

ORIGINS

A SHORT
ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY
OF MODERN ENGLISH

by
ERIC PARTRIDGE



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ORIGINS

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- A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (Routledge; 5th edition (7th printing, in all);—U.S.A.: Macmillan.)
- A Dictionary of the Underworld, British and American* (Routledge; 2nd edition, revised and enlarged—U.S.A.: Macmillan.)
- Slang Today and Yesterday: a history and a study* (Routledge; 4th printing, —U.S.A.: Macmillan.)
- A Dictionary of Clichés* (Routledge; 5th printing—U.S.A.: Macmillan.)
- Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Study and a Glossary* (Routledge; 3rd edition—U.S.A.: Dutton.)
- Usage and Abusage: A Guide to Good English* (Hamish Hamilton; 5th edition, revised, enlarged, brought up to date, re-set—U.S.A.: (1) British Book Centre; (2) school edition, Grosset & Dunlap.)
- The Concise Usage and Abusage* (Hamish Hamilton; 2nd impression—U.S.A.: Philosophical Library.)
- Name This Child: a dictionary of Christian or given names* (Hamish Hamilton; 5th edition—U.S.A.: British Book Centre.)
- You Have a Point There: a guide to punctuation and its allies, with an American chapter by John W. Clark* (Hamish Hamilton; 4th edition, 2nd impression—U.S.A., British Book Centre.)
- What's the Meaning?: mostly for young people* (Hamish Hamilton; 4th impression—U.S.A.: British Book Centre.)
- English: A Course for Human Beings* (Macdonald; 4th edition: in one volume, and separately: Books I, II, III—U.S.A.: Macdonald.)
- The 'Shaggy Dog' Story: its origin, development and nature, with many seemingly examples. Illustrated* (Faber & Faber, 3rd impression—U.S.A.: Philosophical Library.)
- Adventuring Among Words: a light-hearted essay on etymology. A volume in The Language Library.* (André Deutsch—U.S.A.: Oxford University Press.)

pian in memoriam

CECIL ARTHUR FRANKLIN

**a kindly and generous man
and a remarkable publisher**

Philologists who chase
A panting syllable through time and space,
Start it at home, and hunt it in the dark,
To Gaul, to Greece, and into Noah's Ark.
Cowper, *Retirement*

FOREWORD

PROFESSOR W. W. SKEAT'S large and small etymological dictionaries were last revised in 1910; Ernest Weekley's *Concise Etymological Dictionary* and Ferdinand Holthausen's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der englischen Sprache*, both excellent in their way, treat words so briefly and ignore ramifications so wholeheartedly that it was easy to plan a work entirely different—a remark that applies equally to Skeat's *Concise* and, for relationships, almost as much to his larger book.

'Exigencies of space'—not always a myth, nor always a mere excuse for laziness—preclude a large vocabulary. The number of entries in *Origins* is comparatively small, even for an etymological dictionary, but the system I have devised has enabled me, with the aid of cross-references, not only to cover a very much wider field than might have seemed possible but also, and especially, to treat all important words much more comprehensively and thoroughly. I have concentrated upon civilization rather than upon science and technology; dialect and cant have been ignored; slang is represented only by a very few outstanding examples (e.g., *phoney*).

On the other hand, I have included a certain number of words not usually found in a small British etymological dictionary: words that, little known in Britain, form part of the common currency of Standard English as it is spoken and written in the United States of America, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India and Pakistan.

One class of words has deliberately been treated very meagrely: such exotics as do not fall into the classification 'Americanisms'—'Australianisms'—etc. It does not much help the searcher to be told that *llama* has been adopted—that is, accepted unchanged—from Quechuan, or *okapi* from Bambulan (Mbuba); only a little more does it help him to learn that *cassowary* has been adapted from Malayan *kasuari*. For Amerindian, Australian aboriginal, Maori, Hindi and similar words, I have, wherever possible, avoided the baldness and inadequacy of such entries as 'kangaroo. Australian aboriginal word' or 'pakeha. Maori for a white man'.

