

The Hampshire Origins of the Oxford English Dictionary

R.C. Richardson

The long awaited publication of the monumental complete set of the *Oxford English Dictionary* took place in 1928 amidst much relief and rejoicing and with Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin presiding over a celebratory banquet held in Goldsmiths' Hall, London. He declared confidently in his speech on the occasion that the *Dictionary* was the 'greatest enterprise of its kind in history'. The first copies were proudly presented to King George V and to American President Calvin Coolidge. Published in parts as the project had lumbered on, the final instalment or fascicle had just been issued. Doggedly long-serving editor since the 1870s James Murray had died in 1915 but not before receiving a knighthood in 1908 and an honorary doctorate from Oxford in 1914; he had literally devoted his life to a project which against all the odds he vowed simply had to be completed.¹ But though no one would seek to deny Murray his central place in the long, drawn-out saga of the *Dictionary* he himself always recognised that he was following in another's footsteps and on more than one occasion made this perfectly clear. He paid a fulsome tribute to the insights and pioneering efforts of this man in 1900 in his Romanes lecture at Oxford. In a letter to James Bryce, later published in a commemorative volume, he humbly confessed 'I am only an instrument, and there is no credit due to me, except that of trying to do my duty... I wish from my heart that people would accept my work at the *Dictionary* as my

1 See K.M.E. Murray, *Caught in the Web of Words. James Murray and the Oxford English Dictionary* (New Haven and London, 1977) and S. Winchester, *The Meaning of Everything. The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 2003). The quotation from Baldwin's speech is found in *Oxford English Dictionary, 1884-1928. Speeches delivered in the Goldsmiths' Hall 6 June 1928* (Oxford, 1928), p. 11.

simple effort to do my duty and leave me quietly to do it'.² Murray was the disciple, the dedicated, hard-working labourer, not the original visionary. That special eminence was reserved for Richard Chevenix Trench (1807–1886). Trench's clarion call in 1857 for a new dictionary of the language, declared the editor of the *Dictionary Supplement* issued in 1933,

retains its value as a statement of what an English dictionary ought to be. No one who reads it can fail to see how clearly he anticipated the lines on which the [Philological] Society's Dictionary was ultimately compiled – all of them indeed a necessary result of the principles he laid down as the only sound basis for the work.³

Of Huguenot descent, Trench's immediate forebears were a distinguished Irish family of churchmen and lawyers. Though born in Dublin, however, Trench had strong and treasured links with Hampshire which dated back to his early childhood. He was raised on his father's newly acquired estate at Bursledon near Southampton and his formal education began at Twyford School situated between Winchester and Bishop's Waltham. He returned to Hampshire in 1835 ten years after graduating from Trinity College, Cambridge and three years after marrying his cousin Frances Mary, to begin one of the early stages of his career as a clergyman, becoming perpetual curate of the new parish of Curdridge. There he remained for six years raising some of the first of his twelve children before taking up the position of curate at Alverstoke to Samuel Wilberforce, later Bishop of Oxford and then Winchester. He and Wilberforce became firm friends – like Jonathan and David, said some. 'It always does me good to visit him' said Wilberforce of his friend. 'He is full of thought, patient and laborious in study, and of a highly refined mind; a zealous churchman and a man of deep and earnest personal piety'.⁴ Trench was appointed Wilberforce's examining chaplain for the Oxford diocese after he moved there in 1845. This was not without some misgivings on Trench's part; as a

2 J.A.H. Murray, *The Evolution of English Lexicography* [Romanes Lecture 1900] (Oxford, 1900) pp. 45–8; Quoted in G.F. Timpson (ed.), *Sir James A.H. Murray. A Self Portrait* (Gloucester, 1957), p. 21.

3 W.A. Craigie and C.T. Onions (eds), *A New English Dictionary on Historic Principles. Introduction, Supplement and Bibliography* (Oxford, 1933), p. vii. Lynda Mugglestone, *Lost for Words. The Hidden History of the Oxford English Dictionary* (New Haven and London, 2005) is careful to draw attention to Trench's formative role in what eventually became the OED as is James Turner in his *Philology. The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton NJ, 2014), p. 252.

