

‘A NATIONAL TAONGA’

LAURIE BAUER

This review by Laurie Bauer of Harry Orsman’s *Dictionary of New Zealand English* first appeared in *New Zealand Books* (December 1997); it is reprinted here by generous permission of the publishers.

Following *The Australian National Dictionary* (1988) and *A Dictionary of South African English* (1996), Oxford University Press has now given us *The Dictionary of New Zealand English*, its third and largest foray into ‘colonial’ varieties of English. Both the publisher and the editor are to be congratulated on the publication of this fascinating and important work, the result of over forty years’ **hard yakker** on the part of Harry Orsman, who has previously given us the *Heinemann New Zealand Dictionary* (1979, 2nd edn 1989) and who has also contributed to *The Macquarie Dictionary*, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, and *The New Zealand Dictionary* (1994). But this dictionary does what Orsman’s earlier work could not do: it gives us a thorough historical picture of the way in which English in New Zealand has developed from before 1840 to the present day. This picture of historical development (to which I shall return) is one of the features which makes the dictionary so fascinating.

The Dictionary of New Zealand English is a dictionary on historical principles. This means that it is concerned with the origins of the words it catalogues and with the development of meanings in these words. Each entry is supported by numerous quotations from New Zealand writers illustrating the usage of the word under discussion and often providing surprising insights into New Zealand society, culture, and history. Those not familiar with a dictionary of this type may find the amount of information on each word daunting, but it repays close study.

When the *Heinemann New Zealand Dictionary* first appeared, its reviewer in one major newspaper said that ‘the New Zealand element in [this dictionary] seems to be made up a good deal from the familiar and

specialised language of the bar-room and racetrack, sportsfield and primary school lavatories’, and suggested that we do not really need dictionaries that list such words as part of their primary function. Words of this kind were part of New Zealand English in 1979, and they are still part of New Zealand English. Accordingly, they are still listed in this new dictionary (see for example **donger-knocker**, **duck-fart**, and **stink**).

But while such words and phrases are listed—as they should be since they form part of the uniqueness of New Zealand English—they are swamped by words from many specialised areas and from everyday language, words which many New Zealanders will never have considered might possibly mark them, in a wider environment, as being New Zealanders. There are far more New Zealand English words than just the non-standard words mentioned above. The dictionary lists specialised terms from children’s games, drugs-users, farming, **freezing works** (itself a New Zealand term), goldmining, gumdigging, mustering, prison, tramping, wood-chopping and wool-handling. It lists vast numbers of terms for the flora and fauna of New Zealand. Indeed, one of the many benefits of the dictionary for the country as a whole may turn out to be the specification of a good deal of partly overlapping and conflicting terminology for the names of plants and fish. And anyone who thinks that there is not much to noting the names of the **kauri** and the **tui** should consider the entries for superficially unremarkable words like **duck**, **grass**, **lily**, **limpet**, and **pine**, which show the complexities of nomenclature and the problems faced by the lexicographer.

You will find entries here for words which are important in New Zealand culture (**four main centres**, **kohanga reo**, **main trunk line**, **Peggy square**), words which reflect important events or institutions from our past (**communicate with Hobart**, **dpb**, **Expeditionary Force**, **six-o’clock closing**), words which are

EDITORIAL

Welcome to all readers of this first issue of *NZWords*, the newsletter of the New Zealand Dictionary Centre, published by Oxford University Press, New Zealand. The main focus in these initial pages is on events in 1997 which have brought this publication into being. The establishment and role of the NZDC at Victoria University of Wellington are outlined by the Centre’s Director, Professor Graeme Kennedy. Two other contributions honour the award-winning *Dictionary of New Zealand English* and its editor Dr Harry Orsman. The culmination of Dr Orsman’s lexicographical life’s work in 1997 was at the same time a major incentive for the founding of a centre which would reinforce and continue that work and ensure a sound future for New Zealand lexicography.

NZWords intends to keep readers informed of all aspects of the research and publication activities of the NZDC and to publish informative articles on New Zealand lexical topics. We should also like to hear from and respond to our readers. If you have comment on or suggestions for the newsletter’s contents, please let us know. Questions and observations about this country’s distinctive words and usages will also be welcome, and we look forward to having a lively ‘Mailbag’ page in future issues. The editor’s addresses are to be found on page 6.



