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**Additional Keywords**
lexicographer; Oxford English Dictionary
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That Tolkien considered his involvement in the compiling of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1919-20 to have been time well spent is shown by his observation that he “learned more in those two years than in any other equal period of my life” (quoted in Carpenter, 1977, p. 101). That he also conceived an abiding affection for the Dictionary is evident from the episode in *Farmer Giles of Ham* where “Four Wise Clerks of Oxenford”, consulted as to the meaning of *blunderbuss*, reply with the *OED* definition (the Clerkes being of course the four original Editors of the *OED*). As a lexicographer at work on the same dictionary some seventy years later, I was interested to learn what I could about Tolkien’s tasks and working methods.

Long before the completion of its first edition in 1928, the *Oxford English Dictionary* was already justly famous as the largest survey of the English language ever undertaken. Work began in the 1850s under the auspices of the Philological Society, and publication began in 1884 with the first instalment, or fascicle, under the editorship of its first and most famous Editor, James Murray. To increase the rate of progress Henry Bradley was appointed as a second Editor in 1887; he was later joined by William Craigie and Charles Onions. Sir James Murray died in 1915, so that when Tolkien arrived there remained three teams of lexicographers proceeding through separate swathes of the alphabet, each headed by an Editor. At the beginning of 1919 the letters U-Z and parts of S had not yet appeared in print: Tolkien was assigned to Henry Bradley’s team, which had just begun work at the beginning of W. Tolkien’s background and philological training suited him particularly well for work on vocabulary of Germanic origin, in which W was probably the richest of the remaining letters.

Having been unable to consult the diary which, uncharacteristically, Tolkien kept from the beginning of 1919, I have had to rely instead on the available *OED* working papers. The Dictionary was passed to press in the form of bundles of slips, each bearing either illustrative quotations (most of which were sent in by members of the public) or portions of editorial text. Much of this copy was donated to the Bodleian Library, along with some slips discarded in the course of the editorial process, but not before the extraction and dispersal of three components of the text: materials relating to Scottish, Middle English, and early Modern English were (somewhat haphazardly) separated out and dispatched to the historical dictionary projects concerned. Various other contemporaneous bodies of material still reside in the archives of Oxford Dictionaries, including slips intended for use in the preparation of the 1933 *Supplement*. The standard “Dictionary slip” was a quarter-sheet of foolscap, but some contributors sent in quotations on more or less any similarly-sized piece of paper that came to hand, and many of the lexicographers did likewise: in their case this included torn-up proofs of earlier *OED* fascicles and, crucially, discarded earlier drafts of editorial material. (Of course, a slip of paper discarded by Tolkien might not be re-used until it was picked up years later by another lexicographer.) Some slips must have been destroyed altogether, and many others are presently unavailable because of the aforementioned dispersal of the slips; but by examining the remaining material for the letter W, I hope that I have managed to reconstruct a reasonably full picture of Tolkien’s involvement in the creation of Dictionary text. (Although he could conceivably have been involved in the coverage of words beginning with other letters, the manuscript evidence available to me suggests otherwise, at least as far as the first edition of the *OED* is concerned.) Precise dating of most of Tolkien’s lexicographical work is difficult, since very few slips (and none of Tolkien’s) bear...
any indication of when they were written. A certain amount can be deduced from the dates stamped on bundles of slips when they were sent for typesetting: for example, Tolkien must have started writing definitions before 3 April 1919, which is when the first bundle to which he contributed was sent to press. Beyond this, all that is certain regarding the start of his work is that by the end of March 1919, according to Oxford University Press accounts, he had been paid one-and-a-half months’ salary, although this may have been for work begun late in 1918 and carried out part-time. (Humphrey Carpenter’s biography states that Tolkien joined the staff of the Dictionary in November, soon after the Armistice.) The OUP accounts also show that he ceased to be paid out of Dictionary funds at the end of June 1920, but that for the last month he was engaged in work connected with an anthology of Middle English texts (Sisam, 1921)\(^4\) rather than the *OED* – although, as we shall see, this work did in fact continue to benefit the Dictionary. Tolkien remained in touch with Henry Bradley after ceasing to work for OUP, as is shown by a postcard from Leeds, dated 26 June 1922, in which he quotes an Anglo-Saxon riddle (which he describes as *enigma saxonicum nuper inventum*), but it seems unlikely that the contact was more than social.\(^5\) As for the order in which Tolkien performed the main body of his lexicographical work – the drafting of Dictionary entries – I have had to assume that work proceeded through the alphabetical sequence, as it does in Oxford Dictionaries today, and have therefore described it in alphabetical order by headword, except where there is good reason to do otherwise.

