

ANALYZING WIRETAPS

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In the February 1982 *Word Ways*, Darryl Francis attempted to form words out of the 255 different subsets of letters from the set NEUSTRIA. There were eight gaps in his list; two, SRT and TRN, were filled in the February 1983 *Colloquy* as placenames in Yugoslavia. After considerable searching, I was able to plug three more holes:

aeiu AUIE 16-17th century form of 'a-vie' in the OED

aeisu AUISE early form of 'advise' shown in 1330 quotation in the OED

aeitu ATIUE a place in the South Pacific in the Times Index-Gazetteer

This leaves only nrs, nst and nrst missing.

I decided to try a different set of eight letters, selecting the five consonants PRSTW and the three vowels AEI. The list below is complete, but I had to resort to abbreviations to fill two gaps (TW and PTR) and a symbol for a third (PR). Perhaps *Word Ways* readers can improve on these. For example, I think it likely that TW is an old Scots form for 'to', 'too' or 'tow', but the Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue has not progressed beyond P.

ae AE	ei EI	ir IR	pw WP ₄
ai AI	ep PE	is IS	rs RS ₅
ap PA	er ER	it IT	rt RT
ar AR	es ES	iw WI ₁	rw WR
as AS	et TE	pr PR ₂	st ST ₆
at AT	ew WE	ps PS ₃	sw WS ₇
aw AW	ip PI	pt PT	tw WT
aei AEI ⁸	apw PAW	ept PET	irw WIR ⁹
aep APE	ars SAR	epw PEW	ist SIT
aer ERA	art RAT	ers ERS	isw WIS
aes SEA	arw WAR	ert RET	itw WIT ₁₀
aet ATE	ast SAT	erw REW	prs PRS ₁₁
aew AWE	asw WAS	est SET	prr PTR ₁₁
aip PIA	atw TAW	esw SEW	prw PRW
air AIR	eip PIE	etw WET	pst PST
ais AIS	eir IRE	ipr RIP	psw WPS
ait AIT	eis SEI	ips SIP	ptw PWT ₁₂
aiw WAI	eit TIE	ipt PIT	rst SRT ₁₃
apr RAP	eiw WIE	ipw WIP	rsw WRS
aps SPA	epr PER	irs SIR	rtw TRW
apt TAP	eps PES	irt RIT	stw STW

aeip PEAI	aipw WAIP ¹⁵	eips PIES	estw STEW
aeir ERIA	airs AIRS	eipt PIET	iprs RIPS
aeis ASIE	airt RAIT	eipw WIPT	iprt TRIP
aeit AEIT ¹⁴	airw WARI	eirs SIRE	iprw PWIR
aeiw AWEI	aist AITS	eirt RITE	ipst SPIT
aepr PEAR	aisw WAIS	eirw WIRE	ipsw WISP
aeps PEAS	aitw WAIT	eist TIES	iptw WIPT
aept TAPE	aprs SPAR	eisw WISE	irst STIR
aepw WEAP	aprt PART	eitw WITE	irsw WIRS
aers SEAR	aprw WARP	eprs REPS	irtw WRIT
aert RATE	apst SPAT	eprt PERT	istw WITS
aerw WEAR	apsw WASP	eprw WERP	prst STRP ¹⁷
aest SEAT	aptw WAPT ¹⁶	epst STEP	prsw PRWS ¹⁸
aesw WASE	arst STAR	epsw PEWS	prtw TPRW
aetw WATE	arsw WARS	eptw WEPT	pstw PWTS ¹⁹
aipr PAIR	artw WART	erst REST	rstw WRST ¹⁹
aips PAIS	astw TAWS	ersw REWS	
aipt PIAT	eipr RIPE	ertw WERT	
aeipr PERAI	aepsw WEAPS ²²	airtw WAITR	eirsw WISER
aeips SEPIA ²⁰	aeptw PAWTE ²²	aistw WAIST	eirtw WRITE
aeipt PAITE ²¹	aerst STARE	aprst STRAP	eistw SWEIT
aeipw AWPIE ²¹	aersw SWEAR	aprsw WARPS	eprst PREST
aeirs RAISE	aertw WATER	aprtw WRAPT ²⁵	eprsw SPREW ²⁶
aeirt IRATE	aestw WASTE	apstw SWAPT ²⁵	eprtw TWERP ²⁶
aeirw WARIE	aiprs PAIRS	arstw WARTS	epstw SWEPT
aeist STAIE	aiprt TAPIR ²³	eiprs PRISE	erstw WREST
aeisw AWISE	aiprw WAIRP ²³	eiprt TRIPE	iprst TRIPS ²⁷
aeitw TAWIE	aipst TAPIS	eiprw WIPER	iprsw WIRPS ²⁸
aeprs SPARE	aipsw SWAIP ²⁴	eipst SPITE	iprtw TWIRP ²⁹
aeprt TAPER	aiptw WA-PIT ²⁴	eipsw SWIPE	ipstw WISPT ²⁹
aepw WRAP	airst STAIR	eiptw PEWIT	irstw WRIST ³⁰
aepst PASTE	airsw SWAIR	eirst TIRES	prstw TPRWS ³⁰
aeiprs PRAISE	aeirsw WARIES	aerstw WATERS	eiprst STRIPE
aeiprt PIRATE ³¹	aeirtw WAITER	aiprst RAPIST ³³	eiprsw WIPERS ³⁷
aeiprw WIREPA ³¹	aeistw WAITES	aiprsw RIPSAP ³⁴	eiprtw WERPIT ³⁷
aeipst PATISE	aeprst REPAST	aiprtw WARPIT ³⁵	eipstw PEWITS
aeipsw SWAIP	aeprrsw SERPAW ³²	aipstw PITSAP ³⁵	eirstw WRITES
aeiptw TAWPIE	aeprtw PREAWT ³²	airstw WATIRS ³⁶	eprstw TWERPS
aeirst SATIRE	aepstw PAWTES	aprstw SPRAWT ³⁶	iprstw TWIRPS
aeiprst PIASTER	aeiprtw TAWPIER	aeirstw WARIEST ³⁸	aiprstw PRISTAW ³⁹
aeiprsw WASPIER	aeipstw TAWPIES	aeprstw TRAWPSE ³⁸	epirstw PWIREST ⁴⁰
aeiprstw WIRETAPS ⁴¹			

