

A dictionary of
IEPONYMS

Cyril Leslie Beeching

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Second Edition

CLIVE BINGLEY  LONDON

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First published in 1979 by Clive Bingley Limited

This revised second edition published in 1983 by Clive Bingley Limited, 16 Pembridge Road, London W11 3HL, and printed and bound in England by Redwood Burn Limited, Trowbridge, Wiltshire.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Beeching, Cyril Leslie

A dictionary of eponyms.—2nd ed.

1. Biography 2. Eponyms 3. English language—Eponyms—Glossaries, vocabularies, etc.

I. Title

920'.02 CT105

ISBN 0-85157-329-0

1234586858483

To my wife, Ann

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

The English language contains a large number of eponymic words — words derived from the names of people. Yet this is a rare distinction for a living person and is a lasting memorial to the dead only if there is sufficient awareness of the connection between the word and the name.

To give advice on how to get your name in the dictionary, or how to become eponymous, would be difficult. An easy answer might be to suggest, 'Become a famous scientist'. Most of the eminent men of science (Ohm, Ampère, Galvani, Watt, Newton, Rutherford, et al) have given their names to something or other. One could point to the Danish physicist Hans Christian Oersted, who is remembered (by scientists, at least) as the man who gave his name to the unit of magnetic field strength; while his brother, Anders Oersted, is quite forgotten today though he was once Prime Minister of Denmark. However, the names of some prime ministers have passed into the language, but more often than not for reasons unconnected with statesmanship — for example, Anthony Eden and the *Anthony Eden* hat.

Certain professions and callings do seem less productive of eponyms than others. The names of painters are rarely to be found in the dictionary, and musicians fare little better. There are some surprising omissions in the musical field — no Bach or Beethoven, for example — which suggests that even the sound of a name can affect its suitability as an eponymic word.

There are three main groups of eponymic words: those derived from mythological or fictitious names; those which are descriptive of a person or his works (as, for example, Shakespearian or Shavian); and the 'true' eponymic words which have become part of the language in a fuller sense and are taken from the names of people who actually exist or once existed. The examples in this dictionary are taken from the last group.

The aim of the selection has been to present a variety of eponymic words with relevant and interesting information concerning the men and women who have given their names

to the words. It is, of course, the human association of these words which gives them their uniqueness and other peculiar attraction. Some areas have been avoided. Engineering eponyms — apart from a few included because of common usage or particular interest of subject — have been ignored. They are comprehensively dealt with in C P Auger's *Engineering eponyms* (second edition, Library Association, 1975). Horticulture and botany, also, have been generally avoided because of the proliferation of eponymic species — roses alone would fill a volume. Makes of motor cars (Rolls-Royce, Ford, Benz, etc) are excluded because they are not truly eponymic.

Words of doubtful origin are not included. 'Lynch', for instance, has been variously ascribed to James Fitzstephen Lynch, a mayor of Galway, who tried and executed his own son in 1493; an eighteenth-century Virginian farmer, Charles Lynch; and a number of other Lynches, to say nothing of Lynch's Creek in both North and South Carolina.

It is hoped that, in addition to satisfying the curiosity of the casual reader with a general interest in eponymous persons, this book may answer some specific enquiries about eponyms. The subject index is intended to facilitate this aspect of use.

Some eponyms are instantly created as the result of an invention or a discovery; others gain acceptance more slowly. A dictionary of eponyms a generation from now, would certainly include new examples of both types. Perhaps this author's own name may appear there as a synonym for 'axing', or a word for 'ruthless cutting or pruning of unprofitable services', after Lord Beeching who, as Dr Richard Beeching, became well-known for such activities during his term of office as Chairman of the British Railways Board.

New Malden
Surrey

C L B
September 1978

INTRODUCTION TO THE REVISED EDITION

In the compilation of this revised edition of the *Dictionary*, well over a hundred eponyms have been added to those which comprised the main body of the first edition. There are also certain alterations and corrections to the original entries: for example, the guillotine as an instrument for inflicting capital punishment is no longer in use in France. And yet while the scope of the *Dictionary* has been considerably widened to embrace a greater choice of eponyms, the initial intention of confining these words to the category derived from 'the names of people who actually exist or once existed' has been adhered to.

