

# Open Slather

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### EDITORIAL

NZWords 14 contains news of old and early New Zealand English usages, along with changes found in more recent times. Increasingly, we note that we are borrowing and using more and more terms from te reo Maori. In this issue, two articles highlight this increase. Jenna Tinkle, a student summer research assistant, describes the extent to which new and changing language features, including increased borrowings, are found in New Zealand newspaper death notices, and André Taber provides us with an interesting summary of the changing use of **hangi** and **hangi** technology. We are happily combining elements of both languages in compounds and collocations, including **folding koha**, which we particularly enjoyed reading. Jenna's article also focuses on the use of text language, hypocoristics, and abbreviated forms in death notices. Tony Deveson provides us with an examination of **slather** and **open slather** through the years, and there is a paper on alcohol, and the attitudes expressed through particular language use to alcohol and its uses in New Zealand. We also look at how New Zealanders look at exaggeration or hyperbole. In Miscellany, we examine both current and early uses, both from within New Zealand and from other varieties of English.

Thank you to all those who have provided the Centre with citations, and comments. We appreciate your letters, your observations, and your interest in words, along with the additions to our databases.

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Readers of Dianne Bardsley's article in last year's NZWords will know of the large and exciting boost given to the historical study of the New Zealand English lexicon by the appearance of the National Library's online resource *Papers Past* in 2007. We now have easily-searchable access to a huge body of journalistic material quite beyond what even the indefatigable Harry Orsman's prodigious reading programme for the *Dictionary of New Zealand English* could have incorporated. With *Papers Past* (and some other electronic databases), labour-intensive page-by-page perusal for words, if and when they might occur, is replaced by the speed and certainty of targeted online searching, and much new and improved information about New Zealandisms and their history is being obtained as a result.

A specific case in point concerns the word **slather** (as noun and verb), especially in the recognisably New Zealand (and Australian) colloquial expression **open slather**, now widely used in reference to situations where actions are unconstrained, freedom of choice prevails, and 'anything goes'. DNZE records the term from 1959 (in Gordon Slatter's *A Gun in My Hand*), also noting 1919 as the earliest Australian use. This is a rather unlikely 40-year gap in first usage between the two countries, as Orsman was no doubt aware, but his reading had simply turned up no evidence of earlier New Zealand use.

The earliest citation for **open slather** recovered from *Papers Past* is in fact from 1915, so (at present) antedating the Australian (*Australian National Dictionary*; also *OED*) record as well as – considerably – DNZE's. The *Poverty Bay Herald* on 15 July 1915 printed a letter from a Gunner Pat Duncan at Gallipoli to a friend in Gisborne:

It was our fate to witness the misfortune of the sinking of the Triumph near-by, and when next morning the Majestic followed it made us want still more to 'Up and at them'. However, things will not and cannot be always in our favor, but it [is] hard to grin and bear it at times, especially when your side loses without a

fair go, or what we call 'an **open slather**'.

The 'fair go' (or 'fair fight'?) meaning here is not quite the same as the subsequent usage; that is first seen in a further antedating of all previous records, from a boxing column in the *Grey River Argus* on 26 March 1918:

I think his [a boxer named Torrie's] will be one of the best professional fights the Association has ever put on and it will be **open slather** from the gong. I am sure this event will be worth the price of admission.

The boxing context is significant here, as we shall see later. Eleven further instances of **open slather** (in the sense 'free rein' or 'free-for-all') are found in the *Papers Past* data before 1932 when the coverage ends, and all but one are from the popular weekly *New Zealand Truth*, in various sporting, criminal and political stories, some sourced from Australia. *Truth*'s 'Melbourne Rep.' on 6 December 1924, for example, reporting on a spate of bank shootings there, sardonically observed:

It is open season all the year round for the shooting of bank clerks. Even the wild ducks get a sanctuary sometimes, but with the underpaid and responsibility-laden banker it is an **open slather** all the year round.

It seems very likely that in due course the oldest record of **open slather** will be found in an Australian source. As to the remainder of the 40-year interval mentioned earlier, we can expect to fill some of that from other searchable online collections. Several instances of the expression's wartime use have been found in *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War*, for example, available at the New Zealand Electronic Text Centre ([www.nzetc.org](http://www.nzetc.org)).

So much (and fairly easily) for questions of antedating and interdating. A second line of inquiry concerns the lexical origins of this compound form. What is the **slather** that is **open** here? DNZE and AND both nest **open slather** as the sole item under the headword **slather**, and DNZE derives it from British dialect and US *slather* 'a large amount', as defined in

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*OED*. In truth it is difficult to see any connection between the idea of free rein and a large amount or quantity of anything; once again the rich materials of *Papers Past* can point us to a different and surer explanation of the expression's origins.

In international English **slather** itself has become familiar rather as a verb, in the sense 'apply liberally or thickly'. You can **slather** butter on your toast, say, or sunscreen on your face. *OED* labels the verb still 'chiefly dial. & US', and gives two other senses: 1 'slip or slide' (now evidently archaic), and 3 'thrash, defeat thoroughly, castigate'. The latter, still current in North American use, would seem to be an extension of the idea of besmearing with cream and the like, rather as we can talk about giving someone a 'pasting' in a similar transferred usage.

Interestingly, Orsman does have a separate entry in *DNZE* for the phrasal verb **slather up**, with the meaning 'scold, slate', with citations from 1926 and 1952. We can now antedate this variant of *OED*'s **slather** sense 3 (referring to assaults both physical and verbal), again to 1915. In a story headed 'Back from Samoa', *Truth* on 27 March 1915 reports:

These officers and men, commented upon at the time of their departure as 'the flower of New Zealand's manhood' etc., went to Samoa expecting to **slather up** the Germans. When they got there they found that the Teuton preferred to leave out the **slather**, and the eager lads had to enter upon the dull dreary round of garrison life.

And later that same year a letter to the editor of the *Grey River Argus* on 15 December begins:

Sir, I read a lot of chucks off about our Member in your paper, but I reckon our Member **slathered up** the capitalistic class to some tune in his speech the other night.

There are numerous similar instances of both **slather** and **slather up** in the *Papers Past* materials in the remainder of the 1910s and through the 1920s, though their meanings here do not appear to have survived into present-day New Zealand English. The verb

**slather** by itself is found also before 1915, including an intransitive use in this boxing announcement from *Truth* on 23 May 1914:

On the 28th of this month, Gisborne stoush lovers will have another bonzer night, when the Gisborne Association will bring Bert Lowe and Bill Bartlett together. These two are scheduled to **slather** for fifteen rounds, but this is not going to be nearly all the fun. Viv Lowe and Poesy will try to deal out oblivion to each other during six rounds, while Mellow and Heany and also Harrison and Frurie will put up their 'dukes'.

Finally, as already seen in the citation above referring to Kiwi soldiers in Samoa, there is a noun **slather** that derives from and corresponds to the verb in its 'thrashing' or 'defeating' sense. The noun too can be accompanied by **up** (a **slather up**, also a **slathering up**), as in this report from the *Poverty Bay Herald* of 27 March 1916:

Writing to his mother, Mrs D. Gordon, from Egypt on January 23 last, Lance-Corporal W. Heany said he was still in good health. They expected another big '**slather up**', and he was sure they would shatter the Turks and Germans because they had plenty of confidence in themselves.

