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## EDITORIAL

In the April 2008 edition of *Ozwords* we pointed out that the naming of a 'Word of the Year' goes back to the early 1990s, when the American Dialect Society began to announce its annual choice. In 2006 the Australian National Dictionary Centre chose the verb and noun *podcast* as its Word of the Year, and our 2007 Word of the Year was *metooism*, a choice that reflected the Australian significance of this term in the drawn-out federal election campaign that dominated 2007.

Whereas 2007 was dominated by political terms, 2008 was more narrowly economic in focus. 2008 was the year when not only did we understand what *subprime* really meant, but *hedge funds*, *short selling*, and *toxic debt* also became the topics of morning-tea conversations. In this climate, it was not surprising that the American Dialect Society chose *bailout* (in the specific sense of 'the rescue by the government of companies on the brink of failure, including large players in the banking industry') as its 2008 Word of the Year.

In Australia, the first three-quarters of the year were dominated by the rising interest rates that resulted from attempts to curb inflation. It looked as if *mortgage stress* (the direct result of rising interest rates) would be the Australian Word of the Year, and it won extra points by virtue of its being an Australianism. But then all changed: the world financial system collapsed, and interest rates in Australia took a tumble. There was still abundant stress, but it infected all economic realms, and not just Australian mortgages. Enter the monster: the *Global Financial Crisis*, or the *GFC* as it came popularly to be known. This is our 2008 Word of the Year.

Frederick Ludowyk  
Editor, *Ozwords*

# WHO'S ROBBING THIS COACH? NED KELLY AND AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

FREDERICK LUDOWYK

An article in the Hobart *Mercury* on Ned Kelly in May 2008 posed the question: 'Ned Kelly—hero or villain?' The writer answered himself by coming firmly down in favour of the non-saintly side of the dichotomy: 'Despite the eulogising of Kelly as some kind of noble figure who was much wronged, the fact remains that he was a criminal and a triple police murderer. ... A society that lauds a cheap, psychopathic cop killer and elevates him to hero status is guilty of craven double standards. We are appalled by police deaths but make excuses for Ned Kelly.' Ned Kelly's dual reputation as both saint and sinner is no doubt part of the reason for his continuing iconic attraction—you just don't fashion folk heroes out of goody-goody namby-pambies.

Indeed, it tends to be outsiders to the particular culture who make the error of attributing saint-like qualities to such folk heroes. M. O'Sullivan in *Cameos of Crime* (1935) describes how in a conflict between British and Australian soldiers during the First World War, the Pommie 'Tommies' appear to have constructed an image of Ned Kelly as an antipodean equivalent of the English King:

In 1917, in France there were a number of Australians and English soldiers enjoying themselves in a saloon. The Tommies, when having their refreshment, drank to 'The King'. One of the bunch of Australians, who had had four years of war and whose nerves were raw, out of sheer cussedness, wanted to shock the Tommies, gulped down his liquor, at the same time saying: 'Oh, to hell with the King'. His own party took no notice, but the English soldiers were obviously very annoyed. They talked it over seriously, and then two of them advanced on the party of Australians, and in a loud, defiant challenging voice called out: 'To hell with Ned Kelly!'

The British soldiers were no doubt right in assuming that the Australians idolised Ned Kelly; and perhaps, amid the wartime flurries of Australian accents and idioms, they had heard the phrase *as game as Ned Kelly*—but the idolisation of certain qualities in Ned Kelly would not necessarily blind the Australians to the reality of a 'gameness' in Kelly that was perilously comic in its ultimate armour-clad confrontation with the authorities. This is not to underestimate the power of the anti-authoritarian myth that lies at the heart of the Ned Kelly story; but the miscalculation that equates 'The King' (of England) with 'Ned Kelly' (of Australia) is a misjudgment

both of the Australians and of the myth.

What I am suggesting is that the Ned Kelly myth has always been open to ambiguous meaning and interpretation. This is especially true of the words and idioms that the name *Ned Kelly* has generated.

### GAME AS NED KELLY

The most positive of these words and idioms is the phrase *as game as Ned Kelly*, meaning 'extremely courageous'. This idiom first appeared in a 1938 poem called 'Militiaman', inspired by the Spanish Civil War: 'Sleet-smarted face and snow-filled eye, / Vigilant in the dark before the dawn / Game as Ned Kelly.' I have no doubt that the syntactic pattern of this idiom is to be traced to the comparable phrases *game as a pebble* and *game as a meat-ant*. The 'pebble' of the former phrase is a transferred use of the sense 'stone' to describe someone who is 'a tough or indomitable person' or 'a reprobate' (*Oxford English Dictionary* [*OED*]). While this began as an English slang term, its subsequent use was mainly Australian, and it was applied in Australia to convicts and prisoners. In 1848 the *Port Phillip Herald* in Melbourne reported: 'A carpenter showed a note in one of the public houses in town which circumstance having been observed by three "pebbles", who were watching him outside, they followed him till he got opposite the Church, when they attacked and attempted to rob him.' The earliest use of *game as a pebble* occurs in an 1829 British account of a boxing match—'Hudson, as game as a pebble, stuck to his man like glue'—and the 'gameness' thus displayed has its origin in an animal metaphor: 'Having the spirit of a game-cock; full of pluck, showing "fight"; plucky, spirited' (*OED*). Thereafter, it is an Australian term, first appearing here in 1863. The variant *game as a meat-ant* is exclusively Australian, and is first recorded in 1932. A *meat-ant* (also called *tyrant ant*) is any of various Australian ants, especially *Iridomyrmex purpureus*, a mound-building ant with a reddish head and purple body, and capable of inflicting a painful bite (*Australian National Dictionary* [*AND*]). The 'gameness' of a meat-ant is a very aggressive quality indeed! When the new variant *game as Ned Kelly* appears six years later (in 1938) it slots into the template (*as game as ...*) that carries with it connotations of gameness that include daring, risk-taking, cockiness, and also aggression—the British *OED* defines *game as Ned Kelly* as 'very spirited or brave' (as, I think, the First World War

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'Tommies' might have defined it), whereas the Australian *AND* is more cautious: 'fearless in the face of odds; foolhardy.'

