

Oxford English Dictionary News

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Editorial

Most of the articles that have appeared in previous issues of *OED News* have focused on a single aspect of the work that goes into creating the Dictionary.

In this issue I would like to offer something a little different: a snapshot of some of the things going on in all parts of the project on a single day. I picked Monday 19 April entirely at random, and asked my colleagues to write me something about what they had done that day; it could be a description of the whole day's work, or of a single piece of work which seemed worth picking out. What follows is only a selection of the contributions I received, and does not, indeed could not, cover anything like the full range of tasks being carried out on

that day. There is no account, for example, of the activities of our researchers working in libraries around the world, or of the many external consultants who comment on entries in particular subject areas, or of the research being done in the *OED* archives, or even of the mundane but essential business of filing away the quotation slips which flow into and around the *OED* office every day. Nevertheless, I hope the picture that emerges proves an interesting one.

Peter Gilliver, Newsletter Editor and Associate Editor, *OED*

19 April 2004: a day in the life of the *OED*

Bernadette Paton, Associate Editor:

On Monday I edited *OED* entries for words beginning with *pha-*. I found out all there is to know about Greek phalanxes (a soldier in a phalanx, known as a phalangite, was allowed to occupy no more than 1.5 feet of space when marching — sounds a tight squeeze but they say ancient Greeks were quite small). I also learned about phalaricas (or phalaricae) — ancient Molotov cocktails consisting of a javelin wrapped in tow and pitch, set alight and hurled at the enemy. But my word of the day was *phalanstery*. Phalansteries were early nineteenth-century communes established by the French socialist Charles Fourier and run entirely on egalitarian principles. Sadly, they met the fate of most such enterprises, and I've labelled the word 'Now *hist.*' (i.e.

it's still used, but only in a historical context).

Veronica Hurst, Principal Editor (Bibliography):

I worked through some of the flurry of contributions helping us to identify the remaining incompletely cited quotations taken by *OED* from Johnson's *Dictionary* (see my article in the March issue of *OED News*, which I hope may have been the starting point for some of these contributions). All in all we have been able to tick off another thirty or so of these 'Johnson quotations'. Processing a contribution would typically involve: checking full titles and dates of the reported source texts in catalogues to arrive at the correct citation style for *OED*; calling up the relevant headword in *OED*; adding the bibliographical details supplied by the readers to the hitherto unidentified

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Johnson quotations; notifying Fred Nicholls of the Johnson Project in case they're quotations he hasn't yet been able to identify; and arranging for the necessary changes to be made to the list of Johnson quotations as it appears on our web site, 'greying out' those quotations that have now been identified and adding the name of the reader as the discoverer thereof. [Editor's note: as of the time of writing, further contributions have increased the number of newly-identified Johnson quotations to 67, leaving only 229 still to be found. Thank you to all our readers!]

Samantha Schad, Senior Assistant Editor (Etymology):

On Monday I did penance. Actually, I revised the Latin component of the etymology of the word *penance*. This also involved looking at the entry for *penitence*; Latin *paenitentia* is the ultimate source of both words.

Katherine Martin, Assistant Editor (North American Editorial Unit):

I was working on a draft entry for the verb *other* (and the related adjective *othered*). Due to the complex and philosophical nature of these terms (and our mutual interest in the subject matter), Abigail and I decided to split them up — she took on the noun *othering* — so that we could discuss the definitions in detail and share our research.

Abigail Zitin, Senior Assistant Editor (North American Editorial Unit):

Apart from *othering* (see above), I have been preoccupied with participles. Assigned the simple task of putting together a definition and quotation paragraph for the literal sense of the adjectival compound 'oiled-up' — which one would expect to appear in print well before the more fanciful metaphorical extensions of the term — I've hit upon a possible first quotation from Dickens' *Hard Times*: 'All the melancholy-mad elephants, polished and oiled up for the day's monotony, were at their heavy exercise again.' But is this, on second thought, more verb than adjective, with its implied 'elephants [that had been]...oiled up'? It would be a shame not to be able to use the quotation: it would make a fine counterbalance to the 'oiled-up love god' who features in the last quotation in my draft entry, from a 2002 issue of *Smash Hits* magazine.

