

Eric Partridge

A DICTIONARY OF

SLANG

AND UNCONVENTIONAL
ENGLISH

Edited by Paul Beale

8th Edition Completely Revised.

Eric Partridge

**A DICTIONARY OF
SLANG
AND UNCONVENTIONAL
ENGLISH**

**Colloquialisms and Catch Phrases
Fossilised Jokes and Puns
General Nicknames
Vulgarisms and
such Americanisms as have
been naturalised**

Edited by Paul Beale

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TO THE MEMORY OF
THE LATE
ALFRED SUTRO
OF SAN FRANCISCO
LOVER OF LOVELY THINGS IN ART AND LITERATURE
DEVOTEE TO KNOWLEDGE
AND TRUE FRIEND

Preface to the 8th Edition

The greatest and, I hope, the most helpful change effected in this new edition of *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* is the conflation of the original text of the first (1937) edition with all the subsequent Addenda that became, by 1961, so numerous as to warrant a second volume over half the size of the original. Besides making the Dictionary easier to consult and to browse in, this reunification has made it possible to correct a number of small inconsistencies, blind entries, duplications and one or two downright contradictions, all of which had gradually and almost inevitably crept in during the thirty busy years of Eric Partridge's piecemeal work of updating between 1937 and when the 7th edition went to the printer.

The second major change is the incorporation of the material accumulated by E.P. between 1967 and his last suggestion for a new entry, a mere six weeks before his death at the age of eighty-five on 1 June 1979. His notes, which he gave to me in autumn 1978, comprised some 5,000 entries: many entirely new; some additions, modifications and corrections to existing entries; a few back-datings. Nearly 1,000 of these were my own contributions, made during the course of a regular and copious correspondence that began in early 1974 when I was nearing the end of twenty-one years with the Intelligence Corps. These 1,000 may be considered to have been 'vetted' and approved; post-1978 'P.B.' entries and citations, unless otherwise attributed, are my own responsibility. An Appendix has now been added to contain items too unwieldy to fit comfortably into the main body of the text; it includes, for example, a chart showing the evolution of the signallers' phonetic alphabet that has given rise to many slang terms (**O Pip, Charlie Oboe**, etc.); some self-contained bodies of slang, e.g. that of prisoners of war in WW2; terms used in Housey/Tombola/Bingo and Tiddlywinks; a short discourse on the nonsense-prefix **HARRY**; and so on.

Other changes are less obvious, because they are omissions. E.P. included a considerable number of 'solecisms and catachreses', in other words illiteracies, or phrases couched in a grammar inconsistent with that of Standard English, and malapropisms. Many of these he treated more authoritatively and at greater length in his later *Usage and Abusage*, and the enquirer may seek them there, as those interested in the long-dead solecisms, many from the time when Modern English was still experimental, may look in the *OED* for the oddities and dead-end offshoots that E.P. dug out from its columns. I have omitted all such unless I know them to be or to have been used deliberately for (usually) humorous effect. Also disregarded are most of the familiar elisions of the *aren't*, *weren't*, *sort*, and phonetic renderings of what is merely slovenly (or perhaps dialect)

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speech, e.g. *y'* or *ya'* or *yer* for 'you' or 'your', *tempory* for 'temporary', '*cordin*' for 'according', etc.

