

WORDS NEWFOUND, WORDS REOBSERVED

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This article started life as a collection of odd slips of paper. While thumbing through dictionaries, or researching for other articles, I am inclined to note interesting words for possible use later. These words are usually irrelevant to the piece of research I am doing at the time, but they look like good fodder for reexamination later on. I have a file stuffed full of these oddballs. In an attempt to downsize the file, I decided to bring 26 of the items together in this article, each one representing a different letter of the alphabet.

There is no connection between the 26 offerings here, there is no underlying theme, other than the fact that they have caught my eye. Some of the words are new, meaning that they have only appeared in the last decade or so. Others are centuries old, and have lain unnoted in dictionaries until I plucked them from obscurity! Perhaps you have your own clutch of interesting words, not necessarily 26. If sufficient readers submit them to the editor, they (the words, not the readers) could be put together to form a future article.

Without further ado, here are my 26 offerings.

AUXANAGRAM

A variant spelling of AUXANAGRAMME, a plate culture used in studying the effects of various substances in the promotion or inhibition of microorganism growth. Both of these words appear in **A Glossary of Botanic Terms** (by B. Daydon Jackson, 4th edition 1928, reprinted 1971). The number of words having the letters ANAGRAM embedded in them, and not having any connection with anagrams as logologists know them, is very small. AUXANAGRAM is notable for being such a word. (Also see the V word in this article!) However, the question arises as to whether AUXANAGRAM is a misprint. Webster's Second and Third Editions, and the Oxford English Dictionary, show only the spelling with an O in the middle: AUXANOGRAM. They also list several related words, all with O in the middle, such as AUXANOGRAPHY, AUXANOGRAPHIC, AUXANOMETER. Examination of other reference material turns up only O spellings. The conclusion must be that either AUXANAGRAM is a misprint or was a very short-lived variant of AUXANOGRAM which has been ignored by other major reference works.

BLOWBELLOSES

The plural form of BLOWBELLOWS, a pair of bellows, this is notable for its two Bs, 2 Es, 2 Os, 2 Ss, 2 Ws and 3 Ls. Jack Levine's **A List of Pattern Words of Lengths Thirteen to Sixteen** lists nine other words having five doublets and one triplet (such as EPHEMEROMORPH and GLACIOLOGICAL). BLOWBELLOSES brings the total to ten. Let's examine BLOWBELLOSES a little closer. **A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words** (by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, published in 1847, republished in 1968) lists BLOWBELLOWS, spelled solidly, and defines it as a pair of bellows. Joseph Wright's **English Dialect Dictionary** spells the word with a hyphen, BLOW-BELLOWS. Now, is the -ES form a valid plural form? The Oxford English Dictionary shows BELLOSES as a 17th-century "double plural", and says that this form is "common in the dialects". Wright's work also shows BELLOSES as a "double plural". It would seem quite legitimate to assume that BLOWBELLOSES is a valid plural form of BLOWBELLOWS. I note that the entry at BELLOWS in Wright's dictionary has an illustrative quotation which uses BELLOSES as a singular: "...like a pair of bellowses..."

CABBAGE-BED

This is probably the longest word which can be played on a piano, using the musical notes C, D, E, F, G, A, B, and C. Although the word appeared in Dmitri Borgmann's **Language on Vacation**, he referred to it as a well-coined term. That may have been the case in 1965, but by 1972, when the A-G section of the Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary was published, the word was no longer a coinage; it was listed there as a hyphenated term. The earliest illustrated quotation using the word is from 1816, when Jane Austen uses the word in her novel **Emma**.

DHOLERA

At first sight, this looks like a misprint for CHOLERA. However, research shows it to be the valid name of a town in Bombay, India. It appears in both *The Times Index Gazetteer of the World* (1965) and *The Century Atlas* (1897). Hence, DHOLERA and CHOLERA are mutual alphagrams, words differing only in their first letters.