Tony Deveson

Tony Deveson
Editor, NZWords
Associate Director, New Zealand Dictionary Centre



THE NEW ZEALAND DICTIONARY CENTRE

A joint project between
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON and OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



THE DICTIONARY OF NEW ZEALAND ENGLISH

WINNER OF THE 1998 MONTANA MEDAL FOR NON-FICTION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

listed because of their commercial significance in New Zealand (**cervena**, **fejjoa**), words which are listed because of their social or cultural importance (**football**, **gumboot**), words for foods which are best known from New Zealand (these frequently have partial recipes next to them; see e.g. **afghan**, **gem**, **pavlova**, **pikelet**). One category that I found particularly interesting was those words which, while used elsewhere in English, are recorded first in New Zealand: words like **gobstopper**, **sandwich loaf**, **stairdancer**, and **throw a wobbly**. To dip into this dictionary is to be brought face-to-face with the culture and history of New Zealand. Looking at this book makes you think about what it is that makes New Zealand the way it is and what it means to be a New Zealander.

One facet of this is the interaction between Maori and Pakeha and the way it has changed in the past 160 years. The entries for **Maori** and **Pakeha**, as well as synonyms or near-synonyms like **native** and **white man**, provide a fascinating commentary on the relationship between the races in New Zealand. The lengthy essay on the obscure etymology of the word **Pakeha** itself and the way it has been interpreted (both by Maori people and by Pakeha people) casts interesting light on this thorny problem. Less direct light is cast by the number of Maori words that have become part of English in this country.

One of the striking points of contrast between *The Dictionary of New Zealand English* and its companion volumes, *The Australian National Dictionary* and *A Dictionary of South African English*, is the weighting of words from indigenous languages which appear in them. *The Australian National Dictionary* has proportionately very few Aboriginal words. *A Dictionary of South African English* is full of borrowings from Dutch (and Afrikaans), Bantu languages (Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, etc.), Khoisan languages, Hindi, Malay, and others. There are remarkably few words listed which are English creations or leftovers from English dialects.

The Dictionary of New Zealand English is very different from both of these. Some 700 of the

approximately 6,000 headwords (p. viii) are Maori words. This puts *The Dictionary of New Zealand English* in a compromise position between the other two: it is largely a dictionary of English words and expressions, but contains a significant number of Maori words. Maori speakers have frequently complained—and with a great deal of justification—about the way in which Maori words are treated in English. One of the interesting facets of dealing with a dictionary on historical principles is that it allows one to see how the Pakeha have, with time, become more accustomed to Maori expressions, and have become better at using them. Pakeha writers would no longer get away with things like **gromalla** for **kumara**, **goashore** for **koohua** or with the variety of forms under which **kahikatea** has been found over the years.

'To dip into this dictionary is to be brought face to face with the culture and history of New Zealand.'

The link between New Zealand English and Australian English is rarely made overt, but it permeates the whole dictionary. There are as many words shared with Australian English as there are words shared with Maori in this dictionary (p. viii). The constant reference to the *Australian National Dictionary* in the etymologies is a recurrent reminder of the close ties between the two varieties, and the earliest datings fluctuate back and forth across the Tasman, sometimes Australia being recorded as having the word first (**electorate**), sometimes New Zealand (the noun **fossick**).

Perhaps some of the New Zealandisms (q.v.) that are hardest to spot are those *faux amis* which mean one thing in New Zealand and something entirely different outside it. Words like **mince about**, **nookie**, **peasouper**, and **togs** provide potential for major misunderstandings for New Zealanders travelling abroad or for other English speakers coming here.

There are, of course, plenty of expressions listed in the dictionary which can be used to make one's speech more picturesque: **a pair**

of bastards on a raft ('poached eggs on toast'), **as miserable as a shag on a rock**, **so thin you could cut your finger on its spine**, **rough as a bag of files**, **since Adam was a cowboy**, **all done up like a sore toe** are just a few of the colourful expressions that stand out. Harry Orsman has a good eye for the telling or amusing quotation and, on occasions, a nice turn of phrase of his own.