I have deleted some entries dealing with what either E.P. or his source Baumann glossed rather patronisingly as 'solecisms' that were, I maintain, simply examples of Cockney dialect. My deletion is not from prejudice against Cockney, but rather a recognition of it as a true dialect—and if that be included as 'unconventional English', then so too should be the whole of the *English Dialect Dictionary*. A line must be drawn somewhere (see **as the monkey said**)! The phonetic renderings were not, in many instances, completely accurate in any case. Here I must recommend without reserve *The Muvver Tongue*, 1980, by two highly observant, born-and-bred, dyed-in-the-wool East Londoners, Robert Barltrop and Jim Wolveridge. I found a particularly helpful corrective their astringent, practical, unromantic view of rhyming slang, examples of which of course appear widely in this Dictionary. It has been a pleasure to learn from them, as it has from Professor G.A. Wilkes, without whose *Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*, 1978, this edition would be so much the poorer. Because of E.P.'s background, born in New Zealand, being educated in Australia and serving 1915–18 in the AIF, he sometimes attributed words and phrases to those countries that should properly be allowed a much wider usage; his knowledge of Australian terms since ca. 1920 was not direct (see his own extensive acknowledgments to Baker and to Prentice). Professor Wilkes's work has therefore proved an invaluable fund of later twentieth century contexts, and I have, in some instances, preferred his interpretation of a term or phrase to E.P.'s original. It seems appropriate here to say that with so much very good cover already available on Austral English, it would be impertinent of me, even if I were qualified by any more than my six happy years of working with Australian servicemen, to do other than concentrate entirely, in any future edition of this Dictionary, on the slang and unconventional English used in Great Britain alone.

From this feeling that the Dictionary should try to deal mainly with British English stems my decision to ignore, except in minor references, any mention of the jargons generated by the two great imported fads that have swept the country while this work was in preparation: those of skateboarding and of Citizens' Band radio. Neither, so far as I am aware, has had any real impact on our 'normal' unconventional English; both are completely derivative. Skateboarding talk comes almost unchanged from that of its parent, surfboarding, which is itself already quite well covered by the new entries in the 7th edition (see AUSTRALIAN SURFING, in the Appendix); while 'CB', or 'Breakers' talk, so redolent of its American background, has been extensively treated in a number of glossaries for enthusiasts.

Researchers comparing the 7th edition with Farmer & Henley, and with Ware, will find that E.P. considered some of their entries to be Standard English, on the ground, I presume, of their entry without qualification in the *OED*. He noted his omissions; I have omitted most of his noted omissions because, with space important, their continued inclusion would be an unnecessary duplication. They formed part of the 1st edition of this

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Dictionary, so are now mostly historical, and they were, in most instances, unhelpful because unglossed.

Some items of pidgin, e.g. *fowlo* = fowl, have been left out (unless they have become recognised as slang, as **all same like** and **long time no see**) since they are merely examples of the inability of speakers of other languages—in this instance, mainly the Chinese—to get their tongues around certain English sounds. Many of the omissions are of course still available in E.P.'s sources, Yule & Burnell and Barrère & Leland. I have further omitted all nicknames of *individuals*, no matter how famous, unless they have some bearing on other terms or phrases. This means that nearly all E.P.'s borrowings from Dawson, 1908, have been dropped—but again, Dawson remains to be consulted. On the other hand, the stock of 'inevitable' nicknames, those automatically adhering to a surname, like 'Chippy' Carpenter, 'Dusty' Miller and 'Dolly'-Gray, which were such a feature of late nineteenth century and earlier twentieth century Service life, has been slightly augmented (see Appendix). The one exception to the 'individuals' is in the world of earlier twentieth century cricket and tennis, where I have left E.P.'s entries untouched, as a tribute to his ardent love of both games, for one has only to read Corrie Denison, *Glimpses*, 1928, a pseudonymously written thinly fictionalised account of his early life, to realise what an importance sport always held for him.

Readers familiar with earlier editions will soon realise that I have tried, as far as possible, to get away from the 'Quartermasters' English'. The result is that E.P.'s *goose, be sound on the* and *goose, shoe the* will now be found at **sound on the...** and **shoe the...**, and cross-referenced from **goose**, n. Phrases in which the emphasis is less on the action, more on the object, e.g. *get the goose*, are subsumed as additional senses of the noun; or, as was the case in this instance, where **goose**, n., 3, was already defined as 'a (theatrical) hissing', it has been removed from its former *goose, get the* and used to amplify that definition. The process involved in this rearrangement brought to light more than a few duplications, and it enabled me to save space by eliminating them. The network of cross-references has thus been extended and strengthened throughout the text. A further minor but necessary alteration has been the suppression of 'one's' as an alphabetically significant element. I surmise from internal evidence that E.P. soon realised the disadvantage of his original scheme, but that it was by then too late to change it; in this edition, therefore, the phrase **come one's cocoa** (for example), instead of being entered at **come off it.../come one's cocoa.../come round...**, files now at **come clean.../come (one's) cocoa.../come Cripple-gate...**

