

On Winchester's *The Meaning of Everything*

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In the beginning...

- ▶ • Winchester begins at the “end” with publication of the first edition of the OED
- ▶ • Derby day 1928 – A day grand celebrations, beginning with a traditional horserace and culminating in two big events that evening, a ball, hosted by Edward Prince of Wales, future (if only briefly) King of England.
- ▶ • And the event more important to us...
- ▶ • The celebration of the publication of the OED. An event attended by the likes of J.R.R. Tolkien, and a great many other of England’s Intellectual elite--including the then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin

In the beginning (for real this time)

- ▶ The story of the OED really begins of course with beginning of English itself.
 - ▶ Language of Invasion, etc., etc.

Dictionaries Galore

- ▶ More so, our story begins with the advent of the dictionary.
- John Withal's English—Latin Vocabulary (c. 1558).
- Robert Cawdrey's Table Alphabetical (1604)
- Samuel Johnson's (1775)
- Webster's (1828)
- Charles Richardson's A New Dictionary of the English Language (1837)

channell, *finck*.
chaos, (g) a confused heap or mingle-mangle
§ chapelet, a garland.
chaffar, buying and selling.
character, (g) the fashion of a letter, a
marke or stampe.
§ champion, wilde field, also a challenger.
chambering, lightnesse, and wanton beha-
viour in private places.

OA'TMEAL. *n. f.* [*oat* and *meal*.] Flower made by grinding
oats.
Oatmeal and butter, outwardly applied, dry the scab on the
head. *Arbutnot on Aliment.*
Our neighbours tell me oft, in joking talk,
Of ashes, leather, *oatmeal*, bran, and chalk. *Gay.*
OA'TMEAL. *n. f.* An herb. *Ainsworth.*
OATS. *n. f.* [*azen*, Saxon.] A grain, which in England is
generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.
It is of the gras leaved tribe; the flowers have no petals,
and are disposed in a loose panicle: the grain is eatable.
The meal makes tolerable good bread. *Miller.*
The *oats* have eaten the horses. *Shakespeare.*
It is bare mechanism, no otherwise produced than the
turning of a wild *oatbeard*, by the insinuation of the particles
of moisture. *Locke.*
For your lean cattle, fodder them with barley straw first,
and the *oat* straw last. *Mortimer's Husbandry.*
His horse's allowance of *oats* and beans, was greater than
the journey required. *Swift.*
OA'TTHISTLE. *n. f.* [*oat* and *thistle*.] An herb. *Ainsf.*

The Mission is Set

- ▶ 1842 Philological Society is founded for men both “learned and leisured”
- ▶ Herbet Coleridge, Fredrick Furnivall, and Richard Trench the Dean of Westminster
- ▶ Have some uneasiness
- ▶ Decide to form an “Unregistered Words Committee” in 1857 to seek out any omissions.
- ▶ Trench presents “On Some Deficiencies in our English Dictionaries”

The Initial Plan

- ▶ • The new dictionary should do its best contain every word
- ▶ • Every word should have listed, every sense and meaning.
- ▶ • Every word should have all variant spellings as well as the currently preferred spelling.
- ▶ • Every word should have as full an etymology as possible
- ▶ • Every word should have a detail of how every form should be pronounced
- ▶ • It had to offer up a historical biography, through quotations.
- ▶ • They would ask for volunteers to aid them

And so it Begins

- ▶ A year after the initial call to create a dictionary, the Philological Society drafted a formal resolution to set about the task, on 12 May 1860.