*DNZE*'s first citation at **slather up** (entered as a verb) is in fact a noun use, also from 1916, and glossed as 'a violent brawl or beating up':

Before we got shut of it the battle [a street fight] had developed into a first-class **slather-up**. [*Anzac' On the Anzac Trail*]

**Slather** in the US sense of 'large amount' is found in *Papers Past* as early as 1879 (often in the plural **slathers of** ...). The more aggressive meaning taken from the verb first appears in 1908, the first of some twenty hits (not including **open slather**) extending to 1930, every one from *Truth*, and almost all from that publication's boxing reports. A favourite collocation is '**slather and**

**whack**', as in the initial instance, from 12 December 1908:

Then both warriors made a speech, which was lost amid the roar. It was a great **slather and whack** fight. There is no gainsaying Grim's pluck and ability to take punishment. But there is a big chunk of his reputation gone now that Griffin dropped him.

Elsewhere in these reports from the ring there is 'wild slather', 'ding dong **slather**', 'brisk **slather**', and 'stoush and **slather**'. On 4 March 1922, for example, we have this:

Chris. Rusterholz (8.5) versus Cliff Pearce (7.12). This was the tit-bit of the evening and provided five rounds of **ding dong slather** of a high order. Both are quick two-handed fighters and they went at it hammer and tacks without a dull moment intervening.

Typically then **slather** is used to describe bouts of energetic, unrestrained, toe-to-toe pummelling ('hammer and tacks' is a New Zealand variant of 'hammer and tongs'), rather than exhibitions of the noble art of boxing as such. The contrast is explicit in the following from 24 December 1921:

The feathers, J. Whittome (8.7) and C. McCarthy (8.5), followed, and they gave a clean, clever exhibition, more like a professional bout than that of amateurs. There was none of that wild **slather**, but good, scientific punching throughout.

Similarly on 16 August 1928:

Seldom indeed has a crowd voiced its approval of an out-and-out boxing match as it did at Wellington last week. Scientific stuff nine times out of ten leaves the audience cold – it is the **slather and whack** artists that get 'em on their feet, yelling encouragement. But the exception was bumped into last week when Jack Carroll gained a points decision over Charlie Purdy. Carroll came to us with a reputation of a bit of a killer, but his first

fight in Wellington showed he was more of a stylist. He showed up as a nice mover, possessing plenty of speed at both ends, but totally lacking as a purveyor of hefty wallops.

The sense of all-out, no-holding-back fighting, the exchange of 'hefty wallops', in the word **slather** made it natural for **open** to accompany it adjectivally. As well as that given earlier from 1918, another boxing example in *Papers Past* comes from *Truth* on 3 January 1929:

The last round was a 'trimmer'. Both boys let themselves go, and made it

an **open slather**. The crowd was on its feet throughout.

Slightly differently, a brief note in the *Grey River Argus* on 11 October 1920 suggests that an **open slather** was also the name of a boxing event open to all-comers:

Open Competition (heading)  
In the final of the **open 'slather'** Dellaway gained the verdict over Parker on the towel trick [?].

In summary, the newly-acquired and extensive evidence from *Papers Past* allows us to say with some certainty that the original free-for-all implied by the combination **open slather** was that of the boxing ring

(or other fighting situation), and that the **slather** in question was the infliction or the exchange of blows, a sense which is no doubt shared with Australian English (though not yet recorded in Australian dictionaries – or as far as I know in any dictionary anywhere).

While **slather** itself in that meaning is now disused, the fuller expression **open slather** on the other hand came to be transferred early on to a variety of contexts outside of physical fighting, and it has enjoyed continued colloquial currency and popularity ever since. So far as the opportunities for using the expression are concerned, it's now, well, **open slather**.

## 'Love Ya and Miss Ya Heaps!'

### Evidence of Changing Cultural Scripts in New Zealand Death Notices

JENNA TINKLE, STUDENT RESEARCH ASSISTANT, NEW ZEALAND DICTIONARY CENTRE

Newspaper death notices reflect New Zealand's changing cultural scripts and contain evidence of several features of New Zealand English. Traditionally, death notices are a means of notifying the public of someone's death, with minimal information usually provided about the person, including their full name, birth date, place of birth and perhaps the names of family members they leave behind. Most provide details about the funeral, memorial or tangi and perhaps might also include a short but sweet and often generic statement, such as 'Always cherished', 'Missed but never forgotten', and the classic 'Rest in peace'. They are, or rather they were, primarily an informative announcement.

This was my understanding of death notices until I read several hundred death columns from *The Dominion Post* (*Dom Post*), *The New Zealand Herald* (*NZ Herald*) and the *Whakatane Beacon*, published between 2006 and 2009. I discovered several recurring trends and patterns in the type of language used and the structure and content of these notices. These patterns reflect what is acceptable in our community in terms of cultural and social norms as well as revealing aspects of New Zealand life, culture, and of course our variety of English.

It did not take long to discover that, while traditional send offs still make up a proportion of the death columns, it is clear that New Zealanders no longer feel restricted by set formulaic phrases when farewelling loved ones. Evidently, anything goes. Those who wish may still announce death in structured, formal language, but it is also perfectly acceptable to stray away from tradition and state that so and so was the 'Best Bloody Mate of Colin' (*NZ Herald* 3 November 2006: C7).

New conventions are apparent. Death notices are no longer purely a means of announcing death; they have other more personal, often bittersweet, functions. They are used to record what people miss most about someone: 'Skeenie, we'll miss our weekly debates on rugby and racing' (*NZ Herald* 14 January 2009: D6), relate a personal joke, a humorous quality, a favourite hobby: 'She loved her tennis and we loved our team mate' (*Dom Post* 9 August 2008: D7), dish out a jokey piece of advice: 'Be good up there!' (*NZ Herald* 21 April 2008: C7), or relay a defining characteristic. They are also increasingly used for public expression of personal grief and to ask 'what will I do without you?!', 'Who will I ring three times a day?' (*NZ Herald* 17 November 2006: C6).

Also noticeable is the tendency for people to address the dead, rather

than addressing the notice to the public. This trend is often in the form of thanks: 'Candy Baby. Thanks for always being there for a wine, a fag, a gossip and a good laugh – just one of the girls.' (*NZ Herald* 19 June 2008: B7), or seen in the use of the second person: 'We hope the Vegies you grow up there are as good as the ones you grew for us.' (*NZ Herald* 26 September 2006: C8).

At first I was amazed, if not a little shocked, by the casual, informal tone of some of these notices. Often references are made to seemingly insignificant aspects of someone's life: 'Watching Coro St won't be the same' (*NZ Herald* 21 April 2008: C7) and 'Who will bring the Christmas Crackers now?' (*NZ Herald* 21 April 2008: C7). Other notices are communicated in such a way that they give the impression that people are planning on seeing the person the next day: 'Later Grandad' (*NZ Herald* 7 February 2007: D7).

However, the more I read, the more I realised that the casual, sometimes light-hearted tone is not a reflection of New Zealanders' attitudes to death. Rather, these notices were written by people who knew the deceased so well that they were able to provide the public with a snapshot of their loved one's life and personality. It is more heart-wrenching to read how a young son misses the activities he did with his dad than to read the



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generic RIP notice: 'Dad – camping and fishing with you was the best. I will always think of our walk up at Stoney Bay – up the creek and to the old fire place.' (NZ Herald 30 April 2008: D4).

