

LINGUISTICS

CLERKS TO THE LANGUAGE — THE TWENTIETH CENTURY NEW ZEALAND LEXICOGRAPHERS OF ENGLISH

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If we consider what... the Oxford School of English owes to the Antipodes, to the Southern Hemisphere, especially to scholars born in Australia and New Zealand, it may well be felt that it is only just that one of them should now ascend an Oxford chair of English. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Valedictory 1959*.¹

We know that our language, or at least our speech, differs discernibly from English... All in all we have no powerful motive for throwing up scholars to explore what we have done and are doing to the imperial language.

We are observed instead by New Zealanders. Take away what Eric Partridge, S. J. Baker, W. S. Ramson, G. W. Turner and Grahame Johnston... have written about the English language in Australia, and there is not much left. All of them came to this country from New Zealand. K. S. Inglis,² (1977: 99 - 100).

The first part of the article title is a quotation, in fact the title of an essay, from Israel Shenker (1977), a work subtitled 'Wizards of Language — ancient, mediaeval and modern'. The book's own short title, *Harmless Drudges*, itself echoed Samuel Johnson's mocking self-description and derisive comment on lexicographers. Shenker's purpose in the evocative caption was to alert the reader to the men who had followed Johnson and to suggest by the seeming deprecation that he would be offering sharp-edged, provocative and entertaining sketches of some of these men. Included amongst them are Eric Partridge (1894—1979) (115—120) and the still living Robert W. Burchfield (84—95),

¹ From the 1959 lecture, as reproduced in Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell (eds). 1979: 31. The new professor and Tolkien's successor as Merton Professor of English Language and Literature was N. Davis. Earlier persons referred to would include: E. J. Dobson (from Australia), K. Sisam and others (from New Zealand). In 1980 D. Gray (from Wellington) would become the initial occupant of the J. R. R. Tolkien English chair at Oxford.

² Inglis was then Professor of History, Research School of Social Sciences, the Australian National University, Canberra, A.C.T., Australia.

but there is no chapter heading identifying their own common country of origin — New Zealand.

The first³ valid Australasian dictionary, was E. E. Morris's (1898)⁴, a work the origin of which was a concern to support Dr. James Murray, editor of *The New English Dictionary*, for "Dr. Murray several years ago invited assistance from this end of the world for words and usages of words peculiar to Australasia, or to parts of it". (Morris 1898: ix) Morris's main text consisted of 525 double column pages, where each word, its definition and its etymology, were supported by illustrative quotations, sometimes six to ten in all. Altered English (especially botanical and zoological) items, were mingled with Aboriginal and Maori words, as well as the technical terms of the pastoral, gold mining, timber, whaling and other industries. Morris who had been born in Madras, India⁵, in 1843, and who studied Classics, Law and History at the University of Oxford, had lived in Australia from 1875, becoming in 1883 Professor of the English, French, and German Languages and Literatures in the University of Melbourne. He was thus the better able to 'hear' English English and Australian English from an outside position, as well as to identify idioms in the literature which he was teaching. He was possessed of vast commonsense and willingness to record local usage, rather than to worry over imprecisions and misnaming from the English point of view. (Much of the rest of this article is concerned with the line of his inspired followers).

Some four years before the issuing of *Austral English*, there was born in the Waimata Valley, near Gisborne, in New Zealand's North Island, a boy named Eric Honeywood Partridge, whose scholarly family emigrated from New Zealand to Australia late in 1907. Of these early country years he would say later: "There I ... gained a pretty intimate knowledge of country life and rural fauna and flora ... Learning very early became a passion". Partridge (1965: 16) He was already a user of the dictionary at the age of seven (*ibid.*), but argued that he was made a lexicographer by 'the courses and migrations' (14) of his life, 'some pushing vulgarly, others shyly nudging' (15). Australia he found 'a shock', and, from a New Zealand viewpoint, 'sharply contrasted', recalling (Partridge in Crystal (ed.). 1980: 53—54) that: "I wrote in my diary a long series of notes upon the contrast ... of language, Australians having speech-habits almost as sharply alien from those of New Zealanders as Americans have from Britons ... but far more in common than in dissonance".

³ As is pointed out by K. Inglis (1977: 98), it was the only one issued up to 1976.

⁴ The facsimile reprint of 1972 has a new title page, *A Dictionary of Austral English*, and a 'Foreword' [7]-[10] by H. L. Rogers of the University of Sydney. Significantly he, too, was an import, from the United Kingdom.

⁵ 'Rolf Boldrewood' (i.e. T. A. Browne), novelist, magistrate and student of (Australian) English language had a like early background and hence sharp ear for 'Englishisms', 'Irishisms', 'Australianisms', etc.

His Queensland years — late 1907 to 1921 — were spent sequentially in: schooling at a grammar school; being himself a school teacher (1910 to 1913); serving as a private in the Australian Infantry (1915—19)⁶ and in being a University student. As he would recall of all this period: "I came to acquire the knowledge that even one language can and does change... from one social group to the next... [and] that it springs not from books but from life, not from pundits but from the people". (*Op. cit.* 54.) Equally significant was the fact that he was soon doing further literary studies at Oxford⁷ for the degrees of B. Litt, and M. A., the theses for each being issued in Paris as books in 1924 (Partridge, 1924, a and b). He would practice a similar pattern of language observation and literary study all his life, averring that: "This almost life-long association with literature has helped to preserve me from the morass of in-grown philology." (in Crystal (ed.) 1980: 56) Its earliest example was the appendix to his M. A. thesis, in which he listed neologisms committed by the earlier English romantic poets, including compounds not artlessly coined by Coleridge who had been trained as a philologist.

After teaching briefly at the Universities of Manchester and London, he ran the Scholartis Press from 1927 to 1931, publishing in three years some 62 books, several of which he edited, introduced or wrote himself.⁸ Like the volume on the slang of the first world war, another Scholartis 1931 imprint, his edition⁹ of Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (first published in 1785), confirmed his now considerable interest in less conventional forms of English. It is also appropriate to add that this field of investigation was often (then and since) viewed with some suspicion as an area of obscenity, and this may well have been the cause of the lack of academic recognition accorded to him in Britain.¹⁰

The first of his big dictionaries, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, was published in 1937 and reprinted repeatedly, seven editions appearing in his lifetime and an eighth (edited by Paul Beale) in 1984. The book gives a full and documented account of English slang or 'rough words' over four centuries,¹¹ with, wherever possible, dated occurrences and early sources.

⁶ This experience resulted later in E. Partridge and J. Brophy (eds.), *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier (1914—18)*, 1930; 2nd edn 1930; 3rd ed 1931. Reprinted as *The Long Trail* (1965).

⁷ Oxford gave him early contact with Professor H. C. Wyld, to whose 1932 publication (Wyld: 1932) he pays tribute again and again.

⁸ Many of these are listed in 'A Partridge Bibliography', (Crystal, ed. 1980: 239, ff.)

⁹ Reprinted with minor corrections, London, 1962.

¹⁰ His only honorary doctorate of letters was from the University of Queensland. He was also an Australian Academician.

¹¹ The eighth edition has 1372 double column pages and much other material, including many engaging articles.