The result is that material which could be dry actually becomes a fascinating and lively social document, which can be read on many levels. For example, under **Jaffa** he comments: 'once often popular among children for rolling down the sloping floors of picture theatres during matinees'. Under **root** (verb: 'to have sexual intercourse (with)') he cites the 1950s catchphrase 'A Kiwi is a swine who eats roots and leaves'. For other examples see the quotation for 1906 under **milko**, the comment on the pronunciation of **Maori**, or the introductory comments under **war**. Humour is perhaps not the trait one most expects to find in a dictionary, but it is present in this one, making dipping into the dictionary all the more pleasurable.

I would warmly recommend this dictionary to anyone who is interested in New Zealand or New Zealandisms. I am full of admiration for the achievement it represents, and I believe that New Zealand has been extremely fortunate that a lexicographer of Harry Orsman's ability has taken the trouble to note the vocabulary of the nation with so much care and love.

But it would be misleading to leave the impression that this is a perfect and completed project. It is not. The work on New Zealand vocabulary will continue, and, though it will be many years before we are likely to see a second edition of this dictionary, when it comes it will be able to improve on this one in many ways. For instance, there are the occasional expressions such as **it's snowing down south** (said to a woman whose petticoat is showing beneath the hem of her skirt), which are familiar to me from my English childhood and so should probably not feature in a dictionary of New Zealand words.

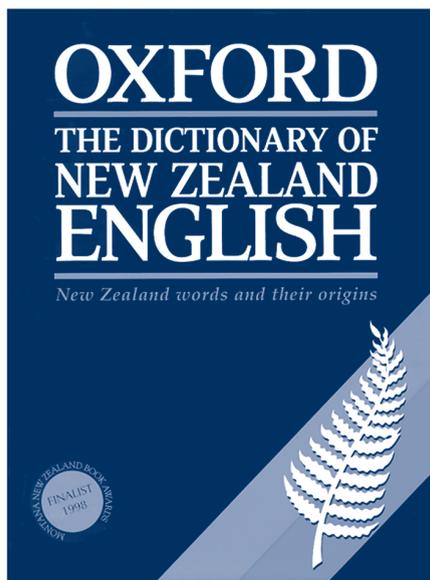
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

But clearly one of the biggest problems for the editor has been in finding printed citations for words which are known to have been heard in New Zealand for decades. So much slang and children's language is essentially spoken language, and a dictionary like this one is a dictionary of written language. Time and again, Harry Orsman has had to refer to his own experience (or that of others) of **New Zealandish** as she spoke in an attempt to provide an early dating for a word. New Zealanders reading this dictionary will often say to themselves 'But my grandfather used that term!' and be aware that the word is older than the quotations assembled in the dictionary show. Only if such people can provide written proof of the use of such words at dates earlier than the one given in the dictionary will we get a more accurate picture of how long some of these words have actually been around in New Zealand. (If you have such evidence, you can send a copy of it to the New Zealand Dictionary Centre at Victoria University of Wellington, so that the dictionary files can be up-dated.) A dictionary of New Zealand English of this kind needs the help of all New Zealanders to become more accurate.

In this forum, it may be worthwhile making a political point about this particular work. It has taken over forty years to come to fruition. Looking at it in retrospect, it cannot be said that those years have been wasted—particularly when you consider that the published volume represents only a third of the material that has been collected. But research which produces one major publication in forty years is not the kind of thing our political masters think the universities should be doing: constant results

are the name of the game. Under current government policy (not only in New Zealand but also all round the world), a work of this nature would effectively be discouraged because of its lack of immediate 'outputs'. I would suggest that we all are richer for having this work, with its long gestation period, and that any policies which force short-term outcomes without having the flexibility to allow for works of this kind are self-defeating.

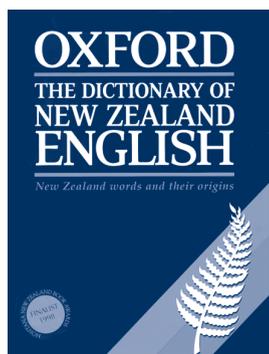
The Dictionary of New Zealand English is not merely a dictionary for looking up words, it is also a dictionary that can be studied in its own right for the light it throws on the New Zealand experience. It is a specialist work concerned with words and expressions whose existence is tied up with the society and culture of New Zealand; its aim is to provide depth of coverage rather than breadth; it is first and foremost an academic work (in the very best sense of the adjective); it is a national taonga.