4 Quoted in *Richard Chevenix Trench, Archbishop. Letters and Memorials* p. 199.

Cambridge man he thought he would be unwelcome in Oxford and that he would be resented on account of his close ties with the Bishop. He was Hulsean Lecturer at Cambridge in 1845/46. Rising in the clerical ladder Trench became rector of St Mary's in nearby Itchen Stoke in 1844 and there he stayed for the next twelve years. For much of this time he was also Professor of Divinity at the newly founded King's College, London and became Dean of Westminster in 1856 and finally Archbishop of Dublin in 1864 during the difficult years before and after Gladstone's disestablishment of the Anglican church in Ireland in 1869. With his health failing and increasingly despondent about the state of Ireland he resigned his Archbishopric in 1884. He died in London in March 1886.

During his Hampshire period he established himself as a prolific and highly successful writer of theological works; his first book, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord* (London, 1841), ran through no fewer than fourteen editions. Numerous other publications, commentaries and collections of sermons, followed. Trench was an incredibly prolific author; a complete list of his publications appearing at the end of his *Sermons Old and New* (London, 1886) occupies two whole pages. As a theologian he demonstrated a far from intransigent conservatism and he was perfectly willing to contemplate appropriate revisions to the *Book of Common Prayer* and the launching of a revised translation of the New Testament.⁵ He remained outside the Oxford Movement though he valued its reinvigorating effects on the church and respected some of its leading figures, especially John Keble. Though not a cutting-edge scholar Trench was an omnivorous reader, was skilful at synthesising, and had a talent for clear, logical, easily grasped exposition, a quality well suited to lecturing and to the needs of rural congregations.⁶ He also published several volumes of verse, successful in their day but now viewed as mawkishly sentimental and long since overtaken by changing tastes. With his *penchant* for poetry he might perhaps have been expected to write hymns for his country congregations, but in fact did not.

Trench, self-effacing in many ways, wrote no autobiography and discouraged the writing of a formal biography; indeed he was careful to destroy many of his own personal papers. But two years after his

5 J. Bromley, *The Man of Ten Talents. A Portrait of Richard Chevenix Trench, 1807–86. Philologist, Poet, Theologian, Archbishop* (London, 1959), pp. 231, 236. See also A.J. Fletcher. *Richard Chevenix Trench and his Legacy* (privately printed, 2007). I am grateful to Professor Fletcher for loaning me his personal copy of this publication.

6 *Oxford DNB*; Bromley, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

death a substantial two-volume tribute appeared – *Richard Chevenix Trench, Archbishop. Letters and Memorials* (London, 1888). Compiled by a family member and author of other biographies of churchmen, this was a work of pious devotion and chiefly an ecclesiastical biography concentrating on the different stages of his clerical career and, not surprisingly, giving most space to his terms as Dean of Westminster and Archbishop in Ireland.⁷ But it also depicted Trench as a voracious, if always moralising, reader who regarded Scott's novels as little more than 'a successful instrument of money-making' and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* as a thoroughly corrupt book which ought not to have been written.⁸ And it brought out some of Trench's personal qualities – his deep affection for his wife and children, his gift for friendship, capacity for self-criticism, his humility and compassion for those in need (as in the Irish Famine of the 1840s). Years after he had left Hampshire behind his former parishioners still recalled this good-hearted and unassuming man and his care for his rural congregations. He took his pastoral responsibilities very seriously and preached with conviction if not always with uniform success. The same kind of attentiveness to his flock came to the fore later at Westminster Abbey where he expanded access to preaching by reviving the long-defunct practice of holding services with sermons in the nave on Sunday evenings – more easily attended by working people who were spared the challenge of mingling with the fashionable congregations assembling for Mattins and Eucharist on Sunday mornings. Making Westminster Abbey a 'people's church' on these occasions was a bold step. James Sylvester's pamphlet on *Archbishop Trench, Poet and Divine. A Sketch of his Life and Character* (London, Christian Knowledge Society, 1891) no more than a very brief outline and following largely the same path as the two-volume memorial, welcomed it.

7 Maria Trench, the editor, also published lives of Dr Edward Pusey (1800–82), one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, Charles Lowder (1820–80), Anglican clergyman and founder of the Society of the Holy Cross, and of James Skinner (1818–81), author and hymn writer. Her two-volume memorial on Richard Chevenix Trench followed in a family tradition since Trench himself had earlier published a similar account of the life of his mother: *The Remains of the late Mrs Richard Trench, being Selections from Journals, Letters and other Papers* (London, 1862). Melesina Trench (1768–1827), benevolent estate owner, social reformer, poet and writer on education and travel, is now being considered with a new seriousness by today's scholars concerned with women and literature. For an outline sketch of her life see Sheila Gray, 'Mrs Melesina Trench, 1768–1827', *Winchester Cathedral Record* 69 (1999), 17–23.

