

From the Back Verandah

Are you a diver or a scanner? Barbara Sher's *I Could Do Anything If Only I Knew What It Was*, 1995 (ISBN 0 7336 0057 3), claims that knowing the answer to that question will help you pursue your life's vocation.

Some *Bikwil* readers will be divers, I'm sure: musicians, scientists, artists, programmers.

Divers aren't satisfied with beginnings or quick insights: they hang on for the whole ride. They need to see how things come together in the end. If they find . . . no bottom to what they study, it's because they've opened up a new depth revealing new secrets and new puzzles, and then a diver is in heaven.

What about you scanners? You librarians, documentary filmmakers, explorers, managers, teachers?

Scanners . . . love to learn about the structure of a flower, and they love to learn about the theory of music . . . the adventures of travel . . . the tangle of politics . . . The world is a treasure house full of a million works of art, and life is hardly long enough to see them all . . . Because our culture values the diver's specialization and determination, we often think of scanners as people who simply won't get down to work . . . a foolish cultural oversight.

There's plenty of advice, too, for those who seem to be scanners, but who are really divers with something blocking them from diving.

A book well worth the scan/dive. But as to whether it will temper your overall cynicism about American pop (pap?) psychology . . .

—Fizzgig

Colophon

Bikwil
18 Pembury Ave.
NORTH ROCKS. 2151.
trogers@wr.com.au

We welcome PC disk
submissions in these formats:
Word 2/6/7/97, TXT

© All contributions remain the copyright property of their respective authors

Back Issues Are Still Available

BIKWIL

The Newsletter of Quiet Enthusiasms

Editor: Tony Rogers

ISSN 1328-7842

No. 8

July 1998

Manifesto of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palimpsests

Hope I didn't excite you too much. Look, let me reassure you. To the best of my knowledge, there are very few recycled parchments living dispossessed lives under totalitarian regimes, though some do live repossessed lives under restrictive glass.

Be that as it may, you'll no doubt be aware that *Bikwil* has this thing going with the spirit of liberated enquiry into all kinds of unobtrusive obsessions. Well — and this is where "popular frontism" comes in — today we call for contributions to a proposed occasional series (*Up-front Popularizers?*)

celebrating those men and women with the gift for emancipating abstruse interests and disseminating them with entertaining clarity.

So how about it? Do you have a favourite creator of a "Made Simple" book or broadcast programme, however old, you'd like to extol in *Bikwil*? Jacob Bronowski, say, or Jostein Gaarder, Robert Hughes, Julius Sumner Miller, Bertrand Russell, Carl Sagan, H.G. Wells, Sister Wendy Becket . . .

Ok, then, let's hear about the popularizer you especially like.

What's Inside?

Camp Creative '98, or I'll Take		"The Most Sublime Noise"	13
You Home Again, Antonio	2	Quintessential Quirky Quotes	15
Web Line	7	From the Back Verandah	16
A Word in Your Pink Shell-like	8		

Camp Creative '98, or I'll Take You Home Again, Antonio

Would I come to Nambucca Heads with Carol and Catherine in January while Carol ran a course in Creative Writing or would I stay home alone through the baking days? Clearly Camp Creative would be a fest for vegetarian sandal wearers studying Zen or High Wire Monocycling for Beginners. I would stay home accompanying the air conditioner and avoid the crowds of macrobiotic basket weavers.

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast

When a splendid prospectus came by mail I had just a peek . . . and I kept returning to the same page.

Now, I used to believe that Dreams were the "Royal Road to the Unconscious" but I had come to the view that it was Music that was the true road and the Singing Voice could at times have a direct line to the Soul with its surprise of feelings.

In '93 I had joined with forty men in the Central Coast Barber-shop Chorus and slowly my voice

had been able to sing notes in tune with others. After four years I was still a *leaner* — one who needed a surer singer close by.

Ambition, secret and exciting, was there. What if I went on this singing course for *Savvy Singers* without letting on. Perhaps I could come back as a really strong singer (and, sotto voce, amaze everyone!).