The Dictionary of New Zealand English
edited by Harry Orsman
Winner of the 1998 Montana Medal for Non-Fiction

Laurie Bauer is Reader in Linguistics at Victoria University of Wellington and a member of the Advisory Committee of the New Zealand Dictionary Centre.

NEW FROM OXFORD

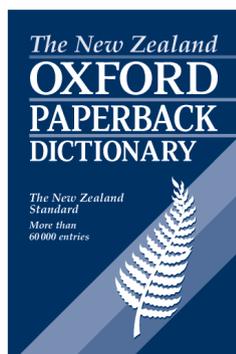


The Dictionary of New Zealand English

Edited by H.W. Orsman

Winner of the 1998 Montana Medal for Non-fiction
The Dictionary of New Zealand English provides a unique historical record of New Zealand words and phrases from their earliest use to the present day. Its 6,000 main headword entries and 9,300 separate subentries provide fascinating insights into New Zealand's diverse linguistic heritage.

0-19-558347-7 H/B
984 pp. \$150.00

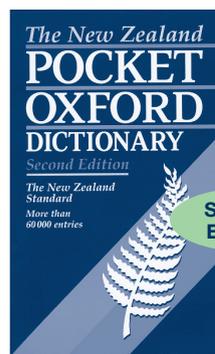


The New Zealand Oxford Paperback Dictionary

Edited by Tony Deveson

Produced in conjunction with the recently established New Zealand Dictionary Centre, *The New Zealand Oxford Paperback Dictionary* contains clear definitions of everyday vocabulary, encyclopedic entries for famous people, places and institutions, and includes many words of Maori origin. Oxford's New Zealand dictionaries offer an unique combination of international English and New Zealand usage.

0-19-558410-4 P/B
1,008 pp. \$19.95

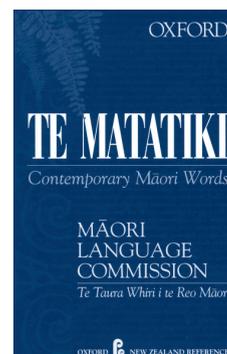


New Zealand Pocket Oxford Dictionary

Edited by Tony Deveson

The New Zealand Pocket Oxford Dictionary is the definitive New Zealand dictionary. It offers comprehensive coverage of current New Zealand English, combining New Zealand words and usages with the international vocabulary, drawing on the database of the 20-volume *Oxford English Dictionary*.

0-19-558379-5 P/B
1,264 pp. \$29.95



Te Matatiki Contemporary Māori Words

*Māori Language Commission
Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori*

The growing interest in Māori language learning has created a need for new words to describe contemporary ideas. First published in 1991, *Te Matatiki: New Māori Words* was designed to make the new vocabulary created by the Māori Language Commission more widely accessible. The new edition of this bestselling publication will help further promote te reo Māori as a living language.

0-19-558341-8 P/B
232 pp. \$19.95

From THE NEW ZEALAND DICTIONARY CENTRE



Graeme Kennedy

Director, New Zealand Dictionary Centre
School of Linguistics and Applied
Language Studies
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600 Wellington
New Zealand
e-mail: nzdc@vuw.ac.nz

In July 1997 Dr Harry Orsman's *Dictionary of New Zealand English* was published by Oxford University Press. The culmination of some 45 years' work, the dictionary has been widely recognised not only for its contribution to our understanding of how the English language has developed in New Zealand but also for the light it throws on our social history. Characteristically, Harry Orsman has generously given his intellectual property rights in the dictionary to Victoria University. At the launch of the dictionary at Government House in Wellington on 17 July 1997, it was therefore especially appropriate for Victoria University and Oxford University Press to announce a joint venture, the establishment of the New Zealand Dictionary Centre, to carry on the work which Dr Orsman has done so superbly.

The new Centre has three main responsibilities:

1. To maintain and update the *Dictionary of New Zealand English* database and to prepare future editions of the dictionary.
2. To conduct research on aspects of language in New Zealand. The Centre is establishing a research programme to this end and will welcome contributions from scholars and members of the general public about new words or new uses of older words which have evolved in New Zealand.
3. To prepare and publish dictionaries and related educational materials.