According to Humphrey Carpenter, in his first weeks Tolkien “was given the job of researching the etymology of

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\(^4\) Tolkien’s contribution was the preparation of a glossary, which appeared separately as *A Middle English Vocabulary* (1922) – his first published book.

\(^5\) Later in 1923 Tolkien’s riddle was published in the anthology *A Northern Venture* (Leeds University English School Association, 1923) under the heading “*Enigmata Saxonica Nuper Inventa Duo*”. The cordiality of Tolkien’s relations with Bradley are vividly conveyed in the heartfelt obituary (signed “J.R.R.T.”): “To see him working in the Dictionary Room at the Old Ashmolean and to work for a time under his wise and kindly hand was a privilege not at that time looked for. [...] The Memory of more recent years recalls with a sense of great loss his piled table in the Dictionary Room; and many, whether occasional visitors, or workers in that great dusty workshop, that brownest of brown studies, preserve a picture of him as he sat writing there, glimpses of him momentarily held in thought, with eyes looking into the grey shadows of the roof, pen poised in the air to descend at last and fix a sentence or a paragraph complete and rounded, without blot or erasure, on the paper before him” (Tolkien, 1923). The obituary ends with an alliterative verse tribute to Bradley, once again in Anglo-Saxon.
warm, wasp, water, wick (lamp), and winter" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 101). The extent to which Tolkien's work on these etymologies was made use of by later editors is, unfortunately, uncertain, since many of the relevant slips are missing; however, most of the etymology of warm at least is in Tolkien's hand, and although it is completed in Henry Bradley's hand, it is likely that this is based on an earlier draft by Tolkien (see figure 1).

Probably even before this etymological research, and certainly before he began to draft entries on a substantial scale, Tolkien embarked on an ancillary task which drew upon his thorough knowledge of Old English, and whose results were made use of long after he had given up work on the Dictionary. At some stage during the collection of quotation evidence, numerous important Old and Middle English texts had been examined by readers who copied out illustrative quotations but were unable to lemmatize the words illustrated, that is, to convert the form occurring in the text to the form with which a dictionary entry would be headed. Tolkien was one of a small number of people who lemmatized these slips by writing the correct lemmas alongside the cited forms noted by the less able readers, thereby allowing the slips for each lemma to be placed together. Quotations of this type exist for words in the range waedle to worsien.

Somewhat surprisingly, I have found very little evidence that Tolkien habitually wrote out quotations encountered during his everyday reading, as his colleagues certainly did: slips sent in by readers from all over the English-speaking world were, of course, still flooding in — as they do to this day — and it must surely have been as automatic for lexicographers in Tolkien's time as it is now for myself and my colleagues to contribute quotations from their own reading in the same way. However, apart from a single quotation for the word smirkle, taken from Lewis Carroll's Sylvie and Bruno, no quotations in Tolkien's handwriting for words outside the letter W have come to light. The existence of one slip, nevertheless, does suggest that there were others which simply cannot be found; which is a pity, since they would have provided an interesting glimpse of Tolkien's recreational reading habits.

After some little time spent in learning his job, then, Tolkien at last started work on the drafting of Dictionary entries. This central task seems to have been organized much as it is today: each assistant was allocated an alphabetical range by his or her Editor, and would deal with all aspects of the final text — pronunciation, spelling variants, and etymology, as well as the defining of the various senses and the selection and copy-editing of illustrative quotations. The text prepared in this way would eventually be revised by the Editor, who frequently made substantial changes such as reclassifying the senses (and rewriting the definitions accordingly), choosing different quotations, and even deciding to reject a word entirely, often because of a paucity of quotation evidence. Variations to this routine were made when some assistants were not competent to deal with certain aspects of particular entries, such as the etymology of a word derived from an unusual language (in some cases these were even left to be added in proof).

The raw material for the creation of Dictionary text, namely the quotation slips, would have already undergone some initial processing by the time an assistant such as Tolkien came to work on it: this included sorting into alphabetical order (no small task) and, in the case of more complex words, preliminary arrangement of slips approximately by sense. Some of the sub-editors who carried out this work went further, and wrote first drafts of definitions. A great many of these editorial slips were, however, rejected by the "official" lexicographers, including Tolkien, as is shown by the fact that definitions by these later workers are frequently written on the backs of the earlier drafts.

Tolkien's first editorial range appears to have been a short one consisting of the verb waggle and its cognates. Quite what training he will have received is not at all clear: it seems most likely to me that once embarked on drafting proper, assistants would be expected to learn from their mistakes. Certainly these early slips show an incomplete grasp of "house style", as can be seen from the number of corrections made by Bradley, who also rewrote the etymology of waggle v. completely (see figure 2). This initial range (waggle to waggly) was evidently returned with annotations to Tolkien, who made some further corrections. Tolkien also wrote out two quotations for an unrelated word (dealt with for the most part by Bradley), wag(g)el "a name for the Black-backed Gull, Larus marinus, in its immature state", probably through finding misfiled references to them among the evidence for waggle.