These personalised notices provide glimpses of the deceased's identity and personality as well as New Zealand's broader cultural identity, social and cultural norms. One of the most frequently mentioned activities is fishing. We are a country full of fishermen: 'Make sure you walk slowly mate, we'll catch up one day and go fishing again.' (NZ Herald 5 November 2008: D5), *Catch heaps of whitebait for us* (NZ Herald 19 November 2008: D6), and 'No more duck shooting and no more you.' (NZ Herald 28 February 2006: C8).

Another quality that is often referred to, and greatly missed, is talent in the kitchen. Clearly, we are a nation of superb bakers and cooks: 'She left an everlasting impression on us all, especially her baking.' (Dom Post 15 January 2010: C9), 'We'll miss your roasted cashew nuts and lamb roasts and we especially will miss you Auntie B.' (NZ Herald 19 November 2008: D6) and 'PS. We'll miss our talks, your peanut brownies and banana cake.' (NZ Herald 19 March 2008: D5).

It is no secret that we are a nation with a heavy drinking culture, thus it is no surprise that alcohol is referred to frequently: 'Have a glass of Chardonnay with the angels and keep dancing.' (NZ Herald 20 March 2006 C11) and 'Finished his work, put away his tools and gone home to Mum... "Feel like a beer, Duck?"' (NZ Herald 21 January 2009 D8). Some refer to how they toast in remembrance: 'We'll have a Harvey Wallbanger for you, June.' (Dom Post 11 February 2009: D9), 'Pop/Bertie you will be missed, but always remembered with love, we toast you with a wee glass of Port.' (NZ Herald 24 March 2006: C8), and 'Cheers and beers from the lads' (NZ Herald 19 March 2008: D5).

As Kiwis, morning and afternoon cuppas hold important status in our day, and so it is natural to miss this shared time with friends: 'I will miss our Sundays together, when we shared cappuccino and cake.' (NZ Herald 13 March 2008: C7) and 'Who is Ali going to enjoy coffee with now?' (NZ Herald 10 January 2006:

C6). Also, there is hope that this daily ritual will continue in the afterlife: 'Hope you are enjoying the milo and tea with Dad and Janine' (Dom Post 2 August 2008: D7) and 'Enjoy your cups of tea in heaven.' (NZ Herald 5 January 2006: C6).

A recurring pattern is the belief that heaven or 'up there' is often a reflection of a person's life on earth. Everyone hopes that their loved one has gone to a 'better place' and it is only natural to picture this place as containing all of their favourite things and people. Our cultural norms and the values that we prioritise are captured in these notices. Our Kiwi community and culture is reformed in the afterlife; a fisherman will have an ever-flowing sea of fish: 'May the fishing and whitebait be forever plentiful.' (Whakatane Beacon 17 October 2007: 12), a wine connoisseur's glass will always be full of the very best: 'Hope the red wine is flowing and you have your glass full where-ever you are.' (NZ Herald 8 August 2007: D7), green-fingered grandparents can garden all day long and hobbies can be carried out to their hearts' content: 'You can bowl everyday now.' (Dom Post 20 November 2009: C11).

This portrayal of heaven is almost irreverent, the pastimes people continue 'up there' idiosyncratic. This is an interesting type of spirituality; it is detached, it seems, from any religion but still expresses hope and comfort that there is something else. To think that it is all over is too harsh. It is much more pleasant to imagine that whatever our family members and friends loved doing down here, 'up there' they can do it as much as they please, guilt-free of course: 'I hope they have got plenty of fags and coke' (NZ Herald 13 February 2007: C6) and 'Enjoy the Pokies in heaven.' (NZ Herald 8 May 2008: C7).

Comfort is drawn by the belief that our deceased family and friends will all be reunited in the afterlife; wives join husbands: 'Mum, you are where you want to be, with Dad, but we did not expect it to be so soon.' (NZ Herald 5 October 2006: C7) and children join parents: 'With arms wide open there stands Mum and Dad, a cup of tea and some biscuits will be on hand.' (NZ Herald 7 February 2007: D7).

Death notices also provide significant evidence of the use of te reo Maori.

The high frequency of **whanau** and **tangi** is well established, but **hakari**, **arohatinonui**, **mokopuna** and **koro** are becoming increasingly more common, examples being: 'Big Koro of Bryce and Keyshawn.' (Dom Post 11 February 2009: D9) and 'Kai hakiri at 11am.' (NZ Herald 13 January 2006: C6). The integration of more Maori terms, especially the less common words, as cultural scripts suggests increased familiarity and knowledge of te reo by speakers of New Zealand English. Extremely interesting is the trend of consistently shortening **mokopuna** to **mokos**; the term has obviously become so familiar in New Zealand English that the meaning is clear even in shortened form: 'We will never forget all the prettiful times we had. Sweet dreams Nanz, love from all your snotty nosed mokos.' (NZ Herald 13 February 2007: C6). Also significant is use of the English plural 's' on the shortened form. Likewise, the 's' plural is used on the single occurrence I found of **kikihi**: 'Kihis to Ngarangi & Penina.' (Dom Post 1 February 2006: D9).

The integration of Maori into the death notices can also be seen in the use of the Maori-English compounds **step-moko**, **whangai daughter** and **grand mokos**. For example, 'Stepmother of Sharee, Stephanie, Melanie and her step-moko.' (Dom Post 22 February 2008: C15), 'Whangai daughter of Hazel Crombie, best buddy of Lorena and friend of Trish, Nathan, and Justin.' (Dom Post 23 April 2007: D7) and 'You've left behind many mokos and many great grand mokos.' (NZ Herald 19 November 2008: D9).

Use of hypocoristics is a common New Zealand English feature and several can be found in death notices. **Bro** is the most commonly occurring: 'See you next time round Bro.' (NZ Herald 29 January 2007: C12) and 'We love you our son, our bro, our friend.' (NZ Herald 10 January 2006: C6). **Cuz** and **cuzzie** also occur relatively often: 'Rest in peace cuzzie' (NZ Herald 19 March 2008: D5). In addition, I have discovered some less common forms such as 'Love from your Nephie.' (NZ Herald 30 April 2008: D4) and 'Will be sadly missed by all his fisho mates.' (NZ Herald 12 April 2007: C7). Use of hypocoristics demonstrates the current acceptable informality in the deaths column, as well as a distinctive Kiwi characteristic.

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Features such as text language and x's and o's at the end of notices are another interesting pattern. People have adopted the format of emails and texts to send off their loved one, appropriate perhaps for this technological age but far from conventional: 'It's bn a yr sinc u were takn. I luv u muchly n mis u. Gon bt neva 4gtn. Luv u always Cinta xo' (*Dom Post* 22 February 2008: C15), 'Always loved 4eva & then sum.' (*Dom Post* 23 September 2006: D7) and 'Love U xoxo' (*Dom Post* 5 October 2006: D9).

More obvious colloquial language and slang is also used: 'You are "grous".' (*Dom Post* 9 August 2008: D7) and 'See ya Dad.' (*NZ Herald* 13 March 2008: C7). Often the traditional RIP has been transferred into a casual statement such as 'Rest in peace buddy' (*NZ Herald* 13 March 2008: C7) or 'Rest in peace cuddie' (*NZ Herald* 19 March 2008: D5). The term **heaps** is used so frequently that it appears to be a well-established convention to say 'We will miss you heaps' (*Dom Post* 6 August 2008: D7) and 'Love ya heaps' (*Dom Post* 18 March 2008: C15).