8 *Archbishop Trench Letters and Memorials*, pp. 225, 297.

But even during his own lifetime, and certainly afterwards, Trench was much more notable and successful as a philologist, an aspect of his career largely passed over in silence in the two-volume memorial which focussed, the editor thought, on much more important things. An oblique reference to this side of Trench's work, however, appeared in the editor's description of Trench as 'one honoured wherever the English tongue is spoken'.⁹ It should be emphasised, however, that for Trench philology was not a separate compartment of study; for him philology and religion went hand in hand. His *Notes on the Parables of our Lord* (London, 1841) had contained a philological dimension, both specifically in relation to the Biblical text and, more generally, in terms of its applications for the preacher. So had a slightly later publication of his Hampshire period, *Notes on the Miracles of our Lord* (London, 1846) which began with a consideration of the different scriptural words used to describe miracles. 'Every discussion about a thing', he insisted, 'will best proceed from an investigation of the name or names which it bears... In the name we have the true declaration of the innermost nature of the thing...'.¹⁰ Trench's *Synonyms of the New Testament* (London, 1854) which, like a number of his other publications grew out of a lecture series, continued in the same vein and expressed his concerns about the absence of language studies in theological training at King's College, London. 'There are few things which a theological teacher should have more at heart than to awaken in his scholars an enthusiasm for the grammar and the lexicon'.¹¹ Noted theologian and preacher Dr Henry Liddon (1829–90) pronounced that Trench's 'great work for the English church was his drawing its attention to the philosophy of religious language'.¹² Trench's general conviction was that language was God-given, though far from immutable, and that Christianity had deepened the meaning of many words.¹³ There was a moral and spiritual purpose, therefore, he believed, in studying the English language and its development and, when properly pursued, both church and state were principal beneficiaries. Faith and understanding

9 *Trench Letters and Memorials*, p. ix.

10 Trench, *Miracles*, *op. cit.*, p. 1

11 Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (London, 1854, 8th ed., revised, 1876), p. vi.

12 Quoted in *Archbishop Trench. Letters and Memorials*, p. 316.

13 A minor publication dating from the end of the 1850s – *A Select Glossary of English Words used formerly in senses different from their present* (London, 1859) – documented some of these mutations.

of truth and falsehood were strengthened and men were likely to become better and more useful citizens.

His two major publications in philology – *On The Study of Words* (London, 1851) and *English Past and Present* (London, 1855) – several times brought out in revised editions and much reprinted have acquired the status of classics. There were American as well as British printings. The two titles were jointly issued in a single Everyman's Library volume in 1927, and the books remain in print to this day.¹⁴ They provided Trench with a lucrative and steady source of income. Both these books appeared during Trench's Hampshire period but were even more specifically anchored in his years as curate and rector in the county. He drew on first-hand knowledge in *English Past and Present* to demonstrate the persistence of local usages of vocabulary ('gossip' for godparent, and 'nuncheon' for the midday repast for example, in rural Hampshire); 'nammit' was another dialect word for midday meal in use in certain parts of the county. The persistence in rural settings of different forms and different spellings of common words and of different pronunciations was also a phenomenon which fascinated Trench. A Hampshire countryman, he noted, was likely to say 'afeard' instead of afraid and 'axe' instead of ask, 'waps' instead of wasps, 'hern' instead of hers, 'along' instead of because, 'nestes' instead of nests. When using the words 'contrary' or 'mischievous' the rustic's spoken emphasis would be placed on the second rather than the first syllable. 'Count nothing of this kind beneath your notice', Trench exhorted his audience (which, after all, when the lectures were first delivered consisted partly of lower middle-class students also from Hampshire). 'Do not at once ascribe any departure from what you have been used to, either in grammar, or pronunciation, or meaning ascribed to words, to the ignorance or