I hope that I have fulfilled with the preparation of this volume the trust that Eric Partridge laid upon me; I can say only that it has been an honour and a very great pleasure to me to make the attempt. It has also given me a renewed and even greater respect for all those anonymous and otherwise unremembered ancestors of ours who were able to laugh in the blackest of hells, be it in the stews of Alsatia, in the condemned cell awaiting execution at Tyburn, or in all the horror of the trenches, and to cheer their fellow victims with a word or phrase that sparkled so brightly as to be treasured and repeated over and

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over—for what is this Dictionary, really, but a pile of fossilised jokes and puns and ironies, tinselly gems dulled eventually by overmuch handling, but gleaming still when held up to the light.

April 1982

Paul Beale

Preface to the 1st Edition

This dictionary, at which I have worked harder than (I hope, but should not swear) I shall ever work again and which incorporates the results of a close observation of colloquial speech for many years, is designed to form a humble companion to the monumental *Oxford English Dictionary*, from which I am proud to have learnt a very great amount.

A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, i.e. of linguistically unconventional English, should be of interest to word-lovers; but it should also be useful to the general as well as the cultured reader, to the scholar and the linguist, to the foreigner and the American. I have, in fact, kept the foreigner as well as the English-speaker in mind; and I have often compared British with American usage. In short, the field is of all English other than standard and other than dialectal.

Although I have not worked out the proportions, I should say that, merely approximately, they are:

Slang and Cant	50%
Colloquialisms	35%
Solecisms and Catachreses	6½%
Catch-phrases	6½%
Nicknames	1½%
Vulgarisms	½%

(By the last, I understand words and phrases that, in no way slangy, are avoided in polite society.) For the interrelations of these classes, I must refer the reader to my *Slang To-day and Yesterday: a Study and a History*, where these interrelations are treated in some detail.

The degree of comprehensiveness? This may best be gauged by comparing the relevant terms in any one letter (I suggest a 'short' one like *o* or *v*) of either *The Oxford English Dictionary* and its *Supplement* or Farmer and Henley's *Slang and its Analogues* with the terms in the same letter here (including the inevitable Addenda). On this point, again, I have not worked out the proportions, but I should guess that whereas the *OED* contains roughly 30 per cent more than F. & H., and F. & H. has some 20 per cent not in the *OED*, the present dictionary contains approximately 35 per cent more than the other two taken together and, except accidentally, has missed nothing included in those two works. Nor are my additions confined to the period since ca. 1800, a period for which—owing to the partial neglect of Vaux, Egan, 'John Bee', Brandon, 'Ducange Anglicus', Hotten, Ware, and Collinson, to the literally complete neglect of Baumann and Lyell, and the virtually

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complete neglect of Manchon, not to mention the incomplete use made of the glossaries of military and naval unconventional terms—the lexicography of slang and other unconventional English is gravely inadequate: even such 17th–18th century dictionaries as Coles's, B.E.'s, and Grose's have been only culled, not used thoroughly. Nor has proper attention been given, in the matter of dates, to the various editions of Grose (1785, 1788, 1796, 1811, 1823) and Hotten (1859, 1860, 1864, 1872, 1874): collation has been sporadic.

For Farmer & Henley there was only the excuse (which I hasten to make for my own shortcomings) that certain sources were not examined; the *OED* is differently placed, its aim, for unconventional English, being selective—it has omitted what it deemed ephemeral. In the vast majority of instances, the omissions from, e.g., B.E., Grose, Hotten, Farmer & Henley, Ware, and others, were deliberate: yet, with all due respect, I submit that if Harman was incorporated almost *in toto*, so should B.E. and Grose (to take but two examples) have been. The *OED*, moreover, has omitted certain vulgarisms and included others. Should a lexicographer, if he includes *any* vulgarisms (in any sense of that term), omit the others? I have given them all. (My rule, in the matter of unpleasant terms, has been to deal with them as briefly, as astringently, as aseptically as was consistent with clarity and adequacy; in a few instances, I had to force myself to overcome an instinctive repugnance; for these I ask the indulgence of my readers.)

