

## AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DICTIONARY CENTRE

Newsletter No. 8, 1995

The *Australian National Dictionary Centre Newsletter* is an 'in-house' bulletin, which aims to keep people who are interested in our activities informed about them.

### Retirement of Bill Ransom and Joan Hughes

Bill Ransom and Joan Hughes retired at the end of June 1994 and moved to Sydney before spending three months in France. Tributes to Bill and Joan by John Simpson and John Ritchie appeared in the recently published number of *Ozwords*. To mark their retirement members of the Centre made a patchwork quilt with each of its handmade patches illustrating a stage in the production of the *Australian National Dictionary* or a feature of life in the Centre.

### New Director of Centre

Bruce Moore has been appointed Director of the Centre. Bruce comes from the Australian Defence Force Academy and has a background in medieval literature. His most recent work has been in Australian lexicography – producing the third edition of the *Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (1993), and the *Lexicon of Cadet Language, Royal Military College, Duntroon, in the period 1983 to 1985* (1993).

### Other changes to staffing

The computerisation of the Centre's database has meant that we have become very dependent on the work of a computer programmer. Monica Berko, our programmer since 1993, returned to full-time work at the Centre for Networked Information and Publishing in October. Gavin Mercer, an honours graduate in computer science, has been appointed as half-time programmer in Monica's stead. We have been unable to appoint a replacement for the Research Officer (although Hilary Kent now works full-

time). Maureen Brooks, Joan Ritchie, Julia Robinson, and Dorothy Savage continue to work part-time. Jay Arthur has continued her work on Aboriginal English, in 1994 supported by external grants. From March 1995 Jay takes up a PhD scholarship at the University of Canberra, although her association with the Centre will continue. Linden Wolfe has been appointed to the Centre for six months as a trainee and is working mainly on the corpus project. The position of secretary/administrator has been abolished.

### Word Bank of Australian English

Until now, a great disappointment has been the lack of development of the Corpus Project even though it is an essential tool of the modern lexicographer. Grants from the University enabled us to acquire the hardware and some software for the project. What is needed now is a full-time computer programmer for one year to complete the development of sophisticated search and concordancing tools and to automate the complex structural tagging process. The ARC has not been sympathetic to this kind of funding. We are seeking ways of getting some other kind of external funding for the programmer.

In spite of this, we are proceeding with work on the Corpus, with abbreviated processing, as a matter of priority. To this point the title of the project has been 'The Australian National Corpus'. As the term 'corpus' is not readily understood by the wider community (indeed, it is not readily understood by the academic community!), the project will now be known as the Word Bank of Australian English.

A great deal of material has already been entered into the database but much more is needed. Can you help us? Do you have any material in electronic form which you would be willing to donate to the database? We are especially interested in transcribed

oral material, but any written text is welcome. We do not have the resources to 'buy' material such as newspapers in electronic form. Do you have any ideas about where we might obtain material?

#### Publication of *Words from the West*.

*Words from the West: A Glossary of Western Australian Terms*, by Maureen Brooks and Joan Ritchie, was launched by Professor Bruce Bennett during the Association for the Study of Australian Literature annual conference in July 1994. The book has been well received, including a good review from Les Murray in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

#### Australian Little Oxford Dictionary

Hilary Kent has completed a new edition of the *Australian Little Oxford Dictionary*, which is due for publication late in 1995.

#### Tassie terms

Maureen Brooks and Joan Ritchie have been working on a book of Tasmanian terms. Their earlier work, *Words from the West*, relied exclusively on newspaper sources for its lexicon, but the Tasmanian book draws on a variety of written sources. It is due for publication late in 1995.

#### ARC Small Grant

Bruce Moore received an ARC Small Grant (\$15,000 per year for three years) which will enable us to continue the programme of examining regional newspapers. The main areas to be targeted are South Australia, Queensland, and the Northern Territory.