14 Not all were agreed, however, about Trench's high-standing as a philologist. B.W. Wright, an American rival, definitely placed him in the second rank. 'The Rev. Richard C. Trench, Professor of King's College London, has made himself more known in this country than any other one as a writer on the study of words. Many of our common words he opens to view and shows them to contain poetical, ethical, and historical elements of great interest. His work is, however, as it was designed by him to be, entertaining rather than scientific, a book of suggestions and of a few mere outline sketches adapted to the popular reader and not one of deep scholarly investigations of his own or of scholarly guidance unto others. He casts around about a few of the Anglo-Saxon, Norman, and Latin elements of our own language, and speaks of Latin in old style as "a compound of Grecian and un-Grecian derivatives"'. *Modern Philology. Its Discoveries, History and Influence* (3rd ed., New York, 1864) I, pp. 256–7.

stupidity of the speaker'.¹⁵ Though such variations were becoming increasingly scarce due to exposure to 'the ravages of the schoolmaster or the inroads of the railway' they should still be treasured rather than disregarded and those speaking in dialect should not be looked down on as backward or inferior. And as a preacher before rural congregations in Alverstoke and Itchen Stoke Trench knew the value of appealing to homely proverbs to hammer home a point which would otherwise have been lost in a learned discourse.¹⁶ Always (like his mother) a committed educationist, he was a passionate supporter of the Church's national schools and in later life he championed the cause of women's education in Ireland.¹⁷ Trench viewed school-teaching as a 'calling' or vocation occupying a special place among the professions. Accordingly he took a keen interest in the newly established Diocesan Training School (for teachers in Church of England schools) in Winchester at which some of the instruction was provided by the cathedral clergy, Winchester College, and the diocese.¹⁸ Samuel Sebastian Wesley, organist at the cathedral and celebrated composer, George Moberly, Headmaster of Winchester College, and John Keble, sometime Professor of Poetry at Oxford and vicar of Hursley, were among their number.

Both of his major philological books had originated as extra-curricular lecture series given there. (The contents of *English Past and Present* had first been delivered in lectures to senior pupils of King's College School, London in the spring of 1854 but were expanded and re-cast in the autumn of the same year for a repeat performance at the Winchester

15 *English Past and Present*, pp. 307, 229, 227, 228, 229, 231. Jane Austen, thoroughly attuned to Hampshire society at its various levels, had made use of the word 'nuncheon' in *Sense and Sensibility*, III, chapter 8. W.H. Cope, *A Glossary of Hampshire Words and Phrases* (English Dialect Society, 40, London, 1883) later addressed this subject more comprehensively. Like Trench Cope took the view that the combined standardising effects of National and Board Schools and railways could well eradicate Hampshire dialect within the space of two more generations (*ibid.*, p. v).

16 Trench, *On the Lessons in Proverbs* (London, 1853), p. 114.

17 *Oxford DNB*.

18 M. Rose, *A History of King Alfred's College, Winchester, 1840–1980* (London and Chichester, 1981), p. 43. See also T.B. James, *The University of Winchester. 175 Years of Values-Driven Higher Education* (Winchester, 2015). Trench's association with the Diocesan Training School was long-lasting and was encouraged no doubt by his friend Samuel Wilberforce's translation to the Winchester see in 1869. In his will he left a bequest to fund an annual prize there. See J. Simons, 'R. C. Trench and the Development of English at King Alfred's College' in S. Barker and C. Haydon (eds), *Winchester. History and Literature* (Winchester, 1992), pp. 90–107, which places Trench in another context.

Diocesan Training School.) Trench's lucid, well-organised lecturing style is plain to see in the published texts as it is also in another publication from the same period, *On the Lessons in Proverbs* (London, 1853), which disseminated in print the substance of five occasional lectures originally given to young men's societies in and around Portsmouth. Although by nature rather austere and solemn, Trench had an enviable capacity for communicating in an earnest, accessible, and inspiring way and illustrated his points by drawing on an apparently endless store of examples culled from exceptionally wide reading. Lecturing, which he found immensely satisfying, in many ways became his *forte*.

Studying the mother tongue, Trench declared in the introductory section of *On The Study of Words*, was an exercise even more instructive and gratifying than learning a foreign language. Words are 'treasures of wisdom and knowledge lying about us so far more precious than mines of Californian gold' and invaluable as an educational tool both for would-be teachers and their pupils.