Indeed, a complex range of connotations is often present when the idiom *game as Ned Kelly* is called into use:

A common expression on the lips of Aussies of both sexes to describe someone engaged in a risky enterprise is 'he's as game as Ned Kelly'. (S. Hope, *Diggers' Paradise*, 1956)

There was already a national chip on the shoulder and those who felt it would come out fighting or admire those who did. To die 'game as Ned Kelly' would become part of the language. (J. Murray, *Larrikins*, 1973)

The Holden and Ford are excellent machines for running down ordinary roads. Both ride and handle good and bad roads with ease plus a fair degree of enthusiasm and a tonne of balance. Both are as game as Ned Kelly in the rough. (*Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 8 December, 2004)

And, like his brothers, he has no fear. They are all mad that way. Mad, game as Ned Kelly, but great young blokes. (*Herald-Sun*, 3 June, 2006)

The 'game' qualities are admired, but they are by no means the courageous 'virtues' of a saint! There is an edgy riskiness in that courage, a dogged bucking of the system, a bush roughness, and a mischievous madness that is as foolhardy as it is fearless. To be as game as Ned Kelly is not to go forth with the unambiguous, indeed simple, indeed simplistic, spiritual courage of an English St George.

## WHO IS A 'NED KELLY'? WHAT IS HE?

If there are glimmers of ambiguity in the phrase *as game as Ned Kelly*, the ambiguity becomes explicit in the figurative instances where people are compared directly to Ned Kelly. A *Ned Kelly* can be someone who is a kind of maverick or larrikin, especially someone who is resistant to overarching authority and its symbols:

This Ned Kelly of colonial politics may yet jockey himself into a local immortality, as the father of Australian Federation. (F.W.L. Adams, *Australians*, 1893)

David Boon: the Ned Kelly of the cricketing 90s? The ... determined Aussie battler taking on the might of the international fast-paced firing squads? (*Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 23 October, 1993)

Even so, everyone knows that Ned Kelly was *also* an outlaw and a thief, and a *Ned Kelly* in Australian English is very commonly

someone 'who is unscrupulous in seeking personal gain' (*AND*), especially in business dealings:

Would you kindly allow me a small space to expose the Ned Kelly methods of a great majority of Sydney shopkeepers. (*Truth* (Sydney), 17 November, 1918)

Included in this Ned Kelly category [is] ... the bloke who sells you a second-hand, guaranteed, 'every bit as good as new...' vehicle, which falls to pieces in the first hundred miles. (J. O'Grady, *Aussie English*, 1965)

Mr. Bizzell said the council offered him £740 for 74 perches of land. ... 'They are just Ned Kellys,' he said. 'They certainly won't put it back on the market without making a handsome profit.' (*Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 20 August, 1974)

By the 1940s the term *Kelly gang* was not simply a historical reference to Ned Kelly's band of bushrangers, but also 'a term applied to any business firm whose practices are not above suspicion, and especially to a ruling Government, with reference to tax-grabbing propensities' (S. Baker, *A Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang*, 1941). The term *Ned Kelly* by itself can have the same allusive power, as when a subheading in the *Canberra Times* (20 March, 2008) attacked the Federal Government's policy on broadband services: 'Broadband bill a "Ned Kelly" raid on the Bush'.

In Melbourne, tram inspectors were nicknamed *kellies* because of the puritanical (and thoroughly unsporting!) vigour with which they insisted that tickets should be paid for, this quite 'legal' extraction of money being conflated with Ned Kelly's illegal extractions. In some parts of Australia the crow is called a *Kelly* or a *Kelly crow*, and some writers attribute the term to an association made between the Kelly gang and crows: "Kelly" for crow had its genesis in the deeds of the Kelly gang. Birds and bushrangers were addicted to forays; hence "Those damn crows are just like the Kellys"; hence "Kelly". The name is indiscriminately applied to crows and ravens' (*Bulletin*, 11 April, 1945). While it is not entirely certain that Ned Kelly is the origin of this word for a crow, it is also not entirely certain why the term *Ned Kelly* came to be applied to a kind of fishing rig. Some have suggested that the *Ned Kelly* rig is 'unsporting', but the evidence (from 1948 onwards) is not clear-cut. Here is a description from the June 2007 edition of *Modern Fishing*:

I would have been a little tacker fishing off a riverbank with my Dad and my Pop, using a long cane without a reel. We called the poles 'Ned Kellys', and the rig was simple: a length of line knotted

from the tip to halfway down the cane behind each node. A slit cork was our float and a split shot above the hook kept our bait at the destined depth.

## WHO IS DOING THIS ROBBING, MAY I ASK?

One of the most fascinating developments in the lexicon of Ned Kelly has been the bushranger's association with a story that probably originates in the United States. The earliest version of the story that I have been able to find is in a rather risqué (for its time) 1934 American text *Anecdota Americana*:

The train came to a halt with a sudden jar. Two men sprang into the aisles, one tall man, the other short. Both brandished guns. 'Hands up everybody', yelled the tall man. 'You men line up on this side, women on the other. Now we ain't goin' to hurt nobody that behaves. Gents, shell out your dough and jewelry. All the men are going to be robbed and then we'll see the women.' 'Easy now, easy', protested the smaller robber, 'never mind that last. We'll just cop the dough and beat it.' 'You mind your own business', spoke up an old maid. 'Who's robbing this train, I'd like to know.'

In the United States the story became associated with the outlaw Jesse James, and at a later date a somewhat homophobic version arose, in which a drunken Jesse James 'mistakenly' asserts that he will 'rob all the women and rape all the men'; to his partner's assertion that he perhaps got that the wrong way round, a young gay man pipes up: 'Who's robbing this train, you or Mr James?' Both versions of the story were transferred to Australia and associated with Ned Kelly, the Australian equivalent of Jesse James, and the story was localised by having the bushranger rob a coach rather than a train (even though Ned Kelly, unlike some other Aussie bushrangers, was not a coach robber). Frank Hardy tells the 'straight' version in *The Outcasts of Foolgarah* (1971), where Ned Kelly threatens to rob all the men and rape all the women, and is berated with the line 'You can't do that, you dreadful man', which prompts the response from a female 'Who's robbing this coach, you or Mister Kelly?' The 'gay' version is related in the 1984 edition of Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*:

Ned Kelly and his gang held up a coach. Ned gave orders to rape the men and rob the women. One of his offsidars said, 'You mean, rob the men and rape the women'. A passenger with a squeaky voice exclaimed, 'Who's robbing this coach?'