The Centre is fortunate to be located in Wellington where there are valuable sources for lexicographical research in the National Library, the Turnbull Library, National Archives, and the records of government and other agencies, which will enable researchers to explore a variety of topics.

Preliminary work has shown that there are opportunities for further research on a number of non-contemporary and contemporary sources to further develop our understanding of the New Zealand lexicon. Some examples include the language of the missionaries, whalers, goldminers, bush workers, farmers, soldiers, parliamentarians, police, the horse-racing industry, domestic life, school playgrounds, different sports, professions, and trades. Then there are the consequences of contact between Maori and English on each language and, closer to the present, the newspeak of administrative restructuring. (Remember **think big**, **corporatisation**, **sinking lids** and **downsizing**, or when **CHEs** were called **hospitals** and **administration assistants** were called **secretaries**?)

Those of us associated with the New Zealand Dictionary Centre hope it will in particular attract scholars from a variety of academic disciplines, some of whom will work on lexicographic topics for MA or PhD theses, bringing backgrounds in literary, historical or linguistic studies. The Centre will also of course welcome contributions from any persons with an interest in New Zealand words and their use.

There are now a number of new major regional dictionaries of English which record the way the language has developed in different geographical and cultural contexts. *The Australian National Dictionary* (1988), *The Dictionary of South African English* (1996), *The Dictionary of New Zealand English* (1997) and the forthcoming *Dictionary of Canadian English* (1998)—all published by Oxford University Press—complement OED 2, the 20-volume second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989). The interrelationship of these regional varieties of English with local indigenous languages and with British and American English, at a time of globalised cultural mergings, is a major field of linguistic research.

The establishment of English in further new varieties is itself a phenomenon of our time. English has become the most widespread international language, used regularly as a second or foreign language, by perhaps as many as 800 million people in every part of the world. How NZ English develops in such a context will be another focus of the New Zealand Dictionary Centre in the years ahead.

The New Zealand Dictionary Centre is being established at a time of significant advances in the technology available to support lexicography. The compilation of electronic versions of large collections of spoken and written texts, known as corpora, enables lexicographers to search rapidly these databases for new forms and for citations. The Centre will make use of this new technology. We are especially fortunate that Victoria University has for many years been a centre for the compilation of electronic corpora, with the one-million-word Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English and the similarly sized Wellington Corpus of Written New Zealand English both located here. Smaller corpora of Maori, Samoan and New Zealand Sign Language are being compiled at Victoria.

In future issues of *NZWords* I will be reporting on new developments at the Centre as well as on current projects and opportunities to find out more about the words we use in New Zealand.

NEW ZEALAND DICTIONARY CENTRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Dr Laurie Bauer**
Wellington Corpus of NZ English
- Dr Linda Cassells**
Publisher, OUP New Zealand
- Mr David Crabbe**
Head, School of Linguistics & Applied
Language Studies
- Assoc Prof Tony Deverson**
Associate Director, NZDC, University of
Canterbury
- Dr Christine Franzen**
Senior Lecturer, School of English, Film &
Theatre, VUW
- Prof Janet Holmes**
Wellington Corpus of NZ English
- Mr Wiremu Kaa**
Senior Lecturer, School of Māori Studies,
VUW
- Prof Timoti Kāretu**
Commissioner, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori
- Prof Graeme Kennedy**
Director, NZDC
- Mr Derek LeDayn**
Director, Information Services, VUW
- Prof David Mackay**
Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social
Sciences
- Dr Bruce Moore**
Director, Australian National Dictionary Centre
- Mr Ray O'Farrell**
OUPANZ Director, Education Division
- Prof Vincent O'Sullivan**
Director, Stout Centre, VUW
- Dr Harry Orsman**
Senior Fellow, NZDC
- Mr Marek Palka**
Managing Director, OUPANZ
- Mr Richard Samson**
OUPANZ Director, Academic Division

HARRY ORSMAN AND HIS DICTIONARY

SPEECH BY STUART JOHNSTON

The following is the text of a speech given by Emeritus Professor Stuart Johnston at an English Department function at Victoria University of Wellington on 24 July 1997, to celebrate the publication of the *Dictionary of New Zealand English*.