Andreas Groeger, Assistant Editor (Etymology):

I spent a very interesting time investigating the etymology of the noun *panzer*, eagerly searching for

early uses of the word in its 'tank' sense in German. The earliest German occurrence I've found so far is from 1934, but this can probably be improved upon!

Catherine Bailey, Senior Assistant Editor:

On Monday I arrived to a diary full of meetings concerning a new editing system for the *OED*, the development of which is involving a great deal of input from the staff of the project. It was quite an atypical *OED* day; I spent all day talking about the processes of editing, finding quotations, and tracking workflow, and no time at all actually doing those things.

Andrew Ball, Senior Editor:

I tried to ascertain whether all of the quotations in *OED2* cited in the form 'a1500 P. Johnston *Thre Deid Powis*', which appear to have been taken from the version of this old Scots poem given in a folio manuscript known as the 'Maitland Folio', could be quoted instead from the 'Bannatyne manuscript', and attributed to Robert Henryson. They could.

Bill Trumble, Associate Editor:

Science revision for the word *pen-fish*: three sketchy senses in *OED* ('sea-pen'; 'squid'; 'porgy'); no twentieth-century quotations. So I searched ECCO [Eighteenth Century Collections Online, a valuable electronic resource] for earlier examples, and found some, but only for a fourth sense (an eelpout). Other online resources yielded examples only for the sense 'fish raised in a pen', another entry altogether if I decide to add it. A bitty entry made bittier. (Typical fish.)

Nick Shearing, Senior Editor (New Words):

The Contemporary Reading Programme regularly looks at recent issues of magazines, and today I prepared some of the magazines that have recently been read (and noteworthy words highlighted) for keying. This entailed giving suitable *OED* citation styles for such titles as *Sporting Gun*, *Diva*, *Prediction*, *Knowledge.co.uk Magazine*, *Scouting Magazine*, *Mixmag*, and *Loaded*, and attaching appropriate subject labelling to these sources and their related catchwords. I also edited a number of new entries, including those for the phrase 'to miss the point' (which required the commissioning of library research to see if my first quotation, found in the third edition of Kennet's translation of Pascal's *Thoughts on Religion*, will convert to an earlier edition) and for *Pogs* — a children's game played with plastic discs, named after the lids of a Hawaiian juice drink of passion-fruit, orange, and guava.

The newsletter of the *Oxford English Dictionary*

Philip Gerrish, Assistant Editor (Bibliography):

Spent the whole day preparing batches of quotations to be sent out for checking by library researchers. This involved: using search tool to find quotations marked by editors as needing queries answered, gathering all examples from each individual work that I could find, deciding how many of these to send out at one time (I'm limited to roughly 70 quotations at one go), and then printing them off on paper. Then searched online library catalogues and our in-house bibliographical sources to provide guidance on how the quotations should be cited (date, author, form of title, form of location). Finally, updated annotations in individual entries and in-house records to show that work had been considered and dealt with.

Edmund Weiner, Deputy Chief Editor:

I read and took notes from an article in a scholarly journal analysing the historical development of the epistemic use of *ought* (as in 'it's 7 o'clock; I should think they all ought to have reached home by now') from its more usual and older deontic use ('one ought always to tell the truth'). This use is not in *OED2* but is likely to be in *OED3*.

Jeremy Marshall, Associate Editor:

I checked the French text of Cuvier's *Le Règne Animal* (1817) against Dr H. McMurtrie's English translation (1834), to confirm that the name 'Palpicornes', as used for a family of beetles, could be either French or scientific Latin, depending on context.