DEFINITIONS

1. PR symbol for propyl (Web 3)
2. PS plural of the letter P (Web 3)
3. PT variant of 'PT boat' (Web 3)
4. RS plural of the letter R (Web 3)
5. RT in 'Cnri Rt', a point listed in the OSNG, Yugoslavia
6. WS 17th-century Scottish form of 'us'

7. WT abbrev. for 'wireless telephone' (Web 3)
8. AEI early form of 'any'
9. WIR early form of 'wire'
10. PRS plural of PR, a Puerto Rican, as in the OED citation 'the PR was neutral as grey paint'
11. PTR abbrev. of 'painter' and 'printer' (Web 3)
12. SRT a mountain listed in the OSNG, Yugoslavia
13. WRS a 13th-century spelling of 'worse'
14. AEIT a 13th-century spelling of 'ait'
15. WAIP variant of 'wap' (EDD)
16. WAPT past tense of verb 'wap', shown in c1550 citation
17. STRP a populated place listed in the OSNG, Yugoslavia
18. PRWS plural of 'prw', variant of 'prow', an old word meaning 'profit'
19. WRST 13th- and 14th-century spelling of 'worst'
20. PAITE an early form of 'pate'
21. AWPIE the guillemot (Scottish National Dictionary)
22. PAWTE variant of 'paut', to poke (EDD)
23. WALRP Scots form of 'warp' (Scottish National Dictionary)
24. WA-PIT the act of sending away (Scottish National Dictionary)
25. SWAPT past tense of the verb 'swap'
26. TWERP an insignificant or contemptible fellow (Web 3)
27. WIRPS jogs along (EDD)
28. TWIRP variant of 'twerp' (Web 3)
29. WISPT past tense of the verb 'wisp', to rub (a 1598 quotation)
30. TPRWS imitation of horn sounds
31. WIREPA a Maori surname (there are eight listed in the 1983 Auckland, New Zealand telephone directory)
32. PREAWT variant of 'prowt', rubbish (EDD)
33. RIPSAW to saw wood in the direction of the grain (Web 3)
34. WARPIIT early past tense of the verb 'warp', shown in various OED citations
35. PITSAW a type of large saw worked by two men (Web 2)
36. SPRAWT to sprawl (EDD)
37. WERPIT 14th- to 16th-century past tense of the verb 'warp'
38. TRAWPSE variant of 'trapes', to trudge (EDD)
39. PRISTAW 19th-century variant of 'pristaf', a police officer
40. PWIREST superlative form of 'pwir', an early Scots form of 'poor'
41. WIRETAPS devices for tapping telephones

All the definitions given above are from the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) unless otherwise stated. Undefined terms can all be located in the OED.