It must not, however, be thought that I am in the least ungrateful to either the *OED* or F. & H. I have noted *every* debt* to the former, not merely for the sake of its authority but to indicate my profound admiration for its work; to the latter, I have made few references—for the simple reason that the publishers have given me *carte blanche* permission to use it. But it may be assumed that, for the period up to 1904, and where *no* author or dictionary is quoted, the debt is, in most instances, to Farmer & Henley—who, by the way, have never received their dues.

It has, I think, been made clear that I also owe a very great deal to such dictionaries and glossaries as those of Weekley, Apperson; Coles, B.E., Grose; 'Jon Bee', Hotten; Baumann, Ware; Manchon, Collinson,[†] Lyell; Fraser & Gibbons, and Bowen.

Yet, as a detailed examination of these pages will show, I have added considerably from my own knowledge of language-byways and from my own reading, much of the latter having been undertaken with this specific end in view.

[The following comments originally formed part of E.P.'s entry at **bring off**, in the earlier editions.] One of the most remarkable *lacunae* of lexicography is exhibited by the failure of the accredited dictionaries to include such terms. One readily admits that the reason for these omissions is excellent and that a very difficult problem has thereby been posed. The result is that students of Standard English (British and American) are obliged to seek the definitions of Standard words either in dictionaries of slang, such as, for the

* Often, indeed, I have preferred its evidence to that on which I came independently.

[†] Professor W. E. Collinson's admirable *Contemporary English: A personal speech record*, 1927 (Leipzig and Berlin), is mentioned here for convenience' sake.

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US, Berrey & Van den Bark's *Thesaurus* and, for Britain and its Dominions, Farmer & Henley's *Slang and its Analogues* (Meagre for the Dominions, and out of print since ca. 1910) and this dictionary of mine, or in encyclopedias and specialist glossaries of sex—where, probably, they won't find many of the words they seek.

But also I am fully aware that there must be errors, both typographical and other, and that, inevitably, there are numerous omissions. Here and now, may I say that I shall be deeply grateful for notification (and note) of errors and for words and phrases that, through ignorance, I have omitted.[‡]

[‡] With information on their milieu and period, please! This applies also to omitted senses of terms and phrases that are already represented in this work.

Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to thank, for terms that I might well have failed to encounter, the following lady and gentlemen:

Mr J.J.W. Pollard, Mr G.D. Nicolson, Mr G. Ramsay, Mr K.G. Wyness-Mitchell, Mr G.G.M. Mitchell, Mr A.E. Strong, Mr Robert E. Brown (of Hamilton), all of New Zealand; Mr John Beames, of Canada; Mr Stanley Deegan, Mrs J. Litchfield, Mr H.C. McKay, of Australia; Dr Jean Bordeaux, of Los Angeles. From Great Britain: Mr John Gibbons (most unselfishly), Mr Alastair Baxter (a long, valuable list), Mr Julian Franklyn (author of *This Gutter Life*), Mr John Brophy, Professor J.R. Sutherland. Mr J. Hodgson Lobley, RBA, Mr Alfred Atkins, the actor, Major-General A.P. Wavell, C.M.G., Commander W.M. Ross, Major A.J. Dawson, Mr R.A. Auty, Mr Allan M. Laing, Mr R.A. Walker, Mr G.W. Pirie, Mr D.E. Yates, Mr Joe Maurant, Mr Hugh Milner, Sgt T. Waterman, the Rev. A.K. Chignell, the Rev. A. Trevellick Cape, Mr Henry Gray, Mr E. Unné, Mr Malcolm McDougall, Mr R.B. Oram, Mr L.S. Tugwell, Mr V.C. Brodie, Mr Douglas Buchanan, Mr Will T. Fleet, Mr Fred Burton, Mr Alfred T. Chenhalls, Mr Digby A. Smith, Mr George S. Robinson (London), Mr Arthur W. Allen, Mr Frank Dean, Mr M.C. Way, Mr David MacGibbon, Mr A. Jameson, Mr Jack Lindsay, Mr 'David Hume' (of 'thriller' fame), Mr J.G. Considine, the Rev. M. Summers, Mr C.H. Davis, Mr H.E.A. Richardson, Mr J. Hall Richardson, Mr E. Ellis Roberts, Mr George Baker (who has a notable knowledge of unconventional English and no selfishness), Mr F.R. Jelley, Mr Barry Moore, Mr H.C. Cardew-Rendle, Mr Norman T. McMurdo, Mr R.H. Parrott, Mr F. Willis (Sheffield), Mr E.C. Pattison (of *A Martial Medley*), and, for introducing me to the work of Clarence Rook and the early work of Edwin Pugh, Mr Wilson Benington.