ECITON

According to Webster's Second and Third Editions, this is a proper name, used for a genus of ants. Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary, however, gives the word an initial lowercase letter, defining it as a foraging ant, and then mentioning that the corresponding genus is, indeed, ECITON. What's so special about this word? Spell the word backward, and notice the result. Has this word had the attention of logologists drawn to it previously? I don't recall seeing it, but it may well have been mentioned in an earlier **Word Ways**.

FORTYSOMETHING

An indeterminate age between forty and fifty, a person of this age, or an adjective referring to a person or group of such an age. This appears in the **Oxford English Dictionary of New Words** (1991). The question which occurs to the logologist is whether there exists a complete set of words from TWENTYSOMETHING up to NINETYSOMETHING. The **Oxford Dictionary of New Words** lists THIRTY-SOMETHING as the main entry (because of the originating influence of the US television program of the same title), and refers to TWENTYSOMETHING and FORTYSOMETHING in the associated entry. One of the illustrative quotes also contains SEVENTYSOMETHING. A similar dictionary, **The Longman Register of New Words** (1990), has THIRTY-SOMETHING as a main entry, and various illustrative quotes, one of which includes FIFTYSOMETHING. Can anyone find the remaining cases, or even ONE-HUNDRED-AND-SOMETHING?

GORSFAWDDACHA'IDRAIGODANHEDDOGLEDDOLONPENRHYNAREURDRAETHCER EDIGION

This 66-letter specimen is purported to be the new longest place-name in Britain, having been specially coined to surpass the previous well-known 58-letter LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRNDROBWLILLANTYSILIOGOGOCH. The **Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language** (by David Crystal, 1987), says: "...an exceptionally long place name proves to be a tourist attraction, and in 1984 a new candidate for longest place name emerged. A station on the Fairbourne narrow track railway in North Wales was deliberately renamed, so as to be longer than the previous British record-holder. The new name has 66 letters, thus beating the Anglesey village whose unofficial name of 58 letters had also been artificially constructed (in the 19th century)." If the apostrophe between the 14th and 15th letters is counted, the name could be construed as a 67-character name!

HOOLIE-GOOL-OO-OO

The cry of an owl, or a hooting. This has four pairs of Os, the last two pairs occurring consecutively. This appears in the **English Dialect Dictionary**. Other words with pairs of Os appearing together include COOKKOOOSE (see page 166, **Language on Vacation**) and HOO-OO (an interjection of boisterous emotion, in **Chambers English Dictionary**).

ITTIOTTO

This is listed in **The Dictionary of Jamaican English** (by Cassidy and Le Page, Cambridge University Press, 1967), where it is given as one of several variants of OTAHEITE in the two-word term OTAHEITE APPLE, a handsome tree of Jamaica with large, shining, leathery leaves. Its fruit is pear-shaped and bright red in colour. ITTIOTTO is notable for it uses only three letters, and in the ratios of 2:2:4. The only other word with this ratio and with the same ABBACBBC pattern is the hyphenated IPPI-APPA, a Central and South American plant resembling a palm.

JUBARAJ

Borgmann's **Language on Vacation** mentioned JURAJ (a Yugoslavian given name, listed in the prenames section of **Webster's Biographical Dictionary**) as the longest known word beginning and ending with a J. I subsequently pointed out to Borgmann that JERNEJ was another Yugoslavian given name, taken from exactly the same source. And there the matter stood until recently. Ploughing through the pages of the Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary, I discovered JUBARAJ listed as an alternative spelling of YUVARAJA. These, plus a number of other variant spellings, are used to refer to the male heir to an Indian state or principality. Since I discovered this word, Dan Tilque published the same word in the November 1992 issue of **Word Ways**. Any longer specimens?

KUKUMAKRANKA

A South African plant, listed in the Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary. Logologists will be familiar with 4-K words such as KAKKAK and KUKUKUKU, but KUKUMAKRANKA now joins that elite group.