The course was a five-day one for average singers who would be taught how to sing off the page. Wow!

Frank Partridge VC Public School

People were pegging tents on the school oval, campervan drivers were looking for the shadiest level spot. Classrooms were converted into dorms. Hundreds of people were wandering around with maps finding where the thirty-seven courses were to be held. The new High School had opened its gates to the students and the great gymnasium became the men's dorm at night.

The "onlie begetter" of all this, Bill Lockley, wandered about

The trouble with America is that there are too many wide open spaces surrounded by teeth.
Charles Luckman

Send two dozen roses to Room 424 and put 'Emily, I love you' on the back of the bill.
Groucho Marx

Quintessential Quirky Quotes

I'm all for bringing back the birch, but only between consenting adults.
Gore Vidal

A drama critic is a man who leaves no turn unstoned.
George Bernard Shaw

If you can't say anything good about someone, sit right here by me.
Alice Roosevelt Longworth

and the other are a perpetual commandment, an infallible revelation.

Poet Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892 - 1950) wrote a moving sonnet *On Hearing a Symphony of Beethoven*. I love these lines:

This moment is the best the world
can give:

The tranquil blossom on the
tortured stem.

Black writer, Ralph Ellison in *Harper's Magazine*, March 1967, wrote: "Anyone who listens to a Beethoven quartet or symphony and can't hear soul is in trouble. Maybe they can hear the sound of blackness, but they're deaf to the soul."

Even Walt Disney, having adapted Beethoven's 6th Symphony, the *Pastoral*, for his animated film, *Fantasia* (1940), is said to have commented: "Gee! This'll make Beethoven." (Marshall McLuhan, *Culture is Our Business*, 1970)

Beethoven, of course, was already made through his own genius.

This festival will surely continue to enhance his genius. It has been such a joy for performers and listeners, what better way to end now with lines from Schiller's *Ode to Joy* (1785) which Beethoven set for Chorus and Orchestra to end

brilliantly his 9th Symphony, the *Choral*.

Joy, bright spark of divinity,
Daughter of Elysium.

Fire-inspired we tread

Thy sanctuary.

Thy magic power re-unites

All that custom has divided,

All men become brothers

Under the sway of thy gentle
wings.

...

You millions, I embrace you.

This kiss is for all the world!

Brothers, above the starry
canopy

There must dwell a loving
Father.

Do you fall in worship, you
millions?

World, do you know your
Creator?

Seek him in the heavens!

Above the stars must He dwell.

— Bet Briggs

giving help wherever he was needed but letting things take their course. Erik Erikson wrote that in Old Age we have two choices; Generativity versus Despair and I take Generativity to mean a generous creativity connecting you to others. Twelve years before, the retired Lockley had plumped for Generativity in a big way and set up courses for kids and adults within a framework of concerts and get-togethers. This was Camp Creative number seventeen.

*There'll be some changes made
today*

I put away the kaftan and straw hat and adopted North Coast Uniform of baseball cap, sunnies, polo shirt worn outside, baggy board shorts and sandals. With my water bottle and nonchalant air I approached the classroom for *Savvy Singers*. At least I'd be attending a course where not too much would be expected unlike the elite *Choral Kings* who, under the direction of Isabel Atcheson of the much toured and recorded *Isabella A Capella* would be presenting a Full Liturgical Work in a Public Concert.

But the courses for the timid had collapsed. I was now in the elite *Choral Kings* and presented with a 72 page score — Antonio Vivaldi, *Gloria*, for solo voices, mixed chorus in four parts and orchestra.

Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie — where are you now? At least Vivaldi had got it right with four parts. Perhaps he was an ancient Barbershopper singing lead with off-duty gondolieri by a leaning striped pole as the waters of the Grand Canal softly lapped the stones. But had I arrived at the Palace of The Inquisition?