His next task, alphabetically, was to work on parts of the entry for the noun wain (wagon). He may have dealt with the whole entry, but all slips relating to the three main published senses show evidence only of Bradley's hand, and it seems more likely that Tolkien was assigned only the etymology and the end of the entry (where combinations such as wain-

house and wain-trees are dealt with). Characteristically, the long etymological note contains a speculation about the ultimate derivation of the word, which Bradley felt obliged to tone down (see figures 3a and 3b).

The same division of labour between Tolkien and Bradley is observed in the case of waist: here, however, several of the waist- combinations require entries of their own, and in some cases division into senses. Thus having organized the final paragraphs of the entry for the main noun, Tolkien proceeded to write full entries for waistband (two senses), waist-cloth (three senses), and — after considerable deliberation (surely to be expected of a future connoisseur of the garment) — waistcoat (see figure 4). In fact Tolkien identified no less than four distinct varieties of garment denoted by this word, two of which he further subdivided into several subsenses (including at least three senses omitted from the published

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6 For a full account of the various stages of the editorial process, see the article "The history of the Oxford English Dictionary" which appears in the prefatory matter to the Second Edition of the OED. See also Murray, 1977.
Figure 2: OED slips, headword Waggle, (a) noun (start); (b) verb (first sense). (Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library)
After waistcoat follow several other waist- compounds and derivatives (waisted, waist-rail and the like). The complex word wait was dealt with by Bradley, but he once again allowed Tolkien to “mop up” the related words, including waiting (together with combinations such as waiting-room and waiting-woman), wait-a-bit (a South African plant, whose diversity of spelling received comprehensive treatment before the simplifying touch of Bradley’s pen) and waiter, whose eleven senses were left much as Tolkien drafted them. In a dictionary the size of the OED even nonce-words can find room; however, at this stage in the project the Editors were under considerable pressure to keep the volume of text down as much as possible, and so Tolkien’s original full-scale entries for waiterage (“the performance of a waiter’s duties”), waiterdom (“waiters considered as a class, or collectively”), waiterhood (“the state or condition of a waiter”) and waiting (“the occupation of a waiter”) were subsequently condensed into a subentry under waiter, and his definition of waiterful (“as much of anything as can be carried on a waiter, or tray”) was omitted entirely.

With the exception of waith and waive and their cognates, the next five pages of the published Dictionary are closely based on Tolkien’s work, including entries for the various kinds of wake — the nouns, that is: Bradley apparently considered the main verb too important or difficult for Tolkien at this stage, wrote the etymology himself and left the senses to be defined by another assistant. The nouns were, in any case, something of a handful, there being possibly as many as five etymologically distinct words, of which three were eventually included. It may be worth examining some of the evidence left by Tolkien of his deliberations about two of these (see figure 5). The senses to do with vigils and wakefulness go back to Middle English, although now surviving only in connection with funerals (especially in Irish contexts) and some rural English merrymaking. Once again Tolkien’s impulse was to say more about the history of the word and its connotations than Bradley could allow space for: the final draft of the published sense 3 carried a small-type note in which Tolkien observed, “This custom (cf. next sense) appears never to have been free from frivolous or disorderly tendencies. It now survives most vigorously in Ireland, or colonies of Irish.” This (deleted) note represents the last stage in a long struggle to convey a sense of the word’s overtones: earlier drafts of sense 4b (originally further subdivided into two subsenses by Tolkien) show a whole succession of attempts to capture aspects of a rural English wake:

very frequently mentioned with disapproval as characterised by riot, drunkenness, and dissolute conduct

a typical scene of uncultured excess or of unsophisticated simple speech

associated with the preservation of certain rustic sports as wrestling, single-sticks etc. [. . .] also used as a typical scene of boorish, sometimes unsophisticated or simple, speech and manners

the holiday-making marked by fairs, sports and often riot and drunkenness incident to such annual local
feasts.

The second etymologically distinct noun wake gave Tolkien problems of a different kind, to do with the arrangement of the senses. At one point he copied out the OED definitions of several senses of the words rear and train onto separate slips, presumably as models on which to base his own treatment of the corresponding senses: indeed his final draft of the preemble to the phrase “in the wake of” suggested that “in these expressions WAKE is often practically synonymous with TRAIN” – a remark deleted by Bradley as not in keeping with the usually self-contained style of OED entries, with minimal cross-referencing. Tolkien was clearly still learning.