The prestige of his work has grown with the years, particularly since Partridge (1972)¹² contained 'only those moribund expressions which were already in use before the First World War'. Its nearly 50,000 entries recall the living speech of a world now largely lost. As its publishers claim of the edition's entries: "Often wry and flippant, occasionally 'blue', and sometimes uproariously comical, they recapture the rich idiom of English life through the ages, bringing back the mind the vigour of Elizabethan phrase, the ribald language of the dockside and pub, the richer coinages of messdeck and barrack, the euphemisms and witticisms of the Victorian drawing-room, and the irrepressible wit of errand boys and costermongers."

The second of his major works (Partridge: 1949), issued first in New York, had as its expanded title: *Being the Vocabulary of Crooks, Criminals, Racketeers, Beggars and Tramps, Convicts, the Commercial Underworld, the Drug Traffic, the White Slave Traffic, Spivs*.¹³ In his essay, 'The Language of the Underworld',¹⁴ he discusses cant, or the lexis of that subculture, stressing the prolific nature of British cant in documents to 1840, but the more formidable bulk of the American corpus since that time, and singling out among non-lexicographical twentieth-century users¹⁵ of cant: "Josiah Flynt, Jack London, Jim Tully, Glen Mullin, for tramps; Hutchins Hapgood, A. H. Lewis, Donald Lowrie, ... Charles C. Booth, ... Lee Duncan and Don Castle, for crooks (p. 123)." In Britain, for tramps and beggars he cites W. H. Davies and George Orwell and (inter alios) for crooks Edgar Wallace, George Ingram or Val Davis.

As illustration of that argot he quotes from the October 1879 number of *Macmillan's Magazine* a London criminal's words as recorded by a prison chaplain, the Rev. J. W. Horsley:¹⁶

... I piped¹⁷ a slavey (servant) come out of a chat (house), so when she had got a little way up the double (turning of a road), I pratted (went) in the house ... I piped some daisyroots (boots). So I claimed (stole) them ... and guyed¹⁸ to the rattler (railway) and took a brief (ticket) to London Bridge, and took the daisies to a sheney (Jew) — and done them for thirty blow (shillings); some of the widest (cleverest) people in London ... used to use at (frequent) a pub in Shoreditch. The following people used to go in there — toy-getters (watch-stealers), magsmen (confidencetrick men), men at the mace (sham loan officers), broadsmen (cardsharps), peter-claimers (port-manteau-stealers), busters and screwmen (both names = burglars), snide-pitchers (utterers of false coin), men at the duff (passing false jewellery) ...

¹² Abridged by Jacqueline Simpson for Penguin Books.

¹³ Its second edition (1950) was 'much enlarged', as was its third (1968).

¹⁴ Originally printed in Partridge: 1950, but quoted from Crystal (ed.), 1980.

¹⁵ A number of these are included by R. W. Burchfield as sources for the four volumes (1972—86).

¹⁶ The parenthetical explanations are Horsley's.

¹⁷ 'Pipe', (v.) used in the slang sense, 'watch', 'see'.

¹⁸ To 'guy' in Victorian cant could mean, 'to run away, escape'. (Partridge, 1972 : 44).

As Partridge stresses,¹⁹ here and elsewhere, cant has a very long life — 'cant is much more conservative, tends to last longer than slang' (126) and so has very notable 'word histories' (i.e. complex chaining of semantics or meaning). Thus he notes that the phrase, *to go west*, popularized during the War of 1914—1918 in the sense 'to be killed, to die', may owe something to pioneering in North America, but then he quotes from Robert Greene's 1592 *Coney-Catching*, Part II: "So long the foists (pickpockets) put their vilanie in practise, that Westward they goe, and these solemnly make a rehearsall sermon at tiberne". (The last clause refers to the famous gallows at Tyburn, the place of execution from the late twelfth to the late eighteenth century.)" Thus the phrase may well have been current since the Middle Ages.

The third of his large dictionaries, or, as he liked to call them, his 'heavy weights', is *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (1958), a work repeatedly revised and enlarged, and almost unique amongst etymological dictionaries for its clustering of forms with similar roots (or various grades of the same root vowel) and for its generous cross-referencing. While his courage in etymologizing has sometimes been reproved for its speculation, particularly when there was a dearth of dated forms available, Ralph Elliott defended the process thus: "...for slang and other forms of 'low' English... Partridge is often compelled to approximate or to hazard a guess; but neither the approximations nor the guesses are arbitrary. He possessed both a thorough knowledge of English linguistic history and a detailed acquaintance with his sources — British, American and Australian especially — to add substance to this datings." (D. Crystal (ed.). 1980: 14) While Partridge has written much about his own methods, two quotations must suffice: "(i) the lone worker [himself] adopts an attitude... single-mindedly... and undeviatingly; the manner and the tone are personal; ... he can and, if he is a writer as well as a scholar, will strongly impress upon his work a definite character and a clear-cut personality ... It is, I think, better for people to be irritated into disagreement". (Partridge, 1965: 96); and (ii) "For this work, I shall require not only all the courage and resources that can be afforded by a powerful predilection, by knowledge, but also an enduring, open-minded enthusiasm — ingenuity — and imagination rather than mere fancy." (D. Crystal (ed.). 1980: 58) As a tribute to his friend's compassion and (compassionate) insights, written after Partridge's death in 1979, Anthony Burgess, himself both writer and scholar of words, would comment: Eric was brought up in a kind of dispossessed demotic tradition²⁰ which prized the speech of the people as the repository of a dour

¹⁹ The most significant source for Partridge's encyclopedic knowledge was the British Museum library, as is described in Crystal (ed.). 1980 : 10. Apart from war-service and ill-health he occupied the same seat in the library for more than fifty years.

²⁰ Referring to: multi-racial New Zealand; egalitarian Australia; and the life of

philosophy of life. The downtrodden who are the great creators of slang, hurl pithiness and colour at poverty and oppression. Language is not, like everything else, in the hands of the haughty and educated: it is the people's property and sometimes all they have. (Crystal (ed.). 1980: 28).

Before we leave Partridge, it will be enough to comment that he wrote or edited some 79 books which have been categorized by David Crystal (1980 (ed.): 239–244) as: I. Word-Books, like *A Charm of Words* (1960); II. Word-Levels, such as: *Slang Today and Yesterday*; or *Words, Words, Words* (1933); III. Words: *From Sanskrit to Brazil* (1952); and IV. Dictionaries: *Usage and Abusage* (1942); *A Dictionary of Clichés* (1940); *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (1947); or *A Dictionary of Catch Phrases: British and American from the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day*²¹ (1977). In his concluding remark, David Crystal observed (11): "For Partridge, language was a key to our understanding of civilization — its present social structure and its history, English [being]... the language and culture at issue."

Indeed it may well be that for the more general scholar, studies of (author) stylistics of the most humane sort — his own, or the many volumes commissioned by him — will be his memorial. For he was the founder and long sole editor of the Language Library from Messrs André Deutsch²² which has covered so many authors from Chaucer and Caxton to Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson to Swift, Keats, G. M. Hopkins, Charles Dickens, Tennyson and dozens more. Many other volumes in the sequence are concerned with such matters as: sea-language; Biblical style; dialect; lexicography; the history of the English language; good style; etc. If there is a note in common in his work here it is their infectious enthusiasm for the work of gifted wordsmiths of English, whatever their century, social level, or subject matter.