#### OZWORDS

OZWORDS, a new publication aimed at a general readership, appeared three times in 1994. It is produced and distributed for us by Oxford University Press. If you would like a free subscription write to: Subscription Manager, OZWORDS, GPO Box 2784Y, Melbourne 3001.

#### Gelato / Gelati

We received the following query from Maurice Waite at Oxford: "Could you answer some questions for me about gelato? Dictionaries define it as 'a variety of ice cream...' or 'a kind of...' but none that I have found are unequivocally countable. Can you have more than one, and if so, does it mean 'different types of', as in 'Wonder Ices make three different gelatos', or 'portions of', as in 'Four choc ices, please, and two gelatos', or both? Secondly, is the plural gelatos (as is implied by the lack of a form in most dictionaries, and as I would expect if it is at all common) or gelati (the only form I can find stated)?" It was this query which led to the research reported in the November 1994 number of OZWORDS. In the latest edition of the *Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary* there is a Usage note at gelato "The Italian plural *gelati* is often treated as a *singular* in Australian usage". It was interesting to come across the following passage in (Victorian-born) Georgia Savage's *Ceremony at Lang Nho* (McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, 1994, p.3): "As often as not, Jesse greets me with the words. 'I've just seen the most beautiful man.' She'll shout them at you when you come across her in Lygon Street with a gelati in her hand, whisper them breathlessly in the foyer at the opera, and say them for certain as you hurry along the dank walkway beneath our favourite stand at the MCG".

#### Rosa Praed and Florence Driscoll

Rosa Praed was the daughter of Thomas Lodge Murray-Prior, an Irish immigrant who arrived in Sydney in 1838. In 1853 Murray-Prior purchased a property in the Upper Burnett district (some 300 miles to the north-west), and the family lived here until 1858. After 1858 there were various residences in and around Brisbane, until in 1865 Murray-Prior purchased the property "Marroon" near Boonah. In 1872 Rosa married Arthur Campbell Buckley Praed, a young Englishman. Praed purchased a property on Curtis Island off Gladstone, but his pastoral venture was unsuccessful, and Rosa spent a miserable life there. Praed

sold up and returned to England in 1875. Rosa Praed revisited Australia briefly in 1894-95. In England she had a highly successful career as a novelist, publishing about forty works. Many of these have Australian settings. Six of Praed's texts were read for the *Australian National Dictionary*, and she proved to be a good source for Australianisms. There are 47 citations from her texts. She provides the earliest citations for 9 terms or meanings.

Rosa Praed was a great hoarder of material for her writing. The Oxley Library in Brisbane holds her papers (in 24 boxes), and one item, a scrapbook entitled "Australian Notes" contains much interesting material, clearly collected over many years. There is much typewritten material covering various aspects of Australian life. For example, in a note on "Character ... Men" Praed gives as part of a sketch for a "stockman": "He is a rough man but not ungentlemanly, unread, but far from stupid, quite colonial & with an Australian drawl spoiling an otherwise pleasant voice". There are examples of, and notes on, Australian expressions. There are examples of pidgin English. There are notes on flora and fauna. There are notes on the Aborigines. There are lists of Chinese and Polynesian names. There are lists of Aboriginal words, and some poems with translations. There are cuttings from newspapers. It is at the same time a frustrating document, and it is difficult to evaluate the status of the material from a lexicographical point of view. The material is largely undated. At times sources for the material are noted (for example, a list of terms used by Boldrewood), but elsewhere, and especially with the Aboriginal material, there is no source given. Thus on p. 111 we find:

Deaf adder *Mumulgum*  
Tarantula *Thiwa*  
Ulala Dead

And on p. 224:

Northern blacks

Blacks' language is quite different in different parts. In the Flinders district some of the words were -

Duck *Brookum*  
Turkey *Coobiddy*  
Cattle bird or Wagtail *Thackangarra*  
Laughing Jackass *Acobarra*  
Pigeon *Moongan*