Fathers of the Philological Society Dictionary

- Richard Chevenix Trench: Irish aristocratic background, became a member of the clergy, very liberal-minded and reformist, his Church work became too great for him to continue working on the dictionary
- Herbert Coleridge: the first editor of the project, grandson of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he's a precocious young barrister, knowledgeable about several languages, he's not physically well, under Coleridge the project gains American contributors, uses a comparative descriptive approach to defining words, tries to exclude certain words but the other members of the Society vote that idea down, dies at the age of 31 of tuberculosis
- Frederick James Furnivall: eccentric, ladies' man, he's a lawyer and has many hobbies, including sculling and cycling, isn't really suited to the job so he hires unpaid “subeditors”, many of whom quit early on, the project almost fails completely under his care

James Murray

- Lowland Scot, Calvinist not very well off
- Not highly educated early in life, later gets an unimpressive degree, ends up with an honorary doctorate of law from University of Edinburgh much later
- “radiated a magisterial air of righteous authority” that becomes associated with the dictionary itself
- Has a tragic first marriage but his second marriage lasts much longer and produces **11 children**
- Learns of the Philological Society's work through Alexander Melville Bell (father of Alexander Graham Bell)

Murray's Family



Image courtesy of OUP Archives

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Struggle Was Real

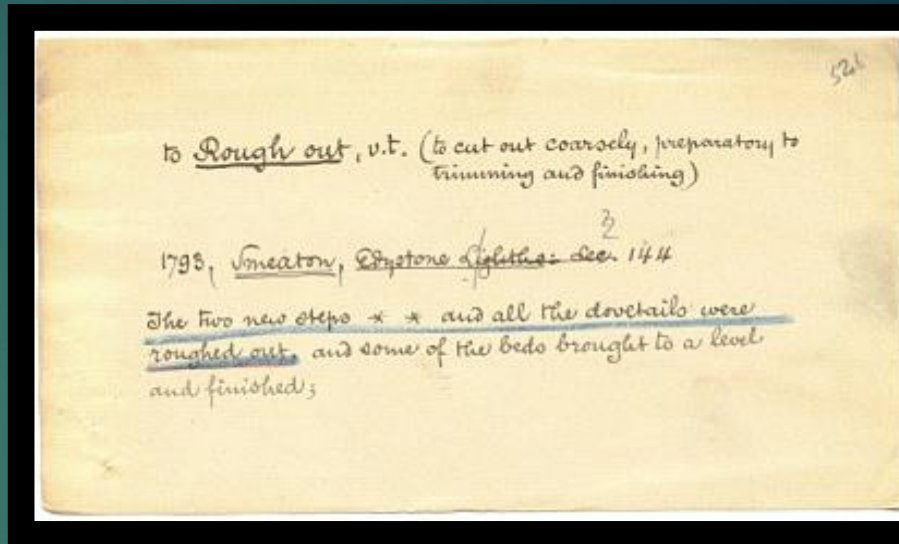
- Murray tries to get Macmillan to publish the dictionary, but Furnivall was still around trying to make deals elsewhere and this rubbed Macmillan the wrong way.
- In an effort to get Oxford to publish it, Murray works very hard but doesn't get very far at first. Furnivall acts as a sort of lobbyist and appeals to one of the Delegates to gain influence.
- On April 26, 1878, Murray presents the case to the Delegates. They all get along well and the presentation goes well, but the deal takes another year to work out.

Let's make a deal!

- The deal
 - 7,000 pages, must be complete in 10 years, can only cost £9,000 and Murray will be paid an annual salary of £500 as editor
- What actually happens
 - It takes 54 years
 - It spans 16,000 pages
 - It costs £300,000

Battling with the Undertow

- ▶ It wasn't easy taking up the task after such a lapse.
 - ▶ The problem of "The Slips"
 - ▶ Lack of ordinary words
 - ▶ Building "the Scriptorium"
 - ▶ Developing guidelines for entries
 - ▶ Proof Pages– and their cost
- ▶ Benjamin Jowett's objections
 - ▶ ...and Murray's response