We have been invited here this afternoon not simply to mark the publication of Harry Orsman's *Dictionary* but to celebrate it. I really think something spectacular is needed—a fireworks display, or a *son et lumière*. But it is perhaps fitting that words alone should serve as our means of formally congratulating Harry on the publication of this great word book. There is a crisp proverb by one of Harry's favourite poets, William Blake, that captures my sense of the delight, the excitement we feel at holding and reading this volume: 'What is now proved was once only imagin'd'.

It is very appropriate that the English Department should host such a gathering, for Harry's *Dictionary* has been part of the life of the department for many years. Firstly, through the decades when Harry worked away at it in the snatches of time he could find within a heavy load of teaching and other responsibilities, inside and outside the university. Those in the university who knew something about it shared an awed sense that he had committed himself to the loneliness of the long-distance lexicographer. Those who were in and out of Harry's study saw the growing pile of files, and heard some of the choicest of the usages that Harry and his informants had discovered. Later, when he published some of the results of his research in the Macquarie and Heinemann dictionaries, and elsewhere, we saw much more of where he was heading, but few can have realised what the scope and grandeur of this great volume would be, how rich a picture it would give of our language, and of the history of our society and our natural world.

The second phase of the *Dictionary's* presence in the English Department began in the 1980s. Three important things happened that illustrate Harry's array of talents. To begin with there was the speed and skill with which he seized on the possibilities of large-scale computing coming to the university; then, his very productive use of the PEP Project Employment Programme, for training young people out of work. This enabled the transfer of the huge mass of material he had to the university's IBM mainframe (and later to personal computers), and access to new means of processing and editing; and then, at the end of the 1980s, his negotiating of large-scale funding of the final stages of preparation of

the *Dictionary* by having it accepted as a 1990 sesquicentennial project. All these meant that the English Department became the base for a very busy and very congenial *Dictionary* team.

Among so many things to praise about Harry's achievement I have a special admiration for the masterly way he transformed his research into New Zealand English from an individual project of heroic proportions into a team operation. A total of 44 people, full- and part-time, have been employed at different times on the *Dictionary*, from the early 1980s. I know that Harry takes quiet pride in the fact that all the PEP trainees found permanent employment elsewhere after their six months of *Dictionary* work. We can add the gloss: thanks to the skills they developed under Harry's demanding but ever-kindly guidance.



Harry Orsman
Editor, *Dictionary of New Zealand English*

Through the support Harry has had from the Computing Services Centre, from many other members of other departments and sections, and from research committees, the *Dictionary* has been part of the wider life of Victoria University as well as much prized by the English Department.

It is also very appropriate that there was an official national launching of the *Dictionary* at Government House (17 July 1997). As Harry said in his submission for sesquicentennial funding, pointing out various international parallels, having a national dictionary on historical principles is a sign of nationhood. In 1940, at New Zealand's centenary, there was a concerted attempt to mark its nationhood by publishing a number of surveys on

aspects of our history and culture—J. C. Beaglehole on exploration, and so on. Eric McCormick was commissioned to write the volume on literature and language. The book that was eventually published was called *Letters and Art in New Zealand*. As McCormick recalls in his memoirs, he simply dropped 'language' from his survey, without consulting the National Historical Committee, and without anyone seeming to notice the omission. How could McCormick have been expected to survey the subject adequately in the absence of a scholarly record of the language of New Zealanders?

Aspects of New Zealand vocabulary and usage have, of course, been examined in the intervening years, but always in a way that acknowledged how tentative and provisional any conclusions had to be in the absence of a dictionary on historical principles. This volume of Harry's is, indeed, a national milestone in our understanding of our heritage and our character; a sign of nationhood, important both in itself and for what, as a major reference work, it will enable other scholars and students to accomplish. Inevitably, early media attention to the dictionary is highlighting its entertaining record of the colloquial idiom, but what will come to matter more is the authority of its presentation of the language of the land, of the law, of many aspects of science, and so on.

What is so remarkable about it is that, unlike so many national reference works across the world—dictionaries, encyclopedias, dictionaries of biography, and the like—it was not planned by a national committee, or commissioned by government. It is, rather, Harry's gift to the nation, the fulfilment of an individual scholarly ambition, tenaciously pursued.