In a book of this size a certain number of abbreviations is unavoidable. These abbreviations will not impede the easy flow of the consecutive English I hold to be indispensable in a book designed for the use of the general intelligent public as well as for that of the erudite. Nor, I hope, will scholars and students find readability a defect; after all, a work is not necessarily the more scholarly for being written in philological shorthand. Where, however, the conventions of lexicography make for clarity and simplicity, I have followed most of these conventions: and where either extremely brief etymologies or multiple cognates and complex histories occur, I

have employed a brevity hardly less austere than compact. This combination of consecutiveness and terseness should prevent the treatment from becoming too deadly monotonous.

Warmest thanks are due, both to Professor John W. Clark, of the University of Minnesota, for help in choosing terms important in the United States of America, yet little known in Britain and the British Dominions, and to Professor D. Winton Thomas for occasional help in Semitic origins.

I shall be grateful for (private) notification, whether of printer's and other errors or of entries that 'simply must be added': non-specialist words that, falling within the 10,000-or-so used by every intelligent person, have been inadvertently omitted from this dictionary. Also, a few important affixes and elements have probably slipped through the net.

ERIC PARTRIDGE

Postscript to the second edition. I have to thank Professors John W. Clark, Norman Davis, Simeon Potter, for some valuable notifications and corrections.

Postscript to the third edition. I owe much to Professors John W. Clark, Norman Davis, Simeon Potter and especially R. M. Wilson; and something to Mr R. W. Burchfield (by salutary indirection)—Dr A. J. R. Green—Professor Mario Pei—Mr Stephen Potter—and Mr T. Skaug of Oslo. All these gentlemen have been most generous: I can only hope that the third edition approaches their ideals a little more closely than did the first: it leaves me a shade less dissatisfied than I was.

HOW TO USE THIS DICTIONARY

AN etymological dictionary supplies neither pronunciations nor definitions. Here, pronunciation is indicated only where it affects the origin or the development of a word; and definitions only where, in little-known words, they are necessary to an understanding of the problem. Wherever the meaning of a word has notably changed, the sense-transformation is explained, as, for instance, in *knave*, *marshal*, *phoney*, adjectival *rum*: here we enter the domain of semantics, the science of meanings, for semantics will sometimes resolve an otherwise insoluble problem.

If the reader intends to use this book extensively and even if he intends merely to consult it occasionally, he will spare himself much time and trouble if he previously familiarizes himself with the list of abbreviations immediately preceding the dictionary proper.

If he wishes to be in a position to understand words in their fullest implications and subtleties, in their nuances and most delicate modifications, he will do well to study the list of suffixes and then the little less important list of prefixes; lists that are themselves etymological. By the way, the prefixes and suffixes are my own idea; the list of compound-forming elements (this list, too, is etymological), that of an eminent and humane, practical yet imaginative French philologist, the late M. Albert Dauzat. Like his, my list is confined to learned elements: where he omits such elements as, in the fact, are self-contained French words, I omit such elements as are English words recorded in the dictionary itself. My list, however, is more than twice as long as his and, in treatment, much more spacious, for *Origins* differs considerably from the *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*.

This list of compound-forming elements will enable inquirers to ascertain the etymology of most of the innumerable learned words—scientific and technical, philosophical and psychological, economic and sociological, linguistic and literary—missing from the dictionary; these are specialist terms. Take, for example, *Calyptorhynchus*, a genus of dark-coloured cockatoos: such a word has no right to appear in an etymological dictionary and no privilege to appear in any 'straight' dictionary other than one of the Universal Stores class. Yet the list of elements will reveal that the word is compounded of *calypto-*, meaning 'covered', hence 'hidden', and *-rhynchus*, 'beak'.