The second of the great New Zealand word-scholars of English was Sidney James Baker (1912–76) who was educated in New Zealand at Victoria University College,²³ and became interested in Australasian English when questioned about his own idiom while in England in the late 1930s. He was an enthusiastic pioneer²⁴ of the study of New Zealand and Australian English, particularly of the study of idiom and its relationship to national character and folklore.

Australian and British troops in the trenches in World War I. It also pays tribute to the amazing open-mindedness of Partridge, something which the present writer can testify to.

²¹ This was his last published book.

²² A judicious assessment of the series is given by Sir Randolph Quirk, Crystal (ed.) 1980: 23, and (in the same work) there are included other comments by Ralph Elliott (13–18).

²³ Ian Gordon (in Wellington from 1936) assisted Baker with his first language research grant work.

²⁴ Professor George Thompson of the University of Otago had completed a doctoral thesis on New Zealand English in the 1920s but his emphasis was largely phonetic and concerned to bring the colonial back to an English purity and also to combat 'the weaken-

His major books in this sphere were, sequentially: *New Zealand Slang* (1940); *A Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang* (1941); *The Australian Language*²⁵ (1945); *Australian Pronunciation* (1947); and *The Drum: Australian Character and Slang* (1959). In the preface to the second of these works Baker notes: "To Eric Partridge, the English slang authority, for much personal and textual help, I acknowledge my indebtedness" (Baker 1941: 4).

Although a working journalist, Baker had been educated in Wellington at the then Victoria University College of the University of New Zealand. Thus he — like H. Orsman, R. W. Burchfield, G. K. W. Johnston and W. S. Ramson, all to be treated below — would have been assisted or taught by the young Scottish professor, Ian A. Gordon (1908–), still flourishing today as Emeritus Professor Ian Gordon, the contributor for the last several decades of regular language columns to the widely read and prestigious weekly, *The Listener*.²⁶ His (Baker's) scholarly work in England, New Zealand and Australia enabled him to win, while still in his twenties, various New Zealand and (Australian) Commonwealth Literary Grants for the purpose of research into Australasian English.

Baker disclaimed in the 'Foreword' to his 1941 text,²⁷ that he was merely collecting slang, seeing his task as one of describing 'the evolution of a new way of speaking, of a national idiom' (3). Thus many of the terms collected were already 'standard' and not merely 'a few sickly colloquialisms of the bonzer-dinkum-strike-me-up-a-gumtree brand'. In short he had gathered up: "terms sloughed by us in our social and national growth over the past century and a half. ... I offer the native product — terse, apt and often colourful." Accordingly under the first letter of the alphabet he gave

aboliar	a writer, for <i>The Bulletin</i> , of 'Aboriginalities', or out-back gossip and stories.
acid on, put the aeroplanes	to seek a loan, ask (an employer) for a rise in wages.
afto	a bow tie.
air and exercise ²⁸	abbreviation of afternoon.
	a short term in gaol.

ing of the home traditions among the members of the third and fourth generations of New Zealand speakers'. (A. Wall 1951: 91).

²⁵ The later editions from 1966 are, essentially, a different book. See further on.

²⁶ This journal's literary columns have long combined something of England's *The Spectator* and *The Radio Times*. Most major creative writers and social commentators have contributed to it since c. 1935.

²⁷ Its second impression (1943) was 'extended to include modern war slang and other terms of recent origin' that have been added to 'a new and unkempt language'.

²⁸ A similar British term was used of being 'whipped' or 'dragged along at the tail of a cart'.

all behind in Melbourne very broad across the rump (Western Australian slang).
 angel cocaine.
 any-every a method of playing a shot in marbles (boys' slang).
 as rotten no deviation allowed in playing a musical score (means
 'as written').
 Musicians' slang.
 etc. etc.

His *The Australian Language* (1945) was updated continually by means of candid items until its definitive issue²⁹ in 1966, when it was, accurately, described in its sub-title as: "An Examination of the English Language and English speech as used in Australia, from convict days to the present, with special reference to the growth of indigenous idiom and its use by Australian writers."³⁰ In this work he was assisted by hundreds of readers and himself read and annotated equally large numbers of journals and documents associated with Australian history. By 1966 his view was that Australia was one of the world's most fascinating linguistic laboratories in which British, American and local social conditions had combined to produce a long sustained outburst of indigenous invention³¹ that probably has no parallel, at least in terms of the small size of Australia's population.

The best illustration of Baker's claim is the vast scope of his book, treating sequentially as it does the jargon/idiom of: convicts; bushrangers; squatting; pastoral workers; bushmen; outback building and foods; bush idiom; gold; wanderers; explorers; larrikins and wowsers;³² criminals; soldiers; vulgarism; city life; drinking and betting; football and surfing; onomastics; language of the young; fauna and flora; pidgin English and aboriginal borrowings; rhyming slang; and the Australian accent. Later chapters discuss the making of: a Linguistic Community; a literary idiom; and the use of idiom by native-born writers.³³ While the book is almost too large with its 500-odd closely printed pages, subsequent scholars have been very eager to quote from Baker's books, notably:

(i) G. A. Wilkes in his *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms* (1978) and in the enlarged second edition (1985);

²⁹ The versions of 1970, 1976, 1977, 1981 and 1986 (each with 517 pages) are all reprints with varying page size and with differing publishers.

³⁰ Many of these are essayists, although there are quotations from more popular novelists such as Ernestine Hill, Xavier Herbert and Kylie Tennant.

³¹ Perhaps coincidentally the present writer had given a like-titled paper in England in March 1966 (Ryan: 1966), with the new printed title 'Isolation and Generation within a Conservative Framework — A Unique Dialectal Situation for English'.

³² I.e. 'young thugs' and 'kill-joys'.

³³ In a sense Baker summarized his own work in his signed article, (Baker: 1958). A following article there by F. D. McCarthy — the first Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies — treats of Aboriginal Words, particularly those encountered in the large Australian English vocabulary.

and

(ii) R. W. Burchfield in the four volumes (1972 — 1986) of his *Supplement to the Oxford Dictionary*. (See below.)

It is significant that Baker himself quotes Partridge at many points.³⁴ (See 'Index', 514).

Meanwhile there were gathering in the wings a number of younger New Zealand scholars whose careers may be said to have flowered in the 1970s and 1980s and it will be found necessary to interweave them to some extent. The first of these is Dr. Robert W. Burchfield (b. 1923), a Rhodes Scholar from Wellington³⁵ and Oxford teacher and researcher in the area of Early English language. After the dropping out of the literary scholar, New Zealand born Alan Horsman, from the editorship of this new *Supplement to The Oxford English Dictionary*, in 1957 the Delegates of the Oxford University Press invited Burchfield to the task.³⁶ It had then been imagined that the work would take perhaps ten years, be contained in a single volume; and 'catch up' with the vocabulary necessarily missed by the early volumes of the main dictionary — for the letter A was published in 1884 and Z in 1928 — together with the lexis of the 1950s, 'a convenient terminal date'. The work would soon be seen to be of a vastly greater magnitude.