London, 11 November 1936

E.P.

2nd edition, July 1937

Hearty thanks must be—and readily are—given to the following gentlemen for notice of errors and omissions:—Dr W.P. Barrett; Colonel Bates; Mr Wilson Benington; Mr John Brophy; Lt-General Sir J.R.E. Charles, KCB; Dr M. Clement, MD; 'Mr J.J. Connington', very generously; Mr B. Crocker; Mr James Curtis, author of that masterly underworld novel, *The Gilt Kid*; Mr Brian Frith; M. François Fosca; Mr Julian Franklyn (a very valuable list); Mr David Garnett; Mr G.W. Gough; Mr Robert Graves; Mr Harold James; Mr Gershon Legman; Mr J. Langley Levy; Mr Jack Lindsay; Dr E.V. Lucas; Mr David MacGibbon; Mr H.L. Mencken; Mr Hamish Miles; Mr George Milne; Mr Raymond Mortimer; Mr Robert Nott;

(notably); Mr Basil de Sélincourt; Mr Kazim Raza Siddiqui Dr C.T. Onions, CBE; Mr H.D. Poole; Mr Vernon Rendall (Lucknow); Mr G.W. Stonier, most generously; Professor J.R. Sutherland; the leader-writer in *The Times* (15 Feb. 1937) and the reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement*; Mr Evelyn Waugh; Major-General A.P. Wavell, CMG (extensively); Professor Ernest Weekley; Mr Wilfred Whitten.

3rd edition, July 1948

I must particularise the kindness of Mr Sidney J. Baker and Lieut. Wilfred Granville, RNVR, without whose published and unpublished works these addenda would be so very much poorer; for the new South African matter, I am indebted to the four correspondents that supplied me with South African cant for *A Dictionary of the Underworld*, where, by the way, the curious will find a much fuller treatment of such cant terms as are included in *A Dictionary of Slang* and many not there included, this applying especially to terms of American origin. Of Service contributors, one of the most valuable has been Sgt-Pilot F. Rhodes (to quote his rank in September 1942); Sgt Gerald Emanuel (letter of 29 March 1945) vies with him; and Flying-Officer Robert Hinde and Wing-Commander Robin McDouall have been most helpful. My best Army contributor has been Lieut. Frank Roberts, R A, now a master at Cotton College. Nor may I, without the grossest discourtesy, omit the names of Mr F.W. Thomas (of *The Star*); the late Professor A.W. Stewart (widely known as 'J.J. Connington', writer of detective novels); and, above all, Mr Albert Petch (of Bournemouth)—three loyal helpers. Also, at the eleventh hour, I have received a valuable set of pellucid and scholarly notes from Mr Laurie Atkinson.

5th edition, March 1960

Among my numerous helpers, all of whom I warmly thank for their patience and generosity, there are a few whose names could not be omitted from even the most cavalier and perfunctory list: Sidney J. Baker, author of *The Australian Language* and *The Drum*; Harold Griffiths, of New Zealand; Mr Douglas Leechman and Professor F.E.L. Priestley, of Canada; Colonel Albert F. Moe, of Arlington, Virginia; and, in Britain, Laurie Atkinson (well-informed and scholarly)—Julian Franklyn, author of *The Cockney* and *A Dictionary of Rhyming Slang*—Wilfred Granville, whose *Sea Slang of the Twentieth Century* is so very unfortunately out of print—and Albert Petch of Bournemouth, tireless gleaner and tenacious rememberer.