For many a young man his first discovery of the fact that words are living powers, are the vesture, even the living body which thoughts weave for themselves, has been like the dropping of scales from his eyes... Only try your pupils [he went on] and mark the kindling of the eye, the lighting up of the countenance, the revival of flagging attention, with which the humblest lecture upon words, and on the words which they are daily using, which are familiar to them at their play or at their church, will be welcomed by them.

In recognition of the Diocesan Training School's giving him a platform for his lectures and to provide his hearers with a lasting memento of the occasion and tool for future teaching Trench presented all the pupils with a copy of his book.¹⁹

'In words contemplated singly there are boundless stores of moral and historic truth', Trench declared at the outset of *On the Study of Words*, and the main body of the text, based on the seven principal lectures given at the Diocesan Training-School in Winchester, proceeded to illustrate this fundamental conviction from different angles and with a enormous armoury of well-chosen examples and quotations. Studying English words, Trench argued, led on naturally to other things such as history and patriotism; national schools in which the Winchester

19 *On the Study of Words*, p. 40. The topical reference to the ongoing Californian goldrush which began in 1848/9 would obviously have been well received by his hearers. James, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

teacher-training students would later serve were ideally placed to foster the national spirit (unlike Roman Catholic schools which he viewed as both anti-national and anti-scriptural).²⁰ Language for this author was both a 'moral barometer' and historically stratified entity.²¹ The complex development of English, both in its home-grown elements and in its responses to external impositions – through its Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman French phases – explained the abundance of synonyms and rich diversity of vocabulary, nuances and meanings. Moreover as a churchman, Trench always took pains to uncover the religious cargo that so many words carried, even if at first hidden from view.

Trench's *English Past and Present*, which went through a staggering ten printings in the first year of its publication in 1855, both complemented the subject matter of the first book, revisited some of the same ground, displayed the same impressive range of reading from which his numerous illustrations were derived, and the same qualities of lucid exposition and capacity to marshal his subject matter. Like its predecessor it revealed in equal measure Trench's deep-seated religious convictions and patriotism, though he was not so anglo-centric as to fail to be alert to the many instances of the assimilation of words from other languages, Arabic, Hindu, Italian, and Spanish among them. (On other occasions, when it was expressly called for, his patriotism gushed forth without restraint, as in a sermon preached in Westminster Abbey to mark the tercentenary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth I, saviour of the English church and nation.)²² He took Dr Johnson to task for his disproportionate and pompous down-playing of Anglo-Saxon words in favour of those of a Latin and French derivation and argued – counterfactually – that the English language, if it had not been enlarged by the Norman Conquest, would still have been incredibly rich, resourceful and arguably more 'honest' and less elitist.

[It] would have been an instrument with not so many strings... wanting many of the grander resonances which it now possesses [but it would have been] an instrument easier to play on, requiring infinitely less skill, not so likely to betray into gross absurdities, nor to make an open show of the incapacity of such as handled it badly.

But Trench, at times behaving as the self-appointed guardian of English (in that respect ironically reminiscent of Dr Johnson) could

20 *On the Study of Words*, p. 301.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

22 Trench, *Sermons preached in Westminster Abbey* (2nd ed., London, 1861), esp. p. 21.

be firmly dismissive of some modern usages and of tendencies which he saw as threatening the purity and good name of the language. The word 'denominationalism' to him was a 'monstrous birth', while the word 'idea', so variously and casually deployed in his own day, had become hopelessly debased. 'There is perhaps no word in the whole compass of the language so ill treated, so rarely employed with any tolerable correctness'.²³ And from his moral pedestal he denounced some modern word play ('love-child' instead of bastard, for instance) deliberately designed, in his view to conceal sin. 'How vigorously ought we to oppose ourselves to all such immoralities of language'. Conversely, it was surely a sign of the moral depravity of modern times that 'prude' had come to be defined as *false* modesty. 'Libertine', once more neutral in its connotations, had by Trench's day come to be applied only to the debauched. 'Eau de vie', by contrast, was a term that in Trench's view coyly concealed its evil in being a 'source of disease, crime, madness, and death'. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, a modern commentator describes Trench's *On the Study of Words* as 'an odd though immensely popular amalgam of moral exhortation and etymological research'.²⁴