Having assimilated the table of abbreviations and the lists of Prefixes, Suffixes, Elements, inquirers will find consultation easy and reading unimpeded. The cross-references will present no difficulty, for if one word is to be sought at another, as for instance *erg* at *work*, and if the latter entry be at all long, the long entry is divided into numbered paragraphs.

'See WORK' would mean 'See that word in the Dictionary'. If the dictionary contains any such references as 'See *para-*'—'See *-ace*'—'See *calypto-*', the application is clearly to *para-* in Prefixes, *-ace* in Suffixes, *calypto-* in Elements. If the reference happens to be double, as in 'See PSEUDO and *pseudo-*', the application would be to the former in the dictionary and to the latter in Elements.

All words belonging to alphabets other than 'English'—to Greek, Russian, Egyptian, for instance—have been transliterated. The transliteration of Greek words, in particular, has been more exact than in several dictionaries one might, but does not, name. I have, for χ , preferred *kh* to *ch*, and represented $\gamma\gamma$ as *ng*, $\gamma\kappa$ as *nk*, $\gamma\xi$ as *nx*, $\gamma\chi$ as *nkh*. In pre-Medieval Latin words I have retained *i* and *u*, as in *Iulius*, ML *Julius*, and *uinum*, ML *vinum*, for reasons too obvious to be enumerated. Long Greek and Latin vowels have been shown as long. I have, however, omitted that over the final *-ī* of Latin passives and deponents.

ABBREVIATIONS¹

(including those for the most frequently cited authorities)

A or Am	American (U.S.A.)	BE	British English
abbr	abbreviation of; abbreviated (to)	b/f	back-formation (from)
abl	ablative	Bio	Biology, biological
acc	accusative (or objective) case	Boisacq	Emile Boisacq, <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque</i> , 4th ed., 1950
A.D.	<i>Anno Domini</i> , in the year of (our) Lord	Bot	Botany, botanical
adj	adjective, adjectival	Br	Breton
adv	adverb, adverbial	Bu	Bantu
AE	American English	Byz Gr	Byzantine Greek
Aer	Aeronautics, aeronautical		
AF	Anglo-French		
Afr	Afrikaans		
AIr	Anglo-Irish		
Akk	Akkadian		
AL	Anglo-Latin (= Medieval Latin as used in Britain)	C	Celtic
Alb	Albanian	c	<i>circa</i> , about (in dates)
Alg	Algonquin	C16, 17	16th (etc.) Century; CC16-17, 16th-17th Centuries
Am	American	CA	Central America(n)
Amerind	American Indian	Can	Canadian
AmF	American French	Cat	Catalan
An	Anatomy, anatomical	caus	causative
anl	analogous, analogously, analogy	cf	<i>confer</i> , compare!
app	apparently	c/f	combining-form; pl: c/ff
approx	approximately	c/f e	compound-forming element
Ar	Arabic	Ch	Chinese
Aram	Aramaic	Chem	Chemistry, chemical
Arch	Architecture, architectural	Clark	John W. Clark (private communication)
Arm	Armenian	Class	Classical (Greek, Latin)
AS	Anglo-Saxon	coll	colloquial, -ism, -ly
ASp	American Spanish	comb	combination, combiner
Ass	Assyrian	comp	comparative
Astr	Astronomy, astronomical	cond	conditional (mood)
aug	augmentative	conj	conjunction, conjunctive
Aus	Australia, Australian	conjug	conjugation
Av	Avestic (or Zend)	conn	connotation
		cons	consonant, consonantal
		contr	contracted, contraction
		Cor	Cornish
B	British	corresp	corresponding
Bab	Babylonian, Babylonish	cpd	compound
Bact	Bacteriology, bacteriological	Craigie	Sir William Craigie, <i>A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue</i> , 1931-
Baker	Sidney J. Baker, <i>The Australian Language</i> , 1945	Cz	Czechoslovak
B & W	O. Bloch and W. von Wartburg, <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française</i> , 2nd ed., 1950		
B.C.	Before Christ	D	Dutch
		Da	Danish

¹ Except for A.D. and B.C., and for *e.g.*, *f.a.e.*, *i.e.*, *o.o.o.*, *q.v.* and *s.f.*, the very modern practice of using as few points (periods, full stops) as possible has been followed. In philology, OHG, MLG, ONF, etc.—not O.H.G., etc.—have long been usual; I have merely extended the practice to, e.g., *n* for noun.

