

I HAD A SOLANDER ON CANBERRA DAY

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"I had a Solander on Canberra Day," I announced.

"A what?" asked my wife.

"A Solander," I replied. "That's it, you see. Solander Court. Thought. Rhyming slang based on localities around Canberra."

"Hmmp," said my wife.

"No, listen. There's lots of possibilities. Take this. I was sitting with my Royal in the park when a mountie scared us off. Royal Mint - bint, you see. And.."

"Bint. Really archaic. And mountie - that must be Black Mountain something. Peninsula? What rhymes with peninsula? "

"Black Mountain Reserve. A perve. You've got to be with it."

"Want a memorial?"

"I suppose that's Memorial Jet - bet. Not bad. There's lots more. Jamison Centre - magenta. Burley Griffin - tiffin."

"Since when have you used a word like tiffin?" she asked.

"Poetic license. What else? Carillon - can't do much with that. And.."

"Come on. Parliament House - louse. Red Hill - dill. Or the Pill. No, that can be Swingers Hill. Post Office Tower - hour. And that's about Monaro."

"Monaro Crescent - pleasant? No, I've got it - Monaro Mall. All. I think I need a drink after that. What are you Noah's?"

"Noah's Tavern - havin'. I like it. There's a beer in the Commonwealth."

"Bridge. Fridge. I'm with you. Hey, it gets Weston early now they've dropped daylight saving. Feel like a bit of Canberra tonight?"

"Canberra?"

"Canberra Rex. Sex," I explained.

"Hmmp," said my wife.

"It was only a Solander," I said.

To non-Cockneys, one of the most baffling features about rhyming slang continues to be the use of abbreviated, non-rhyming words. Just recently I have heard British comedy programs use **Richard**, which can stand for "bird" (cf. **dickey-bird**, which is itself rhyming slang for "word") or "turd" (**Richard the Third**), and **merchant**, which is **merchant banker** for "wanker". Such abbreviated forms have survived in Australia, where a **babbling brook** is a "cook"; and when I say I was "burning up the freeway with a john on my hammer" I am saying that there was a "cop" (**John Hop, Johnny Hop, John on the hop**) on my "tail" (**hammer and nail**) - or, as some would argue, on my "track"

(hammer and tack). Even the British who call someone "a silly berk" are usually unaware that the full phrase is Berkshire hunt, which rhymes with a four-letter word I won't print here. And even in America, the word raspberry (usually denoting a rude sound made with the lips) is rarely connected with its origin in raspberry tart for "fart".

Rhyming slang did, however, get to America, to underworld slang in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco; the Irish immigrants may have had something to do with it, but the main source was the traffic across the Pacific caused by the American and Australian Gold Rushes of the middle of the nineteenth century. The major article on this is by D.W. Maurer (in collaboration with the Australian lexicographer Sydney J. Baker), entitled "Australian Rhyming Argot in the American Underworld" in the October 1944 issue of American Speech. Perhaps readers of Word Ways can find new examples that are still current in their region.

1551 PALINDROMES

This is the title of a new 25-page booklet issued by National Library Publications, Box 73, Brooklyn NY 11234 for \$10 (add \$1 for postage and handling). It concentrates on single-word palindromes instead of phrases, although a few two-word examples (DR. AAGAARD; KROYWEN, NEW YORK; LON NOL; DRAY YARD) do occur. Each palindrome is briefly defined, but its source is not given. However, a general list of 25 sources consulted is given in the Foreword and Addendum.

The reader should be warned that nearly 300 palindromes consist of appropriate Arabic numbers (between 1 and 15851) and Roman numerals; in addition, the author has coined more than 300 words using appropriate prefixes (see "Artificial Adreverbums" by William Sunners in this issue). However, the fastidious reader can ignore these, and concentrate on the 900 or so examples actually found in reference works. These agree reasonably well with the 1000-plus palindromes compiled by Jeff Grant of New Zealand (unpublished manuscript); for instance, of the first 23 Grant palindromes (A through AFFA), 5 are missing from "1551 Palindromes", but this work has two (ACA, AEGEA) not in Grant.