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We might debate the political correctness of these yarns, but what is interesting for the history of Australian English is that the phrase *who's robbing this coach?* has, in many instances, become detached from its origin in the Ned Kelly 'coach' version of an American train robbery story. Sidney Baker gives the idiom in the 1945 first edition of *The Australian Language*, and comments: 'Reputed to be associated with bushranging days, this expression is equivalent to "mind your own business"'. Baker knows that the idiom has some connection with bushranging, but he does not know of its association with Ned Kelly. It is similarly detached from its origin in E. Lambert's *Twenty Thousand Thieves* (1951): 'Chip's boom shattered the ... feeling among them: "Who's robbing this coach? Do you want to hear the news or not?"' *Who's robbing this coach?* is an idiom that deserves preservation, so I encourage you to use it as a put-down line, especially when someone is trying to interfere with your plans—*who's robbing this coach!* Perhaps we could elevate it to the same heights as *What do you think this is—Bush Week?*

## VERBING NED KELLY

An eponymous word has perhaps truly arrived when it transfers from a noun to a verb. The term *Ned Kelly* has been used as a verb meaning 'to bushrange': 'Gipsy Smith ... Ned-Kellied on a small scale about Bendigo in the days of the Forest Range goldfield' (*Gadfly* (Adelaide), 2 May, 1908). It has also been used as a verb meaning 'to kill (a bird etc.) unsportingly':

'When raising yourself above the bank of a dam, go up very, very slowly ... and you will have ample time to plan your shot, whether you intend to "Ned Kelly" them or take them on the wing' (S.H. Edwards, *Shooting & Bushcraft*, 1951). More recently, the verb simply means 'to rob', as in this extract from a letter to the *Newcastle Herald* (27 October, 1999) complaining about an increase in the price of a season ticket for the Newcastle Knights: 'Few people enjoy being Ned Kellied or taken for schmucks.'

## RHYME-SLANGING NED KELLY

Rhyming slang usually uses proper names arbitrarily, and there is no surprise in the fact that Australian English has used *Ned Kelly* as rhyming slang for 'belly' from the 1940s. It is somewhat surprising, however, to find that in Britain, since the 1970s, *Ned Kelly* has been used as rhyming slang for 'telly'. We have some slight evidence that *Ned Kelly* has been used allusively in referring to strong alcoholic drinks—a glossary from the First World War uses *Ned Kelly's blood* as a term for red wine or *vin rouge*, and on a few occasions Barry Humphries has used the phrase *Ned Kelly whisky*.

## SUCH IS LIFE!

All in all, the lexical evidence would not support the notion that Ned Kelly has been embraced as a folk hero in Australia in an unthinking and uncritical way. The term *such is life* is first recorded in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1865)—'With a mournful air as who should say, "Here is another wretched creature come to dinner;

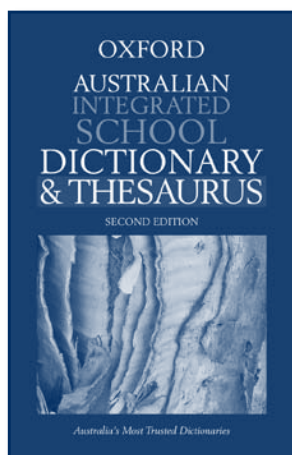
such is life!"'—and the *OED* defines its use in this way: 'an exclamatory phrase now often used trivially as an expression of resignation or acquiescence in things as they are.' After Ned Kelly reportedly used the phrase *Such is life!* as his last words before being hanged on 11 November 1880, it has assumed greater weight in Australian culture, although still with the primary sense 'a philosophical acceptance of the bad things that happen in life'. The deep ambiguities at the heart of the Ned Kelly myth were brought to the fore when Brownlow-medallist Ben Cousins was sacked by his Western Australian club for various offences, and it was revealed that he had the phrase *Such is life* tattooed in large letters across his torso. The *Age* (Melbourne) reported (20 October, 2007):

Cousins' new tattoo, famously unveiled on Tuesday, reads 'Such is life'. In Melbourne, the appropriation of Ned Kelly has been mocked. In Perth, the comparison with a charismatic victim of police persecution is resonating. Talkback radio was buzzing with callers defending Cousins yesterday. The switchboard at Eagles headquarters was deluged with demands for his reinstatement.

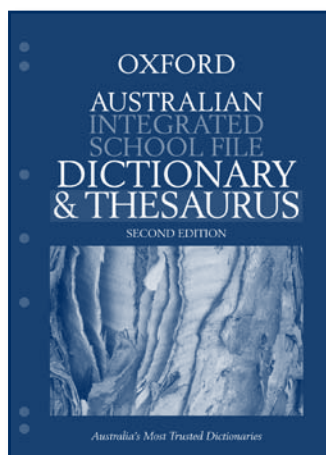
Such is the fate of folk heroes. In Ned Kelly's case, the lexical record would suggest that he is regarded in Australian culture as both hero and villain. On the positive side, it is difficult to think of another personal name that has contributed so much to the word-board of our Australian English.

## Announcing new major editions to the Australian School Dictionary range from Oxford University Press.

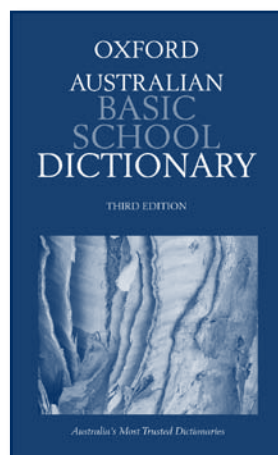
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## We welcome readers' comments on their recent observations of Australian usage, both positive and negative, and their queries, particularly those not easily answerable from the standard reference books.

In addition to letters sent directly to *Ozwords*, the Dictionary Centre receives language queries directly or via OWLS (the *Oxford World Language Service*). Our reply goes only to the person who sent in the query, but the queries are often of interest to a wider audience. The letters and answers in this issue's *Mailbag* are modified versions of some of the queries we received in the past twelve months. They are all presented now as 'anonymous' queries. **ED.**

### HUMMUS

*From my observations the most common spelling of the 'dip made from ground chickpeas and sesame oil flavoured with lemon and garlic' is hommos (although the spellings hoummus and hummus are certainly around). I was wondering if this is an Australian spelling of the word?*

When we first entered this word in our Australian dictionaries we gave *hummus* as the headword, with the variants *hoummos* and *hommos*. The British OUP dictionaries give *hummus* (with variant *houmous*). The OUP American dictionary gives *hummus* (with variants *hoummos* and *humous*). The OUP Canadian dictionary gives *hummus* (with the variant *hommos*). Another common spelling, not represented in these dictionaries, is *hoummus*. The variants illustrate the fact that there is still uncertainty about what to do with the spelling of this term. Internet searches indicate that *hommos*, *hummus*, and *hoummus* are on a par in Australia, but that *hoummos* is ahead of them all. Australian newspaper evidence, however, shows an overwhelming preference for *hummus*, followed by *hommos*, with *hoummus* and *hoummos* hardly represented at all. The word comes from Arabic *hummus*, and this spelling, preferred by the major dictionaries, may turn out to be the eventual victor in English.