In an address to the English Association some three years after commencing his duties, the editor stressed certain policies: the descriptive nature of the task; the need to use old quotation slips which had not been deemed in 1933 to record fully established usages;³⁷ coarse speech; wartime terminology; technical terms of linguistics; Partridge's slang;³⁸ electricity; engineering; aeronautics; nuclear science; archaeology; philology; cooking; English language newspapers worldwide; town and country planning; terminology of elections; politics; international diplomacy; sexual behaviour; dialectal words used by major authors; American English; Commonwealth English, especially the idiom of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and the West Indies; modern loan words from such languages as German, Bantu, Russian and Indian and Moslem tongues; by forms and shortenings of common words; changed parts of speech;

³⁴ The traffic two-way, for, as K. S. Inglis well observed (1977 : 99): 'Partridge's fecund *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional Usage* would be less rich but for Baker's books and correspondence'.

³⁵ He stresses his debt to the scholar of Old English there, Professor P. S. Arden (Burchfield 1985: viii).

³⁶ Burchfield: 1961. See also the 'Introductions' to the Supplement volumes.

³⁷ In the event 'coarse language' was also included and the two taboo 'four letter words' — f-k and c-nt both appeared in Burchfield, 1972b.

³⁸ See Burchfield 1961 : 39. As is indicated in (Burchfield: 1986b) the 'Bibliography' at the end of Vol. IV, some 16 of Partridge's books were read carefully, several in multiple editions for illustrative quotations or for special senses.

affixed words from a known base; and the need to include words whose etymology is uncertain.

The authors generously cited — for the glory of these volumes, as with their parent series, is the citation of dated and illuminating quotations — include W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, R. Kipling, W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, P. G. Wodehouse, Nabokov and Dr. Spock. Indeed, the list of the works most frequently quoted in the four volumes — and so necessarily read from cover to cover for useful context quotations — covers some 133 page columns of tiny print.

Meanwhile, a digression. In 1969 there was completed and published the Fifth Edition³⁹ to *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English* for which R. W. Burchfield was responsible. The etymologies included were revised by G. W. S. Friedrichsen who, with Burchfield, had seen through the press *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*⁴⁰ (1966) and worked on the dictionary for some four years with 'scrupulous diligence'. This volume, treating of some 38,000 words, immediately became standard for scholars. The 1969 edition of *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary* had added to it 'A Supplement of Australian and New Zealand Words', edited by R. W. Burchfield, a 32-page vocabulary list 'drawn from a wide range of Australian and New Zealand printed sources for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'. For their assistance with this text the editor thanked the following New Zealanders: J. A. W. Bennett (long at Oxford⁴¹ but by 1964 a professor in the University of Cambridge); D. M. Davin (novelist and at this time Assistant Secretary at the Clarendon Press, Oxford); N. Davis (Merton Professor of English Language and Literature, Oxford); D. Gray (later to be Tolkien Professor, University of Oxford); G. K. W. Johnston (ex Wellington and then in Canberra) and H. W. Orsman (still on the staff of his Alma Mater, the Victoria University⁴² of Wellington). It is also indicated that W. S. Ramson read the first draft. As these names make clear, there was a considerable camaraderie between these largely expatriate New Zealanders, all of whom, except Orsman and Ramson, had gone from New Zealand to Oxford for further study in English,⁴³ doing the Final Honours Schools there.

While there is no space for a just appraisal of Burchfield's enormous

³⁹ Pp. xxiv+1048.

⁴⁰ Pp. xvi+1025. The senior author was C. T. Onions, long Burchfield's mentor and the scholar largely responsible for his young friend's selection as editor.

⁴¹ The annotations in brackets come from the present writer. Bennett is further mentioned in conjunction with Ramson below.

⁴² It ceased to be a University College in 1960.

⁴³ All those at Oxford had done the J. R. R. Tolkien—C. S. Lewis—D. Nichol Smith created type of Schools syllabus, with heavy emphasis on stylistics, whatever the main period of interest.

task with the *Supplement*, it may be said that he carried out right nobly the responsibility of 'ascertaining the significance' of many modern English words and of ordering the world-wide written usages of the English language in the twentieth century. The original thirteen volumes had contained some 425,000 words treated and illustrated with dated quotations from published sources, and the new four volumes were more than a third of the bulk of the 1933 dictionary, adding more than 5,250 pages with three columns per page, and justifying *Newsweek's* eulogy: "...like the work from which it depends... the present last word, the indispensable addendum to what is, in all probability, the greatest continuing work of scholarship that this century has produced." Quite certainly it more than earned anew a 1928 comment in *The Times Literary Supplement* as to its being "easily the most entertaining and readable of all dictionaries".

Thus one of the most significant aspects of the 1957—1986 enterprise is that it has all been carried out under the direction of the one man, unlike the parent work's four main editors: James A. H. Murray, Henry Bradley, W. A. Craigie and C. T. Onions. And like Dr. Johnson before him, Burchfield has left in many places the impress of his concepts, growing confidence and quiet but identifiable sense of propriety and fitness in both the definitions and the inclusions. But let it be said, too, that one feels a certain generous bias towards the inclusion of New Zealandisms which often seem as many as the Australian entries coming from a people approximately five times as numerous. An excellent account of his painstaking working methods is to be found in Burchfield (1973). As the dates would indicate, his concern was with "the vocabulary that lies on or near the admission/exclusion boundary⁴⁴ in the *OED* and its 1933 (Suppl.) and 1972 (Suppl.) *Supplements*" (1). The illuminating discussion is, thus, concerned with lexis that is: racial; specialized; ambiguous; (not) matching *OED* categories; geographic; 'closer'⁴⁵ usage of field-names or house names with no transformed sense; names of persons; names of places of business; proprietary terms, sociolinguistic/sexual taboos;⁴⁶ obvious combinations;⁴⁷ etc. The conclusion to this account of the need for constant decision-making runs thus: "The 'judicial and regulative' authority of the Editor must be applied with firmness and consistency to avoid the inclusion of more than a reasonable number of items from some very large classes of words that straddle the border (27)."

In 1986 the great task came to an end with the appearance of the fourth

⁴⁴ This no longer involved sexual or colloquial words, technical or scientific terms, or 'common words ... of literature or conversation' (1).

⁴⁵ Thus Carnaby Street and Wardour-Street are included (3).

⁴⁶ See Burchfield 1973: 1233.

⁴⁷ E.g. those with elf —, from J. R. R. Tolkien.

volume, thus endorsing *The Times* comment of 1976 on its editor as "a creative and scholarly master of the English language whose work will last longer and prove more influential than anything else published this year or indeed this half-century." Others would justly call it 'the greatest continuing work of scholarship that this century has produced' (*Newsweek*), and of enormous value in establishing the language as it has been and is being used in the twentieth century.

