

Oxford Australia Word of the Month

February 2010

Bogey – *noun* a swim or bathe; a bath. *verb* to swim; to bathe.

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Bogey

The story behind the Word of the Month

In her 1996 novel *A Bunch of Strays*, Marie Mahood writes: 'It'll do for yer bathroom fer the time bein', he said. 'Yer can stick the hose in at the side and syphon the water when yer want a **bogey**'. How many Australians still know the word **bogey**?

If we move back to 1946 and Frank Dalby Davison's novel *Dusty*, about a sheep dog, **bogey** appears again: 'Except that he was dusty from a day's work—and a shake and a **bogey** would remove that—he was dusty in name only.' In both cases, **bogey** appears to mean 'a wash'.

In 1955 H.G. Lamond in *Towser* writes: 'We'll go down to the water-hole and have a **bogey**'. In 1999 L. Wallace in *Dad and Joey in Possum Gully* writes: Mum followed Mavis and Bobby to the river for a **bogey**.' Here, a **bogey** is 'a swim'.

Bogey was one of the very early borrowings into Australian English from the Aboriginal language spoken in the

Sydney area. It was initially borrowed as a verb, which is highly unusual, since almost all the words that were taken from Aboriginal languages were nouns. In the early years it was largely used in nineteenth-century Australian pidgin English, but it then became part of standard Australian English.

A number of beaches that had rock pools that were used for swimming named these pools **bogey holes**, and it is probably in such place names (as in Newcastle in New South Wales) that the word **bogey** lives on. For example, in December 2009 the *Newcastle Herald* reported: 'A controversial plan to close the historic **Bogey Hole** to the public has met with condemnation from regular users, Hunter residents, politicians and the National Trust.' Outside of place names, the word **bogey** will sometimes be heard in country Australia. But it is a word that is doomed to archaism.

metrosexual
weapon
of mass destruction
karrack
glycaemic
burka
index
barbecue stopper
senior moment
Sudoku
hornbag
dishlicker
witlof
cyberstalking
Naltrexone
pear-shaped
yakitori
Bioterrorism