Death notices also contain significant evidence of unusual names and spellings. The wide variety found here once again reveals New Zealand's cultural and social norms, as it is clear that almost 'anything goes' when it comes to naming one's offspring.

In order to see a cultural shift, I used *Papers Past* and compiled a list

of names from *The Evening Post* death notices, ranging from 1902 to 1915. In this small sample, the deceased and their family members had classic, traditional names. There were no unusual spellings, multicultural names, or names that denote objects or animals. As expected, the royal English names were extremely popular, such as **Elizabeth**, **Henry**, **Catherine**, and **Mary**. It was also more common for children to take their parents' names, usually as a middle name: 'Ronald Arthur, infant son of Arthur and Alice McDowall ...' (*Evening Post* 27 May 1915: 1). One deceased woman is not even named, but simply referred to as the 'beloved wife of Malcom Niccol...' (*Evening Post* 8 October 1903: 1). Other names from the list include **Katherine Alicia**, **Agnes**, **Joseph Henry**, **Julia**, **Francis**, **George**, **William**, **Alice**, **Frederick**, **Anne Jane**, **John Oliver** and **Michael**.

There is a striking difference between the list of names from 100 years ago and the list of names compiled from recent years' newspapers. However, this is not to say that traditional, common names do not appear at a high frequency in the death notices today. Rather, the difference is in the variety and in the presence of several unusual and unique names and spellings. It is perfectly acceptable to stray away from tradition and call one's child **Bomber**, **Crusade**, **Patience**, **Atlas**, **Nirvana** or even **Casino**.

There are several uncommon female names ending in 'a', such as

**Ocean'ianna**, **Mirtilla**, **Mishaela** and **Egidia**, and names that denote 'preciousness', such as **Heavenly** or **Miracle**. People have been named after animals, such as **Swallow**, **Squid**, or **Possum**, or have names that relate to nature, such as **Storym**, **Skyla**, **Forrest**, and **Cloud**. I also discovered a pattern of individuals being named after places; for example, **Kenya**, **Cairo**, **India**, and **Crete**. Some people have the same name as a car make and model; for example, **Ford** and **Mondeo**.

Some individuals have also put a twist on traditional names by choosing unusual or uncommon spellings. In the notices I discovered a 'Fred' spelt **Phread**, 'George' spelt **Jorge**, 'Justin' **Justynne**, 'Jessica' **Jessyka**, 'Alex' **Alykx** and 'Jackson' **Jaxon**.

These names and spellings allow people a chance to be different and perhaps unique. To my amazement, I even came across a child called **Tintin Java Rocket**. Though, perhaps some names on this list are not as uncommon as I thought; I was definitely surprised by the number of **Diamonds** and **Phoenix's** I came across.

The language of death notices is one of the ways the ongoing change in cultural scripts and features of New Zealand English can be traced, as the communication of such important and solemn announcements is significant in terms of social and cultural norms. Without a doubt, we Kiwis are 'Full of cheek right to the end' (*Dom Post* 9 August 2008: D7).

## Grog's Own Country

DIANNE BARDSLEY

At the Centre we are interested in the historical aspect of New Zealand words and usages in every domain, and alcohol is no exception for, as Harry Orsman attested, it has produced an extensive and creative lexis. From the earliest days of European discovery and settlement, whalers and sealers brought alcohol. In fact, in *Cook's Voyages* (1889) Kippis claimed 'The white man and the whiskey bottle came together.' The nineteenth-century prohibition movement and the twentieth-century referenda at general elections between 1911 and 1987 show that New Zealanders'

attitudes to alcohol and its use were far from unanimous.

In the early days of rural settlement, alcohol was the single man's salvo to the isolation and ruggedness of an



alien existence. Boundary shepherds and out-station managers were amongst those who succumbed, and alcoholism was commonly referred to as **runholders' disease**. Shepherds, station hands, and shearers would rush to town to **lamb down** their pay cheques, i.e., spend it at the nearest public house. As prohibition took hold, a unique use of the term **dry area** developed in New Zealand English. Soon words were generated for the products of illicit stilling and brewing, ranging from **bush beer**, **bush whisky**, **cabbage tree rum**, **chain lightning**, **colonial brew**, **hokonui**, **matai beer**, **paikaka** ('it had a kick like a mule'), and **tutu**



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beer, to **sheep wash** and **Waitohi dew**. **Sly groggers** were known in New Zealand by a variety of names, including **dropper** and **blind tiger**. They operated **sly grogeries** or **shanties**, where home-made alcohol was available to all and sundry.

**Waipiro** (rotten water) was an early name borrowed from te reo as a general term for alcohol, while **titoki** was a common borrowing for beer or shandy. Even dogs contributed to the lexis of alcohol. A **dog collar** is froth on beer, while to have a **dog tied up** was to owe money for drink. The word fence was compounded with others when alcohol was mixed with ginger beer, hence **rum fence**, **sherry fence**, and **stone fence** (brandy and ginger beer).

Beer brewing and drinking has had its own vocabulary. To **chew hops** was to drink beer, or in other words, to have a **brown bomber**. Too much of a good thing could produce a **beer goitre** or pot belly. Amongst the shearing fraternity and sorority, **beer o'clock** was the time to 'knock off' work for the day. In fact, beer was often known as **shearers' joy** or **Tommy Dodd**. To **gatter one's clay** we might have done in New Zealand (drink beer), but elsewhere beer was actually known as **gatter**. Cockney rhyming slang was adopted to codify beer as **pig's ear**, while too much gave one the **Joe Blakes** (the shakes). One then recovered with a **nurse** (an alcoholic pick-up drink) and the empties or **dead marines** were collected in **bottle drives**.

Alcohol produced by amateurs usually resulted in unpalatable or potent drinks known as **green liquor**, **purple death** (cheap red wine), **purge**, or **panther purge**. No doubt even more unpalatable was methylated spirits, known as **steam** by those in the know. Steam drinkers were likely to be **Jimmy Wooders**, to **drink Jimmy Wooders**, or to **drink with the flies**, all the equivalent of drinking alone. An **Anzac Day dinner** was the term for a liquid lunch, perhaps with **Anzac shandy**, a beer and champagne mix.

The more New Zealanders drank, the more **mullocked**, **munted**, **shickered**, **sliced**, **steamed**, or

**wasted** they would become. The term **shicker** has had both noun and adjectival uses – for alcohol, for drunkenness, and for an intoxicated person:

Graham Roberts, a prohibited remittance man, whose lapse into shicker was detailed in last week's "Truth", caused some disturbance amongst the "trade" by his arrest and conviction. (NZ Truth 31 July 1909: 4)

It was the old trouble that the Magistrate had to decide when a man was sober and when he was in a state of shicker. (NZ Truth 31 July 1909: 4)

A Christchurch man with a foreign moniker, who got run in for shicker, was found to be identical with one who was wanted on a charge of wife desertion in the North island. (NZ Truth 4 August 1906: 1)

Another chap and I saw an old shicker get fired out of the New Zealander hotel ... (NZ Truth 17 November 1906: 5)

After midnight, Jerry got so shicker that he was quarrelling with everyone. (NZ Listener 12 October 1970: 12)

New Zealanders left the **six o'clock swill** in the 1960s, in the attempt to make our drinking culture more 'civilised'. Perhaps you can sense the **Tui moments (yeah, right)**, hear the apposite response, and visualise the headshakes from the **wowers**.