The sheer scale of the reading Harry did in compiling the illustrative quotations is remarkable enough, especially when we consider that the volume as we have it before us uses only a quarter to a third of the quotations he assembled—but I think that pride of place has to be given to Harry's extraordinary powers of response to the spoken language. As some entries in the *Dictionary* show, Harry comes from a family that has been very alert to distinctive New Zealand spoken idiom, especially that of Marlborough. In that year of 1940, when McCormick's survey appeared, a 12-year-old boy was finishing primary school down Havelock, and preparing to launch himself on the Hutt Valley and Wellington scene he has invigorated ever since. There is a special pleasure to be had in noting the 1941 citation that accompanies some words and phrases, namely: 'frequently used at St Patrick's College, Silverstream'.

Listener seems too passive a word to describe him—I like Bill Manhire's idea of Harry's being engaged in 'cultural espionage', eavesdropping on the whole of New Zealand. How were Harry's fellow boarders to know, as they went to classes, or got excited about rugby or athletics, or planned how to slope off down to the Hutt River to fry some sausages or have a smoke, or dreamed aloud about the meals and girls they would return to in the holidays, that this little joker Orsman was snapping up all their unconsidered linguistic trifles.

Similarly, there are 1945 citations that trace Harry's arrival at this university and, most importantly, his immersion in the linguistically vibrant subculture of Weir House, that showcase of post-war New Zealand male experience. I note, for example, the entry '**brewer's goitre**: a fat belly or "pot" associated with too much beer-drinking. [Known to Ed. from 1945–46.]'.

Harry's years as a student of English language in its Old, Medieval and Modern phases equipped him intellectually for the great undertaking of the *Dictionary*, but much more than that formal training was needed to propel and sustain him on a long journey of research. What preceded and enveloped that formal training was a deep love of the language that was all around him—in voices, in books, in newspapers, in every kind of printed matter. Harry must be the only New Zealander to have read the tabloid *Truth* over so many decades not for its scandal but for its style, not for its sin but for its syntax. It is this blend of irrepressible fascination with New Zealand English and scholarly rigour in exploring it that makes Harry a very special New Zealander.

At times he must have wondered what he had let himself in for, as he wrestled with thousands of decisions about the strategy and detail of making the *Dictionary*; or as he concentrated on those succinct definitions that are one of the glories of the volume, for example the packed economy of the entry for **luncheon sausage**. So often the entries are flavoured by the contrast between the colourful extravagance of the particular idiom and the elegant dryness of the lexicographer's definition. We will all have our favourites (mine include **buggerlugs** and **ankle-biter**). I urge Wellington readers not to miss the entry for **sesqui**. If things go wrong in the year 2000, perhaps we will have **millie** in the next edition.

Every entry in the *Dictionary* has been worked on and finalised by Harry, but he has been quick to acknowledge the help he has had, both in gathering examples of usage and in the later stages when he has had research assistants and expert editorial help. Those who have helped him are named in the volume. There are three of the people to whom the *Dictionary* is dedicated that I would like to mention. Firstly, Elizabeth Orsman. Only Harry could say how much Elizabeth's quiet strength and determination have

contributed to the making of this *Dictionary*; what we can all appreciate is how fully she has been identified with the Orsman family industry of dictionary-making, through her work on this project and on the smaller select *New Zealand Dictionary*, published by New House in 1994, of which she was principal editor. The whole story of the making of this learned dictionary is a fascinating piece of social history—Elizabeth has earned her place in that story many times over.

Harry names two academic mentors among the dedicatees. Professor Ian Gordon we all know well, and we realise from his recent book on usage and his appearances on Brian Edwards's radio programme that he is as sharp and incisive as a teacher and writer on language as he approaches 90 as he was when he taught Harry. In Harry's honours year Ian Gordon was away some of the time as Vice-Chancellor of the University of New Zealand, and he filled the gap in teaching by getting Professor P. S. Ardern to come down to Wellington out of retirement in Auckland. Pip Ardern is the other mentor Harry names. He was a scholar and teacher of exceptional ability, as can be seen from the memorial tributes that Jack Bennett, James Bertram, and Harry wrote in *Comment* in 1964.