It is perhaps necessary to explain the addition of the relatively large number of eponyms connected with medicine and surgery. At least one critic has drawn attention (not unfairly) to the inconsistency of including *Parkinson's disease*, but not *Bright's*, or *Addison's*, etc. It was not originally intended to do more than indicate the validity of the medical eponym (surely to include Parkinson of 'the law' to the exclusion of Parkinson of 'the disease' was untenable?); and even with these additions, there is no question of attempting a comprehensive list of diseases, etc, but rather a selection of the more important names in medicine and especially those with some particular human interest of the kind which gives the eponym its peculiar attraction.

The subject index, which has apparently been most helpful to the browser (and at least one reviewer), has been extended in this edition; and though the men and women of science have again furnished a generous proportion of the eponyms, there are many new subjects included. It would seem, in fact, that there is hardly any field of human activity which has not given us an eponymic word. Also, it is interesting to note (as indeed it *was* noted in a BBC World Service broadcast concerning this dictionary) how many of the eponyms in the English language originate from foreign nationals.

The hope that the *Dictionary* would have a comparatively wide appeal has perhaps been confirmed by the interest shown on the one hand by the eminent dramatic critic, the

late Mr Philip Hope-Wallace (who kindly devoted his *Guardian* column to a review of the first edition), and on the other hand by the enthusiastic broadcast comments of the BBC's Mr Terry Wogan. Other writers and broadcasters whose helpful criticisms or comments I wish to acknowledge include Mr Eric Hiscock of *The bookseller*, Mr Magnus Magnusson, Mr Brian Redhead, Mr Robert Robinson, Mr David Jacobs, Mr Bob Holness, Mr Doug Case (of the BBC World Service programme 'Speaking of English') and Mr Steve Race, whose interest in eponyms is by no means confined to his special subject of music.

New Malden
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C L B
December 1982



1 AARON'S BEARD AARON'S ROD

Aaron was the founder of the Jewish priesthood and the brother of Moses (qv). At least two eponyms come from him.

Aaron's beard is the name for various plants, especially St John's Wort ('It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments' *Psalms*, cxxxiii, 2), while *Aaron's rod* is the mullein, or certain other plants with tall flowering stems ('... behold the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds' *Numbers*, xvii, 8). It is also one of the names for a divining rod, a forked twig for locating concealed water or metal.

2 ADAM

Robert Adam (1728-92) and his brother, James Adam (1730-94), were Scottish architects who introduced and gave their name to the neoclassical *Adam style* of architecture and furniture design. They were sons of the architect William Adam, whose two other sons, John and William, were also architects.

As a young man, Robert Adam visited Italy to study the classical style of architecture at first hand, and this was to have a strong influence on the eventual Adam style of architecture. In 1762, he was appointed architect to George III (qv) and after six years, James Adam succeeded him in the post. It was with his brother James that Robert Adam designed the special furniture for the Adam houses, which was light and decorative in style, ornamented with paint and inlaid designs featuring the wreath, the fan, and the honeysuckle. They also produced a number of impressive interiors for their houses, with particularly fine ceilings and mantelpieces.

In 1769, the four brothers acquired a plot of land known as Durham yard (it was formerly the site of the Bishop of Durham's palace), lying between the Strand and the Thames, and began developing the area in the Adam style. They

renamed the plot as the Adelphi, from a Greek word meaning 'brothers'. The venture was not successful financially, but the Adelphi district became very fashionable for a time. Modern development has virtually obliterated the original buildings and streets, though there are many surviving examples of Adam architecture and interior decoration to be seen in London and elsewhere, with Robert Adam's screen and gate for the Admiralty, in Portland Place, probably being the best known.