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6th edition, 1966

In merest and minimal decency I must name these ten: Mr Barry Prentice, of Rodd Point, New South Wales, a mass of material, valuable, discriminated, scholarly; Mr Harold Griffiths of New Zealand; Dr Douglas Leechman and Professor F.E.L. Priestley, both of Canada; Colonel Albert F. Moe, USMC Ret., of Arlington, Virginia, entries and datings, some Naval, some general. In Britain these: Mr Julian Franklyn, author of *Shield and Crest* and *A Dictionary of Rhyming Slang*; Mr Wilfred Granville, author of *A Dictionary of Sailor's Slang* and *A Dictionary of Theatrical Slang*; Mr Albert

Petch, 'wedges' of pertinent matter; Mr Peter Sanders, copious and scholarly; Mr Frank Shaw of Liverpool. Several contributors have been helping me since well before World War II; the oldest of these, Mr Gregory Mitchell, of Onehunga, New Zealand, died in March 1965.

7th edition, 1969

To the list of contributors, I have to add Mr Oliver Stonor and Colonel Archie White, VC.

E.P.

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Following precedent, it gives me very great pleasure to thank all the kind people whose help and encouragement have so much enriched this 8th edition—without that help it might, indeed, never have appeared at all. I name first the stalwarts of Eric Partridge's 'Old Guard', whose names appear not only in earlier editions but also again and again in the manuscript notes that he handed over to me: Laurie Atkinson, London; Robert Claiborne, New York; Col. Albert F. Moe, Arlington, Va.; Barry Prentice, Sydney; all have given me warm and continuing encouragement. Next, 'new', 8th edition correspondents with E.P.: F.J. French (RAF terms); David Hillman, Geneva (rhyming slang); Robin Leech, Edmonton, Alberta; Lt Cdr Frank Peppitt, RNR (nautical terms); Sir Edward Playfair (the world of business); and Gavin Weightman, of *New Society*. Paul Janssen, of Tilff, Belgium, and J.B. Mindel, BSc MRCVS, of Kfar Tabor, Israel, were E.P. helpers since the late 1960s, and have generously and in friendship continued to 'serve the cause' for me.

Now 'my' helpers, to whom the opening remark applies just as warmly: they are, in particular, Deputy Assistant Commissioner David Powis, OBE, QPM, whose generous blanket permission to quote from his expert and lucidly commonsensical treatise has so enriched this compilation's stock of cant and police terms; Major Tim Carew, MC, who granted me free range of his work on regimental nicknames; Patrick O'Shaughnessy, whose glossary of market traders' argot follows a long line on from Mayhew through Allingham; Frank McKenna, and his publishers Messrs Faber & Faber, for railwaymen's words and phrases; Robert Barltrop, co-author, with Jim Wolveridge, of the present definitive work on Cockney, has provided valuable correction and perspective on the talk of Londoners, and especially on rhyming slang; Red Daniells, photographer and witty writer, has, with his wife Margaret, also given considerable help with rhyming slang; and the great debt this edition owes to Prof. G.A. Wilkes is noted elsewhere.

Mrs Camilla Raab has not only supplied me with new material, but in her capacity as sub-editor of this edition has provided very welcome essential professional assistance, as well as introduction to Leo Madigan, and John Malin, late PO, RN, with their funds of C.20 nautical slang. The RAF is represented by Sqn/Ldr G.D. Wilson, sometime Education Officer at RAF Leuchars; and the Home Office, for prison and drug terms, by J.D. Cleary. My old friend Capt. Ted Bishop gave help with army slang, and led me to Douglas Dunford, of the Beaulieu Motor Museum, expert and authority on motorcycling lore and language. More motorcycling terms came from Mike Partridge; a fine set of WRNS and FAA material from Miss Margot Wood, BA ALA (sometime Leading Writer, WRNS); and David Severn, BA ALA ('banged-out' printer) provided me with fresh

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Finally, my best thanks to my wife Daphne, without whose loving patience and understanding support this whole enterprise might perhaps have started but would surely not ('How can? Never happen!') have been completed.