Its editor in 1985 issued his survey⁴⁸ volume, *The English Language* — widely deemed to have replaced that masterpiece, Logan Pearsall Smith's *The English Language* (1912) — and called by Anthony Burgess "a brilliant book... both scholarly and human... it conveys an authentic sense of the great mystery of language. It instructs, but it also compels wonder. (Publisher's dodger.)" The volume stresses both the flexibility and the resilience of the language from the relative uniformity of Old English to the many varieties of English spoken throughout the world today. The two central chapters are, understandably, concerned with 'The Recording of English in Dictionaries and Grammars' and 'Vocabulary'. His splendid conclusion (173) is a vision of the many styles of English that lie ahead, but then comes the affirmation that "English as it is spoken and written by native speakers looks like remaining a communicative force, however slightly or severely beyond the grasp of foreigners, and changed in whatever agreeable or disagreeable manner, for many centuries to come. (*ibid.*)"

Meanwhile, in the background he was completing a tribute to the land of his birth with *The New Zealand Pocket Oxford Dictionary*,⁴⁹ a book concerned to do for New Zealand English what Katherine Mansfield (also in exile) had done for New Zealand literature. The resultant is a remarkably detailed and subtle amalgam of general English and New Zealand English, in which the everyday language of Pakehas (white New Zealanders) and Maoris⁵⁰ is drawn together as is now the case in ordinary life. Yet no less is "the broad band of vocabulary drawn from regional forms of British English" (Burchfield 1986b: xxii) or "the words generated in the country itself". At various points, too, one is given the New Zealand equivalent for the British term: FOL (Federation of Labour) for TUC (Trades Union Congress); private bag for (large) post box; Road Code for Highway Code; etc. As well, there are the many long-established Maori terms, floral: kowhai, pohutukawa, rimu, totara; or faunal: kiwi, tuatara, weta, etc.

⁴⁸ He had also written for the British Broadcasting Corporation (Burchfield: 1981).

⁴⁹ Based on *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, seventh edition, 1984, edited by R. E. Allen. The 1986 volume has xxvi+901 pages.

⁵⁰ Many of the general sections are also given in Maori. The early settler equivalent names are shown alongside standard modern usages, e.g. *kahikatea* beside 'white pine' (Burchfield: 1986b : 409).

In the matter of sources, Burchfield acknowledges his own 1969 "Supplement" and G. W. Turner (1984) (*v. infra*) and the more recent *COD* notations in complex areas (D for disputed uses, and R for racially offensive uses). His treatment of more than 50,000 words and phrases contains a very wide selection of distinctively New Zealand words in current use as well as the general vocabulary that New Zealand shares with other English-speaking countries.

One of the important — if briefly appearing — figures in this chronicle is Grahame (G. K. W.) Johnston (1929–76), who, after university studies in Wellington and at Oxford, had taught at various Australian universities⁵¹ from 1954 until his premature death, soon after the publication in 1976 of his dictionary *The Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary*. It was based on *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, but it became a complete revision and adaptation for Australian users of the source work, with the bonus of a year (1971) which he spent in Oxford working on the materials assembled for the great *Supplement*. The resultant volume — nominally of the 'pocket' sort — was vastly more sophisticated than its model, giving a comprehensive picture of the far-reaching changes in society, in science, in politics and economics and in many other aspects of life⁵² which had had widespread effects on the vocabulary. In addition to the inclusion of largely Australian words not previously in the dictionary, every entry was scrutinized for its relevance to the Australian culture — sport, worship, flora and fauna — yet the work was also capable of being used overseas.

In 1963, as a trained mediaevalist, he had translated from the German of Jordanes *An Outline of Middle English Grammar*, and so, engagingly, this little dictionary has a generous inclusion of words from both Anglo-Norman and Old Norse. He also noted the presence of many actual or possible⁵³ New Zealandisms — "It is often very difficult to establish precisely the currency of words and idioms, especially those of slang origins. The close relationship between Australian and New Zealand English must particularly be noted: many of the words etc. labelled (Aust.) may even have originated [in the other country]" (xxi). He had included a considerable section on pronunciation, quoting with approval (xxiii) various observations on RP by G. W. Turner in his book *The English Language in Australia* (1966).

The finest tribute to Johnston's *APOD* is the K. S. Inglis paper, (1977),⁵⁴ with its reference to the book's remarkable early sales (92); its milestone definition of the xenophobic *ocker* as 'a boorish person, a person who is agres-

⁵¹ Queensland, Melbourne, New South Wales (at the then Royal Military College), etc.

⁵² See Turner, 1970.

⁵³ The following point had been made by Patridge 40 and more years earlier. The niceties of such emphasis are only achieved in *SOED* by the inclusion of seemingly disproportionate numbers of quotations.

⁵⁴ Subtitled: *Australia's New Dictionaries*. Inglis 1977 : 90–100.

ively Australian in speech and behaviour, often for humorous effect' (96—97); Johnston's stature as a linguist and, for Australian lexicography, 'such a heroic pioneer' (97), as well as his wise caution, enunciated earlier, against the linguistic jingoism discerned from time to time in Baker's *The Australian Language*: "He seems to regard the study of our speech as an exercise not in science or scholarship, but in patriotism." (*The Australian*, 27 August 1966.) Equally scholarly and cautious is Johnston's own stylistic essay of 1970 which explores with great sensitivity the differences between literary and colloquial language, stressing the then considerable neglect of the verbal level of Australian writing, or "ease and freedom in the use of language" (190). His own paper is an appeal for and a leading towards "a flexible, expressive literary language" (192), through discriminating comments on a range of poems of stature. He showed how, from the beginning, "the vernacular is a possible instrument of conversation, but not the normal vehicle of literary expression" (201). Such is the message of the least fulfilled of these lexical careers.

In 1965 the New Zealander, George W. Turner, an Auckland graduate and former senior lecturer at the University of Canterbury⁵⁵ (in New Zealand) was appointed Reader at the University of Adelaide. This translation to a further Australasian speech community caused him to embark on a career of considerable linguistic productivity.⁵⁶ Its academic side was the immediate innovation in his new university of the teaching of Old Norse, and in 1966 he published, through Longmans English Language Series,⁵⁷ his *The English Language in Australia and New Zealand*. Randolph Quirk's 'Foreword' stressed that: "the interest to linguistics of studying a form of language dramatically transported a uniquely great distance from the areas to which it had previously belonged and which deeply conditioned its usage and its imagery (vii)." The author himself, in an opening chapter entitled "English Transported", after an historical survey, stresses the much smaller speech community's sense of difference: "Similarities in speech do not cause comment; every New Zealander knows he does not speak like an Australian. This is partly true. New Zealanders, like Canadians, define themselves negatively, explaining in England that they are not Australians and in Australia trying not to feel rather English (21)."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ He had earlier completed higher studies in both Linguistics and Phonetics at University College, London.

⁵⁶ He would in due course be listed by Burchfield (1972a : xi) as an early (i.e. post 1957) outside consultant to that work.

⁵⁷ General Editor, Randolph Quirk. The Series already contained Ian A. Gordon's *The Movement of English Prose* (1966).

⁵⁸ By 1987 this comment is less true, although the educated from the South Island, with its many English and Scottish early settlers, probably still sound more English to Australian ears.

The volume provides an admirable study of the ways in which the language is used in both countries, including its history and tradition, its sound patterns, its grammar, its lexicology and the rich and functionally oriented variety in speech and writing. Of particular interest are his chapters on: Semantics; The Written Language; Colloquial and Slang; Regional Variations⁵⁹ in word and in pronunciation; Place Names, etc. His sectionalized bibliography (221, ff.) is one of the most evaluative and probing ever published for Australasian English and for Pidgin English in the South and South-east Pacific regions.