Maestro Laudamus Te

Isabel, standing, played through the accompaniment at scalding speed. As I began to know more about her I realised that she was in direct line of succession from the Red Priest himself. Leaving a North Coast farm she had been educated at the famed Mercy Convent in Grafton but having her music practice lessons from the Reverend Mother of the large Mercy Orphanage. Here the hundred boys and girls all sang in the Orphanage choir. Perhaps Isabel's passion for Choral work began then. I discovered that nothing is known of Antonio as a Barbershopper but he had written much of his music for the orphan girls very well cared for in an Orphanage in Venice. It seemed that somehow Vivaldi's flame had been passed on directly to this very room filled with 48 singers and the Maestro and her Assistant Musical Director Brian Martin.

Let's Face the Music and Dance

Without an elaborate tuning up by pitch pipe the singers were brought into tune merely by a ping of a note on the piano. This was new to me but of course there was accompaniment to keep these singers in pitch whereas Barbershop heroes have to do it all by themselves.

The classical singers were into water bottles to keep the voice moist. They did visualisations to relax their minds and bodies. Brian Martin conducted intricate body percussion exercises with six groups all with different clapping and body slapping rhythms working against each other for a great effect. I began to feel very humble about rhythm and to have a greater sense of rhythm within my own body. Composers like Vivaldi would be wonderful dancers. They write moments and milliseconds down on paper giving us the plan of a living clock of rhythm. In Barbershop the rhythm is not a great worry — it's mostly steady — you come in on the first beat of the bar. Here's Vivaldi bringing us in on the second beat, start counting, try and get the beat into your thick skull. Try to count — I lose it every time.

Each day I go home exhausted.

It isn't the heat. It's the mind trying to take it all in — the pitch of the black dot on the page, how long to sing on that black dot, listen, see, take it in to learn it, watch Isabel, tune in to the other parts. Is all this too much to ask?

Let Those Barbershop Chords Ring

Isabel shows us the chords moving, how Vivaldi is raising the chords, building up tension and then resolving into peace. "This is the *crunch* chord." I could taste the chords. One note would change and there would follow a flavour so rare, a perfume in the chord and in the next chord a new magic. This was just like good Barbershop singing — this was getting to the soul.

And Isabel was heaping out praise. Like our Barbershop Musical Director she was positive about effort — there was no time spent on searching out who might be singing a wrong note. Which was just as well for me.

In survival mode after the shock of not being in a beginner's group I had sussed out who of the ten basses was most likely to be able to make sense of 72 pages of music. I was soon seated beside Richard and Alan who were skilled singers and who were toler-

"The Most Sublime Noise"

These words in E.M. Forster's novel *Howards End* described Beethoven's 5th Symphony: ". . . the most sublime noise that ever penetrated the ear of man." That could be said of all his symphonies and other works. We've just had a good chance to assess. Throughout June we've been served a banquet of Beethoven: all nine symphonies and the five piano concertos, the first complete cycle of these magnificent works played by an Australian orchestra since 1944. In a series of concerts at the Sydney Opera House to celebrate its 25th anniversary, we have heard the world premiere of a new edition of Beethoven's symphonies by Jonathan Del Mar, performed superbly by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Edo de Waart with German pianist, Christian Zacharias, the soloist in the five concertos.

The Beethoven Festival, broadcast by the ABC, has been a huge success. If thunderous applause — another sublime noise — is any indication, it has been an extraordinary experience for audiences at the concerts and for listeners at home. It would be true to say everybody's talking about the event and will go on

talking about the music, the performances by the orchestra and soloists and, of course, Beethoven, for a long time.

Much has been said about Beethoven for over 200 years. Back in 1787 when he and Mozart first met, four years before Mozart's death, Mozart, who really knew his man — or boy (for Beethoven, being about 16 or 17 then was half Mozart's age) — was much impressed with the young man. After their meeting he predicted in words now well known: "Keep your eyes on him; he'll make the world talk of him some day."