DAE	<i>A Dictionary of American English</i> , edited by W. A. Craigie and J. R. Hulbert, 1936-44	Ga	Gaelic
DAF	R. Grandsaignes d'Hauterive, <i>Dictionnaire d'ancien français</i> , 1947	Gaul	Gaulish
dat	dative	gen	genitive (possessive case)
Dauzat	Albert Dauzat, <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française</i> , edition of 1947	Geog	Geography, geographical
dial	dialect, -al, -ally	Geol	Geology, geological
Dict	(this) dictionary; dict (pl dictt), any dictionary	Geom	Geometry, geometrical
dim	diminutive	Gmc	Germanic
E	English	Go	Gothic
E & M	A. Ernout and A. Meillet, <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine</i> , 3rd ed., 1951	Gr	Greek
Eccl	Ecclesiastics, ecclesiastic(al)	Gram; gram	Grammar; grammatical
ED	Early Modern Dutch	H	Hebrew
EDD	Joseph Wright, <i>The English Dialect Dictionary</i> , 1896-1905	Ham	Hamitic
EE	Early Modern English } 1500-	Hell	Hellenistic
EF	Early Modern French } 1700	Her	Heraldry, heraldic
Eg	Egyptian	HG	High German
EgAr	Egyptian Arabic	Hi	Hindi
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example	Hind	Hindustani
EI	East Indian, East Indies	hist	historic(al)
Ekwall	B. O. E. Ekwall, <i>The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names</i> , 4th ed., 1958	Hit	Hittite
El	Electricity	Hofmann	J. B. Hofmann, <i>Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Griechischen</i> , 1950
Enci It	<i>Enciclopedia Italiana</i>	Holthausen	Ferdinand Holthausen, <i>Wörterbuch des Altwestnordischen</i> , 1948
Eng	Engineering	Holthausen ¹	F. Holthausen, <i>Altfrisisches Wörterbuch</i> , 1925
Ent	Entomology, entomological	Holthausen ²	F. Holthausen, <i>Etymologisches Wörterbuch der englischen Sprache</i> , 3rd ed.
esp	especially	Hung or Hu	Hungarian
etc.	et cetera	ibid	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place
etym	etymology, etymological(ly)	Ice	Icelandic
euphem	euphemism, euphemistic(ally)	Ich	Ichthyology
EW	Ernest Weekley, <i>Concise Etymological Dictionary</i> , 2nd ed., 1952	id	<i>idem</i> , the same; identical
Ex	example; Exx: examples	IE	Indo-European
extn	extension	i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
F	French	illit	illiterate, illiterately
f	feminine	imm	immediately
f.a.e.	for anterior etymology	imp	imperative (mood)
f/e	folk-etymology or -etymological(ly)	impf	imperfect (tense)
Feist	Sigmund Feist, <i>Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Gotischen Sprache</i> , 3rd ed., 1939	inch	inchoative
fig	figurative(ly)	incl	included, including, inclusion
Fin	Finnish	ind	indicative (mood)
Fl	Flemish	inf	infinitive (mood), infinitival
fl	flourished (lived)	instr	instrument, instrumental
folll	following	int	intensive, intensively
fpl	feminine plural	interj	interjection, interjective(ly)
freq	frequentative	Ir	Irish
Fris	Frisian	irreg	irregular, irregularly
fs	feminine singular	It	Italian
FU	Finno-Ugric	J or Jap	Japanese
G	German	Jav	Javanese
		joc	jocular(ly)
		Kluge	Kluge-Götze, <i>Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache</i> , 14th ed., 1948
		L	Latin

