

**EMBARGOED: 00.01 WEDNESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY**

**OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY LAUNCHES BRAND NEW WORDHUNT AND ASKS FOR NATION'S HELP**

**Calling *pole-dancers* in *stilettos*, *mucky-pups* in *hoodies*, and *plonkers* *bonkers* enough to instigate a *regime change* - the *Oxford English Dictionary* urgently needs your help.**

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) is asking for public assistance to help them trace the history of forty well-known words and phrases. The results of this new Wordhunt will feature in hit BBC Two series *Balderdash & Piffle*, presented by Victoria Coren, which returns this spring.

This year the *OED* and the BBC are appealing via the *Balderdash & Piffle* Wordhunt for help with words relating to dogs, fashion, and dodgy dealings, as well as for euphemisms, insults and some choice X-rated terms.

Did anyone go *dogging* before 1993, have a *domestic* before 1963 or go to the *loo* before 1940? The *OED* needs to know.

Who was *Gordon Bennett*, was his name really first invoked in 1967 and, above all, why?

Is Burnham-on-Sea in Somerset really the birthplace of the *marital aid*?

What's so *daft* about a *brush*?

The *OED* seeks to find the earliest verifiable usage of every single word in the English language – currently 600,000 and counting – and of every separate meaning of every word. The forty words on the new Wordhunt list all have a date next to them – corresponding to the earliest evidence the dictionary currently has for that word or phrase. But can the British public do better? Successful findings will not only feature in the new series but will be published in the *OED*. Some suggestions as to where to start wordhunting can be found at [bbc.co.uk/balderdash](http://bbc.co.uk/balderdash).

Some of the nation's favourite insults feature in this year's Wordhunt. The *OED* is optimistic that help from the public will enable them to improve their dictionary entries for *prat*, *wally*, *wassock*, and *tosser*.

To join the Wordhunt, people need to find an earlier appearance of the word in a book or a magazine, in a movie script, a fanzine, or even in unpublished papers, letters or a post-marked postcard. It might even appear first online or in a sound recording. The most important thing is that it can be dated.

So *dog's bollocks* meaning the *bee's knees* before 1989, anyone?

Sometimes the *OED* can't tell how a word was invented, so these words are listed as ORIGIN UNKNOWN or ORIGIN UNCERTAIN and the *Balderdash & Piffle* team would love to hear convincing theories from the public. If the theory is proved right it might help in rewriting the dictionary.

In 2006 *Balderdash & Piffle* viewers came up trumps by providing evidence to update the dictionary - setting them straight on the *ploughman's lunch*, the *ninety-nine* ice cream, and *the full monty*, among many others.

John Simpson, Chief Editor of the *OED* at Oxford University Press says:

*"Wordhunters made some remarkable discoveries in the last series. They found Wordhunt words tucked away in football fanzines, LPs, school newspapers: just the sort of sources we can't easily get our hands on when we're researching words.*

*It's great that the long-established democratic traditions of the dictionary are continuing. Our first public appeal went out in 1859, and we've been busy collecting information ever since. We've selected forty words that are puzzling the OED's editors for the new Wordhunt, and we're hoping for some more great results!"*

**For further information and stills please contact: Kim Lomax, Takeaway Media, 020 7424 8591, [kim@takeawaymedia.co.uk](mailto:kim@takeawaymedia.co.uk) or Kate Farquhar-Thomson, OUP Publicity, 01865 353423, [kate.farquhar-thomson@oup.com](mailto:kate.farquhar-thomson@oup.com)**

#### **Editors' notes:**

- Please include the info required for people to submit their information to the project. They can visit [www.bbc.co.uk/balderdash](http://www.bbc.co.uk/balderdash) or email [balderdash@bbc.co.uk](mailto:balderdash@bbc.co.uk)
- *Balderdash & Piffle* is a Takeaway Media production for BBC Two – [www.takeawaymedia.com](http://www.takeawaymedia.com)
- About the *Oxford English Dictionary*  
The *Oxford English Dictionary* is the accepted authority on the evolution of the English language over the last millennium. It is an unsurpassed guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of over half a million words, both present and past. For more information about the dictionary, please visit [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com).

## **The forty words:**

### **Man's Best Friend**

dog and bone (1961)  
the dog's bollocks (1989)  
mucky pup (1984)  
shaggy dog story (1946) \*  
sick puppy (1984)

### **Put Downs and Insults**

plonker (1966)  
prat (1968) \*  
tosser (1977)  
wally (1969)  
wazcock (1984)

### **Spend a Penny**

domestic (1963)  
glamour model (1981)  
loo (1940) \*  
regime change (1990)  
whoopsie (1973)

### **Fashionistas**

flip-flop (1970)  
hoodie (1990)  
shell-suit (1989)  
stiletto (1959)  
trainer (1978)

### **X Rated**

dogging (1993) \*  
kinky (1959)  
marital aid (1976)  
pole dance (1992)  
wolf-whistle (1952)

## **One Sandwich Short**

bananas (1968) \*  
bonkers (1957) \*  
daft (or mad) as a brush (1945) \*  
derr brain / duh brain (1997)  
one sandwich short of a picnic (1993)

## **Who Were They?**

Bloody Mary (1956) \*  
Gordon Bennett! (1967) \*  
Jack the Lad (1981)  
round robin (1988)  
to take the mickey (1948) \*

## **Dodgy Dealings**

bung (1958) \*  
Glasgow kiss (1987)  
identity theft (1991)  
spiv (1934) \*  
twoc (1990)

\* ORIGIN UNKNOWN or ORIGIN UNCERTAIN