In 1823 Franz Liszt, likewise, was a young prodigy of 14 when he visited Beethoven four years before his death. Beethoven, like Mozart was sceptical of the young performer at first but was soon won over by his brilliant playing. Years later in 1852 Liszt wrote of his debt to Beethoven in a letter to Wilhelm von Lenz:

To us musicians of the work of Beethoven parallels the pillars of smoke and fire which led the Israelites through the desert, a pillar of smoke to lead us by day, and a pillar of fire to light the night, so that we march ahead both day and night. His darkness and his light equally trace for us the road we must follow; both the one

required the enlisting of help from a team of volunteers, some members of the Society, others drawn from the public. Instead of relying one person alone to find and prepare entries for such a mammoth work, these volunteers would read book after book, record their word discoveries and deliver them to an editor. It would be the editor's job to concentrate on etymology, pronunciation and word history, plus the choice of quotations from all those gathered.

The second, arising from the first, was to have each quotation reported on a separate slip, to be arranged in alphabetical order in pigeon-holes while editing took place. When the trio began they confidently believed that 100,000 slips (an enormous figure at the time) would do the job, but by the time the OED was published, no less than five and half million slips had been collected.

One member of the Philological Society, by the way, was a phonetician called Henry Sweet. He would be immortalised in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and later in *My Fair Lady*, as the eccentric Henry Higgins character.

Phonetics was by now very important to Murray, and he had tried various methods then in vogue for representing speech sounds. One of these systems was the Visible Speech of one Alexander Melville

Bell, with whom Murray became friends. It was Bell, in fact, who later introduced Murray to the Philological Society.

Bell had a teenage son called Alexander, who one day asked Murray to teach him something about electricity, so Murray built him an electric battery and a voltaic pile out of halfpennies and disks of zinc. In time Alexander Graham Bell would reap his own glory, but he was ever grateful for those early lessons in electricity, and always referred to James Murray as "the grandfather of the telephone."

The Society's original dictionary editor was Coleridge, and it was he who suggested the idea for the pigeon-holes. But he died in 1861, and the pertinacious Furnivall who took over the reins soon realised that for all his own enthusiasm the Society needed someone with more scholarship and patience than he possessed, and started casting his wily net for a suitable editor. As things transpired, Furnivall's often misdirected fanaticism for the project would be one of Murray's chief bugbears for the next 30 years.

— Harlish Goop

(This article on James Murray will be concluded in the next issue of *Bikwil*.)

ant souls. Like a boy on a bicycle I grabbed hold of the side of a truck and prepared to go over the mountain pass ahead.

We were seated as we learned. Isabel threatened to tread on any foot that was not flat on the floor. Our trunks were to be kept upright so our breathing from the diaphragm would be unhindered. What a great idea for our chorus to adopt as at our weekly practice we often stand on risers for ninety minutes. A number of our keenest singers are in their seventies and we have enough members with two artificial knees to make up a quartet known as "The Knee Warblers".

Each afternoon a swim at Shelly Beach helped mental recovery and so I had enough energy to go to THE BASH, the one big Camp Creative event where traditionally the bravest campers let their hair down and perform their own original little acts for everyone.

Carry On Camping Creatively

It was crowded and hot in the Hall. I'd left my glasses, curses, but I could make out the performers fairly well. First up was a Shakespearean ham, gesticulating and dissolving the walls of Harfleur with his spittle — when my eyes focussed I saw clearly Charlie Hawtreay who, of course retired to

the North Coast years ago. A fulsome soprano creamily delivered *Bali Ha'i* and Hattie Jacques, for it was she who graciously acknowledged roses flung onto the stage. A comedian told a tale called *My Dog Named Sex* and when he leered at the audience — yes it was — it was Sid James. Just what you'd expect of Sid.