### CONTINENTAL

*I have been doing some work on the history of a local school, and came across the word 'Continental' being used in the 1930s to advertise a type of entertainment in conjunction with a fete. Do you know anything of its origin?*

In 2001 one of our readers noted that in the Official Programme for the January 1901 Federation celebrations there is a series of 'continentals': 'Continental in Domain, 7.30 p.m.' In 1900 the *West Australian* newspaper advertised a 'continental concert': 'This (Wednesday) evening another continental concert will be given at the Zoological Gardens at South Perth. The gardens will be illuminated as on Saturday night last, and a specially attractive programme of instrumental music has been arranged.'

These continentals appear to be musical entertainments, and are not necessarily the same thing as the 1930s fetes. The earliest reference we have been able to find to a 'continental fete' is in the *Melbourne Argus* on 2 April 1917, with a reference to such a fete in the south-western Victorian town of Warrnambool: 'Warrnambool. A "Continental fete" held to provide comforts for soldiers in the trenches brought £1,103. The stallholders decided to endeavour to send the amount direct to the soldiers.' This provides the important information that the 'Continental fete' was a fundraiser, and that money was raised by selling things at stalls. The second record we have been able to find is from the north-western Victorian town of Ararat, in the *Melbourne Argus* on 21 August 1918: 'A successful continental fete was held under the auspices of the Citizens' Welcome Home Committee, to raise funds to purchase gold medals to present to soldiers who have enlisted from Ararat.' When we move to the 1930s, these 'continentals' are still in vogue. In 1930 the *Canberra Times* had a subheading 'continental fete' followed by: 'A continental to be held in St Christopher's school grounds to-night will be the first of its kind to be held in Canberra. The Canberra City Band will be in attendance while there will also be numerous novel attractions.' In the Brisbane *Courier Mail* in 1934 there is a reference to a 'Continental dance': 'A profit of £19/9/ was made by the Dalby Ambulance Centre from the proceeds of a Continental dance.' There is a photograph entitled 'Maypole Dancing at the Continental Fete, Port Macquarie, NSW' in 1924 at the website: <<http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemDetailPaged.asp?itemID=393089#>>. It is not yet clear if the 'continental dance' and the 'continental fete' are synonymous terms. It is clear, however, that the continental fete was a fundraiser of the kind that we would now associate with school fetes, and that in the earlier period it was used for fundraising for various purposes. Why the term 'continental' was introduced remains a mystery, and we should be glad to receive any suggestions from our readers.

### A BAR OF SOAP

*I was recently asked to comment by a local radio station on the following expression: 'wouldn't know him from a bar of soap'. It seemed so familiar to me that I thought it would be easy to track down everything I needed to know. However, although I know the meaning, and know that it is Australian, nobody seems to know why 'a bar of soap', rather than, for example, the more familiar 'Adam'. If I read it literally it seems to*

*indicate that the speaker is no more familiar with soap than with the stranger in question—which seems to reflect rather poorly on their attitude to personal hygiene?*

The international expression that you allude to—not to know a person from Adam—was first recorded in 1784. The variant *not to know a person (or something) from a bar of soap* appears first in New Zealand in 1903: 'Didn't know the game [of golf] from a bar of soap.' It is next used in Australia, in 1918: 'Don't know 'im from a bar of soap.' Thereafter it is widely used in both Australia and New Zealand, as in this passage from Kylie Tennant's 1943 novel *Ride on Stranger*: "Why doesn't she marry the child's father?" ... "It's my belief she doesn't know him from a bar of soap." It is unlikely that hygiene was the issue that gave rise to the idiom. In this age of soaps that come in so many shapes, forms, smells, and colours, it is easy to forget that in earlier days all bars of soap looked much the same. One member of the Dictionary Centre commented: 'it alludes to the anonymous nature of rectangular (yellow) bars of soap, produced by the indistinguishable thousands on production lines in factories. The allusion works well because it's such a common commodity.'

### WOG NIGHTS

*I was doing some casual research on the word wog in Aussie English and found many references to wog nights, wog socials, wog parties, and so on, in the Canberra Times in the 1930s: 'The Christmas party of the club is to take the form of a "wog" night and dance'; 'A Christmas social ... "Wogging" was the principal pastime, and those uninitiated into the game have something yet to live for'; 'The Library Committee is arranging a Wog Afternoon'. What are these so-called wog games?*

The mystery was solved in November 2008 by a caller-in to ABC Canberra 666, which has a fortnightly language show with Bruce Moore on Genevieve Jacobs' afternoon show. The *wog game* was elsewhere called the *beetle game*, and it is a variant of *hangman*. People roll the dice, and bits of the beetle are constructed from the fall of the dice: a six gives the body, a one gives a leg, etc. There were tables of people playing the game, a bit like our contemporary trivia nights. This is interesting early evidence of the Australian sense of *wog* meaning 'an insect or grub', a sense that probably morphed into the Australian 'microbe or germ, a "bug", an illness'. The first quotation above is from 1937, and this predates our previous evidence by one year.

## JUSTUS ANGWIN

We were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Justus Angwin on 25 March 2009. I first had contact with Justus in the mid 1990s when he sent some letters with questions about and comments on some of the entries in the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*. These questions and comments on our dictionaries continued into 2009. They were always astute and knowledgeable, and helped us to improve many of our dictionary entries. When Justus learned of the Australian National Dictionary Project, he started to collect citations for us from newspapers and books, and came to be our most valued voluntary reader. He provided numerous updates for the new edition of the *Australian National Dictionary* and alerted us to potential new Australian words. He sent in thousands of citations. So expert did he become in the collecting of citations, that we were able to send him lists of gaps in our evidence, and he would fill in the gaps with citation evidence. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife Dot and to the rest of his family.