-LEXIC

Any word with LEX in it or having a definition associated with letters of the alphabet must be of interest to the logologist. I spotted four words recently, all ending in -LEXIC, that may be of note. A SUMMILEXIC is a person whose surname begins with A-M; a FUNDILEXIC is a person whose surname begins with N-Z; a MEDILEXIC is a person whose surname begins with G-T; and an EXTREMILEXIC is a person whose surname begins with A-F or U-Z. All four words are courtesy of **The Longman Register of New Words** (1989). I would have thought that there should have been terms which distinguish the A-F extremilexics from the U-Z ones. After all, it is well known that people whose surname begins with a letter early in the alphabet are achievers, and those whose surname begins with a letter late in the alphabet are underachievers. Perhaps they should be referred to as positive extremilexics and negative extremilexics.

MIDNAPORE

Of great interest to logologists, this is a transdeletion of PALINDROME. It is the name of a town in West Bengal, in India. This is listed in **Webster's Geographical Dictionary**. I may be wrong, but I don't recall seeing this before in **Word Ways** as a notable transdeletion.

NAMASKARS

The plural form of NAMASKAR, a salutary gesture used in India, which is listed in the Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary. The plural form is worthy of logologists' attention, as it is a previously unnoted transaddition of ARKANSAS, a state now much in US news.

OCTAMETHYLCYCLOTETRASILOXANE

A 28-letter specimen! While long chemical terms like this are easily findable in chemical dictionaries, this one appears in the Oxford English Dictionary Supplement. One of the illustrative quotations, dated 1962, contains a related 28-letter specimen DECAMETHYLCYCLO-PENTASILOXANE.

PILMANIA

An interesting word listed in Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary. It looks like it ought to be some kind of mania (a mania for pills?), but it isn't. Funk & Wagnalls defines it as "minced meat covered with dough and rolled into small balls"! Neither the Webster unabridged dictionaries nor the Oxford English Dictionary list the word.

QUEUETOPIA

Interesting to logologists because the number of three-consonant ten-letter words is fairly limited. The added attraction of the Q makes the word even more noteworthy. Defined by the Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary as a humorous designation of Great Britain under Socialist rule, supposedly characterized by universal queueing. Dating from about 1950, the word is said to have been coined by Sir Winston Churchill. QUEUETOPIA doesn't appear in Webster's Third or any of the dictionaries of new words which I have seen. The only other three-consonant ten-letter word beginning with Q that I am aware of is QUIINACEAE, a genus of South American trees and shrubs.

RACKENSAK

The Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary defines this as a colloquial US word for a native of Arkansas, and adds that the word is probably obsolete. Why is RACKENSAK interesting? One, President Bill Clinton is a rackensak. Two, the word doesn't appear in Webster's Second or Third Editions, nor in **The American Thesaurus of Slang** (by Berrey and van den Bark). This slang volume has an entire section on slang names for inhabitants of different states, regions and cities. It shows that a resident of Arkansas can be an Arkie, Arkansawyan, Arkansawyer, Goober Grabber, Guinea Pig, Josh, or Toothpick - but no RACKENSAK. Wentworth and Flexner's **Dictionary of American Slang** lists the word RACKENSAKER, but defines it as a common soldier, especially a member of a state volunteer militia group. No reference to Arkansas there! The Oxford English Dictionary Supplement's etymology says that RACKENSAK is probably an altered form of ARKANSAN. A variant spelling, with a C before the final K, occurs elsewhere in the Supplement; an 1845 illustrative quotation at CORN-CRACKER refers to RACKENSACKS. Even the magnificent **Dictionary of American English** has nothing to say about RACKENSAK or anything like it.

SHABAHS

A palindrome, previously unrecorded in the pages of *Word Ways*. The word occurs in a newspaper story relating to the Gulf War in 1991. The *Sunday Times* (dated 17 Feb 1991, page A12) carried the following: "Shortly before 2 am last Wednesday, two ungainly bat-like black objects hurtled down a runway at an air base in western Saudi Arabia and took off into the night sky. Known to their pilots as "wobbly goblins" and referred to by the Saudis as **shababs**, or ghosts, they were F-117A stealth fighter bombers -- ultra high-technology, radar-evading aircraft which are the best-kept secret of Operation Desert Storm."

TRICHINOPOLY

This looks like it's made up of two elements. The first is TRICH- as in "trichinosis", relating to hair; the second is -OPOLY, rule by, as in "monopoly", "oligopoly" and so on. So, perhaps TRICHINOPOLY is rule by hairy persons? Nice try, but not so! Webster's Third defines it straightforwardly as a city in India. It also defines it as a cheroot made in India.