In 1972 Turner again made an important contribution to language studies with his edition of a collection of essays, *Good Australian English and Good New Zealand English*. The only New Zealand-born contributors among the eleven scholars included were Turner himself, contributing "Good English in Australia and New Zealand" (pp. 11—32) and W. S. Ramson,⁶⁰ whose essay was entitled "Distinctive Features of Australian English" (33—46). Turner himself described the volume (11) as "a practical book" giving "detailed information about the workaday use of English... in accessible form". His concerns are with usage and with media, language, with style rather than "correctness", and with powerful literary expression in both countries. Yet the central thrust of his essay is less historical than concerned to stress that — "as Australia⁶¹ becomes an important power in a sensitive area of world politics... we are going to have to know who we are and act with confidence in the years ahead (15)." Thus his concern is with tradition, experience, and with the country's need to find its own identity⁶² and for the individual to solve problems of expression and understanding in the language that belongs to his community.

As any analysis of the index to the last work would indicate, George Turner was concerned to stress the distinctive tone of various writers of quality and this, too, was the theme of his Pelican volume,⁶³ *Stylistics* published in 1973. It is a sensitive study, concerned with variations in the use of language, whether spoken, declaimed, broadcast or written, as the message is affected and modified by various conscious and unconscious factors, as well as by the situation in which the words are used. His many examples come from well-known

⁵⁹ Such isoglotic work is still a neglected area, particularly in Australian lexis. New Zealand variants are more easily discerned since the provinces there had distinct British regional and cultural bases.

⁶⁰ Dr. Ramson is treated below in this general survey.

⁶¹ It must be admitted that the New Zealand references are almost all confined to the first two papers.

⁶² This in 1987 was very much a concern both of the Commission into Folklife and of the Report on Australian Studies, both Federal Australian investigations.

⁶³ David Crystal was Advisory Editor for this volume in a Linguistics series published by Penguin Books.

authors as well as from everyday speech. Thus his English poets cited include: Auden, Blake, Browning, Chaucer, Coleridge, Donne and Dryden; while his British novelists include Austen, Lewis Carrol, Conrad, Defoe, Dickens and Fielding. New Zealand writers quoted are Katherine Mansfield and Frank Sargeson, with Australian idiom represented by Joseph Furphy, Shirley Hazzard and Patrick White. American authors are not neglected any more than are the linguists,⁶⁴ with J. R. Firth, M. A. K. Halliday, Jespersen, John Lyons and J. P. Thorne featuring in the text. *The American Speech* review was right to conclude with praise of Turner's stylishness — "He writes with obvious learning, but with ease and grace, with charm and good humour." (C. Scott 1973: 276)

It had been mentioned above that George Turner was an early consultant for the *SOED*, and he produced the most scholarly review⁶⁵ of Grahame Johnston's *APOD*, defining it as "an Australian dictionary" with "its base and reference point... standard British English". Thus he noted, with approval, such more Australian additions as minestrone, miniaturize, min min ("ghost light, will-'o-the-wisp, reported seen in the outback", Aborig.) and mintbush, and as additions more up-to-date than the fifth edition of *POD*, the entries for bikie, biodegradable, Maoist, microfiche, on-line (computer), uptight and women's rights. He went on to note various omissions, particularly from his own state of South Australia, but praised the inclusion of such easily overlooked Australianisms as dog-leg fence, double dissolution, donkey vote, esky, stubby and Torrens title. He also applauded the identification of words used in non-English ways. His conclusion was that it was both "the best buy for Australians as a general dictionary",⁶⁶ and a significant landmark in the recording of English in its Australian form.

And so it was that Turner became the next editor of *APOD*, and, in due course, for other dictionaries. In May 1982 he had chaired the special dictionary symposium at the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science Congress, contributing meaningfully to the two significant papers then presented by G. A. Wilkes and J. S. Ryan.⁶⁷ In 1984 he issued his own revision of Johnston's *APOD*, being concerned to both retain its "distinctive personality" and revise thoroughly, following the sixth edition of *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary* edited by J. B. Sykes. He also stressed that now "the standpoint is even more decidedly Australian than in the first, Australian usage being taken as a reference point and differences in British usage being recorded as departures from this standpoint (v)". He added the caution that —

⁶⁴ There are quotations from Ian A. Gordon on 117, 123, 157 and 214.

⁶⁵ G. Turner 1977: 63—64.

⁶⁶ In many ways the style of definition is more akin to that of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, a much larger volume.

⁶⁷ See Wilkes: 1982 and Ryan: 1982.

"I have not gone so far, however, as to eliminate the Australian label⁶⁸ from expressions felt to be especially our own as such extra information is interesting to many people and is part of knowing ourselves (*ibid.*)". This last matter of regional designation is indicated by a symbol (Br.), (US), (Aust.), (NZ), although the label (Aust.) "is not added when Aboriginal etymology or local reference in the meaning ... makes Australian provenance obvious". Turner also offered his thanks to Dr. Burchfield (v) and indicated his intention to distinguish usage in the informal range by the labels (Aust. sl.) and (Aust. colloq.). Finally, it was stressed that the more than 49,000 words and phrases treated had the full authority of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, its recent *Supplements*, and the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*.

Then, in 1987 Turner edited two "firsts" for their non England issue, namely

(i) *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* based on *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Seventh Edition⁶⁹ (1982) edited by J. B. Sykes. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, pp. xxvii+1340. Notable features are: over 45,000 leadwords with a total of 80,000 subsidiary vocabulary items; Australian pronunciation, inflexions and etymologies; extensive coverage of Australian botanical and zoological terms; illustrations of usage; senses arranged on the basis of familiarity and importance,⁷⁰ etc. The Introduction incorporates many views of J. B. Sykes and of Turner himself (familiar from their expression in his 1960s books).

and

(ii) *The Australian Little Oxford Dictionary*, based on *The Little Oxford dictionary of Current English*, sixth edition (1986), edited by Julia Swannell. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, pp. xiv+674. The volume contains over 34,000 leadwords, all of which "have been reconsidered with Australian relevance in mind", while 'the pronunciation has been entirely revised to record educated Australian usage' (vii). The size is both convenient and compact and its content range makes it like some of the earlier editions of the *POD*.

And so it is with complete appropriateness that one can record (in October 1987) the imminent appearance of his *festschrift*⁷¹ entitled *Lexicographical and Linguistic Studies: Essays in Honour of G. W. Turner*. Of relevance to the present paper are, *inter alia* the following sections (and contributors):

⁶⁸ This comment is a not so oblique reference to *The Macquarie Dictionary* (1981), where this (too nationalistic?) style is the norm.

⁶⁹ Whereas the Sykes volume has pages 21.5 × 13.5 cm, those in Turner's dictionary are 23.5 × 15.5 cm, and the font is much more legible.

⁷⁰ This is a feature of *COD* from the sixth edition (1976).

⁷¹ T. L. and J. Burton (ed.) 1988.