## BOOK LAUNCH

Bruce Moore's book *Speaking Our Language: The Story of Australian English* was launched at the Research School of Humanities, Australian National University, on 9 October 2008. Speakers included Professor Ian Chubb, Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University, and Dr Henry Reece, Chief Executive of Oxford University Press. A podcast of the launch is available at <[www.anu.edu.au/discoveranu/content/podcasts/speaking\\_our\\_language\\_the\\_story\\_of\\_australian\\_english/](http://www.anu.edu.au/discoveranu/content/podcasts/speaking_our_language_the_story_of_australian_english/)>. The book has received excellent reviews, and is widely available at bookshops.

## AUSTRALEX IN NEW ZEALAND

A conference of Australex (the Australasian Association for Lexicography) was held in Wellington, New Zealand, on 13 and 14 November 2008. It was expertly organised and hosted by Dr Dianne Bardsley, Director of the New Zealand Dictionary Centre. Three members of the ANDC gave papers: Bruce Moore, "*Hands Across the Ditch: The Uses and Abuses of Sidney Baker's Work in Historical Lexicography*"; Dorothy Jauncey, "*Hundreds of Names, Thousands of Spellings: Aboriginal Language Names in a New Edition of the Australian National Dictionary*"; and Bernadette Hince, "*Food Words of the Arctic*". Sarah Ogilvie of Trinity College, Oxford, who was a visiting fellow at the ANDC from August to November 2008, also gave a paper at the Australex Conference: "*World Englishes and the Historical Dictionary*".

## DICTIONARY PUBLICATIONS

A number of OUP dictionaries edited by Mark Gwynn were published in 2008. These included *The Australian School Dictionary* (4th edn) and *The Australian School Dictionary and Thesaurus* (3rd edn).

# FROM THE CENTRE

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL  
DICTIONARY CENTRE

**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.

Mark has recently completed a new edition of the *Australian Integrated School Dictionary and Thesaurus*, and this will be published later in 2009. Bruce Moore has just completed a new edition of the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, adding some 1700 new entries, and this too will be published later in 2009.

## ONLINE

The Word of the Month continues to be distributed by email, and if you would like to subscribe to it, send an email to [wordofthemonth.au@oup.com](mailto:wordofthemonth.au@oup.com). A reminder, too, that the *Australian National Dictionary* has been made available free online by Oxford University Press at <[www.oup.com.au/and](http://www.oup.com.au/and)>.

## HASHMAGANDY

Someone wrote to the Centre to enquire about the word *hashmagandy*. He recalled hearing it in England in the 1960s when the BBC broadcast a film (made by BP) called *Cattle Carters*. It was about a roadtrain travelling through the Australian outback. The enquirer describes the crucial scene: 'the driver picks up an English hitchhiker, and when they stop for a meal the cans of food they are carrying have lost all their labels as the heat has melted the glue. The driver tells the hitchhiker to open up a few cans and stew whatever comes out (peaches, meat etc.). He calls the concoction *hashmagandy*.' The enquirer went on to note that later, when he was in the Caribbean, he came across the word *salmagundi* ('(a) a dish of chopped meat, anchovies, eggs, onions, etc., and seasoning; (b) a general mixture'), and wondered if there were any connection between the international *salmagundi* and the Australian *hashmagandy*.

*Hashmagandy* was in the first edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*, but with very limited evidence. W.H. Downing, in *Digger Dialects* (1919), defined *hashmagandy* as 'an insipid and monotonous army dish', and Sidney Baker in *The Australian Language*

(1945) gave *hash-me-gandy* for 'stew'. These two entries provided the evidence for the sense 'a stew'. There was also an entry, with one piece of evidence from the *Bulletin* in 1944, for *hashmagandy bag*. This was a potato sack containing 'cooked-to-rags mutton' from a 'boiling-down works', and used as a kind of *burley bag* in fishing.

We now have further evidence for the early Australian use of this term to describe the refuse of *boiling-down establishments*, which were places where fat was separated from animal carcasses in the preparation of tallow. An 1893 document defines the boiled carcass as *hashmagandy*. After the industrial process was complete the 'hashmagandy ... [was] drawn out from the bottom doors of the vat and raked into trucks ... taken away and stored ready for sale as one of the best possible manures for orchards and vineyards'. The term was still remembered in the 1960s, as in this passage from the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1968: 'I learnt a new word one night. Hashmagandy. It is a word that belongs to the olden times, and refers to the residue left after cattle had been boiled down for tallow.' One of the common uses of this waste was for burley in fishing, as explained by this 1905 document: 'These fishermen procure from a boiling-down establishment, where diseased sheep, oxen, and horses are reduced to glue and other useful articles, the residuum, an awfully stinking substance called Hashmagandy, compared to which burley is a delicious perfume.'

The earliest reference to *hashmagandy* as 'stew' is in W.S. Walker's 1899 text *From the Land of the Wombat*, where the following reference occurs: 'Get up, I'm cook this morning. What will you have, eh? "Hashmagandy" or "pufterloonas"?' *Puftaloon* is an Australian word for 'a small fried cake, usually spread with jam, sugar, or honey'. Even with this extra evidence, it is still not clear if the 'boiled-down carcass' sense is the original sense, and the 'stew' a very ironic transferred sense, or the other way around.

Can the etymology solve this conundrum? The *hash* part of the word no doubt comes from the standard sense of *hash* meaning 'something cut up into small pieces, especially a dish consisting of meat which has been previously cooked, cut small, and warmed up with gravy and sauce or other flavouring' (*OED*), and then (in a transferred sense) 'a mixture of mangled and incongruous fragments' (*OED*). It seems that this term was then blended with *salmagundi* (a term that has very similar literal and transferred meanings). The subsequent blend could have been applied to either of the Australian senses, and so it is still not clear which sense came first.

BRUCE MOORE  
DIRECTOR



# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

BRUCE MOORE



A number of the new entries that will find their way into the second edition of the *Australian National Dictionary* derive from the allusive use of personal names (including the names of some animals). Many of these were in existence at the time of the publication of the first edition (1988), but there was obviously not enough evidence available to the editors to justify an entry in *AND*. This article sets out some of the new entries, and explains how their inclusion is now justified.