The words following wake (except for an entry for wake{-}robin) belonged to the ranges of other assistants. Tolkien’s next word was wallop: both the relatively straightforward noun, and the verb, concerning the etymology of which Tolkien provides no less than five paragraphs of scholarly speculation, hardly altered at all by Bradley, who by this stage clearly had considerable confidence in him (see figure 6) – sufficient confidence to entrust him with the Old English word walm (syonymous in some senses with wallop, which is perhaps why Tolkien was given both to do). Incidentally, Tolkien apparently had sufficient evidence for the bizarre expression “the right to wallop one’s own nigger” to draft a slip for it, but must have excised it from his entry at a fairly early stage, judging from its provisional sense number.

In the next few pages of the Dictionary, most of which is the work of others, Tolkien contributed to three other isolated words: walnut, walrus and wampum. I am sure that the reason for this departure from the usual assignment of a continuous alphabetical range is that all three words turned out to have unusually tricky etymologies. Frustratingly, the entire entry for wampumpeag (the Algonquian word from which wampum derives) is missing; but Tolkien’s deliberations over walnut and walrus have certainly left their mark. In the case of walrus at least six neatly written versions (of which figure 7 is probably one of the earliest) of the etymology precede the final printed form, all attempting to reconstruct the route by which Old Norse rosmhvalr or rosrmall arrived in Dutch (from which it was borrowed into English in the seventeenth century) as walrus. Bradley was obviously pleased with the result since when the fascicle W{-}Wash was published in October 1921, walnut, walrus and wampum were amongst the few entries singled out in its Introduction as containing “etymological facts or suggestions not given in other dictionaries”.

Tolkien seems next to have been assigned the whole of the range containing the challenging words wan, wander and wane. Whether or not there is any truth in the suggestion, often made, that in his creative writing Tolkien brings particular enthusiasm to his descriptions of “bad things”, he certainly relished the task of working out the sense-development of wan and wane. In particular he was intrigued that wan, which in Old English had meant “dark, gloomy,

7 Tolkien’s daughter Priscilla has kindly informed me that he was sufficiently exercised by these two words in particular to discuss them at home.
WASTE-COAT.

23

	A short garment, often elaborately and costly, worn by women about the upper part of the body (usually beneath an outer gown, but so as to be seen). The whole waistcoat had been one of the normal garments in the history of dress, but was so coarse and common. Later in the 17th c., when going out of fashion, it was worn chiefly by the lower classes, and it appears to have been considered a mark of a low-class woman of the period, with the same label as the neckerchief.

24. plywood, wood of the same kind. The King...being in his waistcoat (King George IV. 1824). The King was wearing a waistcoat of the same material as the coat, or of different materials, and is sometimes embroidered or otherwise ornamented. The back is now of inferior or thinner material. (Doroville saw Savage in Italy, and says he is a coxcomb.)


28. It may be made of the same material as the coat, or of different materials, and is sometimes embroidered or otherwise ornamented. The back is now of inferior or thinner material.

29. In representations of vulgar pronunciation wastenoot, wastecoat, etc.

†A. A short covering the upper part of the body down to the waist.

30. The King...being in his waistcoat (Johnson). The King was wearing a waistcoat of the same material as the coat, or of different materials, and is sometimes embroidered or otherwise ornamented. The back is now of inferior or thinner material.

†B. Applied to garments of foreign women that resembled the contemporary feminile waistcoat.

†C. An ambition waister...with his feelings by...a ladies' waistcoat with...a fashionable and elegant.
Wake (wak), n. 1. A wak, wake, St. wake, 6 wakke, also pl. (sense 4) wakkes, waknesses, wake, 2. In the form the word corresponds to OE. *wakē, str. fem., occurring once in neowace night-watch. Compare also the wk. fem. forms, MDw. wakke, ML. wakke, OHG. wakke (MHG, mod.G. wache), wakfulness, watching, watch, ON. wakke (MSw., Sw. vaka, Norw. vaka) watch, vigil, eve of a feast; related to WAK. In the sense 'state of wakefulness', the sb. is prob. in part a new formation in ME. on the stem of WAK; and, on the analogy of sleep vb. and sb. a spontaneous adoption from ON. is possible; the sense 'merry-making' found in ON. and Norw.; cf. OF. danser, Norw. dansa (st. John the Eve, Midsummer festivities.]

I. The state of wakefulness esp. during normal hours of sleep. Obs. exc. in sleep and (or) wake, wake and dream.

Wake (wak), n. Also 6 wak, wake. [Not found before the 16th c., but possibly much older; either directly or medially a ON. (wak) sb. and vb. 2 wakke, wake, wakke, hole or opening in ice. The ON. word was probably applied to the path made for itself by a vessel through ice, and from this use the sense 'track or track of a vessel in the water' may have been developed by Scandinavian navigators in British seas. Sense 5, 'line of hay', if it really belongs to the same word, may be a transferred use of the nautical sense.