Middle English: Ralph W. V. Elliott⁷²; Stylistics: Graham Tulloch;
English in Australia: W. S. Ramson, G. A. Wilkes, etc.;

and

English in New Zealand: Ian A. Gordon, R. W. Burchfield.

There are two other Wellingtonians who deserve especial mention at this stage, the first of whom is Harold W. Orsman who first appeared in this account as a contributor to Eric Partridge and John W. Clark (1951). As was indicated above, Emeritus Professor Arnold Wall⁷³ had taken a cautious view of New Zealand English, detecting "in speech, a slow, gradual, but indubitable divergence from the home standard" (Partridge and Clark (eds.): 90), although the same was not so remarkable in writing. His clear preference had been for "English custom and usage" (*ibid.*). Partridge's own footnote to this short essay had suggested that "New Zealand English has, except in several quite superficial aspects, remained, like the people, remarkably but unobtrusively independent (92)". Accordingly he had "invited a second consultant's opinion", given by Harold Orsman, then a young research student (93—95). This short piece makes certain important points —

- (1) the drift towards independent idiom had begun before 1900;
- (2) unconventional speech was favoured especially from the 1860 'gold rushes';
- (3) much idiom arose from farm work, e.g. be on one's mutton (alert);
- (4) regional⁷⁴ Maori, Scottish and other usages were significant;
- (5) false views are held that the slang comes from Australia⁷⁵, whereas it may well originate in New Zealand;

and

- (6) it is drawn out and overloaded with many colourless words and phrases (95).

While so many other English language scholars had left their native New Zealand — Partridge from Gisborne, for Australia and Oxford; Baker, Burchfield, Gray and others, from Wellington for London or Oxford; Davis,⁷⁶ from Dunedin, for Oxford; Turner, from Auckland, for London, Christchurch, and, finally, Australia; and Ramson, from Wellington, to Sydney and Canberra — Orsman had stayed at home, near the National Library, assiduously collecting New Zealandisms of various kinds.

⁷² A frequent contributor to E. Partridge's *Language Library*, as was the next named.

⁷³ Renowned as an adviser on "clear/proper" speech on the radio and a believer in 'elocution', or speech as like that of Southern England as possible.

⁷⁴ Particularly noted in his own dictionary. (Orsman: 1979).

⁷⁵ This complex issue has been a matter of concern to both Turner and Burchfield.

⁷⁶ Although a teacher of Middle English, nevertheless a consultant for *SOED*, and, earlier, for the 1969 *Pocket's* appendix.

And thus it was his choice to make available early on to R. W. Burchfield — "his unique collection of some 12,000 quotations from New Zealand works of the period from the rediscovery of New Zealand until about 1950". (Burchfield 1972: xiii). This generous act was in part prompted by the realization that tiny New Zealand was not yet ready for a national dictionary, since the emotional severance of the country from Britain, as when the "Mother Country" joined the Common Market, had yet to occur. But in 1976 the firm of Heinemann Australia had produced the *Heinemann Australian Dictionary*⁷⁷ "written and compiled in association with members of the academic staff of La Trobe University". In particular the volume had a clear, uncluttered appearance, and entries which were nearly always complete in themselves.

Soon after, it was thought that it would be possible to transfer much of the Australian content to a similar New Zealand dictionary. However, the General Editor, H. Orsman, chose to make many alterations to the text, some of which were natural changes to fit New Zealand conditions, but more were of increased subtlety. It is an international English dictionary with the leadwords, phrases, meanings and pronunciations peculiar to New Zealand included. Unlike other dictionaries "salted" with a few key New Zealand and Maori words, this has over 50,000 entries explained in New Zealand terms. As with the Orsman article of 28 years earlier, there may be found:

- (1) New Zealand expressions, colloquialisms and vulgarisms;
- (2) the Maori words commonly used in everyday situations;
- (3) notes on Maori pronunciation; and
- (4) a section giving earliest written usages for various words, e.g. zambuk ("a person who gives first aid at a sporting event"), 1918.⁷⁸

While there is obviously a fine comparative setting for many of Orsman's quotations in the four volumes of the *Supplement to the OED*, the lexicographer has not chosen this as his main outlet for the printing of collected materials and at the present time is working towards an historical dictionary with the hope that it may appear in time for New Zealand's sesqui-centenary in 1990.

The last of the practising lexicographers is W. S. Ramson who had gone directly from the Victoria University of Wellington to the University of Sydney where he undertook postgraduate studies under Professor A. G. Mitchell⁷⁹. Some of his own early papers include:

⁷⁷ Pp. ix+1259. The work was 'plain' and not as probing in definitions or range as G. Johnston's *APOD* which came out at the same time. See K. S. Inglis (1971) for some severe strictures on its style and range.

⁷⁸ This is still the earliest cited use of the noun in an extended context, although *SOED* (IV, 1390) has the trade name recorded in 1904.

⁷⁹ Author of a pioneering text, (Mitchell: 1946) with its revision, ed. A. Delbridge: 1965.

“Aboriginal Words in Early Australian English”, *Southerly*, vol. 24 (1964), 50—60;

Australian English, Canberra, Australian National University, 1965, 26pp.; and

“Australian and New Zealand English: The Present State of Studies”, *Kivung*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (1969), 42—56.

His doctoral thesis appeared in 1966 as a book (Ramson: 1966)⁸⁰. His starting point here was the one, previously ignored, of assuming that the early white convict/settler speech community was a derived one and so of exploring that process, thus tracing Aust. Engl. sense *to barrack* (v), “to support vociferously”, from the Irish sense, “to brag, to be boastful of one’s fighting powers”. As was said in a contemporary review: (Ryan 1967: 72—74): “The book is fascinating, of classic stature, and indispensable for the further study of English dialectal lexis...”⁸¹

In 1970 Ramson edited his *English Transported: Essays on Australasian English*⁸² including the following essays by New Zealand born scholars:

his own “Nineteenth-Century Australian English” (32—48);

J. A. W. Bennett⁸³, “English as it is Spoken in New Zealand” (pp. 69—83);

G. W. Turner, “New Zealand English Today” (84—101); and

G. K. W. Johnston, “The Language of Australian Literature” (188—202).

In his Preface he observed, correctly: “... the Australian and New Zealand dialects ... [and their] contacts have been so close that it is doubtful if one dialect can be fully recorded without prior or concurrent knowledge of the other (v)”. All in all, it is a comprehensive, challenging and exciting anthology of research work and of linguistic and cultural inter-relations between many Englishes, Asian, New Guinean, German and Italian, as well as between the obvious ones from the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

W. S. Ramson was of assistance to R. W. Burchfield in the latter’s 1969 supplement and also to the major Oxford project, being listed (Burchfield 1972: x) as an important Contributor-Reader. Meanwhile, from 1969, he had been the historical lexicographer on the Sydney project (Delbridge 1981a:

⁸⁰ Pp. x+195.

⁸¹ Consider, for example, the verb *spell* (trans.) ‘to take over in the doing of work’, found in *The Owl and the Nightingale* c. 1200 and then only reappearing in later Australasian English.

⁸² The work contains an excellent sectionalized bibliography by David Blair, as well as comprehensive indices.