## A BERNBOROUGH FINISH

*Bernborough* (1939–60) was a Queensland-bred racehorse who competed especially in the years 1941–46, at one stage winning fourteen races in succession. He often carried very heavy weights, and had a reputation for coming from well behind and winning his races. The phrase *a Bernborough finish* came to mean 'a fast and successful finish to a race or other enterprise, after a competitor has been well behind'. It can be used of a horse, as in this example: 'Tear, an eight-year-old stallion ... trailed the field to the home turn and put in a "Bernborough" finish to snatch victory on the post' (*Sun-Herald*, 6 November, 1966). It can also be used of other forms of sporting competition. Indeed, the earliest use of the phrase *a Bernborough finish* that we have been able to find refers to a rugby match. A subheading 'Bernborough Finish by Manuka' in the *Canberra Times* 8 July 1946 refers to a game where the rugby team Manuka stormed home to defeat Ainslie, when it had seemed that Ainslie were certain winners: 'At Manuka Oval, Ainslie, unluckiest team of the competition, suffered a five-points defeat by Manuka after seeming certain of victory with five minutes to play.' In 1985 the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* (18 January) used the phrase to refer to Andrew Peacock's better-than-expected performance in the 1984 Federal election: 'Mr Peacock ... staged a "Bernborough finish" in the election race but still finished in the minor placings.'

## THE BRADMAN OF...

The Australian cricketer Don Bradman (1908–2001) is generally regarded as the finest cricketer of all time anywhere, with a test batting average of 99.94. He began his test career in 1928 and retired in 1948. The phrase *the Bradman of* is commonly used in Australia to designate someone who is the best in their field or the finest exponent of some skill. The earliest use of this idiom that we have been able to find is in the *Courier-Mail* 4 October 1933, where a writer comments on the fact that politicians need to be extraordinarily versatile and able to comment on a range of matters, including 'the prospects of the Treasurer topping

the score as the Bradman of deficits'. The designated field of excellence is often sport: 'Death of Walter Lindrum: The "Bradman" of billiards' (*Sun-Herald*, 31 July, 1960). But it can be any field of endeavour: 'Not long ago, at a Canberra market, I bought a book by the Bradman of travel writing, Paul Theroux' (*Age* (Melbourne), 12 March, 2005).

## CHESTY BOND

*Chesty Bond* is the muscled and square-jawed character created in 1938 to advertise singlets made by the Bonds company. The character also appeared in a popular cartoon, where he turned himself into a superhero when he donned the Chesty Bond vest. The term Chesty Bond is used allusively in Australia to refer to a well-muscled and sexy male. Typical examples: 'Regardless of your sexual bent, the black-singletted "Chesty Bond" barmen provide more than enough to look at' (S. Neal & S. Guest, *Sydney Pubs*, 2000); 'A former rugby player, champion showjumper and basketball player, Jud Arthur radiates raw sexuality along with his Chesty Bond good looks' (*Australian*, 13 November, 2004). As a male ideal, the muscled Chesty bond may be in retreat before the *metrosexual* and finely-toned *tradie*, but he still has a place in the Aussie pantheon: 'Speak of ironmen and big Trev immediately comes to mind. Tall, strapping Chesty Bond type who had that certain aura about him that meant you always looked twice' (*Gold Coast Bulletin*, 20 May, 2005). Given the latest financial news, the chesty Chesty Bond stereotype may be in for some popular deflation.

## CROCODILE DUNDEE

*Crocodile Dundee* is the name of the 1986 comedy film, starring Paul Hogan, set in the Australian Outback and New York. The hero, Mick Dundee, is a macho and laconic character, regarded by some, at least, as quintessentially Australian. The term *Crocodile Dundee* is used allusively to refer to the stereotypical outback Australian male. In the year following the worldwide release of the film, the *Crocodile Dundee* type was in demand in America: 'Two weeks ago an ad agency phoned him and said it wanted a "Crocodile Dundee type" to advertise a menswear store on Long Island. Cheshire had to walk in the store and say "G'day, mates. What a pity we don't have clothes like this in the outback"' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 August, 1987). Two decades later, the type was still in demand: 'A Melbourne man has reportedly been cast as a Crocodile Dundee-type hero in a US reality TV dating show to be filmed in Australia. Vadim Dale is reported to be the male lead for the new US show *Outback Jack*, which puts 12 "high maintenance" American city women in

the Outback, where they compete to win his affections' (*Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 26 April, 2004).

## DAD AND DAVE

The entry for *Dad and Dave* in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* reads: 'two fictional characters from the stories and books of Steele Rudd (1868–1935). Rudd, while treating Dad and Dave humorously, made them representative of all who aspired to be small farmers. In the hands of filmmakers and others they have tended to become crude symbols of rural stupidity.' The original Rudd sense is perhaps represented in this passage from 1939 in *Australia: National Journal* (Sydney): 'All sorts of people—Dad and Dave from the backblocks, artists, University students.' The original sense is still to the fore in the recent links that have been made between Steele Rudd and Kevin Rudd: 'Still, if the new ALP leader has to blaze a trail for his first name, his surname is rich with battler credibility, harking back to the nation's archetypal working family, Dad and Dave' (*Age* (Melbourne), 17 December, 2006). More typically, the allusions refer to the unsophisticated and stupid yokels: 'On the farmlands the trees were ringbarked in their hundreds of thousands, and behind post-and-rail fences they often stood in their pale cemeteries for five or fifteen years before Dad and Dave burned them down' (*Australian*, 4 October, 1974).

## GINGER MEGGS

The entry for *Ginger Meggs* in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* reads: 'a very popular Australian comic-strip character created by the artist James Bancks (1889–1952). The strip first appeared in the *Sydney Sun* in 1921, but was soon syndicated nationally and internationally. Ginger Meggs represents the idealised Australian boy, honest, good-hearted, but mischievous. He is often in trouble with his parents and is always battling with "Tiger" Kelly, the district's bad boy.' The term *Ginger Meggs* is often used allusively to refer to people who exhibit the qualities embodied in Ginger Meggs—from mischievous boy to Australian par excellence. The earliest comparison of someone with Ginger Meggs that we have been able to find is in the *Canberra Times* 28 November 1934: 'A diminutive, freckle-faced lad—he might have been Ginger Meggs—stood trembling before Mr. A.G. Hardwick, P.M., in the Canberra Court of Petty Sessions yesterday, while a charge under the Federal Territory truancy regulations was preferred against his father.' Typical later examples include: 'Some sixth sense [made] her turn round to see her 4-year-old Ginger Meggs gleefully clinging to the roller door of the garage as



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it ascended' (*Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 11 May, 2003); 'Our dad was a quintessential Sydney bloke of his generation, a cheeky urban larrikin, a Ginger Meggs' (*Daily Telegraph*, 31 July, 2004); 'For all the anger in his legs, Bayley [a competitive cyclist] has a Ginger Meggs charm off the bike that is a breath of fresh air in a sport that can often be aggressive and strife-torn' (*Australian*, 20 March, 2006).