Sarah Ogilvie, Senior Assistant Editor:

Yesterday, besides editing the usual batch of words with a non-European origin, which included the Hindi word *pahari* and the West African sense of *palaver*, I prepared a lecture for some visiting journalists from China. The lecture will compare Chinese words edited by James Murray (for the First Edition of *OED*) with Chinese words edited by us (for *OED3*). So Bev Hunt, the *OED*'s archivist, kindly found Murray's slips for the words *oopack*, *ketchup*, *cha*, and *chop-stick*. In the crumbling slips for the last of these, we discovered a letter from the world-famous sinologist James Legge (1815-1897), Professor of Chinese at Oxford, relating the word *chop-stick* to Chinese *k'wai tsze* meaning 'nimble boys'. He wrote, 'If you saw how nimbly they are used, you would call the name a good one.' I later learned that Professor Legge was a good friend of Murray, who requested to be buried beside him in Wolvercote Cemetery in north Oxford. Little did I know that the word *chop-stick* would lead me there.

Yvonne Warburton, Online Publication Manager:

Mail some online links to a regular correspondent keen to establish an etymological link between *god* and *good* and *goddess* — try to gently educate her in the ins and outs of Germanic etymologies. Turn to the serious business of the day — access control, the dark arts by which users are authorized to get into *OED Online*. Our new OUP central system is still learning to talk to that of our hosts, HighWire Press in California, and various aspects of accounts and statistics need checking. Unearth some bogus requests for free trials of *OED Online* from individual users posing as institutions — no chance of success! Check the technical support e-mail; complaints from one displeased user who wants a thesaurus are offset by my *god/good* lady replying with thanks and 'Goddess bless the *OED!*' Not a bad day.

Jemma Best, Senior Assistant Editor:

I final-edited some entries with some help from a senior editor. One entry was for *peg-legger* (a noun meaning a person who has an artificial leg); I already had quotations from 1915, 1937, 1943, and 1995, mostly from British and American newspapers, but we followed a hint on the Internet and managed to find what appears to be a quotation from a book published in 1982, which allowed me to give a better picture of the range of texts in which this word has been used.

Teresa Armstrong, Subscriptions Manager, Online Sales and Marketing:

A small proportion of my work is *OED*-related. I checked the files which are passed from the SAMS access control system to the HighWire access control system. I updated a number of access control records, most memorably for the Pentecostal Church of Vopnafjordur in Iceland. And I investigated the implications of Australian universities using Metalib on a shared portal for accessing/searching *OED* and other online resources.

Fiona McPherson, Senior Editor (New Words):

I spent some time training Jessica Stevens, who is with us on a placement, in the ways of the New Words Group. I went through some of the procedures that we follow when assessing a word which is not yet in *OED*, showing some of the databases we search to find evidence for it and generally explaining how we decide whether a word merits inclusion or not. Training like this is particularly enjoyable, as it forces you to focus your mind on the position in hand, and you are forced

Words and phrases covered in the June 2004 *OED Online* update could help you to...

...**oppose oodles** of **oncoming orange ooze**... ...**opine** on the **oracle's ominous omission** of **onyx**...

...**operate** on the **only one-armed Olmec ophthalmologist**... ...**oppress omnivorous opossums** with **opiated onion**...

to explain procedures which are now second nature to someone who has never done anything like it before. It also makes you realize that you do actually know rather a lot about your position (something which you can often forget).

Elizabeth Thompson, Data Capture Assistant:

I spent most of Monday searching newspaper databases (including the Times Digital Archive and the American source Newspaper Archive) for additional evidence for compounds of the noun *pool*. Compounds such as *pool betting* and *pool hall* led to articles about gambling in early twentieth-century America; *pool petrol* and *pool butter* revealed shortages in wartime Britain; and *pool reporter* and *pool policy* were relevant to the restricted access of newspaper reporters to the events surrounding the end of the Cold War and the first Gulf War.