UMIST

This looks like a rather uninteresting word, so what's it doing here? While the initials UMIST may be unfamiliar to most Americans, this is a well-known abbreviation in England. The initials stand for University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. UMIST is a sort of watered-down version of Massachusetts' MIT. The abbreviation UMIST can be found in various lists of abbreviations - for example, in the abbreviations section of Chambers English Dictionary (1988). However, UMIST also exists as a word in its own right. If you look up UMEST in the Oxford English Dictionary, you will find UMIST as an 18th and 19th century variant spelling. UMEST and UMIST merely mean uppermost, outmost. UMIST also appears as a main entry in Joseph Wright's *The English Dialect Dictionary*.

VIZIANAGRAM

This looks like it's made up of two elements. The first is VIZ, an abbreviation for "videlicet", namely, to wit. The second is ANAGRAM, a term familiar to all logologists. The meaning of the whole could be construed as an emphatic form of ANAGRAM. However, looking up VIZIANAGRAM in *Webster's Geographical Dictionary* will reveal that it is a town in Andhra Pradesh in India. Funk & Wagnalls also lists the name.

WORLDWAYS

The plural of WORLDWAY, defined by Webster's Second as a poetic term for "the highway of the world". The term is of interest to readers of *Word Ways* for the simple reason that it is *Word Ways* around the letter L (and minus the space). WORLDWAY doesn't appear in Webster's Third or the Oxford English Dictionary. I tried to track it down elsewhere, but had no luck.

XENOMYSTAX

Dmitri Borgmann's **Language on Vacation** twice refers to XYLANTHRAX, an old name for charcoal, and Jeff Grant offers XENOCHARAX, a genus of characinoid fish, in the November 1992 **Word Ways**. These are the longest-known words beginning and ending with the letter X. I have unearthed another X-terminated word that has ten letters: XENOMYSTAX. According to **The Century Dictionary Supplement** (1909), this is the name of a genus of eels found off the coast of Ecuador. Anyone know of an eleven-letter specimen?

YKOWERYN

A strange-looking word, but it does appear as a main entry in the Oxford English Dictionary, where it is defined as an obsolete past participle of the verb "cover". The illustrative quotation given in the OED for this word is dated 1466, over 500 years ago. Why have I felt it necessary to dredge up such a strange and obsolete word for this article? Shuffling the letters around will reveal that it is a transposal of NEW-YORKY, an entry from Webster's Third, meaning "suggestive of New York". Transposals of US statenames and related words have long appealed to me. Various of my statename words have been documented already in **Word Ways**, including the YWROKEN transposal of NEW YORK. So, YKOWERYN and YWROKEN make a nice pair, obviously not mutually related, but connected via the NEW YORK and NEW-YORKY transposals.

ZA

As a Scrabble player, I like two-letter words. Of course, ZA isn't a totally new two-letter word. ZA is listed in Webster's Second, and defined as a musical note. But ZA has resurfaced as a word of the 1980s. The Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary defines ZA as a US slang abbreviation of PIZZA, and gives illustrative quotations such as "go for a za" and "do a za". The earliest illustrative quotation in the OED is 1968, but all the others are from the 1980s. Is ZA anywhere near to getting admitted into the Scrabble handbooks, Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (US) or Official Scrabble Words (UK)?

DICTIONARY OF THE AMERICAN WEST

This book of regional expressions was originally compiled by Winfred Blevins, a Western writer, to help colleagues educate book editors prone to second-guessing their lingo. It rapidly expanded into an authoritative, yet entertaining, compendium of 5000 terms peculiar to the American West, with particular emphasis given to the cowboy, the logger, the hunter-trapper, the miner and the Indian. Entries range from single factual sentences to lyrical essays designed to evoke the long-vanished frontier; see, for example, the entries for COWBOY, MOUNTAIN MAN, SLICKROCK. The book has been published in paperback in 1993 by Facts on File for \$17.95.