## HANRAHAN

Hanrahan is the lugubrious and pessimistic doomsayer of John O'Brien's poem 'Said Hanrahan', published in 1921. Whatever the weather, Hanrahan predicts that all will be 'rooned' (this word being his pronunciation of 'ruined'):

'We'll all be rooned,' said Hanrahan,  
In accents most forlorn,  
Outside the church, ere Mass began,  
One frosty Sunday morn. ...  
'If we don't get three inches, man,  
Or four to break this drought,  
We'll all be rooned,' said Hanrahan,  
'Before the year is out.'

In many allusions to this poem, the tone of the original is evoked by citing both the name Hanrahan and the 'rooned' lament: 'It is a feature of life in this country that there exists a number of Hanrahans who believe and preach that "we'll all be rooned before the year is out"' (*Australian Infantry*, September, 1972); 'The message for wool growers as the season ended last week was: "Don't let the gloom merchants drive you out of the business." Despite what Hanrahan and his followers might say, we're not all ruined' (*Weekly Times*, 1 July, 1998). In its most advanced form, only one part of the allusion ('Hanrahan' or 'rooned') need be cited: 'Qantas Boss Geoff Nixon is a hanrahan on what will happen to his airline unless it keeps cutting costs to compete with international carriers' (*Australian*, 18 January, 2005).

## PHAR LAP

*Phar Lap* (1926–32) was the name of a champion racehorse, and his name is used by itself or in various phrases that allude to the horse's reputation for excellence: 'Three blokes in blue singlets shove and squeeze me into the car, the pride of the Ford fleet. It's won 13 touring car races and it's the Phar Lap of V8s' (*Herald-Sun*, 10 September, 2005). The idiom *a heart as big as Phar Lap's* alludes to the horse's strength and staying power, and especially to the fact that his heart (displayed in museums after his death) was twice the weight of a normal horse's. The idiom is used to indicate great courage, generosity, or power: 'He had a heart as big as Phar Lap's and was determined to keep up the battle, no matter what hand he was dealt' (*Herald-Sun*, 7 March, 2002); 'But it's a magnificent

wine, packed with flavor, as clean as a whistle and capable of developing, with a few years' bottling, a heart as big as Phar Lap's' (*Advertiser* (Adelaide), 10 February, 1998). Phar Lap almost always ran as a short-priced favourite, and the phrase *Phar Lap odds* has come to mean 'extremely short odds': 'The PT Cruiser is selling like hot cakes in America and it is at Phar Lap odds to do the same in Australia' (*Sunday Mail*, 6 August, 2000).

## THE SENTIMENTAL BLOKE

C.J. Dennis (1876–1938) published *Songs of a Sentimental Bloke* in 1915, although parts of it had been published in the *Bulletin* magazine from 1909. In this verse novel, rich in Australian idiom, the rough town larrikin Bill is transformed by his love for Doreen, and comes to praise the values of love, marriage, and family. It ends:

Sittin' at ev'nin' in this sunset-land,  
Wiv 'Er in all the World to 'old me 'and,  
A son, to bear me name when I am gone. ...  
Livin' an' lovin'—so life mooches on.

*The Sentimental Bloke* is perhaps unusual in the history of Australian literature in that an immensely popular text (it sold 100,000 copies in its first four years) finds its central values in an urban setting rather than in the bush. The phrase *sentimental bloke* often occurs in Australian writing, and when it does it draws some of its significance from the allusion to the world, and the values of the world, that is created in Dennis's poem: 'On the Darling Downs Len Kahler is as tough as they come, but when it comes to his land, he's a sentimental kind of bloke' (*Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 21 April, 1993); 'Perhaps it's an excuse for a sentimental bloke to re-live his memories, but Fox is spending a lot of time catching up with the friends of his youth. ... Every week brings some long-lost friend or half-forgotten truckie in need of help and Fox has a reputation as a softie for charities involving children' (*Australian Financial Review*, 20 October, 2000).

## THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER

This is the title of a poem by Banjo Paterson, first published in the *Bulletin* magazine in 1890. It tells of a chase after a valuable colt from 'Old Regret', successfully completed only by a rider from the Snowy River country, when all the other riders baulk at the wild country to which the colt has escaped:

He hails from Snowy River, up by  
Kosciusko's side,  
Where the hills are twice as steep and  
twice as rough,  
Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the  
flint stones every stride,  
The man that holds his own is good enough.  
And the Snowy River riders on the mountains  
make their home,  
Where the river runs those giant hills  
between;

I have seen full many horsemen since I first  
commenced to roam,  
But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen.

The poem was turned into a successful film in 1982. The phrase *the man from Snowy River* is used allusively in Australian English to evoke some aspect of the ballad—especially the traits illustrated by the man himself, and also the nature of the country from which he hails: 'Two hundred mountain cattlemen led yesterday's demonstration, aggrieved at being banned from grazing in the Alpine National Park and claiming that Mr Bracks "was killing the man from Snowy River"' (*Australian*, 21 November, 2006); 'Produced in cool Man from Snowy River country, this wine shows lean, tight, lemon-fresh aromas' (*Sun-Herald*, 8 September, 1996).

## SPEED GORDON

*Flash Gordon* was the name of an American science fiction hero, first appearing in a comic strip in the 1930s; his name was changed from *Flash Gordon* to *Speed Gordon* in Australia because the underworld connotations of the term *flash* ('connected with thieves') were still current. Sci-fi heroes, by definition, get themselves into extraordinary predicaments, from which they must escape, and in response to this in Australia the phrase *in more trouble than Speed Gordon* (or *in more strife than Speed Gordon*) arose, meaning 'in a great deal of trouble'. Although *Flash Gordon* has now replaced *Speed Gordon* in comics and films in Australia, the *Speed Gordon* idiom can still be heard, as in this extract from the *Daily Telegraph* 9 October 2007: 'Refereeing groups bearing links to the FFA [Football Federation Australia] were last night reluctant to voice their disapproval, with one apprehensive delegate saying: "If I speak out I'll be in more trouble than Speed Gordon."'