Some (if not most) of these notes undoubtedly come from secondary reading. Even so, there is some interesting material. The term **cattle bird** for the 'wagtail' is not otherwise recorded, but given the bird's habits it is not a surprising epithet. Praed uses the term "deaf adder" rather than "death adder", but there is evidence elsewhere in the scrapbook of an interest in the true etymology. At one point in the scrapbook she is collecting information about Australian snakes, and she has written to Florence Driscoll to clarify whether the correct term is "deaf adder" or "death adder" (the alternatives are in the written records from as early as 1833). Florence Driscoll writes to her in 1892 (the letter appears to be written on notepaper from the House of Commons):

I think the word is death adder, owing to the certainty of death ensuing from the bite of one of them. I have heard it argued so in Australia, and as far as my observations go it is working class people who chiefly call it "deaf". Certainly, as far as I have seen, the adder is not deaf, it always struck me as being a remarkably alert snake and active, with the rapidity of movement like unto a steel spring.

There is another interesting letter from Florence Driscoll (sent from the House of Commons and dated 3 August 1893), which is clearly in response to a query about the term "paddy-melon holes", which appears in the Scrapbook in a list of "Australian epithets" :

"Sauce" Cheek.  
paddy-melon holes  
"planting" horses

N9

413.02805

NL NEW

"Coolaman" - a sort of pitcher made of black excrescence, hanging outside a hut.

AND's earliest citation for the combination paddymelon hole is 1910, although melon hole appears from 1844. Florence Driscoll writes:

Paddy-melon holes or what is generally known as "melon-hole country" is generally flat and swampy & the surface of the ground is broken into irregular holes varying in depth below the general surface of from 12 to 30 inches. The bottom in these holes is generally softer than the grass covered surface of the flat land. The holes are frequently grown up with very coarse grass or rushes and in wet weather are full of water. It is difficult country to ride over at any pace, for the holes cover a greater proportion of the surface of the ground than the unbroken country, & one moment a horse is plunging up to his girths in a small waterhole with a soft bottom & then perhaps in the next stride scrambling over a log lying on the hard surface of the ground. I believe this conformation of country is solely due to bad soil, a flat situation & the action of water.

In the AND citations, in the nineteenth century the term melon-hole always appears in the plural: "The plain is full of deep melon holes". The first citation for melon-hole country is 1929 - so that Florence Driscoll's letter provides important antedatings for both paddymelon hole and melon-hole country. Here again the Scrapbook is of lexicographical interest and value. But who is Florence Driscoll?

**Populate or perish**

James MacLean of Lady Barron, Flinders Island, wrote to us in June with some comments on the AND entry for 'populate or perish'. In AND the slogan is attributed to "W.M. Hughes ... when, as Minister for Repatriation and Health, he drew attention to Australia's falling birth-rate".

The first citation is 1937. James Maclean writes: "The following citation may be of interest to you. It is from Sydney 'Truth', February 16, 1913 1/4: 'Joe Cook says we must populate this country or perish. Well, go on Joe, who's stopping you'.

**1995 Verbatim Award**

This award is administered by EURALEX. It is open to EURALEX members only, and is "for the purpose of supporting unpaid lexicographical work of any type, including study. The amount available is £1,500 sterling; an individual award may vary in size from £250 to the full amount'. Applications close 1 July 1995. For further information contact the ANDC.

**Companion to Language in Australia**

This is a major new project of the ANDC. The aim is to produce an Oxford Companion to Language in Australia, but at this early stage we are also planning a CD-ROM. Thus we will build up a database of material which is suitable for the CD-ROM, but which can also produce books such as an Oxford Companion.

The Companion will be wide ranging. The three main fields are: (1) Australian English (including Aboriginal English); (2) Aboriginal languages; (3) Community Languages [including Migrant Englishes, although formally they belong with (1)]. As with, for example, the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, there will be essay-length entries as well as shorter entries.

**New edition of Australian Aboriginal Words in English**

A second edition of *Australian Aboriginal Words in English* is being prepared. If you have any suggestions for new entries, please let us know.

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