The first round of the New Zealand *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* (TVOne, 9 September 2008) was revealing in that it showed a lack of familiarity with New Zealand English usage by both a contestant and the audience, and a lack of familiarity with up-to-date and appropriate dictionary sources and definitions by the programme's producers. The word in question was **wowser**, a term that New Zealanders and Australians have used since the 1800s, when the principal context then was the prohibition of alcohol. Then, the word meant a person disapproving of the pleasures of others, including the drinking of alcohol, but who was not a 'teetotalling prude'. The word probably has its origins in the British dialect term *wow*, the verb

'to howl or bark as a dog', 'to whine or grumble'. Because of its obscure origins, people have suggested it is an acronym of the prohibitionists' catch cry, 'We Only Want Social Evils Reformed'. But the wider usage covers killjoys, puritans, goody-goodies, and spoilsports in every context, as illustrated by a letter-writer to *North and South* (2005):

'Well, call me a **wowser** but I don't want my bright, curious nieces sucked into premature sex and alcohol experimentation – or stupid fad diets for that matter.'

And later in the same publication (2008)

'He's no **wowser**. If you can afford it [gambling] and it's fun, fair enough'.

**Wowers** have been everything to everybody, we might say, considering the range of citations we have for the term in the New Zealand English database at the Centre. This is where such a database comes into its own – not only does it give citations of a word's use, but shows us how it is used, how often it is used and by whom, and, as we can show in many cases, it provides a reflection of the changing attitudes and values of a society over time. Soon after its introduction, **wowser** became synonymous with hypocrite. In Truth of 2 April 1910, editors gleefully cited a letter written by an 84 year-old woman to a Wanganui newspaper:

'A **wowser** is a crepuscular-minded person of religious proclivities, having one eye on Paradise and the other on the main chance. He generally – but not always – belongs to one of the Non-conformist churches. His pursuits are the holding of conventions and bun-rushes, at the latter of which he consumes marvellous quantities of indigestible tea and buns. When he drinks whisky, he does it in secret.'

The term **wowser** seems to have given churchmen a bad name – a minister of religion (aka a **harp-and-halo man**) being known as a **wowser-bird**, particularly among members of the armed forces. But New Zealand also gained a bad name, being referred to as **Wowserland** and a **wowser-ridden land**.



# Modern Hangification

ANDRÉ TABER

A small but dedicated number of New Zealanders are inventing methods to cook **hangi** without having to dig a hole in the ground. To the social or cultural historian, the match-making of modern cooking appliances to an ancient method represents a snapshot of an evolving New Zealand culinary tradition. And to the lexicographer, this phenomenon provides interesting new language that shows what place **hangi** occupies in the hearts and minds of Kiwis.

If cooking **hangi** inside a traditional pit-hearth **umu** is **real hangi**<sup>1</sup> or **authentic hangi**<sup>2</sup>, then what name do we attach to what is, essentially, fake **hangi**? Cooked in a baking dish in your home oven, it's most likely an **oven hangi**<sup>3</sup> or **indoor hangi**<sup>4</sup>. (These recipes were part of the Maori cultural renaissance; the former term was first recorded in a 1975 Maori Women's Welfare League publication.)

The culinary science is this: the metal container radiates heat (like the stones) while the moisture from the food or a bit of added liquid creates steam, and the tight lid keeps the steam in (like the earth heaped over to seal a real **hangi**). Then there's **hangi smoked lamb rump**<sup>5</sup>: this recipe calls for hot-smoking lamb over a mixture of topsoil, brown sugar and rice or **manuka** shavings. An oddity from 1976, **lamb and vegetable 'hangi' style**<sup>6</sup> asks the cook to encase vegetables in a

boneless forequarter of lamb to cook the vegetables. This method steams the vegetables and allows them to be 'permeated by the flavour' of the meat. One can imagine that serving time, when a lid is cut in the top of the roast meat which is lifted at the table to 'reveal the cooked vegetables' mimics the anticipation and ceremony of uncovering a **hangi**.

We can cook **hangi in a crock pot**,<sup>7</sup> in a frying pan, **hangi in a pan**,<sup>8</sup> or in a pot on the stove top, which would make it **hangi-in-a-pot**.<sup>9</sup> The author of this last recipe promises a house filled with **hangi aroma**.<sup>10</sup> You could even purchase a stainless steel pot with a steamer insert and lid dubbed the **Kaipacific Hangi Pot**.<sup>11</sup>

In order to cook larger quantities of **kai**, blokes have been out in the shed converting beer kegs. A gas burner provides the heat source. What do you call such a contraption? A **keg hangi**,<sup>12</sup> of course. Or, if you need to go bigger still, how about a **44-gallon drum hangi**?<sup>13</sup>

Inevitably, Kiwis apply a dry sense of humour to the oddity of cooking **hangi** in a keg or a drum: 'We make the **honkey hangi**, in a keg.'<sup>14</sup>... A local Maori guy turned up and organised a meal for everyone at the pub using his '**hangi microwave**'. He has an LPG gas burner cooking the food in a 44-gallon drum.<sup>15</sup>

Those who watch Maori TV may have caught advertisements for the **Multi-Kai Cooker**,<sup>16</sup> essentially a commercially-produced variation

of the **keg hangi**. Its competitors include the colourfully-named **Kiwi Keg Cooker**,<sup>17</sup> **Bro Cooker**<sup>18</sup> and **Eco-Hangi**.<sup>19</sup> The **Woodsman Hawaiian Oven**,<sup>20</sup> though New Zealand-manufactured and marketed, chose to distance itself in name from Maori cookery, but still retains that Polynesian flavour.

Even more serious are stainless-steel ovens designed to produce **hangi** for commercial sale. Back in 1974, a joint on Auckland's Ponsonby Road called Aotearoa Takeaways served **hangi plates** and **hangiburgers** from their **indoor hangi oven**.<sup>21</sup> Puff'n Billy Foods in Matamata has even patented and named its oven: the **Earth Permeation Convection Oven 2002**,<sup>22</sup> from which emerge supermarket-style ready meals labelled **Hangi To Go**.<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere, you could shop for your **takeaway hangi** at **Dial A Hangi** in Motueka,<sup>24</sup> **Mr Hangi**<sup>25</sup> and **Hangi Rocks**<sup>26</sup> in Palmerston North, **Hangi House**<sup>27</sup> in Foxton, **Handi Hangi**<sup>28</sup> in Hastings, **Hangi Shop**<sup>29</sup> in Auckland, or the **Hot Hangi Kai Kart**<sup>30</sup> in Kawakawa, Northland.

(This article was distilled from a paper titled 'Reinventing the Hole', presented at the 3rd New Zealand Food History Symposium at Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology in October 2008. André Taber is author of *A Buyer's Guide to New Zealand Olive Oil* (2005) and *The Great New Zealand Pie Guide* (2006), and has edited and contributed widely to New Zealand food magazines.)

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# Exaggeration: Is it always a big have?

DIANNE BARDSLEY

Island nations with a land area of just 267,990 square kilometres are conscious of their size on the global map, particularly if Australia, the Big Brother neighbour, often known in New Zealand as the **Big Frisbee**, is several times that size at 7,741,000 square kilometres. But **big** has been a part of the New Zealand lexicon since European land seekers settled large tracts of land and became **big bugs** as early as the 1850s. These days, one has to have **big bickies** to be a **big bug**, or to **hit the big time**.

Kiwi children eat Marmite and Weetbix and are impatient to grow up, wanting to be big like the teenagers down the road. However in 1999 we were told that

Being tall is seen as desirable, sexy even, but it's all a **big have**.<sup>1</sup>

In New Zealand English, a **have** has been a synonym for a dupe, a falsity, a fallacy, or deception since the 1950s. Like rats, **haves** are usually preceded by **big**, and although a **big have** is usually the worst imaginable, we even have citations for a **big, big have**. A **big have** connotes disgust – and to be responsible for a **big have** is like being the lowest kind of swindler. **Big have** has been recorded in parliamentary debates:

The member opposite mentions the Bank of New Zealand (BNZ). Well, that was a **big have**.<sup>2</sup>

And even on church websites:

It's all a **big 'have'**, a gigantic sop built on the single premise of the 'unconditional love' of God and dished up with huge helpings of good intentions...<sup>3</sup>

And in news stories:

Claiming refugee status is a **big have**.<sup>4</sup>

And generally where anything is difficult to verify:

It may end up being the way of the future, but at the moment it's just a **big have**. Everyone gets really excited about these hydrogen fuel cells ... at the moment they are not environmentally friendly.<sup>5</sup>

In New Zealand, a \$64,000 question is known as a **big if**, or more emphatically, **the big if**, and for decades, an exceptionally high expectation has been known as a **big ask**.

Sports commentators are particularly conscious of the **big ask** made of international players, and of Kiwi spectators:

Even the English and the Australians get a fair run, a **big ask** of any New Zealand crowd, and of course the Kenyans, who can be relied upon to steal the show with their beguiling warm-down routine, are positively adored.<sup>6</sup>

Robert Muldoon will always be remembered for the **Think Big** policies of the 1970s and 1980s when, as Prime Minister, he created the National Development Act to speed up major development projects, known as the **Think Big** projects, such as petroleum refinement, hydroelectricity development, and methanol and urea production. **Think Big** occupied considerable significance in the political, economic, and lexical landscape.

In more recent 'anything goes' days, one is able to read on menu lists of the existence of a **big bugger**, which can either be a **big breakfast** (eggs, bacon, sausage, tomatoes, mushrooms, and mash) or a **big burger**.

Kiwis also **eat up large** and **spend up large**. For some years, Wellington's bus drivers were in control of **Big Reds**, and we buy objects at all hours in the **Big Reds** (otherwise known as **Red Sheds**). For decades, it seemed that every Kiwi householder went to sleep next to a **Big Ben**, a small but sturdily built and reliable alarm clock.

Wellingtonians are warned about being prepared for the **Big One** (an earthquake) while Aucklanders are warned about their version (a volcanic eruption). In the late Selwyn Toogood's day, *It's in the Bag* would occasionally relinquish the **big one**.

**The Big OE**<sup>7</sup> is what most young people take when they go on an extended working holiday overseas.

Today, if we are **big on** something, that something is **big** – it could be

Pacific Rim cuisine, bubble skirts, Viognier, or flashpacking, none of which Great-Grandma would find familiar.

Then there's the **big snow**. And these are the legendary **big snows** – the **big snows** of 1878, 1895, and 1945. They are known by their respective dates:

In 1873, Barnhill with Captain Brown, purchased Blackmount station but the **big snow** of 1878 ruined him ... (1952 Hamilton *History of Northern Southland*: 56)

.. it collapsed under the weight of the '**big snow**' of 1878. (1990 Martin *The Forgotten Worker*: 74)

The legendary '**Big Snow**' of 13–14 July 1945 was an experience the land girl team would not forget. (2000 Bardsley *The Land Girls*: 92)

In the rural world in particular, any environmental feature that is threatening or impressive in size has always been known as an **old man**. A colonial term imported into New Zealand, it appears to have been used from the 1850s.

It seems that Australia had its **old man saltbush**, while we had **old man fern**, **old man manuka**, **old man rimu**, **old man scrub**, and **old man totara**. Just plain, non-specific **old man tree** has been used:

In bushman's parlance, what is termed an "**old man tree**" of huge dimensions, was standing erect on one side of the terrace, it was felled so that it reached the other side...

Our first record for **old man flood** dates from 1866, recorded in the *Otago Witness*:

That fickle stream, the Molyneux, rose to a great height and a second "**Old Man**" flood was expected ... (6 July: 3)

Just when was the first **old man flood**? A controversial question. Some sources say June 1863, while others claim it was closer to the spring of 1863. Whatever, it was a period of extremes in Otago and Southland with up to 100 lives lost by drowning. Many goldminers led nomadic existences, and an



accurate toll from the flood has not been possible. Monuments and cairns on the **Old Man Range** and in Gorge Creek mark some of the losses. A genuine second **old man flood** occurred in Otago in 1878. We continue to suffer **old man southerlies**, referred to still by weather commentators.

Small it may be, but Kiwis still have a sense of the big picture when they view their place on the globe.

- 1 *Evening Post* 25 August 1999: 11
- 2 MP Judy Keall, *NZ Hansard Parliamentary Debate* 1996: Feb 21,
- 3 [www.reformed-churches.org.nz/resources/fnf/a53.htm](http://www.reformed-churches.org.nz/resources/fnf/a53.htm)
- 4 [www.howlingatthemoon.com/\\_NEWSTALK/0000190a.htm](http://www.howlingatthemoon.com/_NEWSTALK/0000190a.htm)

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- 6 *Dominion Post* 3 February 2006: 2.
- 7 OE = overseas experience.

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## Summer Student Research Report

ROSIE KEANE

For my summer research position, I have been based in the NZ Dictionary Centre at Victoria University of Wellington. The focus of my research for Dr Dianne Bardsley has been a data search for New Zealand terms. I have searched for terms in various recent periodicals, as well as NZ fiction, namely recent New Zealand short stories. The periodicals I have read are *express*, *Tearaway*, *New Zealand Wilderness*, *New Zealand Geographic*, *North & South* and the *Horowhenua Chronicle*, as well as *Te Puni Ko\_kiri's* publication *Ko\_kiri Paetae*. I also read stories published in the *Huia Short Stories* series, all of which are written by Maori writers.

My job has been to find and record citations of new and existing New Zealandisms, which will eventually be entered into the New Zealand English (NZE) Database at Victoria University.

It has been interesting noticing patterns in the types of New Zealandisms that occur in these publications. The *Huia Short Stories* and *Ko\_kiri Paetae* showed the increasing number and range of Maori terms that have become recognised as part of New Zealand English. *Ko\_kiri Paetae* frequently used te reo words such as **rangatahi**, **mahi**, **whakawhanaungatanga**, **whakapono** and **whakaaro**. Also evident were Maori terms for jobs such as **kaitakawaenga**, **kaimahi** and **kaiwhakarite**. These terms do not appear in Harry Orsman's 1997 *Dictionary of New Zealand English*, suggesting they are recent additions to NZE. I also found many Maori-English compounds such as **whanau class**, **whanau-friendly** and **iwi radio**. The short

stories' use of Maori terms shows how prevalent Maori cultural terms are in NZE. Terms such as **utu**, **poroporoaki** and **mihi** frequently appear, unglossed, in these stories. A pattern I noticed was a tendency for Maori writers to use Maori words for topics that could be considered 'rude' or sensitive, noting the frequent occurrence of **mimi** (urine, to urinate) as well as **pikaru** (sleep – discharge from the eyes) and **paru** (dirt).

*Express*, a magazine for gay and lesbian New Zealanders, contained many NZ slang words, such as **Banskie** for John Banks, as well as many NZ terms specific to the gay community, such as **CUPped** (verb formed from the initials of Civil Union Partnership), and **pink flight** (an Air New Zealand flight, with decorations and entertainment, that flamboyantly takes NZ partygoers to the Mardi Gras in Sydney). **Takataapui** (Maori for homosexual) is also frequently used, as are similar Pacifica terms, suggesting the multicultural inclusivity the gay community wishes to display. The internationally-used acronym GBLT (Gay Bisexual, Lesbian or Transgender) is often seen in *express* modified to GBLTT, adding **takataapui** to the end.

*NZ Wilderness* and *NZ Geographic* provided many citations of names for NZ's flora and fauna. The original Maori terms are often seen to be overtaking later-coined English terms, with words such as **whekau** (laughing owl), **titipounamu** (rifleman) and **tokoeke** (South Island brown kiwi) being used before, or without, their English counterparts. *NZ Wilderness* contained many terms related to

outdoor leisure, such as **Tararua Biscuit**, **bush-bash**, **benched track**, **rock bivvy**. Both magazines contained conservation terms like **mainland island**, **open sanctuary** and **acoustic anchoring**. *NZ Geographic* showed the New Zealand English speaker's increasing knowledge of Maori cultural terms like **urupa**, **mauri** and **kaitiaki**. Many hypocoristics were also found, e.g. **stormie** (storm petrel), **Tiri** (Tiritiri Matangi), **Coaster** (East Coaster) and **Waitaks** (Waitakares).

*Tearaway*, a magazine aimed at teenagers, also contained many hypocoristics and terms from verbal slang such as **Pap** (Papatoetoe), **stink** (adj.) and **choice**. Maori terms like **poroporoaki** also appeared unglossed, showing NZ teenagers' understanding of Maori protocol. In *North & South* I found an eclectic range of words, many hypocoristic place names (**Coro**, **Tuts**, **Dunners**, **Palmy**), and older NZisms like **hut book**, **poozler**, **new chum** and **mateship**. The *Horowhenua Chronicle* and *The Horowhenua Mail* contained some Maori-English compounds, like **information hui** and **school kaumatua**, as well as more established NZisms like **peggy squares**, **own-your-own**, **Foxton Fizz** and **Old Man Pine**. Newer terms included **quakesafe** (v.) and **blackboard concert**.

This summer research position has given me a real taste of lexicography in practice, and has given me the opportunity to enhance my analytical and research skills, as well as stamina for reading! I have gained an appreciation for the way new words enter the lexicon, and the hard work that goes into keeping track of new terms as they emerge.

# From the Centre

Over the summer break the Centre has had the benefit of 600 hours of student research time through the Summer Research Scholarship scheme for senior students, those considering honours or higher degrees. Rosie Keane and Jenna Tinkle, former students in LING 322 New Zealand English, have made significant contributions to our headword and citation access and retrieval processes. While Rosie has sought terms and citations from nominated sources, Jenna has worked through a file of newspaper death notices, compiling lists of cultural scripts and conventions, new spellings, and new names. An interesting reflection on our culture, as her short article in this NZWords shows. Our antedating of Centre database and Orsman headwords continues through the wonders of digitised newspaper archives. Cheryl McGettigan continues

to work on changes to vocabulary in the New Zealand education domain.

In 2009 the Centre has been represented in conferences at Bloomington, Indiana (Dictionary Society of North America) and Sydney (Australex). Dianne Bardsley presented papers at both of these. Published this year were a fourth edition of the *New Zealand Oxford Primary School Dictionary* (Dianne Bardsley) and *In the Paddock and on the Run* (Uni of Otago Press, Dianne Bardsley). The Centre's profile continues to be served with the regular *Watch Your Language* column in the *Dominion Post* and on Radio New Zealand's *Sunday* programme. We continue to be involved with the regional and national judging for the New Zealand Spelling Bee which, each year, shows the enthusiasm of both young people and teachers.

Cherie Connor completed her PhD study of the contribution of the marine environment to New Zealand English and produced *Iris Josephine*, sister to *Mirabelle*, almost simultaneously. It is hoped that new Fellowships will provide research opportunities for two PhD students this year.

We continue to record a range of new terms used specifically in the New Zealand context, ranging from acronyms and initialisms to hypocoristics, particularly from the domains of politicians and specific occupations, along with a continuing generous borrowing from te reo Maori to enrich our own variety of English.

The very real worldwide interest in words and their origins is reflected in the continuing numbers of publications, in a range of websites and columns, and in the feedback we receive from readers.

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## Miscellany from the media

### The three tailors of Tooley Street:

In sifting through several nineteenth- and early twentieth-century editions of New Zealand newspapers in *Papers Past* for early citations of New Zealand English usages, we came across more than 120 citations for 'The Three Tailors of Tooley Street'. Recognising that this was a term from Mother England, we were intrigued at its use in so many publications, from both North and South Islands, between 1844 and 1922. The phrase comes from the early nineteenth century when three people local to Tooley Street, Southwark, London, held a meeting and prepared a petition to Parliament which began 'We, the people of England...' Apparently,

there were several New Zealand citizens, usually politicians, who spoke on behalf of others without consulting them:

At Wellington, on his last visit, he [Governor Fitzroy] compared a deputation to 'the three tailors of Tooley Street'. (*Nelson Examiner & NZ Chronicle* 21 December 1844: 166)

You have all of course heard of the three tailors of Tooley Street. Heard of them until you are heartily sick of them. Indeed it does not require *three* tailors to make themselves heard. *One*

tailor will do that anywhere, especially if he has a seat on a Borough or County Council... (*Clutha Leader* 16 April 1886: 3)

Since the 'three tailors of Tooley Street' sent up to Parliament their famous memorial commencing 'We, the people of England', there have been few public documents which can match this epistle from the Mayor of Dannevirke. (*Bush Advocate* 15 August 1893: 2)

### storied:

It appears that 'legendary' is being replaced by '**storied**' – at least in



# Miscellany

CONTINUED...

some pages of the *New Zealand Herald* 4 June 2009:

C12: The Mini is rivalled only by the Volkswagen Beetle has [sic] perhaps the two most **storied** cars ever made.

C14: Perhaps the demise of GM's **storied** Oldsmobile brand is indicative of the company's problems.

C16: But fears that a diesel powerplant would detract from the sportiness of the Mini's 50-year lifeline were quickly dispelled when the oil-burner's performance figures were listed: it's faster than the **storied** original Cooper S.

## jump the shark:

*Business Herald* 20 Nov 2009: 9

Some would argue that Bruce **jumped the shark** last year with his uncharitable comments about Hanover investors when they accepted the moratorium, but although Stock Takes doesn't agree with all of his views on the present situation, he makes some worth-while points.

[Ed: **Jump the shark** is the defining moment when an enterprise or person loses their peak position or effectiveness and is now on the downward slope. The phrase comes from the *Happy Days* television programme, when Fonzie waterskiied over a shark, which was contained. The programme was regarded as going downhill from thereon.]

## digital natives:

Heard described on National Radio's *Afternoons with Jim Mora*: 26 Aug 2009: 3.15 p.m. as those people born into an already digital age who seem to understand computers instinctively.

## sifty:

*Sunday Star-Times* 18 Oct 2009:16

His choices showed up the sifty richness of New Zealand English... [Ed: as in gold?]

## skinny:

National Radio *Morning Report* 27 Aug 2009

There's the skinny on the asparagus market. [Ed: inside information]

## belligerating:

Had fun at airport belligerating Air NZ staff who were trying to stop passenger from carrying a not terribly big framed artwork on the flight. [ed. bullying with words]

## papped:

Waiheke Marketplace 30 September 2009: 3

Pam 'papped' at popular vineyard [headline] [Ed: caught on camera by paparazzi]

## get on the jandals:

*Sunday Star Times* 23 August 2009: B3

During the week Carter's Canterbury team-mate, Andy Ellis, noted that Carter had an uncanny ability to be under pressure, soak it up, and then "get on the jandals". So laidback he's almost horizontal? "That'd be it." [Ed: to cope with pressure in a relaxed way]

## scaly:

The Aucklander 19 February 2009: 14

A genuinely useful and clear description of "What is Twitter?" can be found on the YouTube address at the bottom of this article. But be careful: there are lots of scaly postings if you just put in the word "twitter". [Ed: shortlived? unreliable?]

## trafficable:

National Radio *News* 3 July 2009: 9.00 a.m. Spokesman for NZ Traffic Agency:

People should not venture out until they can verify the roads are trafficable.

## Veitched up:

*Canta Magazine*, [University of Canterbury Students Association] 11 May 2009: 5

Why has our university been so perversely defiled by these "veitched up" self minded tossers?

[Veitched up - motivated by testosterone-derived aggression. After Tony Veitch, media personality and TV sports presenter who fell from public grace following a series of serious physical assaults on his girlfriend.]

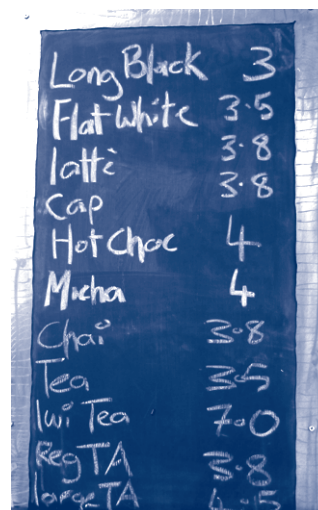
## Iwi tea:

We were recently in a cafe attached to Victoria University when we were greeted with 'iwi tea' on the menu. In response to our question we were told that iwi tea is a large pot of tea, large enough to be served to several people at one brewing. Jan Bunting took a photo of the blackboard menu, constituting our first citation.

## ATTENTION TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Oxford University Press offers an annual award of a copy of the *New Zealand Oxford Dictionary* (valued at \$130) for the best Year 12 or 13 Research Project in New Zealand English. Entries need to be received at the New Zealand Dictionary Centre before December 1 each year. For details e-mail [dianne.bardsley@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:dianne.bardsley@vuw.ac.nz).

At the New Zealand Dictionary Centre, we have compiled a list of more than 50 New Zealand English research topics for use by senior secondary students of English. These are posted on the NZDC website, but are also available as an e-mail attachment from the e-mail address above.



**We welcome comments and queries concerning New Zealand usage. While space does not allow all contributions to be printed, the following letters represent a range of correspondents' interests.**

## Ponsonby handshake:

I was surprised that the 'Ponsonby Handshake' had remained unsolved, considering how widely used the phrase was at the time. The phrase morphed from the time when the Ponsonby Rugby Club was the most successful rugby club in the country in the early 1970s when Andy Haden and Bryan Williams among others were selected from the club to the All Blacks. It was also a time when Polynesian migrants came in large numbers to Auckland, and more often than not joined the Ponsonby Rugby Club. The 'Ponsonby'-cum-'Te Kuiti' Handshake started off as the 'Ponsonby Clothesline' which in its simplest form was a stiff arm tackle aimed at throat height to a running player ... much like one of the old style single wire clotheslines. The Ponsonby handshake likewise was a punch in the mouth.

Don Jacobs.

I was reading the article in the weekend paper last evening [Ed: *Sunday Star Times Magazine* 18 October 2009: 14-16] and asked my husband whether he had heard of either a Ponsonby or a Te Kuiti handshake. His immediate, without hesitation reply was that it was a 'stiff arm tackle' also known as a Canterbury coathanger. Sounds pretty hideous to me!

Kate Hastings

## Sick in bed with a straw hat on

With reference to Tony Deverson's 'Recognising New Zealandisms'. My partner says her father (in Hawke's Bay) used to refuse invitations to go to occasions he wanted to avoid by telling his wife 'Tell them I'm sick in bed with a straw hat on.'

I have not found this in any of my books of words and phrases and am wondering if it's a New Zealandism or a phrase of his own invention. Any thoughts?

David Barber

Ed: We have no records of this expression, David. Let us hope that a reader can help.

## Bosker footballer

[in response to our discussion on **bosker** in *NZWords* 13, we learn that bosker does not necessarily include impressively large, perhaps merely impressive]

Hi Dianne

'Somersault Asher' (Miscellany, *New Zealand Words*, May 2009) was Albert Asher, a star rugby winger (Auckland and New Zealand) who was nicknamed 'Opai' after a champion steeplechaser - he sometimes eluded opponents by jumping over them. Along with his brother Ernest he played a key role in launching rugby league among Maori in 1908. They were Ngati Pikiao/Ngati Pukenga on their mother's side, and Jewish on their father's (hence 'half Yid'). According to Winston McCarthy (*Haka: The Maori Rugby Story*, quoted in John Coffey & Bernie Wood, *100 Years: Maori Rugby League 1908-2008*, p. 30) he was about 5 ft 6 in tall and weighed about 12½ stone, so he clearly wasn't 'impressively large'.

Cheers

David Green

## Tramwait

The word 'tramwait' occurs in this quotation from F.L. Irvine-Smith *The Streets of my City* (AH and AW Reed, Wellington, 1948) p. 231, referring to Katherine Mansfield:

'A memorial tramwait erected at the southern end of Fitzherbert Terrace and her portrait, placed in the Dominion Art Gallery in 1946, keep her memory green in Wellington.'

The word is not in Orsman's big dictionary or OED3 or *Papers Past*, nor have I, who have lived in or near Wellington most of my life (including my first 20 years while trams were still being waited for) and had many older relatives here, ever heard anyone use it. It doesn't look like a typo. Is it a hapax legomenon, or was I in the wrong social circles?

John Harper

Ed: No actually, it is not a hapax legomenon, John, nor it is it a typo, but an abbreviated form of **tram waiting shed**, of which there were several in Wellington.

## MAILBAG

The editor of *NZWords* welcomes readers' comments and observations on New Zealand English in letters and other contributions.

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