The word is represented in all the Scandinavian dialects, and has been adopted in Fr., Sp., and Ger. The sense 'wake of a ship' (as 'track of a vessel') is found, outside Eng., only in Norw. (dal, track, W. F. W. (t) track) the older sense, 'hole or channel in ice' (sometimes, 'hole of water kept unfrozen by wind or current'), belongs to MSw. wakke, wakke, track. (sometimes, wakke, wakke, track. (Sometimes, wake, wake, hole, opening in ice."

b. The local annual festival of an English (now chiefly rural) parish, observed (originally on the feast of the patron saint of the church) now usually on some particular Sunday and the two or three days following as an occasion for making holiday, eating and drinking, and other amusements. In modern music we chiefly pl. in song, and often with song (cf. the double pl. waklessen, in 16th. waklessen). The word is now current only in certain districts, mainly northern and eastern. The modern term is fast or revels.

a. 1635 F. R. H. H. Here before leaped one wakome to one wake of hoole weeden. 1740 S. Eng. Lex. eigl. No etymology is then given.]
WALLOP.

(Bringing) His opponent... has a prodigious 'wallop', but no great amount of skill.

b. dial. (Sc.) A (violent) beat of the heart or of the pulse.

1727 Burn. Addr. Disc. Cold. iv, 19, Think when your con
glated pulse is so quick and then a whole day that you rise
t his veins convulse, That still eternal gallop. 1848 MacTag
gart. Gallop. Encyc. 464. I thought it (my heart) was
jumped clear, like a brake; lord I won wallop is gaed.

5. A flapping or fluttering rag. Sc. 1797 C. Ker. Farmer's Hist. xxiv, Baggers they come
in gure, Wir'the flapping in great store. 1866 G. C. Ban

Wallop (wp-lap), v. Infected walloped (wp-lapt), walloping. Forms: 4-5 wallope(s, 5 walloppe, 5-6 wallope, 5-7 wallope's, 9 wallope, walloopi, wallope, 6-7 wallope (a. ONF. *walop) = f. galoppe (see GALLOW v.)). The existence of this form is evidenced in addition to the English forms by OF. walos sb. pl. and the adopted form Flem. waloas (e. MHG. walloes, a. vb. MHG. walloren vb., probably by mod. Walloon (Sigart) walloper to rinse linen in water. Cf. Norw. (Asen) self/lophilp vb., app. an etymolog
ing alteration, after Norw. hoppa to leap, dance.

A satisfactory origin for this word in French has not been suggested. It is probably purely echoic, or an echoic altera
tion of some Teut. element or elements. The Provencal
form galanpap has suggested Teut. *gal-a-blupan (OE.
geblapan, L ge-vul-plex = hiban to Lear), but the evidence
to original significance suggests the comparison with the
initial element in gallow.

In English the onomatopoeic suggestion of the word has lent itself to varied extension of meanings and to a vague
transference from sense 2 (cf. GALLOP, GALLOPER, GALL, etc.)
and waloped toward his felawes. 1539 Melusine exx
The close resemblance of the word to
bubbling.

The sense 'to beat' may be ultimately due to the causative
use (sense 3, and of F. galoper trans.), or may be entirely
due to onomatopoeic extension.

† I. 1. intr. To gallop. Obs.

b. of horses.

a 1400 (see WALLOPING n., a.) ex. 1410 Syr. Gener. (Roxb.) 2642 Al this folk of mych price in feire armes, and helmes shene, with feir stedes wallopeand. 1440 French. Farm. 254/6 Wallowpe, as horse, wallopes. 1510 Caxton Sources of Asynm xiv. 366 Cam there kyng charlesmagn, as fast as his horse may gallop. 1535 Douce. Axons xi. 2. x. 1710 He (the courtier) sprentis furth, and ful pro
dulge walloppis he. Hie skreckand vp his hede with mony an ne.
1570 Lyd. Loyne. 5675 To gallop, sendeth graduus to
Wallopp, idem, curios.

b. of a rider.

1374 Babson. Bruce ii. 440 To this word that assentat al;
And in thatɧ walle such owyr man. 1464 Weynon Crow
v. 243 (Cott.) Pe cucouros he strakke wibe spurs, And
walapand our foyis and furis Al before he ost he rade. 1466 Generales s 304 He founde anon The kyng of kynges vpppe and
down rideng, And he anoon to hym com walopping. 1500 Milwaine xxi. 130 And thenne the Knight brouchd his hors, and
waloped toward his felawes. 1540 Lyndsey. Comple.
1599 And sum, to shawe thare courtie corsis, Wald ryd to
leith, and yrn thare boxris, And vychytle wallope over
the landis. 1610 Rames. Up in Air h, and walleth walop o'er
to France, Up in the air On my bony grey mare.

