

A wide range of newsletters, clippings and cuttings, catalogues and correspondence arrives (and is welcomed) on *ET*'s editorial desk. From the mass that goes into our files comes this mix of quirky humour, special usages, neologisms and nonce words.

Wudjoo Bleevit?

Earlier this year, there appeared in various British newspapers a one-page ad for Epson printers. Most of the copy, however, said nothing about these machines; instead, there were some business letters from companies headed by certain literary luminaries. Below are five excerpts (with the names and addresses of the companies at the end):

- 1 O Mavis! 'twas upon
th'eleventh inst.,
when the harbingers of
Phoebus' chariot
I' th'orient did jocund day
portend,
That I receiv'd thy dolorous
dispatch.
With onion eyes, alack, I did
straightway
Apprise me of th'occasion of
thy plaint . . .
- 2 Ye de'il! ye awe me twantie
poun!
I canna bide nae mair;
Sae if ye dinna gie it soon,
I'll come an' flae ye bare.
- 3 Drear Serf: Sanctuary much
fjord queryspendunce of
Maythefourthbewithyou.
- 4 Dear Sir: ---- ----, Yours,

p.s. And you can ---- your
---- ---- as well.

- 5 Medjakrisis has beset us,
Made us all cry, 'Wudjoo
Bleevit!
For we have run out of
woodscrews,

Gleaming, shining, 10 mill.
wood screws,
Screws that hold the tallboy
doors on,
Hold the teak-look chipboard
doors on;
Screws that bear the reference
number
KB385/7

Companies 1: W Shakespeare Ltd, Stratford-upon-Avon Cosmetics 2: R. Burns, Auld Lang Signwriter, Wee sleekit housie, Bonnie Doon, Scotia 3: James Joyce, Photographer (Portraits of young men a speciality), Troublin, Direland 4: D. H. Lawrence & Sons & Lovers, Flat-tout-on-Chatterley, Tillet, Wilts 5: Longfellow Inc., Tallboy Makers, By the shore of Gitche Gumme, By the shining Big-Sea-Water.

GETCHER HERNEKIL HERE!

Christopher Goulding wrote in the *Evening Chronicle* of Newcastle-on-Tyne, England (1 Feb 88) that if led blindfold round the streets of Tyneside on a weekday afternoon, he could make a good guess at his position by hearing the cry of the nearest newspaper seller: 'Countless years of repeating the title *Evening Chronicle* in all weathers are required to hone it down to the wonderfully evocative *EVEEN ONNIKERP!*' However, that can be heard only at Grey's Monument, while around the

corner in Pilgrim Street you hear the dulcet 'ERNEGIT!' By the Fire Station, it is a staccato 'ENNEKIL!', while a more full-bodied 'ROWNEGIT!' or 'RONNIEGAIL!' prevails in Northumberland Street. Across the river in Gateshead, the cry is 'KERRON-IK-ERL!' in Jackson Street but in Trinity Square it is more menacing 'CUNNER GITCHER HERNEKIL!'

A beaut Oz glossary

Fragments of Australian English turn up in many places these days. The following comes from a glossary in *The Reporter* (Jan 88), a monthly newspaper published in Italy, with 'articles and entertainment for students of the English language':

Arvo Afternoon. 'Let's go to the beach this arvo.'

Beaut Very good. Excellent. 'We had a beaut arvo at the beach!'

Blue A fight. An argument. *Blue* is also the name given to an Australian with red hair.

Dinkum True. Real. A *dinkum Aussie* is a true Australian – not an immigrant. *Fair dinkum* is an exclamation to verify a dubious statement. 'There was no beer at Bob's party – fair dinkum!'

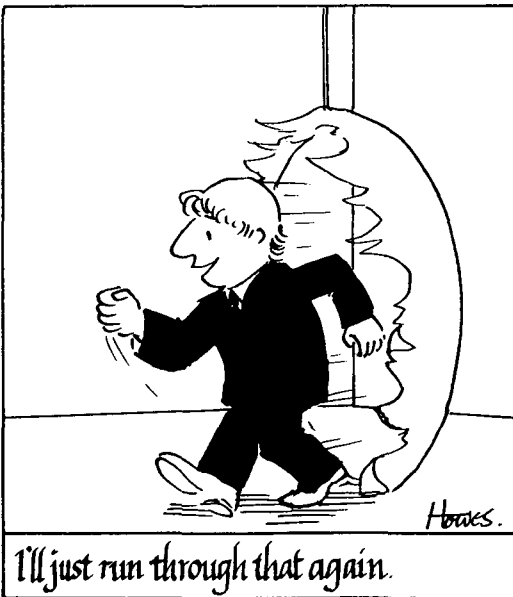
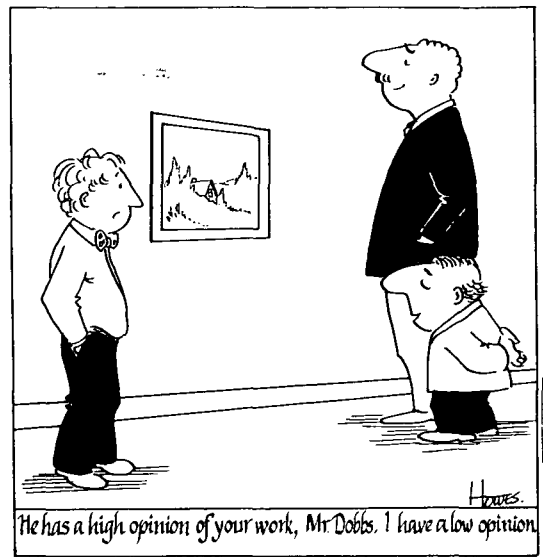
Hard yakker Hard work.