L & S	Liddell and Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , in H. Stuart Jones's recension, 1925-40	neu	neuter; neupl: neuter plural; neus: neuter singular
l.c.	<i>locus citatus</i> , the passage (or book) quoted	NL	New Latin, especially Modern Scientific Latin
Lett	Lettish (Latvian)	nom	nominative (subjective case)
LG	Low German	Nor	Norwegian
LGr	Late Greek	NT	(The) New Testament
LH	Late Hebrew	NZ	New Zealand
lit	literal, literally	O	Old
Lith	Lithuanian	OB	Old Bulgarian (= Old Church Slavic)
LL	Late Latin (c. A.D. 180-600)	OB _r	Old Breton
loc	locative (case)	obs	obsolete
m	masculine	obsol	obsolescent
MacLennan	Malcolm MacLennan, <i>A Dictionary of the Gaelic Language</i> , 1925	OC	Old Celtic
Mal	Malayan	occ	occasional, occasionally
Malvezin	Pierre Malvezin, <i>Dictionnaire des racines celtiques</i> , 2nd ed., 1924	OE	Old English
Malvezin ¹	P. Malvezin, <i>Dictionnaire complétif du latin</i> , 1925	OED	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i>
M _{Ar}	Medieval Arabic	OF	Old French
M _{ath}	Mathematics, mathematical	OF _r	Old Frisian
Mathews	Mitford M. Mathews, <i>A Dictionary of Americanisms</i> , 1951	OG _{mc}	Old Germanic
M _{Br}	Medieval Breton	OHG	Old High German
MD	Medieval Dutch	OIr	Old Irish
mdfn	modification	OIt	Old Italian (Middle Ages)
ME	Middle English	OL	Old Latin
Med	Medicine, medical	OLG	Old Low German
Medit	Mediterranean	ON	Old Norse
Mencken	H. L. Mencken, <i>The American Language</i> , 4th ed., 1936; <i>Supplement One</i> , 1945, and <i>Two</i> , 1948	ONF	Old Northern French
Met	meteorology, -ological	o.o.o.	of obscure origin
MF	Medieval French (CC13-15)	OP	Old Prussian
MGr	Medieval Greek	OP _r	Old Persian
MHG	Middle High German	opp	opposite (adj, n): opposed to
Min	Mineralogy, mineralogical	OP _{rov}	Old Provençal
M _{Ir}	Middle Irish	orig	original, originally
mispron:	mispronounced, mispronunciation	Orn	Ornithology, ornithological
ML	Medieval Latin	OS	Old Saxon
MLG	Middle Low German	o/s	oblique stem
Mod, mod:	modern, as in Mod E, Modern English	OSI	Old Slavic
Morris	E. E. Morris, <i>Austral English</i> , 1898	OSp	Old Spanish
mpl	masculine plural	OSw	Old Swedish
ms	masculine singular	OT	(The) Old Testament
MSc	Middle Scots	OW	Old Welsh
Mus	Music, musical	P	Eric Partridge, <i>A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English</i> , 4th ed., 1950
MW	Middle Welsh	P ¹	E.P., <i>A Dictionary of the Underworld</i> , 1950
Myth	Mythology, mythological	P ²	E.P., <i>Name into Word</i> , 2nd ed., 1950
Mx	Manx	P ³	E.P., <i>Here, There and Everywhere</i> , 2nd ed., 1950
N	north, northern	P ⁴	E.P., <i>From Sanskrit to Brazil</i> , 1952
n	noun	pa	participial adjective
NA	North America, N American	Pal	Palaeography, palaeographical
naut	nautical	para	paragraph
Nav	the (Royal) Navy, naval; navigation(al)	PC	Primitive Celtic
neg	negative, negatively	pej	pejorative, -ly
		Per	Persian
		perh	perhaps
		Pettman:	C. Pettman, <i>Africanderisms</i> , 1913
		PG _{mc}	Primitive Germanic