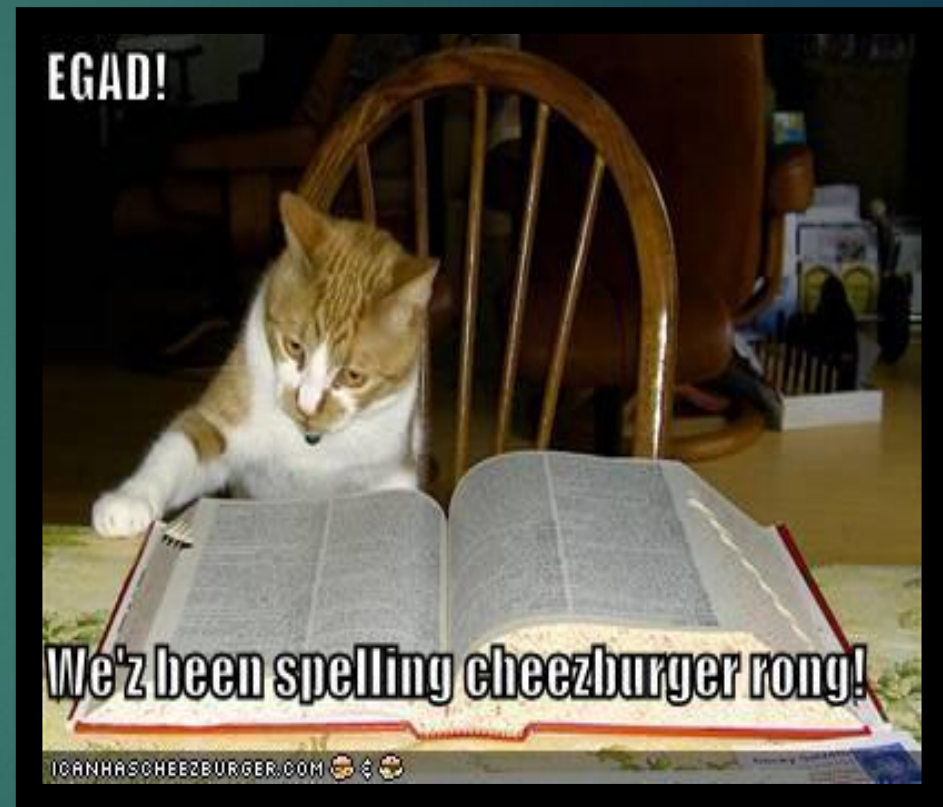
Pushing Through the Untrodden Forest

- ▶ If starting the dictionary was hard, getting it published— a feat never before accomplished for a work of such a scale— was even more difficult, if only because there was no model for it.
 - ▶ 29 January 1884: Part I of the *New English Dictionary* was published— and (though thorough and well-written) it wasn't pretty. They needed money.
 - ▶ Followed Dickens' example and published it in serials that could later be bound into volumes.
 - ▶ This made it easier to sell. Awesome side effect: made it “The Dictionary” because it was affordable for nearly all households.
- ▶ Whole endeavor was greatly improved with Henry Bradley joined the staff of the Dictionary.



So What?

- ▶ The OED is English's first DESCRIPTIVE dictionary– despite Jowett's insistence that it should not be.
- ▶ The first editions of The OED weren't perfect– but they laid the groundwork for well-researched, thorough entries of all English words.
- ▶ Spelling and usage for *all* English words (even common ones) was beginning to be immortalized in print– and therefore standardized.
- ▶ The Dictionary made knowledge and awareness of language “cool”– in other words, a profitable venture of scholarship