Philology, pioneered in Germany by the Brothers Grimm, Barthold Niebuhr, and others, was a growing field of study in nineteenth-century Britain. Roget's *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* (London, 1852) was one obvious landmark.²⁵ W. Barnes' *A Philological Grammar* appeared in 1854 and was followed in rapid succession by B.W. Dwight's *Modern Philology. Its Discoveries, History and Influence* (New York, 1859), G.P. Marsh's *Lectures on the English Language* (New York, 1863), W.D. Whitney's *Language and the Study of Language* (London, 1867) and J. Earle's *Philology of the English Tongue* (Oxford, 1871). After a fluctuating existence in the 1830s, a Philological Society was formally established in London in 1842 with its meetings held in the newly-founded London Library, and soon had over two hundred members, mainly clergymen, a significant number of them graduates of Trinity College, Cambridge, where Trench had studied. Three of these men – R.G. Latham, T.H. Key, and Henry Malden – held professorships at University College, London. From the beginning the Society, though at times myopically insular in its concerns, set its sights on the compilation of an etymological dictionary and there were tentative explorations of suitable methodologies. Trench, with

23 *English Past and Present*, pp. 141, 301.

24 *On The Study of Words*, pp. 97, 89, 84, 99. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

25 See J. Kendall, *The Man who made Lists. Love, Death, Madness and the Creation of Roget's Thesaurus* (New, York, 2008).

two highly successful publications in the field already to his credit and having just taken up his Deanery at Westminster, became a member of the Society in March 1857 and was elected to its Council in May of the same year. From this platform in November 1857 Trench delivered two keynote addresses to the Society entitled 'On Some Deficiencies in our English Dictionaries'.²⁶

Trench systematically identified the shortcomings of existing dictionaries, chief among them those compiled by Samuel Johnson (1755), and, more recently, by the Americans Charles Webster (1828), and Charles Richardson (1837), in terms of their principles, coverage, and methodology. Johnson in particular, despite his pioneering efforts, undoubted achievements, and iconic status, was roundly criticised for his inconsistencies, his high-handed attitude to obsolete words, his limited interest in the lifespan of words and their changing meanings over time, and his exceedingly incomplete search for illustrative quotations. Johnson's methods as a compiler, Trench concluded, amounted to lexicographical dictatorship of the worst kind. His well-known snobbery, prejudices and quirky judgements about what to include and exclude, admired in their day as Enlightenment wisdom, were now more obviously glaring defects in Trench's considered opinion. The sub-text of his great work was often alarmingly autobiographical. Johnson's famous dictionary was often overloaded with its compiler's personal preferences – too many recondite technical terms, for instance, best reserved for a specialised lexicon. He was often mistaken in his dating of the first use of particular words. Moreover Johnson frequently blurred the functions of a dictionary and an encyclopaedia by self-indulgently dwelling on *things* themselves rather than on the words which described them.

It is strange that Johnson's strong common sense did not save him from falling into this error; but it has not. He might well have spared us thirteen closely printed lines on an opal, nineteen on a rose, twenty-one on the alug tree, as many on the air pump, not fewer on the natural history of the armadillo, and rather more than sixty on the pear.²⁷

26 H. Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780–1860* (Princeton, NJ, 1967), chapter 6, *passim*. Trench, *On Some Deficiencies in our Dictionaries, being the Substance of Two Papers read before the Philological Society, 5 November and 19 November, 1857* (London, 1857).

27 Trench, *Some Deficiencies*, p. 50.

The almost total absence of illustrative quotations in Webster's Dictionary in Trench's view deprived it of any substantial value.

There were so many deficiencies in the existing dictionaries, Trench went on, that all thought of merely producing a revision or supplement should be abandoned. What was desperately needed was a new Dictionary of the English language based on historic principles and strategically designed for an age in which the extension of British commerce and of the empire were ensuring that English was fast becoming a world language. A great dictionary would simultaneously express and promote the country's greatness. Trench's lofty conception of the required Dictionary was that it should be 'a historical monument, the history of a nation contemplated from one point of view'. It should chart the past as well as the present of English vocabulary. It should offer 'a complete inventory of the language' and shun the subjective interventions of its compilers. The role of a dictionary was not to judge or impose standards; he rejected the model of the Académie Française.