3 ADDISONIAN TERMINATION

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) is remembered as the founder of *The Spectator* (with Sir Richard Steele) and the creator of Sir Roger de Coverley, 'a gentleman of Worcestershire, of ancient descent, a baronet'. Eponymously he is remembered by way of his tendency to end the occasional sentence with a preposition (eg from his essay *Sir Roger at the play*: 'Why, there is not a single sentence in this play that I do not know the meaning of.'). This was noted by one Bishop Hurd (1720-1808), a bishop of Worcester, who duly coined the term *Addisonian termination* to describe this 'offence'.

It should be pointed out, however, that Bishop Hurd was clearly being less than fair in singling out Addison, who was by no means the worst (nor for that matter the first) offender. In fact there is hardly an English writer of note, from Chaucer onwards, who has not at some time made use of this now generally accepted device.

Yet the pedants still oppose those who argue for the flexibility of the English language and the *effectiveness* of any given *Addisonian termination* as justification for its employment. Perhaps Winston Churchill could be said to have summed up the whole matter in his famous comment on a certain state document: 'This', he wrote, 'is the sort of English up with which I will not put.'

4 ADDISON'S DISEASE

Thomas Addison (1739-1860) is remembered as the discoverer of a glandular disease named after him as *Addison's disease*. This disease affects the adrenal or suprarenal glands (the

glands located above the kidneys) and is marked by wasting effects, tiredness and a brownish pigmentation of the skin in those suffering from it.

Addison studied medicine at Edinburgh and was a physician at Guy's Hospital, in London, where he made his famous discovery at the comparatively advanced age of sixty-two.

5 ADLERIAN

Alfred Adler (1870-1937) gives his name to the *Adlerian* school of philosophy. This departs from the Freudian theory (qv) in its conception of the 'inferiority complex' as an explanation of various forms of human behaviour, as opposed to Freud's emphasis on the importance of sexual factors. According to Adler, we are all affected by an innate inferiority of one kind or another and our reactions to this condition decide the kind of person we become: eg the physically small or inadequate might well develop into a dominating type; or, alternatively, someone unsuccessful in coping with life's difficulties could become a hypochondriac, albeit unconsciously.

Adler was born in Vienna and was at first a disciple and close friend of his fellow-countryman Freud. He was also a friend and contemporary of the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, another Freudian who eventually broke with the 'master' to found his own school of psychoanalysis.

6 ADMIRABLE CRICHTON

James Crichton (1560?-82) was a Scottish prodigy who, it is said, was outstandingly gifted both as a scholar and an athlete. During his short life he travelled widely and met many of the leading scientists and philosophers of his day, who were greatly impressed by his learning and his fluency in some twelve languages, to say nothing of his skill as a swordsman. He is believed to have been little more than twenty-one years of age when he was killed in a brawl in Mantua.

Crichton was eulogized as 'The Admirable Crichton' by the Scottish writer Sir Thomas Urquhart (1611-60) and this term has since been applied to anyone who excels in various arts and sciences, or a polymath. *The Admirable*

Crichton was also the title of one of the best-known plays of another Scottish writer, Sir James Barrie.

7 ALBERT

Prince Albert (1819-61), Consort of Victoria (qv), Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, has been commemorated by monuments, buildings, bridges, street names and names of pubs, etc—all too numerous to mention. And, inevitably, many of these have long since disappeared, for one reason or another. Names too have been changed. What was formerly Lake Albert is currently Lake Mobutu Seso in Zaire, for example. But the prince-consort also gave his name to something more durable — a word in the English language. An *albert* is a short kind of watch-chain, named after Prince Albert Francis Charles Augustus Emmanuel of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha — as any customer in the public bar of *The Royal Albert* or *The Albert Arms* must know.

An award for gallantry in life-saving, the *Albert medal*, was instituted in 1866 to commemorate the prince.

8 ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Alois Alzheimer (1864-1915) gives his name to a disease affecting the brain cells, *Alzheimer's disease* or *Alzheimer's syndrome*. Alzheimer, a German neurologist born in Breslau (now Wrocław, in Poland), identified the characteristic features of the disease circa 1900.