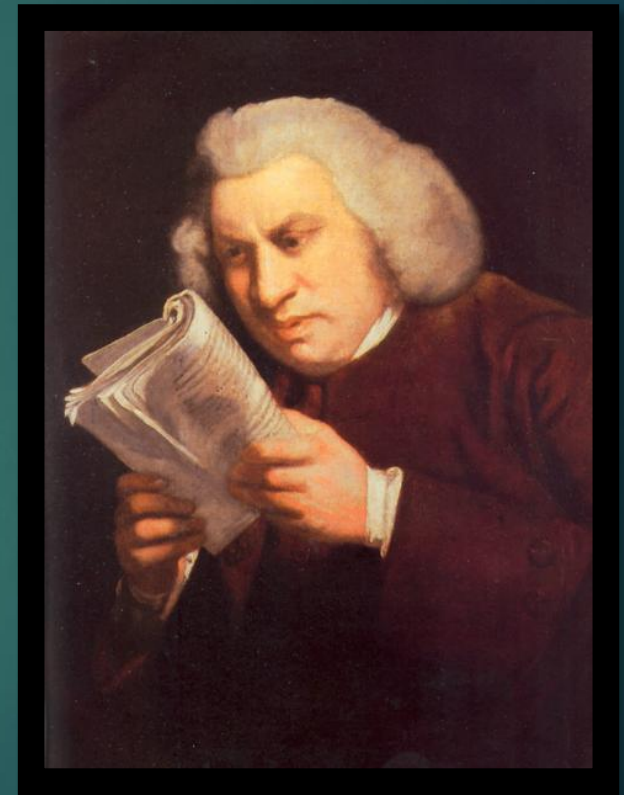


The OED is Born!

- ▶ 1. New Year's Day 1895. You could buy the OED for half a crown (approx. less than five pounds). public was getting access of the OED, hence it's domination. The was the culmination of painstaking work. It was 64-page paperback volume.
- ▶ 2. It became politically preponderant. Lawyers used it, Joseph Chamberlain (8 July 1836 – 2 July 1914) asked Murray about meaning of patriotism that he wanted to use in his speech in Glasgow (218). This shows that the dictionary was now a political force. It could be used to help forward people's political interests. according to OED patriotism: The quality of being patriotic; love of or devotion to one's country.
- ▶ 3. 1897 was Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. She endorsed it. From then on the OED became like the lingua franca, or rather definition of how English is used. It was now the official Lexis of the British Empire.
- ▶ 1893: William Ewart Gladstone (29 December 1809 – 19 May 1898): put-up (cited in Parliament : according to OED: Of a crime: planned in advance by conspiracy with other