Gillian Walker, Editorial Project Manager:

Today I sent out the end-of-year accounts reports to the OED's Principal Editors, showing expenditure against budget for 2003/04.

Bess Bradfield, Senior Assistant Editor:

On Monday I edited my way through eighteen entries, from *pinkishness* to *pinlock*. En route I found six new antedatings, including a 1917 example of the verb *pink-slip* (meaning to fire someone, and previously only known from 1953); I also learned that it is better to be *pinkish* (fit, well) than a *pinkling* (a weak or delicate youth), that *pink lady* cocktails can be made with cream instead of egg white, and that in Australia drinking too many such alcoholic beverages may make one *pinko*.

Jane Millar, Project Planner:

On Monday this week I checked the OED 'Suggestions' box, processed editors' timesheets relating to finalization work on publication batches 19 and 20 (*orb* to *overzealousness*) and spent two hours in a meeting discussing the new computer system with the technical team. The topic was 'Schedule Management', so we looked at screen mock-ups, discussed functionality, ergonomics, colour, navigation, etc., and focused on making the data useful and relevant both managerially and editorially.

David Martin, Senior Assistant Editor:

Spent all day editing the entry for the word *phoenix*, which poses an interesting etymological question about a possible connection with *Phoenician*. During my trawl for new quotations I was perhaps lucky to add

only one quotation about Harry Potter: his 'phoenix-feathered wand'.

Jennie Price, Senior Editor (New Words):

Today saw the New Words Group begin work on a new range of the alphabet. I took a bundle of suggestions for new words — from the files, members of staff, and authors — and looked through them to discard any obvious non-starters: words already in, those with very little evidence, and so on. Then I started assessing each suggestion in more detail, searching databases (our own and external ones) to find sufficient evidence to create an entry. The first few did not make it through, but eventually I began a draft new entry for *plough jockey*, a mildly derogatory slang term for a farmer.

Abigail Reynolds, Artist in Residence:

I spent the day testing magnifying glasses and lights to shine words onto walls... And cutting up copper piping.

John Simpson, Chief Editor:

Working through the research file covering entries which have already been revised and published online. Some of the cards indicate minor stylistic changes that need to be made to the Dictionary. More interestingly others represent earlier examples to be added to entries. Perhaps the most surprising is an antedating for *malleमारoking*, defined as 'the boisterous and drunken exchange of hospitality between sailors in extreme northern waters'. To date our only evidence for this comes from dictionaries and from people citing it as a curious expression for a curious activity. But now we have an example (collected by our Historical Reading Programme) from the famous whaler William Scoresby, using the term in context about fifty years before our previous first example. One for the history books. Another small pebble added to the mosaic of the OED.

Historical postscript: The randomly chosen date of 19 April turns out to have been an auspicious one. It was 122 years earlier to the day, on 19 April 1882, that James Murray passed the first batch of copy for the Dictionary to the printer; and on 19 April 1928 the publication of the First Edition was completed with the appearance of the final fascicle, *Wyse-Wyzen*.

Appeals

Words or phrases which appear on the Appeals List are those currently being drafted or revised for the *OED* for which the documentary evidence is incomplete. Often these are slang or colloquial items which cannot be researched in specialist texts and are most likely to be found by a general reader in non-specialized or popular literature.

Usually the appeal is for an earlier example than our current earliest (e.g. 'antedate 1970' for a word for which our earliest example comes from 1970), but sometimes the appeal is for an interdating where there is a large gap in the *OED*'s quotation evidence (e.g. 'interdate 1589-1910'). Occasionally we ask for a postdating (e.g. 'postdate 1875'), if an editor feels that an item being revised is still current but has failed to find any recent examples through the usual avenues of research.