Pip Ardern taught at Auckland University College for about 40 years. Without opportunities for sabbatical leave, and without ready access to academic publishers, he prepared and kept revising remarkable hand-written folio volumes of annotations on all the medieval texts he taught, as well as cyclo-styled editions of some of them. To see those volumes and to work with them was a revelation of what meticulous scholarship could be. Many of his outstanding students made their own copies, by hand or typewriter, and so disseminated his work to later generations. Some of the original volumes are now in the Beaglehole Room in the University Library. Harry gives some wonderful glimpses of Pip in his memorial piece in *Comment*.

In Ardern's four years at Victoria a number of his junior colleagues and senior students cottoned on to the exceptional opportunity they had to learn from him, and he influenced some distinguished academics: dictionary-makers such as Bob Burchfield, Grahame Johnston, and George Turner; medieval scholars such as Joe Trapp, George Russell, Bernie Martin, and Douglas Gray. But on none of these did he have as great an influence as he did on Harry, through 16 years of warm friendship. I remember the zest with which Harry would return to his teaching and his dictionary work after a visit to Pip.

In conclusion, Harry, I can think of no better way to express the congratulations and admiration of your colleagues, your students, and your friends at this achievement than to invite you to picture the pleasure and satisfaction with which your mentor and friend Pip Ardern would have taken up this volume.

Emeritus Professor Stuart Johnston

OXLEX CONFERENCE

English or Englishes? A conference on the role of English in post-colonial societies.

In the decade since 1988, Oxford University Press has published a number of major 'regional' dictionaries, including *The Australian National Dictionary* (1988), *The Dictionary of South African English* (1996), and *The Dictionary of New Zealand English* (1997). *The Canadian Concise Oxford Dictionary* will appear in 1998. These dictionaries recognise the fact that these regional Englishes are dialects of English in their own right; the public interest in their publication is a measure of the importance of regional languages in constructions of national identity in these post-colonial societies.

Yet their publication raises interesting questions:

- These dictionaries have been published at a time when there is an increasing globalisation and internationalisation of English. What is the prestige model for this new English? Can regional or 'national' Englishes survive in this new environment?
- While the new dictionaries have titles that suggest a 'national' language, they also recognise regionalisms within their own countries. Are these regionalisms likely to survive? What is the place of such regionalisms in dictionaries?
- How do the regional or 'national' Englishes position themselves in relation to indigenous languages?

In order to explore these questions in more detail, an international conference will be held on 27–29 October 1999 at the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, hosted by the Australian National Dictionary Centre and Oxford University Press. Further information on the conference will appear in future editions of *NZWords*.

ADDRESS FOR ARTICLES AND LETTERS:

Tony Deveson
Editor, *NZWords*
Department of English
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, Christchurch
Fax: 03 364 2065
e-mail: a.deveson@engl.canterbury.ac.nz

PAYMENT

The publisher reserves the right to edit or not to publish letters and articles that are submitted. There is no payment for letters. Payment for articles accepted for publication is by credit note from Oxford University Press for books from its list to the value of NZ\$100.

ALL MEDIA ENQUIRIES TO:

Jo Case
Dictionary & Reference Marketing Manager
Oxford University Press
Phone: +61-3-9934 9177
Fax: +61-3-9934 9100
e-mail: casej@oup.com.au

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 30 SEPTEMBER 1998

A NOTE FOR SUBSCRIBERS

NZWords is available free of charge on application to:
The Subscription Manager, *NZWords*
PO Box 11-149 Ellerslie Auckland
e-mail: pattersd@oup.com.au

NZWords
is published by Oxford University Press
540 Great South Road, Greenlane, Auckland
in partnership with

The New Zealand Dictionary Centre
Victoria University of Wellington
Phone: 04 472 1000
e-mail: nzdc@vuw.ac.nz
Publisher: Linda Cassells

Director of the New Zealand Dictionary Centre: Graeme Kennedy
Editor: Tony Deveson

Photocopying of this newsletter is permitted provided that all copies include the name of the newsletter (which appears at the foot of each page) as an acknowledgement of source. All other forms of storage and reproduction are restricted under the normal terms of copyright law.
ISSN 1440-9909