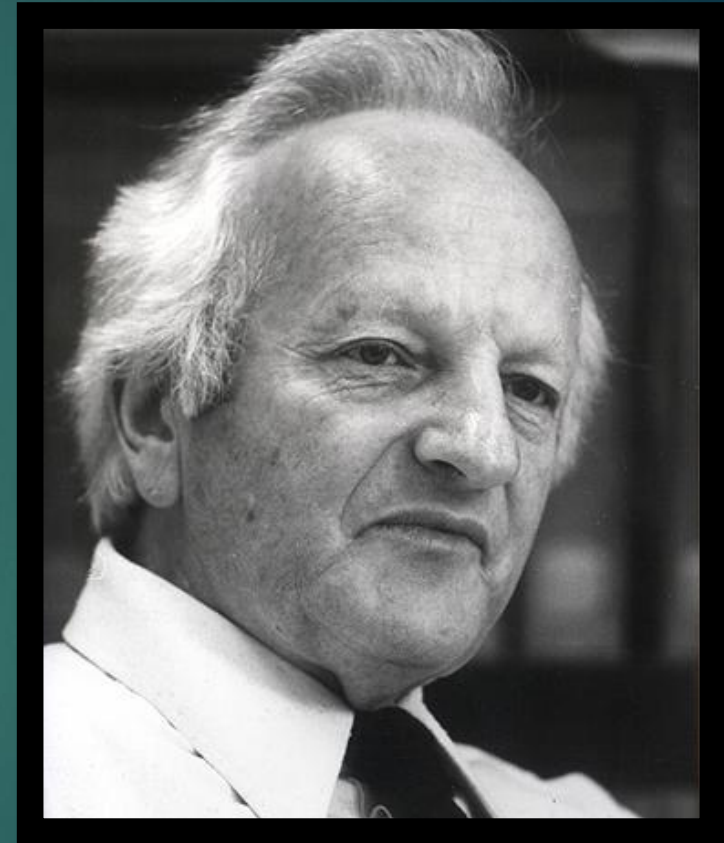
Samuel Johnson

- ▶ Samuel Johnson was compiler of prescriptive 18th Century A Dictionary of the English Language.
- ▶ Penny notes:
 - ▶ 1. Penny notes that Johnson (a Tory) had sought to “secure [the English Language] from corruption or decay” (). She says that he used a prescriptive approach that was compatible with 18th century. Murray’s (Whig) Victorian descriptivism displaced Johnson’s approach and reigned supreme.
 - ▶ 2. Despite this, Johnson was still influential to Murray’s dictionary. She however notes that Johnson’s Dictionary was influential on Murray’s.
 - ▶ Silva, Penny. "Johnson And The OED." *International Journal Of Lexicography* 18.2 (2005): 231-242. MLA International Bibliography. Web. 7 Nov. 2013.



Robert Burchfield

- ▶ 1. He added a lot of words from World Englishes. He put American English, South African, as well as other foreign languages like Hindi, Japanese etc. and many other English as well as adding foreign words, that were not yet very popular. The OED had become global and not just British. Ogilvie however argues that he did not add the most words. Murray died in 1915. Murray had excluded South African words like Aardvark (28). She argues that He did not add the most words, that Onions had 45% more. He was more of a media stunt man.
- ▶ 2. His era, however, shows incorporation of World English and sprouting out of OED. He was, however criticized for sometimes being too prescriptive.
 - ▶ Ogilvie, Sarah. "Rethinking Burchfield And World Englishes." *International Journal Of Lexicography* 21.1 (2008): 23-59. MLA International Bibliography. Web. 7 Nov. 2013.



Miscellaneous

- ▶ “Retreat is the order in which a French fleet retires before an enemy. As it is not properly a term of the British marine, any fuller account would be out of place.” from the *Dictionary of Marine*.
- ▶ Although this seems satirical it shows the political rift between Britain and France, but more relevantly it shows the predominance of Victorian prescriptivism. the word seems relevant because it is politically obsolete.
- ▶ OED did not use this overtly political method of definition.

Crazy Kleptos and Mad Murderers...

- A multitude of people had a hand in creating the OED
Women, daughters of chemists, ministers, college servants, businessman, novelists, scholars, surgeons, and many, many more 'H
- Even a klepto who stealing of course! • But there were two got fired for, well, who exemplified the two extremes of the process the most

William Chester Minor

▶ Fitzedward Hall – American

- Most steadfast worker, spoke

Began working w/ Dictionary in

- Obsessive perfection seeking individual

many languages through experience w/ British India

1881 – working w/ words like develop, diagram, handsome pronoun He individual

▶ William Chester Minor

- Surgeon soldier in Army

- February 1872 - began having

bouts of paranoid schizophrenia

- Shot an innocent man and sentenced to spend life in

- Create indexes of books he was

reading from editors and wait for problems

- Worked to keep sane – saving

reading and wait for problems

grace

Standards Check!

- ▶ Thesis: The OED revolutionizes dictionaries in its use of Victorian descriptivism as opposed to Johnson's prescriptivism; this is an advantage because it captures the evolutionary, mutable nature of English as a language.
- ▶ Methods: While rich in historical details, Winchester focuses the story of the OED on the lives of its creators
- ▶ Evidence: Winchester uses few sources but many examples; his is a popular history, but an exciting one
- ▶ Conclusions:
 - ▶ The OED is a descriptive dictionary
 - ▶ The English language is continuously evolving, and must be documented as such.
 - ▶ The OED has outlived, and will continue to outlive, its continuous string of editors

Assumptions

- ▶ There are immutable rules to English
- ▶ Words mean the same thing to all English-Speakers
- ▶ The OED only covers British English
- ▶ Definitions are “unflappable”
- ▶ The OED was written by old, dead, white guys