Jackeroo An apprentice on a sheep or cattle station. The female is *jilleroo*.

Mate The usual meaning is friend. 'Jack's a good *mate* of mine.' But *mate* can be used to address anyone from the postman to the Prime Minister.

Shout When an Australian *shouts* you a beer, he buys you one. If it's your *shout*, it's your turn to pay.

Idiotisms



Megamania

The old Greek combining form *mega(lo)-*, as in *megaphone* and *megapolis*, broke its classical moorings some years ago and drifted off into the language at large. Now we meet it everywhere, including such forms as 'megacourtroom' and 'megatrial' in *Time* (1985) and headlines like 'The Time to Tame Runaway Mega Cities Is Now' (1986) and

'Pop's Mega Best Seller Ends Silence' (1987), both in the *International Herald Tribune*. Many such neologisms and nonce forms have emerged, of which the following are typical:

- 'Officials said megagaggles of geese had taken over parks' ('Goose "megagaggles" bug N.Y. suburbs,' *New York Times*, June 82).
- 'Mega-group Loverboy and

relative newcomers The Payolas were big winners' (*Montreal Gazette*, 23 June 82).

- 'Despite the plots of many "mega-thriller" adventure novels, it is highly unlikely that a madman could launch a nuclear attack' (*Quest*, Nov 84)

- 'American statistician John Naisbitt has seen the future and it is wired. He was looking chuffed at the Connaught this

week after receiving a call from his old friend Andrew Neil, cable-mad editor of the Sunday Times, who was interested in taking a chunk of his best-seller *Megatrends* ('How to spot a ripple and ride on a megawave', *Guardian*, 7 Apr 84)

● 'For months, the South American mega-debtor had been sending out distress signals' (Mac Margolis, 'Brazil: Debt moratorium gives Sarney room to breathe', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2-8 Mar 87).

● "All roads now bypass North and lead to Poindexter," said Republican Congressman Henry Hyde, a member of the House investigating committee. "What he is going to say now is the mega-question" (quoted by Alexander Chancellor, *The Independent*, 13 July 87).

● 'How about Joan Rivers, the mega-mouthpiece for American womanhood, set free to slander every contemporary under the sun?' (Dave Hill, 'Revenge of the female icons', *The Independent*, 14 Aug 87).

● On the merger between British Airways and British Caledonian: 'BA now carries about 65 per cent of all schedule traffic that flies on British aircraft; once it becomes British Megadonian, it will have about 75 per cent. Even under the Reagan administration, which has allowed mergers to create half-a-dozen airlines bigger than BA, none has a market share bigger than 20 per cent and if any one got much bigger the anti-trust laws would,

albeit reluctantly, be dropped on the runway in front of it. Of course, this is a vital part of BA's rationalisation: that with such American mega-airlines loose in the world, it must "megarise" itself to survive' (Gavin Lyall, *Observer*, 2 Aug 87).

● "There was another guy who we called Mega-Schmooze," Mr. Bromberg said. "When he retired, some guys drew a chalked box on the sidewalk, a memorial space where no one else was supposed to schmooze. There was supposed to be a brass plaque." Many of the city's schmoozers are retired men who frequently return to catch up on their schmoozing. "New York's street life is pre-eminent in the world," said Mr. White. He pronounced the state of schmoozing to be most healthy' (William E. Geist, 'Amiable Sightings on Schmooze Patrol', *New York Times*, July 87).

Words to the wise

● "Their spelling was unbelievable," she says. Variations on such basics as 'separate', "committee" and "accommodation" appeared again and again. One man could be described only in his own word as "jockular" (Alan Road, 'Grammer wot bosses write', *The Observer*, 19 Jul 87).

● 'The word "conclusory" is not in Webster's New World Dictionary, but the Wyoming Supreme Court has ruled it fit for courtroom use. "After painstaking

deliberation, we have decided that we like the word 'conclusory', and we are distressed by its omission from the English language," Judge Walter Urbigkit said in a footnote to an opinion issued Tuesday in a medical malpractice lawsuit' (*The New York Times*, 13 Aug 87).

● 'This was not received politely by anti-smoking activists. They increasingly resemble the man essayist Joseph Epstein says could not be described as irascible because he was permanently irascid' (George F. Will, Washington Post Writers Group, Sep 87)

● 'The 20 women here have in common a successful career, a marriage of at least 25 years' duration, and three children or more . . . The editor says in her postscript that she compiled the book because it was the kind of thing she herself wanted to read. Depicted on the back-jacket with her brood of four, Valerie Grove is clearly on her way to becoming compleat in her own right' (Carol Rumens, reviewing *The Compleat Woman* in *The Observer*, 18 Oct 87).

● 'Verily, any lawyers appearing before Mr Justice Staughton in the Commercial Court in future had better watch their language. His Honour has made a heartfelt plea for his learned friends to use ordinary speech in court . . . "Avoid the word verily," he says' (Steven Bates, 'Judge lays down the law on language', *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 Feb 87).

Cutting the bard to the bone

The Kabet Press (239 Bramcote Lane, Wollaton, Nottingham, NG8 2QL, England) is a recent arrival among those who shorten and simplify Shakespeare, in a series called *The Inessential Shakespeare*, each playlet selling at £2.00. Kabet calls them 'useful preparation for a visit to the

theatre . . . ideal for schools . . . a good choice for amateur theatre groups', and 'excellent' for foreign learners. The style is concise to the point of curtiness: In *Twelfth Night*, where at the start the Bard's Duke cries, 'If music be the food of love, play on, Give me excess of it that, surfeiting, The appetite may sicken and so die', the *IE* simply has: 'Play on!'