Please note: it is generally safe to assume that examples found by searching the Web, using search engines such as Google, will have already been considered by *OED* editors.

donkey (n.: (S. Afr.) primitive water-heating device) antedate 1997
overplot (v.: to provide with an excessively complex plot) antedate 1961
peak (v.: (chiefly N.Z.) to baulk, fail to 'deliver') postdate 1971
peasy (a.: very easy) antedate 1989 (cf. *easy peasy*, currently documented from 1976)
pegall (n.: kind of covered basket) postdate 1936
peg doll (n.) antedate 1950
pelter (n.: animal, person, etc., capable of moving fast) postdate 1901
pemmicanize (v.: compress, condense) postdate 1935
plank (n.: stupid or inept person) antedate 1981; also any evidence of 1980s use outside NW England
plinky-plonk (a.) antedate 1971
plinky-plonky (a.) antedate 1989
pot (also **pot down**) (v.: to cook, stew) any (esp. 20th-century) evidence

Please send submissions to oed3@oup.com

Interesting antedatings

Revision of the entries in the June 2004 *OED Online* update has revealed an earlier origin than previously known for many words, including:

omnipotence (antedated to a1460 from 1566)
one-legged (1636 from 1842)
onrush (noun; a1784 from 1844)

onshore (1567 from 1875)
ooh (1602 from 1916)
opacify (1877 from 1940)
open-minded (1748 from 1828)
ophthalmic (a1425 from 1605)
opportunistically (1915 from 1958)

Quotable quotes

Thought-provoking snippets from the *OED* quotation files:

that'd be most of us then...

1763 W. Dowdeswell (*title*) An address to such of the electors of Great-Britain, as are not makers of cyder and perry.

what fun they had...

1876 'G. Eliot' *Daniel Deronda*, While this polite pea-shooting was going on, Gwendolen trifled with her jelly.

Olympic prowess...

1603 P. Holland tr. Plutarch *Morals* (Gloss.), The practise of all the five feats of activity, which is called Pentathlon and Quinquertium: to wit, buffetting, wrestling, running leaping and coiting.

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Addresses and contacts

EDITOR, OED NEWS

Peter Gilliver
 (peter.gilliver@oup.com)
 A full list of OED staff can be found
 at www.oed.com

OED APPEALS AND SUBMISSIONS

Oxford English Dictionary
 Oxford University Press
 Great Clarendon Street
 Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
 Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353660
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353811
 E-mail: oed3@oup.com

OXFORD DICTIONARY RESEARCH CENTRES

United Kingdom and Europe

Oxford English Dictionary
 Oxford University Press
 Great Clarendon Street
 Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
 Tel: +44 (0) 1865 556767
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 556646
 E-mail: oed3@oup.com

United States

Oxford English Dictionary
 North American Editorial Unit
 Oxford University Press
 198 Madison Avenue, New York
 N.Y. 10016, USA
 Tel: +1 212 726 6215

Australia

Australian National Dictionary
 Centre
 Linnaeus Cottage
 Australian National University
 Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia
 Fax: +61 (0) 2 6249 0475
 E-mail: ANDC@anu.edu.au

Canada

Canadian Oxford Dictionary
 Oxford University Press
 70 Wynford Drive, Don Mills,
 Ontario M3C 1J9, Canada
 Tel: +1 (416) 441 2941

New Zealand

New Zealand Dictionary Centre
 Victoria University of Wellington
 PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand
 Tel: +64 (0) 4 463 5634/5644
 Fax: +64 (0) 4 463 5604
 E-mail: nzdc@vuw.ac.nz

South Africa

Oxford University Press
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 South Africa
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Director, Online Products: Lisa
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 Oxford University Press Inc., USA
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United Kingdom, Europe, and Rest of World

Sales and Marketing Director,
Online Products: Susanna Lob
 Oxford University Press
 Great Clarendon Street
 Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353308
 E-mail: worldinfo@oed.com
Head of Publicity, Academic
Division: Kate Farquhar-Thomson
 Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353423
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Margot Charlton
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