† 2. trans. To let gallop, put to the gallop. Obs.

b. of course. (Cl. 1637 p. 1. 2.)

1489 Caxton. Blanchardyn xi. 42 Blanchardyn wyth a
glad cheere waloped his courser by bruyantly as he coude.
1540 Eynshe. Lei. 151 A knyghte.. .come ayenete hym as
laste as he use to doe more and waloppeth his horse.

II. 3. intr. To boil violently and with a noisy
bubbling. Also fig.

1579 Tovm. Com. Small. Tim. 125/2 Our affection
tobyle within vs, & walop, frothing as a seething potte. 1617 J. Mours. Mappe Muns Mortallity ii. 29 This corruption
is sendeth out the plenteous plume of all rancorous messe, which
continually broyleth and walloppeth in our nature. 1665 S.
Coxker. Div. Character i. xxxiiii. (1658) 499 There is little to
choose between a boyling pot unscummed, and the pot that,

black", should have come to be applied to pale or faint
things: the published entry represents his final conclusions
(see figure 8), and is once again largely unchanged by
Bradley, but it does not suggest the welter of different
versions Tolkien considered, some of which are barely more
than strings of near-synonymous words, apparently jotted
down in an attempt to clarify his thinking (e.g. "with conno[tr[s] of fading founlessness unnatural pallor"; "anaemic
emaciated"). Various versions between them contain
approximately forty "bad" adjectives and nouns, and even
the final form of the entry is unusually plentiful in these. The
verb wage may not have been all Tolkien's work, although
the etymology is in his handwriting (a number of the senses
are defined in Bradley's hand, and I could find no rejected
versions by Tolkien): he did, however, deal with the archaic
and obsolete nouns and adjective. By far the largest
component of this range, however, was the work required on
the verb wander and its cluster of related verbs. Once again
Tolkien's final versions reach the printed page with little or
no alteration. (On the back of one quotation for wandering
are some rather curious jottings in Tolkien's hand, which
appear to be rapidly-noted examples of some consonantal
changes occurring in Indo-European languages (see figure
9). I regret to say that I cannot connect this philological
doodle with either his lexicographical work or the invented
languages he was working on at this time: it more probably
relates to an incidental rumination or discussion with a
colleague. Some of the Greek jottings appear to be an
illustration of the philological rule known as Grassmann's
Law.) Two of Tolkien's other entries in this range reflect
his awareness of the poetic qualities of words: early draft
entries for the obsolete nouns wan "bruise" and wandleth
"adversity" include a note of the other w- words which
frequently co-occur with each of them in alliterative writing
— something not often commented on in OED definitions
(in fact deleted from wan by Bradley). In the case of
wandleth Tolkien perceived in these co-occurring words
(grouped as woe/ waker/ waker and wele/ wethylene/ worldes riches)
a basis for distinguishing two senses, denoting respectively
"evil circumstances, affliction, misery" and "embarrassment
of circumstances, poverty": once again this was too
expansive for the OED, and Bradley collapsed them into one
definition, although a brief comment on the word's
alliterative companions remains.

Tolkien's next word was want — one of the twenty or so
commonest verbs in English, and surely ample evidence of
Bradley's willingness to let him tackle even the most
significant entries more or less without intervention or
correction. Of the twenty-eight separate definitions for the
verb, nineteen of Tolkien's slips went to press, including
some of the Greek jottings, it more probably relates to an
incidental rumination or discussion with a colleague. Some
of the Greek jottings appear to be an illustration of the
philological rule known as Grassmann's Law.) Two of Tolkien's other entries in this range reflect his
awareness of the poetic qualities of words: early draft
tentries for the obsolete nouns wan "bruise" and wandleth
"adversity" include a note of the other w- words which
frequently co-occur with each of them in alliterative writing
— something not often commented on in OED definitions
(in fact deleted from wan by Bradley). In the case of
wandleth Tolkien perceived in these co-occurring words
(grouped as woe/waker/waker and wele/wethylene/worldes riches)
a basis for distinguishing two senses, denoting respectively
"evil circumstances, affliction, misery" and "embarrassment
of circumstances, poverty": once again this was too
expansive for the OED, and Bradley collapsed them into one
definition, although a brief comment on the word's
alliterative companions remains.