Paul Beale

Arrangement within Entries

It is impossible, and undesirable in a dictionary of this sort where so much of the enjoyment is to be gained by browsing, to impose a rigid uniformity on every entry. However, for the general run of terms and phrases not needing discursive treatment, and bearing in mind certain professorial criticisms of the earlier editions as 'inconsistent', I have tried to stick to this layout:

Keyword (classified as noun, verb, adjective, etc.). Definition or explanation: register (i.e. colloquial, slang, jocular, ironic; and main users, e.g. army, prisoners, general, etc.): datings (see section on Dating).

This may be followed by the source, not necessarily the first—the finding of which is usually a matter of pure luck—but an early example of the term's use in print; where this is a private letter to the editor, that is noted. If this is to be followed by editorial comment, e.g. further elucidation, an etymology, cross-references, etc., the source is always in parentheses. If the source is the last element of the entry, then private informants are noted in parentheses, e.g. '(L.A., 1976.)' = Laurie Atkinson, letter of 1976; printed sources stand free, e.g. 'Tempest, 1950' = Paul Tempest, *Lag's Lexicon*, 1950. Entries ending '(P.B.)' are those contributed by the present editor; many—probably most—were seen and approved by E.P. during the five years before his death.

A cross-reference to an entry in **bold type** leads to that word or phrase in the main text; one in SMALL CAPS means that the entry is to be found in the Appendix.

Dating

Much of E.P.'s dating was based on his extensive reading of his sources, and further afield; and upon intelligent 'guesstimation': if a term appeared in Grose, 1785, and there was no previous record of it, then E.P. assumed it to be 'late C.18—'. But the words and phrases that are dealt with in this Dictionary are by their very nature unlikely to be found in print until, in many instances, long after their introduction into the (usually lower strata of the) spoken language. Datings must therefore be treated with caution, and with careful regard to the sources given. A date preceded by a dash and followed by a name in parentheses, as '—1859 (H., 1st ed.)' or '—1923 (Manchon)', means that the term to which it refers is not recorded before Hotten's 1st edition, 1859, or Manchon, 1923, but is assumed to have been in use for some while previously. E.P. made considerable use of a number of earlier slang dictionaries, which means that the same citations keep on appearing; it would be uneconomical to use any but the shortest titles for them, and expansions of the abbreviations used are listed under Bibliographical Abbreviations.

E.P. used the abbreviation 'ob.' a great deal in the 1st edition. After working on the Dictionary for four years I am still not sure whether he was 'playing it safe' by calling usages 'obsolescent', or whether he actually meant 'obsolete'. I have in many entries assumed the latter, which accounts for the frequent terminal date 1930, or the note 'ob. by 1930' (to which should probably be added 'and long before'). It is often very difficult to say for certain when a term has become obsolescent, or even quite extinct (except in historical use): for instance 'soul-case', a body, has a decidedly old-fashioned ring to it, and indeed it is recorded by Grose, 1785—yet it is still 'alive and well' in the Merchant Navy two centuries later. Other signs used are: + after a date means that the term is known to have been in use in that year, and that it probably lingered in speech for a few years afterwards; † means obsolete—dead except in historical use.

Dating even for the last 150 years can in most cases be only conjectural. For this 8th edition the following divisions have been used merely as a rough guide:

later C.19	ca. 1860–85 +
since late C.19	from ca. 1885
early C.20	ca. 1900–1930
since early C.20	from ca. 1910
earlier C.20	ca. 1900–1950
mid-C.20	ca. 1940–60
since mid-C.20	ca. 1950 onwards
later C.20	ca. 1960–80 +

Bibliographical Abbreviations

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