Perhaps the most talented camper was the thin fussy man, the chap who'd thrown red roses at Hattie and who'd been shouting "Bravo!" and "Magnificent!". He was upset, very huffy about the off colour nature of the earlier performer. He asked if anyone in the audience would give him five or six musical notes to start him off. A chap sang a little tune and with a haughty air the pianist began to play, improvising brilliantly on this theme from Smith or Jones. I thought only Beethoven or Mozart was allowed to be able to create an instant concerto with wonderful harmony and bravura passages. Then I realised that seated at the keyboard was none other than Kenneth Williams who can do anything at all.

I spent a lot of money buying raffle tickets from that bright young woman in the sweater. I think her name was Barbara Windsor. I kept going back for more.

If you haven't got a penny a ha'penny will do

There were no stringed instruments to be found on the North Coast. It being the middle of summer they had all gone on holidays.

Isabel went to work. She found two teenagers, one with a sax and one with a trumpet. An organist was located. Brian Martin pressed a button and his keyboard became a harpsichord. Then a double bass arrived, followed by a drummer from a rock band and a rock guitarist with a 1000-watt amplifier! The Chorus was in terror of that amplifier.

On the inside of the music looking out

At last the performance before a large crowd in the Catholic Church at Nambucca. There are twelve stations on the line from *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* to *Cum Santo Spiritu*. I do not want to fall off the train but when Isabel re-arranges the Choir on the altar steps and Richard and Alan are moved to the other side I feel I am about to go. Somehow I sidle and ingratiate around to connect with my friends' timing and pitch. Our Maestro has tamed the rock musos with a baton not a whip. At rehearsal the choir was thrilled with the accuracy and beauty of the two soloists.

With Vivaldi's *Wake Up and Listen to Me!* beginning and its wonderful attack of rhythmical hiccups we are away. Soon I am in the music — it is within me in a way that has never happened before. I am a chord that keeps changing.

At the end, with the audience standing, I see tears on Carol's face while Catherine who loves only Spice Girls looks lost. I know that Vivaldi has lived again through us and it is a triumph.

After the Ball is Over

In the city I found a CD of *Gloria* and bought my own copy of the score. I listen to the music and think of the experience I had. Back at Barbershop practice I think I am a bit better at looking at a score — especially in counting and I think my ear for harmony has improved. I have more confidence.

Next year will we go to Camp Creative? I hope so. To learn from such a teacher, be part of the group and to, once again, have the chance of being just inside the music looking out.

—Peter Mara

(Isabella A Capella is recorded by Larrikin. Camp Creative's email address is ccreativ@midcoast.com.au.)

he worked for a B.A. degree at London University. In 1874 he had an Honorary LL.D conferred on him by Edinburgh University. Other honorary awards followed. Even more belatedly (1885) Oxford University awarded him an Honorary M.A.

Twenty-three years later he received a Knighthood, and still more tardily, only a year before his death, Oxford presented him with an Honorary D. Litt.

His non-intellectual hobbies included gardening and when on holidays vigorous hiking in the high hills or bike riding in Wales.

With a life, work and play ethic like that, Murray's achievement with the *Oxford English Dictionary* comes as little surprise.

Three years before he began work on the *OED*, he had been associated with an abortive attempt to produce a concise English dictionary for the Macmillan publishing firm in collaboration with the American Harper company. This abridged dictionary was actually a cut-down version of a massive work (*The New English Dictionary*) envisaged by three influential members of the Philological Society, Richard Trench, Herbert Coleridge and Frederick Furnivall, who as early as 1857 had begun collecting words for it.

All lexicographic principles for the Macmillan-Harper *New English Dictionary* were the Society's (mainly Trench's), and in time, greatly improved by James Murray, they would lay the foundation for the great *Oxford* undertaking.

One of these ideals looked back beyond Webster — whose work (1828-64) was currently the dictionary held in highest regard internationally — to Samuel Johnson's Dictionary a century earlier. The Society wanted to retain the latter's original use of illustrative quotations to show word usage, but on a larger scale.