Although sufferers from Alzheimer's disease display the common symptoms of senility (eg increasing loss of memory, vagueness, and difficulty in performing everyday tasks), the condition can occur in a patient in the forty to fifty age group, when it is sometimes known as pre-senile dementia.

There is no known cure for the disease, but the Alzheimer's Disease Society, a registered charity based in Oxford, provides specialized help and advice for sufferers and their families.

9 AMBROSIAN CHANT AMBROSIAN MODES AMBROSIAN RITE

Saint Ambrose (340-397) was Bishop of Milan from 374, and is particularly remembered for his great influence on the

music and rituals of the Christian Church. He restored order into church music with the introduction of the *Ambrosian chant*, based on four scales, or modes (*Ambrosian modes*), and this remained as the principal form of church music for some 200 years.

St Ambrose also introduced a form of religious service, or liturgy, named after him as the *Ambrosian rite*, which is one of the few exceptions to the Roman rite used in the Roman Catholic Church, and this is still in use in Milan. And in 1609, the name of St Ambrose was honoured again, when Cardinal Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, bequeathed his private library to the use of the public and named it after his famous predecessor as *The Ambrosian Library*.

10 AMPERE

André Marie Ampère (1775-1836), the French scientist, is one of three men (the other two being the Italian, Volta, and the Scotsman, Watt (qqv)) whose names are almost certain to be found in just about every house, office, shop, or factory — in fact, any place where electricity is used for lighting, heating, or running machines and appliances.

Ampère made a number of important discoveries in the field of magnetism and electricity, and his name has been given to the unit of electric current (usually abbreviated to *amp*), as well as a law, *Ampère's law*, formulated by him, which forms the basis of the study of electrodynamics.

11 ANDERSON SHELTER

Sir John Anderson, later Viscount Waverley (1882-1958), was a civil servant who entered Parliament in 1938, and became Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1943 to 1945. His name is best remembered, however, by the *Anderson shelter*, which he introduced in 1939 when he was Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security.

Faced with the urgent task of providing air-raid shelters for the civilian population in the impending war, Anderson had turned to his old friend and fellow-Scotsman, William Paterson (later Sir William Paterson), a distinguished engineer, who produced a design for a partly prefabricated shelter

which could easily be erected by the non-expert in his own back-garden. Some three million Anderson shelters were built during the war and they undoubtedly saved many lives.

12 THE ANDREW

Andrew Miller was the name of one particularly notorious press-gang operator who 'recruited' for the Royal Navy in the Portsmouth area, circa 1800. Such was his reputation that any impressed man was said to have gone into 'the Andrew' and the term subsequently became synonymous with the Royal Navy itself.

At the height of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, as many as half of the crew of any Royal Naval ship could be made up of impressed men and the press-gangs continued to operate up to the 1830s. It is a common but mistaken assumption that the press-gang takes its name from its victims being 'pressed' (ie forced) into service, whereas the word is really derived from the French *prêter*, 'to lend', or the 'imprest' money loaned to a newly enlisted man.

13 ÅNGSTROM

Anders Jonas Ångström (1814-74) was the Swedish astronomer and physicist who gave his name to the unit used for measuring the wavelengths of light, ultraviolet rays, X-rays (qv under Röntgen), etc, the *ångström*. Ångström was a student and later a professor at the University of Uppsala, and carried out a number of original researches in connection with light, including an analysis of the spectrum of aurora borealis.

14 ANTHONY EDEN

Sir (Robert) Anthony Eden, later the Earl of Avon (1897-1977), is remembered as the British Prime Minister at the time of the ill-fated 'Suez adventure', in 1956, when Anglo-French forces invaded Egypt. He is also remembered for his resignation as Foreign Secretary in the Chamberlain government, following the Munich Conference, in 1938; and he was Foreign Secretary in Churchill's wartime government.

But Anthony Eden (as he was best known) is remembered