Where [the dictionary compiler] counts words to be needless, affected, pedantic, ill-put together, contrary to the genius of the language, there is no objection to his saying so; on the contrary, he may do real service in this way. But let their claim to belong to our book language to be the humblest, and he is bound to record them, to throw wide with an impartial hospitality his doors to them, as to all others.²⁸

A dictionary's responsibility was to be comprehensively helpful, to come to the rescue when difficult, variant or obscure words were encountered. It should pay attention to the family associations of words when used as verbs, nouns or adjectives, and to synonyms. The kind of dictionary which Trench envisaged should properly track the rise and decline of words. Meticulous and extensive checking of first known usage of words should be undertaken and quotations supplied to document variations. Clearly, accomplishing such a project would be a herculean labour, far beyond the capacity of a single individual who could only expect to make 'desultory forays' into the literature. Team effort was vital, with the work of a huge army of volunteers – correspondents and collaborators – carefully managed and coordinated at the editorial hub.²⁹ A further obvious advantage of this way of proceeding would be to curtail the outpouring of the personal convictions and hobby horses

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 52–6.

of a single compiler. There was to be no place for a nineteenth-century re-incarnation of Dr Johnson.

Trench's inspiring words in November 1857 fell on fertile ground since the Philological Society was already strongly committed in principle to a dictionary project and had recently rather quaintly set up an 'unregistered words' committee to accumulate vocabulary omitted from the existing dictionaries. Trench's lectures provided the necessary catalyst and offered a highly practical way of moving forward. Within a year Trench's lectures had been put into print to reach a wider audience, two committees of the Philological Society had been established – the first Literary and Historical and the second Etymological – and a working plan and Rules (the *Canones Lexicographici*) published. Trench, along with Herbert Coleridge and F.J. Furnivall, now constituted the nerve centre of the project which it was at first naively believed might take ten years to accomplish.³⁰ None could then have envisaged that after an exceedingly tortuous history it would be 1928 before the great *Dictionary* would finally appear under the auspices of Oxford University Press. The ailing Coleridge went to an early grave in 1861, Trench felt obliged to bow out from the project when he was appointed Archbishop of Dublin in 1863, and the dynamic but eccentric and badly-organised Furnivall had in practical terms achieved little by the early 1870s. In the event it was the rising star James Murray – hand-picked by Furnivall – who took over in 1875 and relentlessly pursued the project for the remainder of his life.³¹

Richard Chevenix Trench, however, was the chief instigator of the scheme which eventually transformed itself from the Philological

30 W. Benzie, *Dr F.J. Furnivall, Victorian Scholar Adventurer* (Norman, OK, 1983) claims that Furnivall was more important than Trench in the origins of the Dictionary project. This flies in the face of the facts, however, not just on account of Trench's 1857 inspiring papers to the Philological Society and the response they elicited. Murray, surely best placed to know, was in no doubt about Trench's pivotal significance in the Dictionary's development. Furnivall, though incredibly energetic and dedicated, was careless, chaotic and unscholarly in his methods and had a way of alienating others, publishers included. As an agnostic he obviously did not share Trench's convictions about the spiritual value of philology. Though after Coleridge's early death Furnivall kept the idea of the Dictionary alive it would probably be more accurate to claim that its eventual completion occurred despite, rather than because of, him.

31 Turner, *op. cit.*, pp. 263–4, while recognising that Furnivall was 'omnipresent' in so much of the philological and literary activity of his generation, views him as both 'eccentric' and 'slapdash'. 'He aspired to "scientific" scholarship but lacked the philological equipment to produce it'. Murray, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Winchester, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

Society's dictionary into the OED. Though not entirely consistent in harmonising theory and practice, he offered both a definition of what the project should be and a workable agenda for achieving it. His philological, etymological and lexicographical interests first developed, as we have seen, during his Hampshire period and his chief publications in that field belong to those years. Moreover his Hampshire experience heightened his attentiveness to regional variations in dialect and vocabulary – an element in due course integrated into the *Oxford Dictionary*.³² His preaching in country parishes developed his skills of exposition and of organising and illustrating his material, as did his lecturing to young men at the Diocesan Training School in Winchester and elsewhere in the county. His books *On The Study of Words* and *English Past and Present* not only established his own reputation as a philologist but did much to take the subject outside its previously narrow circle of academic and antiquarian followers and bring it before the public at large. By so doing Trench helped to ensure that when the Philological Society's Dictionary project was first launched the call for large numbers of volunteers to trawl through works of literature for examples of word usage would fall on eagerly receptive ears and attract some eminent contributors, among them Edward Dowden, S.R. Gardiner, Benjamin Jowett, Harriet Martineau, W.W. Skeat, and William Stubbs.³³ Significant numbers of keenly interested women, too, signed up to the enterprise, though in the man's world they penetrated their contributions were imperfectly recognised. The preface to the first *Supplement* of the published *Dictionary* in 1933 was right to pay homage to the nineteenth-century clergyman who did so much to pave its way. His contribution to philology, etymology and lexicography unquestionably lives on and constitutes his principal memorial – an achievement unaffected by the fact that after his death Philology tended to be somewhat eclipsed by the nascent discipline of English Studies.