Simultaneously, they wanted to follow methods of philology begun in Germany in 1812 by Franz-Passow, which would enable the new dictionary to show the life history of every word. The quotations would therefore have to show historical changes of form and sense, rather than merely to illuminate the meaning of words, which had been the emphasis with Johnson and his successors.

As well as the quotations idea, the Society's methods of gathering dictionary material introduced two additional far-reaching innovations in English lexicography.

The first was borrowed from the Grimm brothers in Germany. This

In 1864, again through dire financial need (his wife of two years and child were seriously ill), he was obliged to find better paying work in London as a bank clerk. He was unable to return to his first love, teaching, until the age of 33.

In his “recreational” moments (apart from a study of botany and archaeology) he involved himself as a well-informed amateur in the world of Victorian linguistic scholarship. He started with the dialect of his native Border District and moved soon to Anglo-Saxon and German and then in “a mania for learning languages” to any language he could lay his mind and tongue to – 25 in all, including Gothic, Russian, Hungarian, Hebrew, Arabic, Hindi and Tongan.

In appearance, James Murray was tall, thin and good-looking. About the time he first took up school teaching he grew a red beard, and wore it longer and longer as the years passed and its colour turned, first to sandy gold, then to snow white before he had turned 50.

But he aged well, and two years before his death was still feeling fresh and ready for work early each morning. Except on Sundays, his daily routine while working on the *Dictionary* went as follows. (He worked at home.) He awoke at

5 am, took a cold bath followed by a brisk walk, did some work, had his porridge and went off again to his lexicography. He had lunch at 1.30, during which he managed to talk non-stop about his current *Dictionary* problems, then went back to work. After a light evening meal he worked again, often till 11 pm.

Murray married twice. His first wife had died after three years of marriage, a year after the death of their only child, a daughter aged 7 months. His second wife Ada bore him 11 children, many of whom he gave Anglo-Saxon names such as Aelfric, Oswyn, and Rosfrith, and all of whom survived.

A devoted family man, with an extremely strong religious leaning – a pious Congregationalist, simple in his faith – Murray was a strict teetotaller and non-smoker who never in his life once attended a theatre and who barely tolerated music. He has been described variously as imaginative, honest, born to instruct, optimistic, unworldly and given to feelings of inferiority and even martyrdom. Despite his generally austere manner, in the right circumstances he allowed himself to show a genial smile.

His academic awards?

In his mid thirties (1871-3), long after his self-education had begun,

Web Line

A couple of times in *Web Line* I have referred in passing to Project Gutenberg. Ensuing readers’ comments have prompted a closer look.

Begun in 1971, the Project Gutenberg Electronic Public Library’s ongoing purpose is

. . . to make information, books and other materials available . . . in forms a vast majority of the computers, programs and people can easily read, use, quote, and search.

Lack of space permits me to list only a tiny fraction of the texts in the database (most in English):

Cicero: *Orations (Selected)* [Latin]

Descartes: *Discourse on Method*

Hugo: *Les Misérables*

Lincoln: *Gettysberg Address*

Paterson: *Man from Snowy River*

Shakespeare: *Complete Works*

Sophocles: *Oedipus Trilogiy*

In addition to Project Gutenberg, several further sources of literature in electronic form exist on the Net.

A significant one is Project Bartleby at Columbia University. See below for a couple of others.

All well and good, but for many people important questions remain. What’s the use of having such literature on your PC? Who’d read *Paradise Lost* from a screen, when they could curl up with it in an armchair? Who wants to print out reams of loose-leaf paper containing the full *Sons and Lovers*?

Here is part of P. G.’s answer:

We want people to be able to look up quotations they heard in conversation, movies, music, other books, easily with a library containing all these quotations . . . You will be easily able to search an entire library, without any program more sophisticated than a plain search program . . . These . . . files are so plain that you can do a search on them without even using an intermediate search program . . .

In other words, the aim is to provide the world’s literature, not to be read from cover to cover but for research purposes, taking advantage of the computer’s power.