PGr	Primitive Greek	s.f.	<i>sub finem</i> , near the end
Pharm	Pharmacy, pharmaceutical	sing	singular; in the singular
Phil	Philosophy, philosophical	Skeat	W. W. Skeat, <i>An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language</i> , 4th ed., 1910
phon	phonetic, phonetically, phonetics		
Phys	Physics	Skt	Sanskrit
Physio	Physiology, physiological	Sl	Slavonic
PL	Primitive Latin	sl	slang
pl	plural	Slov	Slovene
PIN	place-name	Sophocles	E. A. Sophocles, <i>Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods</i> (146 B.C.—A.D. 1100), ed. of 1893
PN	personal name		
Pol	Polish	Souter	A. Souter, <i>A Glossary of Later Latin</i> , 1949
Poly	Polynesian	sp	Spanish
pop	popular (speech)	spec	specialized
Port	Portuguese	subj	subjunctive
pos	positive	sup	superlative
pp	past participle	Surg	surgery, surgical
pps	past-participial stem	Sw	Swedish
Prati	Angelico Prati, <i>Vocabolario etimologico italiano</i> , 1951	syn	synonym; synonymous
prec	preceding		
prep	preposition(al)	T	Technics, Technology; technical, technological; technicality
pres inf	present infinitive	taut	tautological(ly), tautology
presp	present participle	tech	(a) technical (term)
presp o/s	present-participial oblique stem	Theo	Theology, theological
prob	probable, probably	Tokh	Tokharian
pron	pronounced (as), pronunciation	Topo	Topography, topographical
prop	properly, strictly	Torp:	Alf Torp, <i>Nynorsk Etymologisk Ordbok</i> , 1919
Prov	Provençal	trans	translated, translation
Psy	Psychology, psychological	Tregear	Edward Tregear, <i>The Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary</i> , 1897
Psychi	Psychiatry, psychiatric	trld; trln	transliterated; transliteration
pt	past tense (preterite)	Tu	Turkish
		ult	ultimate, ultimately
q.v.	<i>quod vide</i> , which see! (Plural references: qq.v.)	usu	usually
R	Romance (language or languages)	v	verb
r	root	var	variant
redup	reduplication	Ve	Vedic
ref	reference; in or with reference to	vi	verb intransitive
reg	regular(ly)	viz	to wit
resp	respective, respectively	VL	Vulgar (or Low) Latin
Rom	Romany	vn	verbal noun
Ru	Russian	vr	verb reflexive
Rum	Rumanian	vt	verb transitive
S	south, southern	W	Welsh
s	stem	Walde	A. Walde and J. B. Hofmann, <i>Latinsches etymologisches Wörterbuch</i> , 3rd ed., 1938–56
SAE	Standard American English	Walshe	M. O'C. Walshe, <i>A Concise German Etymological Dictionary</i> , 1952
SAfr	South Africa, S. African	Webster	<i>Webster's New International Dictionary</i> , 2nd ed., 1934, impressions of 1945 and later
SAM	South America, S. American	Whitehall	Harold Whitehall in <i>Webster's New World Dictionary</i> , College Edition, 1953
Santamaria	F. J. Santamaria, <i>Diccionario de Americanismos</i> , 1942		
Sc	Scots, Scottish		
sc	<i>scite</i> , understand! or supply!		
Scan	Scandinavian		
Sci	Science, scientific		
SciL	Scientific Latin		
SE	Standard English		
Sem	Semitic		
sem	semantics, semantic(ally)		
sep	separate, separately (treated)		

ABBREVIATIONS

xix

WI	West Indian, West Indies
Y & B	H. Yule and A. C. Burnell, <i>Hobson- Jobson</i> , revised by W. Crooke, 1903
Zoo	Zoology, zoological

* before a word indicates a presumed word, or
form of a word, or sense
= equal(s); is, or are, equivalent to; equivalent to
+ (in compounds and blends) and
† died; e.g., '† 1792'—died in 1792

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