⁸³ His essay is a slight update of the pioneer version originally in the journal, *American Speech* in 1943. He makes considerable use of the work of both Partridge and of Baker. This essay apart, Bennett is mainly known for his pre-eminent scholarship in the field of Middle English.

1—12) which would finally result in *The Macquarie Dictionary*⁸⁴ (1981), travelling regularly from the Australian National University in Canberra. Despite many difficulties, the editorial team managed to keep to the original concept of a scholarly yet generally useful dictionary serving the needs of the Australian community and faithfully presenting systematic observations of Australian English. As is said in the ‘Introduction’ by Emeritus Professor Manning Clarke “This Dictionary is a magnificent collection of the words and idioms we use not just when we talk or write to each other, but of the essential tools with which we will cut a mark on humanity’s epitaph (11)”.

In more recent years he, Ramson, has been at work on an historical dictionary, backed by dated quotations, and to be known as the *Australian National Dictionary*⁸⁵ the advance publicity for which is exciting, not least from its close work on the lexis and phonology of South Eastern England and of East London in particular, for the one linguistic common possession of the earliest white Australians was the argot of the convict hulks there.

Last and certainly not least in this tale of English ‘down under’ is Ian Gordon (1908), a Scotsman whose first degree at the University of Edinburgh was in classics, soon followed by the M. A. and Ph. D. in English. An Assistant Lecturer in Language and Literature from 1932 and a subeditor on the Scottish National Dictionary from 1930 until 1936, he was in that year appointed Professor of English at the then Victoria University College of Wellington, only becoming Emeritus in 1974. As indicated above, he had helped the young S. J. Baker, as well as teaching Robert Burchfield⁸⁶, Harry Orsman, Grahame Johnston, Douglas Gray, William Ramson, and many another linguist. His own more language-related publications include: Gordon (1947); Gordon (1966); Gordon (1979);⁸⁷ and he was the editor of the New Zealand edition (1982) of the *Collins Concise English Dictionary*.

CONCLUSION

The epigraphs to this survey of one important aspect of modern English language study contained two central statements — the first from a retiring English professor at Oxford, that that University’s School of English owed much to the Antipodes; the second from a senior historian in Australia, who, bemused, reflected that that country had left the exploration of the fate of its

⁸⁴ See the chief editor’s explanation (Delbridge: 1981b). It has 2049 pages. H. Orsman was the New Zealand consultant.

⁸⁵ See the references to it in R. McCrum, W. Cran, and R. MacNeil: 1986.

⁸⁶ 1940—41 and 1946—48. Burchfield served from 1941—46 to 1946 in the Royal New Zealand Artillery.

⁸⁷ Originally published in 1975 in New York as *Family Word Finder*. The Australasian version is subtitled: *A Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms* and is described as ‘a guide to good English ... particularly in this part of the English-speaking world’ (8).

version of 'the imperial language' to a cluster of New Zealanders. Both statements are true and the 28 years since Tolkien's tribute have made it clear to the whole English-speaking world just how considerable was its debt to New Zealand's Robert Burchfield, the heroic 'custodian of the English language'.⁸⁸

In pondering his own conundrum Kenneth Inglis in 1977 reflected that all who had come to Australia had done so after university study in New Zealand and that there "they were more likely than here, so one of them tells me, to study language and literature in conjunction which can dispose people towards linguistic study of the written word". (Inglis, 1977 : 100) Herein lies the clue, for all New Zealand students of those years⁸⁹ had to both study earlier English language and literature for two years prior to Honours, and another (or two) classical or modern languages and their literatures as well. Many, like Ian Gordon in Scotland, or Norman Davis and the present writer in Otago, completed the M. A. in Classics on the way to Honors in English. All those who went to Oxford elected, rather than enter research immediately, to do the English Schools where more papers had a high linguistic/semantic/contextual aspect than has been the case in more recent years. All the named scholars journeyed from the perimeter where they were "last and loneliest"⁹⁰, and like Eric Partridge, found linguistic curiosity roused by the "migrations" of themselves, as outer islanders, in peace or war, for family or other reasons.

But these observations are sociocultural and merely underlay the pattern of remarkable achievement in bringing to the fore the scholarly need to realize and record: the peculiar dynamisms of modern English, particularly on the lips of native speakers in far-flung lands; the wry but essentially good humoured vernacular of the criminal/working classes of an earlier day; and how sturdy a linguistic vehicle that speech could and did supply in distant lands;⁹¹ and how the most informed literary criticism must always be founded on stylistic textual analysis.

In his dedication of 1931 to Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1796 text), after the motto from Corrie Denison:⁹² "There is far more of imagination and enthusiasm in the making of a good dictionary than in the average novel", Eric Partridge spoke of his friend Ernest Weekly as

An Etymologist Who
— As Brilliant as he is Entertaining —
Invests a Remarkable Erudition

⁸⁸ His only challengers would be the great lexicographers of the original Dictionary, Sir James Murray, Henry Bradley, Sir William Craigie, and C. T. Onions.

⁸⁹ And Eric Partridge in Queensland.

⁹⁰ A proverbial phrase, attributed to the essayist from the South Island's farthest south, M. Holcroft.

⁹¹ New Zealand and Australia in particular.

⁹² A mischievous quotation since it was one of his (Partridge's) own aliases.

With the Charm of Fiction
A Lexicographer who
— Easy of Approach —
Combines a Rare Perspicacity
With a Witty Perspicuity
A Writer Whose Style
is Urbane Yet Incisive
Leisurely Yet Economical.

The conjoined lexical and literary habits of Partridge and of his Antipodean followers have produced like scholarship of human face, where the task was never drudgery and the stewardship enjoyable and even joyous as the users of their dictionaries have attested with gratitude.

October 1987

Armidale.

Postscript

In September of 1988 there appeared the long awaited *The Australian national dictionary: a dictionary of Australianisms on historical principles*, edited by W. S. Ramson. As is made clear at the outset (Ramson (ed.). 1988: vi), the concern is with "those words and meanings which have originated in Australia [and] which have a greater currency here than elsewhere, or which have a special significance in Australia because of their connection with an aspect of the history of the country". The *Dictionary* has about 6,000 main entries and is the first comprehensive, historically based record of the 10,000 words which make up the Australian contribution to the English language. Thus from an assembled 300,000 illustrative quotations, some 60,000 dated and referenced examples were included. They were drawn from more than 9,500 sources — books, other dictionaries (including those by Partridge and Baker), newspapers and journals, issued from 1788 to the presented.

As is pointed out by the chief editor of *The Macquarie dictionary*, A. Delbridge (1988 : 77), "the richness of the collection extends ... to unexpected treasures, like the abundant recording of Aboriginal pidgin, the identification of the source languages of Aboriginal borrowings, the recording of colonial words now obsolete, as well as many words found only in a historical context". By reason of the methods used, it is clear that this dictionary can be used profitably alongside its approximate contemporaries, *The Macquarie dictionary* and the 1972–86 *Supplements to The Oxford dictionary*.

May 1989

Armidale.

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APOD is used for further reference to the *Australian pocket Oxford dictionary*; *COD* for the *Concise Oxford dictionary*; *POD* for the *Pocket Oxford dictionary*; *SOED* for the *Supplement(s) to the Oxford English dictionary*.