— TR

Internet sites referred to above:

http://mirrors.org.sg/pg/pg_home.html

<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby>

<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/staff/morgan/alex/alex-index.html>

<http://www.literature.org/Works>



A Word in Your Pink Shell-like

Permit me to introduce one of my heroes – Sir James Murray.

James who?

James Augustus Henry Murray, who lived from 7 February 1837 until 26 July 1915.

And?

You've heard of Samuel Johnson and his Dictionary? Well, James Murray was a far more talented dictionary maker, despite his obscurity when compared with the fame of Dr. Johnson. Indeed, in all likelihood Murray was the greatest dictionary maker who ever lived.

You see, by the time he died, what unexpectedly turned out to be his life's work had become (and remains) the pre-eminent accomplishment of English language lexicography – honoured as the supreme authority, held in awe, and loved the world over — from the Netherlands to the United States, from Japan to South Africa, from Australia to Barbados. For James Murray was the planner, standard setter, layout designer, principal inspiration and Editor-in-chief of the magnificent *Oxford English Dictionary*.

When I was at high school in the 1950s, it was *de rigueur* to have in

your home a well-thumbed copy of the 1,500-page *Concise Oxford* — originally abridged from the *OED* in 1911 by no less a personage than Henry Watson Fowler himself, together with his brother Frank George Fowler. Since then I have worked with many people in Sydney who also kept a *COD* on their desk, and swore by it.

Then there's the bulky two-volume *Shorter Oxford*, though few people, I imagine, would have recourse to this, either at home or at work. Myself included.

Why not go the whole hog and use the full *OED*? Well, cost for one thing (about \$3,700), and size for another. How many of you are not really familiar with the dimensions of the “big Oxford”? Hands up, don't be shy. Well, go into your local library sometime and have a squiz. What you'll find, if your library's wealthy enough, is the second edition in 20 volumes — more than 5,000 definitions, almost 2 and a half million illustrative quotations, and over 21,500 pages. Massive tomes, all 30 cm. high, and some over 5 cm. thick.

(These days you can also get condensed access to the *OED* via

micrographics and computer, and, who knows, I might well devote a column to those formats at a later date.)

The first edition was published initially in 124 unbound parts (or fascicles) for those who had taken out advance subscriptions, the first in 1884 and the last not till 1928, almost half a century after Murray had commenced work. These parts were soon reissued in ten bound volumes. The first completed copies were sent to King George V and President Calvin Coolidge.

Poor old James Murray didn't live to see the 1928 completion date, but even so, when he died in 1915 he had worked over 35 years on the *OED*. When he started, Murray had estimated that it would amount to about 7,000 pages in four volumes and take about ten years, but his meticulous work methods and unswervingly high standards would thoroughly thwart that intention. After five years of part-time toil, for example, he'd got as far as the word “ant”.

Nevertheless, in the light of his gargantuan achievement all blow-outs of cost and time are now forgiven. Amazingly, he wrote almost half the first edition himself (that's 7,207 pages out of a total of 15,487 — the letters A-D, H-K, O, P and T), though he did have a varying handful of poorly paid peo-

ple directly assisting him, mainly in research plus some sub-editing.

His children helped, too, with sorting as soon as they could read, and later, in their well-educated adulthood, with research. As well, there was a worldwide flock of voluntary readers — hundreds, amateur and professional — supplying tens of thousands of word usage quotations.

The remainder of the *Dictionary* was written by Murray's official collaborators: Henry Bradley (second editor from 1887, and chief editor on Murray's death), William Craigie and Charles Onions.

So how did James Murray achieve what he did? What were the principles guiding that fastidious work procedure of his? And how did he come to be involved with the *OED* in the first place?

First some quick details about the man himself.

Born in a small Scottish village, Murray was academically precocious and persistent and largely self-educated. “James Murray will never make a farmer,” said the locals, “he always has a book in his pocket.” At the age of 14 his family's poverty forced him into tailoring, his father's trade, though three years later he won a position as an assistant schoolmaster.