



IN THIS ISSUE:

- JONATHON GREEN ON EARLY AUSTRALIAN SLANG
- MARK GWYNN ON BITUMEN BANDITS
- MICHAEL WALSH ON WORDS AT THE MITCHELL LIBRARY
- AMANDA LAUGESSEN ON THE ANDC AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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EDITORIAL

We welcome Dr Amanda Laugesen to the Australian National Dictionary Centre team as Interim Director. Her areas of expertise are Australian and US history, the history of Australian English, and the history of print culture. She has worked as a lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland, Flinders University, and the Australian National University. Amanda first worked at the Dictionary Centre as a principal researcher for former Director Bruce Moore from 2000 to 2003. As a result of this work she is the author of two books on Australian English: *Convict Words: The Language of the Australian Convict Era* (2002) and *Diggerspeak: The Language of Australians at War* (2005). She has written widely on subjects as diverse as historical memory, the history of reading, libraries and publishing, cultural history, and lexicography. Her most recent publication is *Boredom is the Enemy: the Intellectual and Imaginative Lives of Australian Soldiers in the Great War and Beyond* (2012). We thank former Director Sarah Ogilvie for her contribution and wish her all the best in her new career in the United States.

This has been a sad year for colleagues past and present at the Dictionary Centre. Former *Ozwords* editor Fred Ludowyk, *Australian National Dictionary* bibliographer Pauline Fanning, former Centre Advisory Committee member Bruce Bennett, and well-respected poet and contributor to the Centre Rosemary Dobson all passed away earlier this year. We acknowledge their contribution to the Centre and pay our respects in the From the Centre page.

BELL'S LIFE IN SYDNEY

JONATHON GREEN

No dictionary is ever finished, merely paused for a publisher's deadline. My own *Green's Dictionary of Slang* appeared in 2010, and since then I have been seeking ways to improve, expand, and of course correct. One of these, via the National Library of Australia's online database Trove (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>), has been to read Australia's *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer (BLiS)*, starting with the launch issue of 4 January 1845. As I write, I have reached that of 31 December 1853, some nine years. I have naturally been focusing on slang, and specifically on the 'Police Reports', later 'Police Register', which, with an average of three densely printed columns (out of six or usually seven per page) represented substantial coverage in a four-page paper (of which 1.5 pages were used for advertising and announcements). They cover proceedings at the police court, forerunner of the modern magistrates' court, whose officials made up 'the Bench'.

Australia of 1850 had a white (i.e. other than Indigenous Australian) population of approximately 405,400, a mix of administrators and soldiers, free settlers, freed transportees, and the remaining convict population. The discovery of gold in 1851 brought nearly 250,000 hopefuls in that year alone, and by 1860 the population had topped a million. Sydney's population, 39,000 in 1850, hit 200,000 by 1871. The country remained very much a colony, even if the penal aspect was slowly becoming less central, and authority was the monopoly of the white and British (whether imported 'Sterling' or homegrown 'Currency').

Bell's Life in Sydney appeared in 1845 and survived until 1870. It was founded by George Ferrers Pickering and Charles Hamilton Nichols, who took its title and editorial coverage from the 'sporting journal' *Bell's Life in London*, first published in 1822. (*Bell's Life in Adelaide* (1861–62) and *in Victoria* (1857–68) also appeared but were short-lived.) Little is known of the two proprietors. Pickering (d. 1876) wrote a play—'Lough Deargh's Shrine, or The Cave of Penance' (1847)—and in 1865 was a member of the NSW parliament. Nichols (1811–69) presumably restricted himself to journalism; his biography appears at the website 'Australian Royalty' but no professional details are given.

The concept of a publication devoted mainly to 'sport'—which meant primarily the 'P.R.' and the 'Turf' (i.e. prizefighting and horseracing)—began with London's *Sporting Magazine*, founded in 1792. This was—in look and feel if not in content—very much modelled on its contemporary *The Gentleman's Magazine* (founded 1731). A decline in its fortunes seems to have encouraged the London launch of *Bell's Life*, which in turn would swallow up the short-lived but hugely successful *Life in London* (1821–28), otherwise known as 'The Adventures of Tom and Jerry', created by the sporting journalist Pierce Egan. That Sydney, naturally looking to London for cultural inspiration, should have followed suit was unsurprising.

An essential component of 'sporting' papers (ostensibly confined to varieties of recreational or professional competition, but hinting at a more raffish *demi-monde* that included 'sporting houses', 'sporting women', and of course 'sporting men') was to provide one of the still relatively rare arenas for the printing of slang. Or more specifically of *flash*, under which synonym slang flourished from the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, and in which the slang lexis was heavily infused with that of crime and of prizefighting, gambling, and the racecourse. It provides the material for the convict James Hardy Vaux's *Vocabulary of the Flash Language* of 1812 (Australia's first dictionary), and while sporting gentry used it as a badge of office, it was also (thus Vaux's glossarising for the benefit of his British masters) the language that the transportees brought with them.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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BLiS is not cover-to-cover flash. Nor later, after the name if not the lexis had been jettisoned, is it all slang. Coverage of local, national, or international politics was immune to flash language, as were the varieties of 'Local Intelligence' drawing on the outlying districts. Material was imported from the British and American press, and if it displayed eccentricity, it was factual rather than linguistic. Prizefights, often reprinted from the London *Bell's*, were naturally flash-y: blood was invariably *claret* or *the ruby*, the stomach the *bread-basket* or *victualling department*, the head the *knowledge-box*, teeth the *ivories*, blows variously *rattlers*, *sneezers*, *snorters*, and *winkers*. In the end, however, it is more than a little rote: what had offered a certain freshness in 1818, when the style was pioneered in Egan's pugilistic journal *Boxiana*, had grown stale.