## WALLA WALLA

*Walla Walla* (1922–52) was the name of an Australian trotting horse who was so successful that he often received large handicaps in his races, sometimes starting up to 260 metres behind the other horses. The phrase *further back* (or *behind*) *than Walla Walla* can refer to someone or something that is well behind either literally or figuratively: 'Businesses faithfully practise fire drills that go further back than Walla Walla' (*Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 17 April, 2008). Even with his huge handicaps, however, Walla Walla often stormed home to win, and the phrase is also used to describe any competitor who wins in this manner: 'Dancing Dagger ... had punters ripping up their tickets mid-race before coming home from further back than Walla Walla to win' (*Newcastle Herald*, 25 April, 2005).

**OZWORDS COMPETITION  
NO. 31: RESULTS**

Ernest Hemingway, when challenged to write a novel in six words, came up with: 'For Sale. Baby Shoes. Never Worn.' He is said to have claimed that this was the best novel he'd ever written. Readers were asked to write the Great Australian Novel in 6 words à la Hemingway.

**Honourable Mentions** (alphabetical by surname of entrant).

'White man came. Terra Nullius. Sorry' (**J. Aitken**, Vic.); "'Holt's gone!" "Stumped?" "No: caught (sub)'" (**G. Case**, Qld); 'Leadbeater's possums? Never in Moonee Ponds!' (**G. Case**, Qld); 'Baz tried what God already perfected' (**T. Edmonds**, WA); 'Eh? Ned who? You want what?' (**E. Gibson**, NSW); 'Tuckerbox dog told to piss off' (**C. Gregoriou**, Vic.); 'Danger! "Lookout!" Sadly, mate did' (**L. Grosse**, ACT); 'Wentworth aristocracy resurrected. Downer crowned king' (**P. Harley**, SA); (Romantic novel): 'Married—Quarter acre—Picket fence—Died' (**H. Hogerheyde**, Qld); 'Bunyip growled. Boy curious. Boy missing' (**G. Hurle**, Vic.); 'Great Aussie novel vanishes. Silverfish suspected' (**G. Hurle**, Vic.); 'Migrant literacy test. Cadibarrawirracanna. All failed' (**D. Mercer**, SA); 'Tree change. Combi stuffed. Mallee roots' (**H. Passamani**, WA); 'Kakadu romance: "wolt thou?" she wilted' (**V. Praed**, WA); 'Merinos sold. Sought seachange. Bought marina' (**S. Robson**, Qld); 'We came, saw, conquered, stole. Sorry' (**P. Sainsbury**, NSW); 'Vinnies window. Tiny thongs. Brand new' (apologies to Hemingway) (**C. Saxby**, Vic.); 'City battler. Sea changer. City battler' (**D. Tribe**, NSW); 'Baby gone. Mother blamed. Dingo smirks' (**W. Williamson**, Vic.); 'Schools reintroduce grammar. Litteracy grately improved' (**T. Wybrew**, NSW).

**Equal 2nd Prize** (books to the value of \$50 from the OUP catalogue): 'After Ludwig Leichhardt t'ings became voss' (**Gilbert Case**, Qld); 'Didn't get off at Redfern. Dad' (**Jim Dewar**, NSW)

**1st Prize** (books to the value of \$100 from the OUP catalogue): 'Tucker bag. Jumbuck-sized. Water damaged' (**Carl Savage**, Qld). **ED.**

**OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 32**

Australia and all its States have *floral* emblems, to wit, *plants* officially adopted by the Nation (and in Australia also by each State or Territory) as a symbol. These emblems are: (of Australia) *the golden wattle*; (of the Australian Capital Territory) *the royal bluebell*; (of New South Wales) *the waratah*; (of the Northern Territory) *Sturt's desert rose*; (of Queensland) *the Cooktown orchid*; (of South Australia) *Sturt's desert pea*; (of Tasmania) *the Tasmanian blue gum*; (of Victoria) *the pink form of Epacris impressa*, the

*common heath*; (of Western Australia) *the red-and-green kangaroo paw*.

Australia and all its States also have *faunal* emblems, to wit, an *animal* or *animals* officially adopted as a symbol by the Nation, a State, or a Territory. These emblems are: (of Australia) *the kangaroo and the emu*; (of the Australian Capital Territory) *the gang-gang cockatoo*; (of New South Wales) *the platypus and the kookaburra*; (of the Northern Territory) *the red kangaroo and the wedge-tailed eagle*; (of Queensland) *the koala and the brolga*; (of South Australia) *the hairy-nosed wombat and the piping shrike*; (of Tasmania, unofficial) *the Tasmanian devil*; (of Victoria) *Leadbeater's possum and the helmeted honeyeater*; (of Western Australia) *the numbat and the black swan*.

Of all the worldwide Oxford dictionaries, it is only in the Australian Oxford dictionaries that *floral emblem* appears as a term in its own right. Internet evidence shows, however, that *floral emblem* is certainly used in many countries, alongside such synonyms as *national flower*, *state flower*, and *province flower*. *Faunal emblem*, however, seems to be an Australian term solely.

But, for some reason beyond the present mental purlieus of your editor (thinks: maybe it is a case of rampant *emblematologophobia*) Australia and all of its States are sadly lacking in *verbal* emblems. This was not always the case: the country was once *emblematologist*-enriched to the eyeteeth. I call to witness the emblematic word *yaffler* ('a loud, obnoxious person') that still enriches Tasmania, or *Bananabender*, the emblematic word that some people think sums up the inhabitants of our Prime Minister's State, or *Cornstalk*, the emblematically gangly word, now alas defunct, that expressed the very essence of a New South Welshman. You are asked to choose an *emblematologos* (there ain't no such word, of course, but, inspired by the Dumpty Humpty, I choose it to mean 'a verbal emblem') either for Australia or for any of the States and Territories. For example, you might choose a word that is only used in a particular State (such as *yaffler*); or, you might be impressively witty and create your own coinage. Give us the word of your choice, nominate the State etc. to which you apply it, and energise us with a brief explanation as to why you made that choice. Enter as often as you wish, but do, I implore you, be witty. **ED.**

**ENTRIES CLOSE 31 JULY 2009.**

**Entries sent by email should also contain a snail mail address. All entries should be sent to the editor.**

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