Isolated words, rather than alphabetical ranges, make up
the rest of Tolkien's contribution to the first edition of the
OED. He dealt with the etymologically troublesome

Figure 6: OED, fascicle W-Wash, p. 53 (part).
wariangle (a name for the shrike, found in Chaucer), and with the once almost obsolete word *warlock*, which seems to have been revived by its use in the novels of Walter Scott: unfortunately many slips for this entry are missing, but from what remains it is clear that the etymology and sense-division, and most of the definition text, are Tolkien’s work. Finally there are a small number of words which, while scattered across the letter W, are sufficiently similar in form for their early spellings to coincide, thus making it sensible for someone to work on them as a group. The main members of the group are *Weald*, *wield*, *wild* and *wold*: apart from *Weald* (much of which is missing, although the word itself and several derivatives were at least started by Tolkien), all of these lie in ranges edited not by Bradley but by his colleague C.T. Onions, who seems to have preferred rewriting a slip to attempting to annotate it with his corrections – thus leaving frustratingly few of Tolkien’s own slips. However, discarded slips for most of the entry for *wold* have survived, as has Tolkien’s etymology for *wild*, and I suspect that he in fact dealt with these words in their entirety, although to judge from the example of *wold* the definitions in the printed text are probably mainly the work of Onions: very little of Tolkien’s definitions of *wold*, or even of his division of it into senses, escaped alteration. The etymologies, however, are vintage Tolkien, complete with long lists of cognates in other European languages living and dead, speculations about the ulterior origins of Old Teutonic *wilpizaz* and *walpuz*, and some general remarks about the sense-development of *wold* which are unusually chatty even for Tolkien:

The primitive meaning of this word was probably “wild, unexplored, or untilled land; wilderness”. In early Northern Europe these senses would easily interchange with the sense “forest”. In OE. this later is the only evidenced meaning, and the occasional application of the word to mountainous districts appears to be a translation of L. *saltus* (e.g. *Pirenii weald*). Some of the senses that appear later in English seem more easily derivable from an original meaning “wilderness”, but this development is probably connected solely with the historical deforestation of England, which has produced districts of very varying character in place of former woodlands.

*WOLD* (and its different forms) appears generally speaking to have become obsolete during the 15th., or early in the 16th., century, except locally or dialectally (especially as applied as a fixed name to certain definite localities). From the seventeenth century onwards its use is largely artificial, and its senses apparently due either to the changed character of the localities where the name had become fixed, or to knowledge of the word in OE. or ME. The distinction drawn in *OED* 1577 (Sense 1) between the forms *Wald* and *Wold*, and so by implication between Northern and...
Almost all had been lost. Throw was pales so stark ran
by her siste red. *770 White body was wheal in.
Also 7 wan and wan, 8-9 wan.

*1 O. & Bar. Merk. 11. 61 Wtts. Howe woman with much
blue.

2. The sail of a windmill:
*2 Wane, Adj. Also 7 wanes, 8-9 wane.

3. A windmill:
*3 Wane sallow.

4. Wane, vb. to wan.

5. Lacking light, or least; dark-hued, dusky, gloomy.

6. O. Chib. poet.


8. A. T. L. 11. 72 Wan the sea (waves, etc.) or other waters.
The application to the human face etc., when of unwhole-
gones. Its original sense appears to have been
be due to her so violently on the head, as to fracture her skull. 1835 partis of his body. 1560 wanne 
form wane. 1876 Adj. Also 7 wanne, 8-9 wanne.


10. Wane, n. Infected waning, wanning.

11. Infected, sickly, partially obscured. Also, of
white objects, etc.: Dull, listless.

12. In the form of Ant. The Sumus continuus almost a milons years ago with a pain and were
colours. It almost appears to have been stolen by a


14. 'The sea was pale and skies pale, and was low.

15. With colour that comyth of smytynge. Applied
to wounds, to

16. Colour wan as Lead.
Midland or Southern usage, is not consistently borne out by the rest of the material.8

This brings us to the end of Tolkien’s work on those fascicles of the OED on which he was directly engaged; but there is also a significant body of work left by him specifically for use in revising, expanding and updating the Dictionary, the necessity of which had long been recognised. Materials for the preparation of a Supplement had been accumulating for some time; and when this supplementary volume was published in 1933, the OED was re-issued in twelve volumes (it had until then only been available in the form of fascicles) which incorporated a number of minor corrections and revisions. Some material intended for the Supplement was written on slips and filed; much more was written into the margins of the various working copies of the Dictionary which the lexicographers consulted, and it is here that, thanks once again to Tolkien’s highly distinctive handwriting, I have been able to identify a number of his suggestions.