32 Trench's *Canones Lexicographici* of 1860 guaranteed dialect words a place in the evolving dictionary. Murray tried hard to continue to implement this principle but, increasingly, pressures of available space and cost made it more difficult. (Mugglestone, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–8).

33 One of the most prolific and certainly most colourful of later contributors to the *Dictionary* under Murray's regime was W.C. Minor, ex American army surgeon convicted of murder in London and incarcerated in Broadmoor lunatic asylum. S. Winchester, *The Surgeon of Crowthorne. A Tale of Murder, Madness and the Love of Words* (London, 1998) tells the fascinating story.

Physical traces, however, of Trench's many highly productive years in Hampshire have largely disappeared. The Diocesan Training School moved into handsome new, purpose-built hillside premises in the 1860s away from its original improvised setting in St Swithun's St near the city centre in Winchester and then at Wolvesey, the bishop's palace, where he had delivered his lectures on philology in the previous decade.³⁴ This re-located institution, after a variety of name changes and much diversification and expansion, eventually in 2005 became the University of Winchester, a status in which Trench would surely have rejoiced. (It is singularly appropriate, in view of the Trench connection, that the University now boasts a well-established centre for the study of the English language). The church building of St Mary's in Itchen Stoke where he ministered for twelve years after 1844, condemned as cold, draughty and inadequate by Trench's successor, was demolished and gave way to a grander gothic edifice erected in 1866 to the design of Henry Conybeare, civil engineer and architect, the new rector's brother. More sweepingly in 1923 the parish of Itchen Stoke lost its separate, free-standing identity and was joined with that of nearby Ovington. More changes followed. Services no longer take place there since St Mary's in Itchen Stoke has been designated as redundant though, as a fine Victorian building in its own right, it is now under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust.³⁵ Because his ministry pre-dated the building of the present church no memorial tablet to Trench's incumbency is to be found there. Trench's rectory, the congenial setting for writing many of his books, after being suitably enlarged and refurbished, in due course became the private residence of Lord Ashburton, patron of the church living. And though Trench's mother and his young son Francis (d. 1841 aged 8) are interred in Winchester Cathedral, Trench himself is buried, unsurprisingly as a former Dean, in Westminster Abbey and not in Hampshire.³⁶

As Phythian-Adams and others in the 'Leicester School' of English Local History long ago taught us, local history embraces cultural

34 Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 52–63. Wolvesey, then dilapidated as well as insanitary, was vacant at the time and the bishop in that period resided in the more comfortable surroundings of Farnham Castle.

35 Pevsner considered the church 'remarkable for its date'. N. Pevsner and D. Lloyd, *The Buildings of England. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (Harmondsworth, 1967, 1973), p. 309.

36 Bromley, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Trench's father, dying much later than his mother, was interred at Bursledon close to the family estate since by that date (1860), further burials inside the cathedral were not permitted. I am grateful to Anna Withers for assistance with burial details at Winchester Cathedral.

history as well as the particular or comparative history of places and communities.³⁷ This article has been at pains to demonstrate the fact. Physical remains of Trench's presence in Hampshire for the most part may have gone but his enduring monument remains his two incredibly successful mid nineteenth-century publications on the English language – grounded in his experience in the diocese of Winchester and Diocesan Training School and in Hampshire country parishes – and the famous *Dictionary* to which they eventually gave rise. Studying Trench within his defining local context thus helps us not only to explicate a notable figure in Victorian provincial society and significant contributor to the nineteenth-century worlds of letters and education but also one of the defining landmarks, the *OED*, in this country's national consciousness and culture. For Richard Chevenix Trench the routes to documenting the English language and, indeed, to defining 'Englishness' itself, lay through Hampshire.

37 C. Phythian-Adams, *Re-thinking English Local History* (Leicester, 1987), *passim*.