Where *BLiS* stands alone is in its police court reporting. This is not the entirety of such coverage—there was the sober discussion of more serious cases from the higher courts – but this world of drunks, petty thefts, and disputatious neighbours must have provided something irresistible every week. We do not know who wrote them, nor whether he or they went on to a greater and more celebrated career, but they need have no shame for this creation. There is an element of Dickens in his role as the omnipotent observer 'Boz', but unlike Dickens there is little moralising, merely the ironical eye. The overall image seems to be theatrical, or more precisely a farce. The dramatis personae seem to be plucked from the penny gaff, the cheap theatre, with its stock characters and equally stock scripts.

Nit-picking neighbours, drunken diggers, vociferous (and equally drunken) washerwomen and landladies, larcenous whores and exploitative madams, urchins straight from Fagin's kitchen, knuckle-dragging policemen, supercilious magistrates delighted by their own sallies; no-one is spared. Least of all those who are skewered by the jocular (and not so jocular) contempt that in its arrogance merely underlines the insecurity of the Anglo-Saxon narrator, a prototype colonial cringe, perhaps? No alien—'Emeraldler', 'Hebrew', unspecified 'nigger', and above all and most unreservedly despised 'Celestial'—appears but in 'funny foreigner' garb. The Irish cannot speak without a 'Faix, fer shure, begob ...'; 'Hebrews' lithp; 'niggers' address themselves to 'Massa'; the Chinese, when they are not breaking crockery rather than 'kissing the book', require translators, their proper names invariably traduced with some sneering attempt at transliteration. *BLiS*, in this, is surely a forerunner of the equally vicious *Bulletin* of forty years on. Women are never described other than in terms of their beauty, or their lack of it (*Bell's Life in Sydney's* writer also seems expert in *haute* and not-so-*haute couture*, always lovingly detailed); small tradesmen, e.g. publicans, tailors, or cobblers, are an excuse for three paragraphs of increasingly painful puns; soldiers are licentious, sailors gullible, the police, Irish for the most part, compound illiteracy with brutality.

For the lexicographer, heartless as ever, all this is back story. What matters is what they say, because within the puns, the stereotyped versions of 'typical' Irish, black, Jewish or whatever traduced variation on what must really have been said, lies a good deal of not just slang, but even more important early uses thereof.

A first use, of course, can always be displaced as research proceeds, but these are among those that *BLiS* (from which I have so far taken citations for 963 different headwords) has produced to date.

Back and fill 'to vacillate', *bad actor* 'unpleasant person', *ball off* 'to treat to a drink', *walk the barber* 'to work as a sneak thief', *bat* 'a pace', *bean* 'epitome of fashion', *beef out* 'to call out', *bloke* 'a judge; an authority', *blue-bag* 'a policeman', *bolter* 'an absconder from transportation', *brownie* 'a brown-skinned person', *bull-ring* 'a police office', *burster* 'a heavy blow; a heavy fall', *bush* 'to live in the bush', *bush telegraph* (used of a person), *buster* 'a fight', *cabbage-tree mob* 'a type of layabout', *calendar* 'one month in prison', *chi-ike* 'to tease', *cobra* 'the head', *cold coffee* 'bad luck', *convincing ground* 'a site of prize or grudge fights', *cook* 'to ruin or spoil; to give someone their deserts', *coolie* 'a native of India', *crawler* (as a general insult), *crimson* a euphemism for 'bloody', *crockery* 'teeth', *crockery jack* 'a crockery seller', *crum* 'a body louse', *dilly-bag* 'a small sack or similar container', *down* 'a prejudice against', *drag* 'a hanger-on, a pest', *not so dusty* 'surprisingly good', *Emeraldler* 'an Irish person', *gunyah* 'a house in white context', *do the heavy* 'to show off', *hole* 'to stab', *Indigo* 'a policeman', *jackaroo* 'a white man living outside "civilisation"', *job* 'to hit', *my joker* (term of address), *kissing trap* 'the mouth', *knight of the road* 'bushranger', *lagging* 'any prison sentence, not transportation', *Lushingtonian* 'drunkard', *moony* 'drunk', *my oath!*, *nigger* 'any non-white foreigner', *nipper* 'thief or swindler', *outsider* 'outside pocket', *padder* 'pedestrian', *pantry* 'stomach', *cry pen and ink* 'to surrender', *pigeon* 'a prostitute', *pigskin* 'a saddle', *pigtail* 'a Chinese immigrant', *poley* 'a wanted man', *pudding* 'poisoned meat used to silence watchdogs', *right* 'safe, secure', *roast* 'to beat up', *the rosy* 'blood', *scrubber* 'a rough unkempt individual', *sell* 'a trick, a deception', *sheet home* 'to prove something', *she-male* (as adj.) 'pertaining to female concerns', *a shingle short* 'eccentric', *skull-drag* 'to haul by force', *slogging-match* 'a fight', *slug* 'to hit hard', *squealer* 'a piglet', *stall* 'time-wasting or prevarication', *stringybark* 'a supposed "whisky", actually made of turpentine and fuel oil', *swamp* 'to spend all one's earnings on liquor', *take it out* 'to serve a prison

“
... this world of
drunks, petty
thefts, and
disputatious
neighbours must
have provided
something
irresistible every
week.”



THE FIRST CRICKET MATCH BETWEEN NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA, PLAYED IN THE SYDNEY DOMAIN IN JANUARY 1857, BY S.T. GILL. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA, AN2376907.

sentence rather than pay a fine', *thinkbox* 'the head', *toes up* 'dead', *toe* 'to kick', *t'other side* 'WA', *up* 'upset', *vandemonianism* 'rowdiness', *yabberer* 'a chatterer'.

It must be acknowledged that these are not invariably 'Australian' words. As E.E. Morris would make clear in *Austral English* (1898), those most often pertained to flora and fauna, words created by the mid-century goldrush, and other indigenous phenomena. He offers fewer than forty examples of slang, among them *Australian flag* 'an untucked shirt-tail', *backslang* 'to request lodgings from strangers as one travels through the back country', *Bananaland* 'Queensland', *Barcoo spew* 'severe vomiting brought on by drinking bad water and often accompanied by attacks of dysentery', *butcher* 'a measure of beer', *cronk* 'dishonest, illegal', *gluepot* 'a near-impassable muddy road', *Jack the painter* 'very strong bush-tea, so called from the mark it leaves round the drinker's mouth', *joey* 'a child', *old identity* and its antonym *new iniquity*, *overlander* 'a tramp', *pannikin-boss* 'a minor official', *scrubber* 'a rough unkempt person, thus an outsider', *shepherd* 'to follow someone who has been targeted for robbery', the drinking ritual of *shilling in and the winner shouts*, *stick up* 'to extort money', *take down* 'to swindle', and *trickett* 'a New South Wales term for a long drink of beer'. Only *scrubber* also appears in *BLiS*. Much will have been imported or passed on: 140 of the terms in *BLiS* also occur in Vaux.

More important, at least for me, was that *BLiS* provides so many examples of terms that do not yet appear, in some cases for decades, in British or, when pertinent, American sources. Again, more research may change this, but such is the status quo. Slang, albeit in a specific context—the speech of mainly working-class Australians brought before a city's police court—seems to be far more freely accepted than it is elsewhere. We are not yet seeing the conscious effort to forge a new language that typifies another slang-heavy lexis, that of the *Bulletin*, where the exploitation of the counter-language is boosted further by its own 'Bulletinisms', but there is undoubtedly a sense that this is the language as spoken in Australia, or certainly in the Sydney of Durand's Alley and The Rocks.

Of course *BLiS* is somewhat anomalous. It had a limited coverage and a target audience. But what *BLiS* shows for the 1840s and 1850s is constantly borne out elsewhere. Thanks to Trove I have looked, if usually later, at dozens of mainstream papers, whether of the big cities such the *Sunday Times* of Perth, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Adelaide Advertiser*, or of smaller towns, such as the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (Qld), the *Barrier Miner* (Broken

Hill), and the *Williamstown Chronicle* (Vic.). The story is the same: slang—whether Australian or other—is available and its examples are early ones.

Australia's first dictionary, Vaux's *Vocabulary of the Flash Language*, was one of slang. That it was criminal and, but for a few words, imported from London, is ultimately irrelevant. The country has been and remains one of the most fertile sources of the slang lexis available to the lexicographer. For the lexicographer that has always been clear. The beauty of the digital age is that it has become so much more simple, not to mention satisfying, to prove it.

Jonathon Green is a world-renowned British lexicographer of slang. His latest work is the three-volume *Green's Dictionary of Slang* which uses quotations to illustrate the history of slang and colloquial words. He is also a consultant for the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

HATFUL OF ARSEHOLES

Recently, I happened to describe a crazy ex-school mate as being 'as mad as a hat full of arseholes'. This rarely heard epithet was used by my late father. Its (and his) origins are totally obscure. Very little is known about my father (we are now certain that he used a false name after arriving in South Australia in 1936(?)). He had run away to sea in the early 1900s (1914?) – sailed on sailing ships, then steam ships around the Americas. He saw action in WW1 with American destroyers. He married in 1939 – saw action in WW2 with the RAAF. A peculiar expression of surprise that he used was 'Well cut my legs off and call me shorty'. Were these expressions inventions of his, or were they legacies of his misspent youth?

M. King, SA

These expressions have been around for some time and I am sorry to say they are not likely to be the invention of your father. However, the phrase *hatful of arseholes* usually occurs in the phrase *ugly as a hatful of arseholes*. I can find no evidence for *mad as a hatful of arseholes* so this variation might be your father's. The phrase *as ugly as a hatful of arseholes* appears to be Australian and goes back to at least the early 1950s. In terms of your 'mad as' variation, Australian English has plenty of these kinds of phrases, e.g. *mad as a cut snake*, *mad as a gumtree full of galahs*, *mad as a meataxe*, and so on. In fact these 'mad as' phrases have been used at least since Shakespeare's time but are well represented here in Australia.

The other expression you mention, *Well cut my legs off and call me shorty*, may predate the Second World War period and was actually used by US and Australian soldiers in the Pacific. Louis Armstrong has a 1940 song by this name so it was quite a well-known term in the US. The most common examples of these kinds of expressions of surprise are *Well I'll be damned* or just simply *Well I'll be*. Other examples include *Well pour me out and call me buttermilk*, *Well slap me and call me Sally*, and *Well paint me purple and call me stupid*. As with many of these kinds of expressions, the variations are almost endless and change over time.

There is a good chance that your father picked up these expressions while serving in the military. There have been many words and expressions that have come from periods of war, and more particularly from the servicemen involved.

DURRY AND DHURRIE

I recently had cause to check the spelling of *dhurrie*, in the context of Australian slang for a roll-your-own cigarette. The Google search threw up your site along with many others and I was struck by the fact that of the top listings that I checked, none seemed to mention a possible origin for the slang term that my father had told me many years ago. He always used to refer to his roll-your-own cigarettes as *dhurries*, but always referred to factory-rolled cigarettes as 'Tailor-mades'. When I asked him about the two

terms and their usage he told me that *dhurries* were called that after the Indian/Pakistani rugs of that name. He said that when he learned the term as a young man in the 1920s to early 1930s, it was explained to him that the linkage was due to the fact that these rugs were always advertised as 'hand-made dhurrie rugs' hence with the wry twist of Aussie humour a hand-made ciggie became a *dhurrie*. He also mentioned that the early Afghani cameliers always specified that their rugs were 'hand-made dhurries' even though there probably were no other kind.

M. Hawley, SA

We have considered the possible connection between *durry* the cigarette and *dhurrie* the Indian rug. Currently we say that the origin of this term is unknown but I think we should seriously consider the rug possibility.

Interestingly, all of our evidence (and most database evidence) gives the spelling of the cigarette sense as *durry*, not *dhurrie*, which is usually the spelling of the rug sense. Early newspaper evidence shows that *dhurri* the rug was also spelt *durry*, which adds some weight to your suggestion. Another possibility is that *durry* is an alteration of the American tobacco proprietary name *Bull Durham*.

It is also worth noting that *durry* is used of both tailor-made cigarettes and pre-made ones. Our earliest evidence so far is from the early 1940s where it is used to refer to a cigarette butt.

SPREER

A phone call from new *Ozwords* subscriber Lynette alerted us to the word *spreer*. Lynette recalled a reference to *spreers* in the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, circa 1992, in an article about a Riverina pub. The *spreers* were men on a drinking binge. Lynette asked, is this word in the dictionary? *Spreer* is formed on the word *spree*, which is 'a more or less prolonged bout or spell of drinking; a drunken carousal'. *Spree* in this sense is first recorded in 1811 in the wonderfully subtitled *Lexicon balatronicum; a dictionary of buckish slang, university wit, and pickpocket eloquence*. To be *on the spree* ('to be engaged in a drinking bout') is recorded from 1851. Neither *spree* nor *on the spree* are Australianisms.

So far we have been unable to find *spreer* in any dictionary, but we have found some evidence of the word in the mid-nineteenth century in both American and Australian sources. The first American evidence is in 1857, beating the first Australian *spreer* by ten years. After 1904 we find only American evidence. We think *spreer* is likely to be of American origin, but we will keep checking our sources.

CHEMIST OR PHARMACY?

An English editor, proofreading an American work of fiction set in Australia, asked us for help recently. Would Australians who wanted to buy medication say they were going to the *chemist* or to the *pharmacy*? In fact Australians use both terms; in our general dictionaries one is not preferred to the other. In Britain too both words are used, whereas Americans

get right to the point with 'drugstore'. Historically it seems that *chemist*, or *chemist's shop*, had a definite edge in Australia over *pharmacy* in the first half of the twentieth century, but the difference is not so marked in recent times. Is it because many Australian dispensaries now have *pharmacy* rather than *chemist* in their title, and we have just become used to it? Are we influenced by the fact that *pharmacist* is the preferred job title of the professional behind the counter? Despite Australia's increasing acceptance of *pharmacy*, our advice to the editor was that, although both words are current and acceptable, our gut instinct is that Australians are still more likely to say they are just ducking out to the *chemist*—rather than the *pharmacy*—for their pills and potions. Do you agree?

RACK OFF

John from Perth rang to tell us that although his *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* says that *rack off* is a colloquial Australian expression, he has found it in an early twentieth-century American novel (*Main-travelled Roads* by Hamlin Garland). The sentence reads: 'The old man, appalled and dazed at this sudden change of manner, backed away, and at last turned and racked off up the road, looking back with a wild face.' *Rack off* in this sentence fits the US sense of *rack*, first recorded in the late nineteenth century: 'to move or travel at a steady pace'. The *OED* tells us that it is usually used with an adverb, such as *around* or *along*, etc.; *off* is an adverb in this context. This US sense derives from a sixteenth-century English sense of *rack*, used especially of a horse, 'to move off at a fast pace' (itself derived from the noun *rack* 'the fast gait of a horse'). The only sense we claim as particularly Australian is the imperative use of *rack off*—'clear off', 'go away'. It first occurs in print in the mid-1970s, much later than the general or American senses of the verb, but it is probable that our *rack off* is related to these early senses.



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FREDERICK LUDOWYK

It is with great sadness that we inform our readers of the death of Frederick Ludowyk on 15 May 2012. Fred was the editor of *Ozwords* from 1996 to 2010. As the editor of this newsletter he brought a unique style and wit that many readers will fondly remember. As well as editing *Ozwords* he contributed numerous articles to the newsletter on various aspects of Australian English. Fred worked with his partner, former Director Bruce Moore, on a number of the Dictionary Centre's publications including the *Australian Oxford Paperback Dictionary*. He also contributed to the Centre's database of Australian English—a store of over a hundred thousand quotations that illustrate the history of Australian words. He was the Dictionary Centre's resident classicist, learned in both Latin and Greek. This knowledge combined with his past experience as an English teacher was invaluable to all the staff who have worked at the Centre in the last 17 years. Fred will be fondly remembered by his former colleagues and associates from this period.

PAULINE FANNING

This year saw the loss of another significant figure in the history of the Centre. Pauline Fanning, OBE, was the bibliographer for the Australian National Dictionary Project from its early days. She had a long and distinguished career in the National Library of Australia, retiring in 1980 as Director of the Australian National Humanities Library. After her retirement she began work for Bill Ramson's fledgling *Australian National Dictionary*, where her knowledge of all things Australian and her skills as a bibliographer and reference librarian were invaluable. She was responsible for drawing up the list of works, broadly representative of Australian life and history, from which the project's readers gathered evidence of Australian English. The list was fine-tuned and expanded as Pauline continued to monitor the National Library's new acquisitions on our behalf. In a very real sense her work influenced the character of the *Australian National Dictionary*; its readability is due in large part to the exuberant mix of voices she sourced. Staff members past and present remember her with affection and respect. Pauline died on 24 April 2012.

BRUCE BENNETT

Bruce Bennett, AO, had a long and distinguished career as an academic in the field of English literature, with a particular interest and expertise in Australian literature. He was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1993 for services to education and Australian literature, and was a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities. From 1995 to 2004 Bruce served on the Dictionary Centre's Advisory Committee. Bruce died on 14 April 2012.

ROSEMARY DOBSON

We note too the death of well-known Canberran Rosemary Dobson, AO, who

worked at the Centre for a brief period during the editing of the *Australian National Dictionary*. She was an award-winning poet, publishing her first book of poetry in 1944. She received among other honours the Patrick White Award in 1984, and was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1987. Rosemary died on 27 June 2012.

ANTARCTICA

Congratulations to the Centre's Visiting Fellow Dr Bernadette Hince, whose book *Still no Mawson: Frank Stillwell's Antarctic diaries 1911–1913* was published recently by the Australian Academy of Science. Frank Stillwell was a geologist who accompanied Douglas Mawson's 1911 expedition to Antarctica. The work of establishing a base, collecting scientific data, and exploring unknown territory was difficult and dangerous in such a hostile environment. The title of the book—*Still no Mawson*—refers to the team's anxious wait for the return of Mawson and two others from a sledging trip. Stillwell began his daily entries at this time with 'No Mawson', and 'Still no Mawson'. Mawson in fact was the sole survivor, returning to base shortly after the relief ship had sailed. The six men who stayed behind to search for him remained another year; Stillwell left on the relief ship and never returned to Antarctica. His diaries lay undiscovered for forty years in the archives of the Australian Academy of Science in Canberra until Bernadette found them in 2002. Their publication is a significant contribution to Antarctic scholarship, filling gaps in Mawson's own account and providing a different perspective on events.

TREASURE TROVE

In Jonathon Green's article in this edition of *Ozwords* he mentions the National Library of Australia's public online search engine Trove. It is a valuable research tool for anyone with an interest in Australian history, language, society, and culture. Trove gives users free access to a remarkable database of digitised Australian newspapers—more than 6.8 million pages—covering the period 1803 to 1954. Australia's first newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (1803–1842), is just one of the 260 titles that can be found in Trove. As well as being able to see digital photographs of each newspaper page, users can also search an electronic version of the text in a side panel. While the process of converting the scanned newspaper images into electronic text has produced many errors (badly faded, fly-specked, or smudged letters do not translate well), the searchability of the database is still very high. Trove also allows the user to make corrections to the electronic text—and there is an army of dedicated fans doing this. Astonishingly, there can be well over 100,000 corrections made each day by members of the public.

This database has revolutionised the way lexicographers in Australia and elsewhere conduct research into Australian English. At the Centre we have found Trove to be an invaluable resource for finding earlier evidence of Australianisms. In the past when

our researchers collected evidence from early newspapers they did so in the newspaper room at the National Library, diligently combing through editions in hardcopy or on microfilm (not always easy on the eyes). Since the advent of Trove we now search for early evidence on our own computers, and do it much faster and more comprehensively. A search can be made as broad or narrow as we like; we can search for a word or phrase by state, by newspaper, by date, by category (article, advertisement, family notice, etc.), and that's just the beginning. Thanks to Trove we are finding earlier evidence for many of the Australian English words in our database. For example, two early terms for the game of Aussie rules have benefited from such searches. Our first evidence for the term *Australian football* was 1910; Trove pushed that date back to 1879. The first evidence for *the Australian game* was 1903; Trove gave us 1883. Because the database is constantly being expanded, by the time this issue of *Ozwords* reaches your letterbox these dates may have been pushed back further still.

Ozwords readers may be interested in exploring for themselves what Trove has to offer, for genealogical research, historical enquiry, or simply for fun (search for family names and see what comes up). Trove can be found on the National Library of Australia's website, or by typing the following address into your browser: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

NEW DICTIONARY

Mark Gwynn's new edition of the *Australian School Oxford Dictionary* was published in August. This dictionary is aimed at school children aged between 10 and 16. A number of words have been added in light of the development of the new Australian Curriculum for schools. The dictionary also contains a grammar guide written by Margaret Mackenzie and Susan Leslie.

SCHOOL SLANG

We are interested in collecting examples of school slang across Australia. We hope to hear from primary or high school teachers who might be interested in participating in our project to collect school slang. This data may be used in a variety of our online resources, including in our blogs and social media work, and will contribute to our collection of material on Australian English. If you are a teacher, or know a teacher, who might be interested and would like to find out more, please contact us at andc@anu.edu.au.

WORD BOX

The ANDC is pleased to announce a new feature on our website (<http://andc.anu.edu.au/>) called Word Box. If you come across a word or phrase that you think is new, unusual, or used in an unfamiliar way you can use Word Box to let us know. Contributions so far have included; *yarn bombing*, a form of guerrilla art using wool and yarn; *glamping*, luxury-style camping; *qubit*, a unit of quantum information; and *bessie*, a best friend. We look forward to your contributions.

BITUMEN BANDIT Mark Gwynn

In an ABC online news posting of September 2011 it was reported that ‘The Department of Fair Trading is warning about so-called “*bitumen bandits*” after a man was convicted of several offences’. On the homepage of the company Statewide Bitumen, advice is provided to consumers to ‘protect yourself and our industry’ and to ‘help us stamp out the *Bitumen Bandit*’.

In Australian English *bitumen* is a sealed road—one of the black tarred roads that form the vast majority of highways, freeways, and streets across the country. In general English bitumen is a tarlike mixture derived from petroleum and when mixed with other materials like sand, gravel, and stone forms one of the most common materials for creating sealed roads. In American English the standard word for bitumen is *asphalt* and the mixture used for road construction is *asphalt concrete*.

With this knowledge the reader could be forgiven for believing that a *bitumen bandit* is a *hoon* who travels at high speed along the road placing other drivers at risk, or perhaps a *carjacker* who stops a car for the purpose of stealing money. Indeed, in early Australian English bushrangers were often called *bandits* and they did stop coaches for the purpose of stealing money, but certainly not on sealed roads. However, our *bitumen bandit* is something else altogether, as the following article from the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* of 29 August 2011 makes clear: ‘Sometimes known as “*bitumen bandits*”, the gypsies promise cheap driveways but deliver inferior work at inflated prices.’

In Australia a *bitumen bandit* is a largely itinerant worker who goes from door to door offering to construct or resurface private driveways at a cheap rate. The *Gympie Times* of 24 June 2011 reports: ‘The usual play for itinerant bitumen layers is they offer you a cheap driveway using bitumen “leftover from another job” but you need to take up the offer immediately.’ As news reports make clear, the work is sometimes never started—the *bitumen bandit* taking the deposit or full payment and ‘doing a runner’—or the work is unfinished or of very poor quality.

The first reports of *bitumen bandits* occur in Australian newspapers in 1997. Within a very short period these dodgy workers were associated with gypsies and itinerant workers from Great Britain. Reports often mention Irish, English, or Scottish accents and frequently refer to gypsies from the British Isles as the perpetrators of these types of scams. The reports never make a distinction between the Roma Gypsies who have inhabited Europe for centuries and originally hail from the Indian subcontinent, or the more general use of the word ‘gypsy’ that refers to itinerant workers and people who live in family groups, have no fixed address, and often move around in caravans seeking work. In a Sydney *Daily Telegraph* article of 29 August 2011 it was reported that more than

‘30 families with 1000 members have been identified carrying out multi-million dollar scams’. The article further reported that many of these *bitumen bandits* were moving around in custom-built caravans towed by BMW four-wheel drives, new Pajeros, and Range Rovers. Another newspaper article, this time from the Lismore *Northern Star* of 15 September 2011, reports that every spring these itinerant tradies ‘travel from the UK and Ireland working up and down the east coast of Australia and travelling in expensive four-wheel drives towing luxury caravans’.

Regardless of the association between *bitumen bandits* and itinerant workers from the UK, the term has already extended to other areas of sharp practice—door-to-door con men doing dodgy roof-painting work and, as reported in a headline in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* of 29 July 2011—‘*Bitumen bandits* plan road levy to punish driver’—the term can be used figuratively of a government imposing a road consumption tax on drivers. While relatively new to Australian English, *bitumen bandit* has quickly established itself in the Australian lexicon, and as long as Australians desire bitumen driveways they may possibly meet one of these bandits in the flesh!

Mark Gwynn is an editor and researcher at the Australian National Dictionary Centre.

WORDS AND BOWERBIRDS: THE RIO TINTO/ MITCHELL LIBRARY PROJECT Michael Walsh

Since mid 2011 I have been engaged, off and on, by the Mitchell Library—which houses most of the manuscript collection within the State Library of New South Wales—to locate and identify any resources relevant to Australian languages within the collections. This three-year project is being funded by the Australian mining company Rio Tinto, and my role is to focus on the first (research) phase. Results to date reveal that often resources under one person’s name, for instance, Sir Thomas Mitchell (1792–1855), an early Surveyor-General of New South Wales, the Reverend James Dunmore Lang (1799–1878), or Sir William Dixon (1870–1952), may in fact have come from a variety of sources.

Perhaps the most amazing example of these ‘bowerbirds’ was Dr Alan Carroll (c.1823–1911), prominent in the Royal Anthropological Society of Australasia. His papers include all sorts of material sent in for possible inclusion in the journal *Science of Man*, but occasionally there is material that is unexpected. For instance, a set of documents with minimal metadata turned out to contain a partial translation of the Gospel of Matthew by the Reverend Lancelot Edward Threlkeld (1788–1859), something that was known by scholars to have existed, but had remained hidden until late 2011. Another example is a two-page manuscript entitled ‘Some Norfolk Island Aboriginal words and their meanings taken from Notes Made by the Rev Henry Fulton in 1801’. In fact, the word list is from the Sydney language.

The relevance of all this to *Ozwords* is that these collectors were usually prolific correspondents, so that samples of Australian English are a by-product of their efforts. Particularly in the Carroll and Royal Anthropological Society of Australasia materials there are numerous letters from people wanting to submit something for the journal. More generally there are diaries, journals, reminiscences, and the like that provide extended tracts of Australian English. One example of this is ‘Wombat wallaby; or, Reminiscences of a trip overland to Melbourne and the goldfields by Richard Tester’, c.1860–65. This

has proved to be of considerable interest to the Australian National Dictionary Centre even though it is only of marginal interest to my project!

I believe there are numerous other resources of value to devotees of Australian English yet to be explored in repositories like the Mitchell Library.

Dr Michael Walsh is a linguist at the University of Sydney. His research interests include the study of Aboriginal languages from the Top End of the Northern Territory.

The Australian National Dictionary Centre is jointly funded by Oxford University Press Australia and The Australian National University to research all aspects of Australian English and to publish Australian dictionaries and other works.

OZWORDS, TWEETING AND OMG: THE ANDC ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Amanda Laugesen

This year the ANDC has gone online in a big way. We have started a blog called Ozwords (find it at ozwords.org), we post on Facebook, and we tweet regularly (@ozworders). Through social media we have been building up new audiences for the work that we do at the Centre, and providing new ways for people to engage with Australian English.

Many of the blogs have been written by the ANDC's research editors Mark Gwynn and Julia Robinson. Mark and Julia have surveyed a range of Aussie terms from *to do a Harold Holt* (rhyming slang for 'to do a bolt') to *Johmiedom* (a 19th-century term for 'fashionable young men'). Some of the most popular blogs have included one on *budgie smugglers* and one on Australia's *golden girls* inspired by the London 2012 Olympics.

Blogs provide us with an important means to publicise the work that we do, but more importantly, they allow us to open up a dialogue about Australian English with those who share our fascination with language. The readers of our blog come from all over the world. Some of our readers regularly comment on our blogs, providing their own thoughts, knowledge and reflections on slang, language, and the history of Australian English.

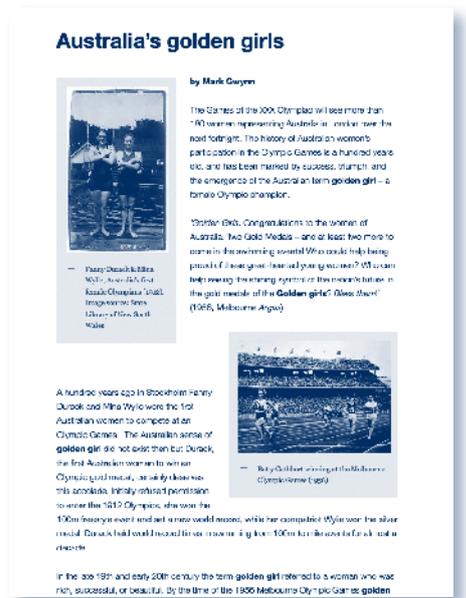
Facebook and Twitter are two other places where we have been engaging with those interested in Australian English. The Dictionary Centre regularly tweets (a 'tweet' is a microblog consisting of 140 or fewer characters) on words and terms that crop up in the media, and on various aspects of language. We have about 300 followers, and are attracting more each day. Like our blog, Twitter allows us to engage in a dialogue about Australian English, and also gives us a good sense of which words and subjects people find interesting. We can also use tweets to direct people to various news reports, research and other online sources for further information, and they help us locate new resources and information.

The most recent surge of interest on Twitter was connected to a news report on the inclusion of 'OMG' (for 'oh my god') in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the first time. The evidence for its first usage is 1917 in a letter written to Winston Churchill – a fact that clearly fascinated our followers and inspired a flurry of tweets.

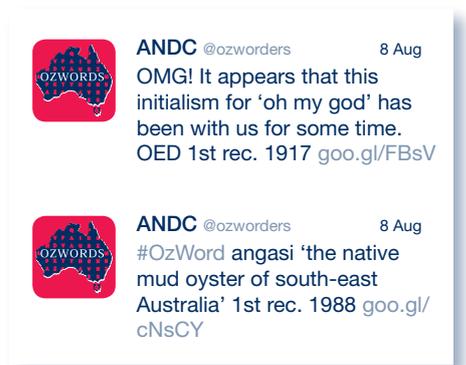
Twitter has also provided a simple way for people to ask questions about Australian English. A recent query was about the history of the word 'bosker' meaning 'very good'; we used our Facebook page to answer the query.

Social media has therefore become yet another way we can enrich our study of Australian English. We hope you will join us in our social media endeavours and we look forward to seeing you online.

Amanda Laugesen is Director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre.



THE OZWORDS BLOG



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OZWORDS COMPETITION

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 38: RESULTS

For this competition you were asked to create a kenning with an Australian flavour. Kennings were a form of poetic compound used in Old English poetry. It seems that the task of transforming an Old English poetic form into the Australian vernacular was not an easy one, because many of our contributors remarked upon the difficulty of this competition. Nonetheless valiant attempts were made including the following:

used beer department = pub toilet
(P. Boardman, Vic.)

the possum farm = New Zealand
(D. Andrews, Qld)

Blossom of Bennelong = Sydney
Opera House
(D. Osborne, SA)

Canberra promise = something that is
not going to happen
(C. Vance, Qld)

pensioners' pick-pockets = gaming
machines
(K. Lord, SA)

democracy dunny = parliament
(L. Pattison, NSW)

big wheelie bin = garbo truck
(P. Wippell, Qld)

cabinet of curiosities = the front
bench
(D. Tribe, ACT)

polly-baiting = denigrating members
of parliament
(G. Case, Qld)

Coral Corral = Great Barrier Reef
(P. Harley, SA)

swy sharks = casinos
(S. Robson, Qld)

rocky road = the recent sad events of
Darrell Lea going into administration
(K. Shooter, Qld)

2nd Prize (books to the value of \$50 from the
OUP catalogue):

lackayacka = unemployment
(J. Dewar, NSW)

1st Prize (books to the value of \$100 from the
OUP catalogue):

brown dog's grave = a very bad
restaurant
(M. Lean, Qld)

The winning entry won over the judges in
the way it plays on the Australian expression
'it would kill a brown dog'—used to indicate
something (especially food) that is extremely
unpleasant, objectionable, or unpalatable.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 39

Many families have favourite words and
expressions that are used only within the
domestic circle and understood by other
family members. From time to time the
Centre receives correspondence regarding
examples of this 'family language'. The
correspondents usually want to know if
the term in question is recorded elsewhere
or is unique to their family. It could be an
invented word, a misheard word ('hostile'
for 'hospital'), a word with transposed
syllables or sounds ('flutterby' for
'butterfly'), 'hangcoater' for 'coathanger'),
an abbreviation ('spag bol' for 'spaghetti
bolognaise'), or an existing expression that
has been changed (Kevin Rudd's 'fair shake
of the sauce bottle' is a variant of the more
usual 'fair suck of the sauce bottle'). Often
these words and expressions have stories
attached to their origin within the family.

Your task for this competition is to tell us
of a word or expression that you believe is
peculiar to your family. The most interesting
entries will be up for the prize.

CONTACT US

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campus, between Melville Hall and Haydon Allen Building.