Often work on a word towards the end of the alphabet would cast light on words nearer the beginning, which had already been dealt with in print. Thus, for example, in the course of his struggle with the derivation of walrus Tolkien discovered the etymology of the obscure word rossome “redness”. He wrote a slip for the Supplement file suggesting that the published etymology “Obscure” be replaced by a. early mod. G. roseme := OHG. rosamo rubor, lentigo, MHG. roseme. (See Diefenbach s.v. Lentigo) which Bradley subsequently approved and wrote in as marginalia, and which was incorporated in the corrected re-issue of 1933 (although drastically shortened to “G. roseme”, to allow it to be added to the entry without causing it to spill over onto a new line). Similarly, his work on the wild/wold group brought to light some errors and omissions, such as the interpretation of one Middle English passage as evidence for a supposed compound noun rood-wold whereas it was in fact an instance of a variant form of the past tense of quell “to kill”, and the absence of cross-references to wold under its variant spellings. He would also make comments on the etymologies of (mainly) Germanic words, often adducing further evidence in support of etymological hypotheses described by the OED as unlikely; and occasionally he would make observations on modern English, as in his suggestions for updating the definition of

8 In fact Tolkien was later able to have his say about the interrelatedness of these words: in The Year’s Work in English Studies for 1924, the chapter on “Philology: General Works” (which Tolkien compiled for three years after moving to Leeds) includes a review of the newly-published OED fascicle Whisking-Wildfulness in which, as well as noting one or two errors and discussing the word whole at some length, Tolkien complains that in the etymology of wild “the connexion with *walpus (wold, weald, forest) is rejected” (Tolkien, 1926, p. 48) – a connection which his own earlier draft etymologies had asserted.
brigade ("now a subdivision (usually a 3rd or 4th part) of a 'division', and consisting of 3-6 battalions" – obviously based on his own recent experiences), and his observation that, in addition to the entry for the Middle English diminutive -kin, the suffix -kings should be included because of its modern colloquial use "in endearing forms of address" (an entry along these lines did indeed appear in the 1933 Supplement).

But the vast majority of Tolkien's marginal annotations originate in the work he did on a number of fourteenth-century texts for Kenneth Sisam during the spring of 1920. The publication of "Sisam's 14th Century reader" (as it was on his own recent experiences), and his observation of many important texts of the period, which are excerpted or given in their entirety in the book: in the course of his work he did on a number of fourteenth-century texts for Kenneth Sisam during the spring of 1920. The publication of "Sisam's 14th Century reader" (as it appears in the OUP ledger) entailed the careful examination of many important texts of the period, which are excerpted or given in their entirety in the book: in the course of this scrutiny Tolkien came across several dozen antedatings (instances of particular words being used earlier than their first date as given in the OED). So, for example, whereas in the OED the verb hem "to edge or border (a garment or cloth); to decorate with a border, fringe, or the like" is recorded no earlier than 1440, Tolkien noted the phrase "he gurdel pat is golde-hemmed" in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, which constitutes an antedating of at least forty years: in a few cases words were antedated by over a century.

Perhaps surprisingly, most of these marginalia have not been acted on: thus the second edition (1989) of the OED contains entries for brigade and hem which are unchanged as far as Tolkien's comments are concerned. The explanation of this lies in the two decades following the publication of the 1933 Supplement, during which OUP disbanded the OED team and work on maintaining the Dictionary ceased completely. Operations recommenced in 1957 with the appointment of Robert Burchfield to oversee the expansion of the 1933 Supplement into what eventually became four volumes, later to be combined with the original twelve together with about 5000 new entries to form the twenty-volume second edition of 1989; but this expanded edition is not a comprehensive revision of the original work, and many of the materials assembled for the task of revision have yet to be taken into account. In consequence, these handwritten notes by Tolkien may be made use of well into the next century, as work proceeds toward the third edition of the OED.

Appendix: Entries in the OED worked on by Tolkien

(Wag(g)el)
Waggle sb., v.; Waggly
Wain sb.
Waist; Waistband, Waist-cloth, Waistcoat, Waistcoated, Waistcoateer, Waist-rail, Waist-tree; Waisted, Waister, Waistless
Wait-a-bit
Waiter; Waitership
Waiting sb., a.; Waiting-maid, Waiting-man, Waiting-room, Waiting-woman
Waitress
Wake sb., v.; Wake-robin, Wake-wort
Waldend
Wallop sb., v.; Walloper, Walloping sb., a.
Walm sb., v.; Walming
Walnut

9 Indeed, with the exception of the edition of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (1925), which he prepared with E.V. Gordon, all of his scholarly output up to 1932 can be described as philological: see Hammond, 1993.
Walrus
Wampum (?Wampumpeag?)
Wan sb., a., v.
Wander sb., v.; Wanderable, Wandered, Wanderer, Wandering sb., a., Wanderment; Wander-year
Wandreth
Wane sb., a., v.
Want sb., v; Want-louse
Wariangle
Warlock sb., v.; Warlockry
Warm a.
(?Wasp, Water?)
Weald; Wealden, Wealding
(?Wick?)
Wield
Wild
(?Winter?)
Wold

References: