

Do You Mean Draft When You Say Draught?

Author:

Helmore, Phillip

Publication details:

The Australian Naval Architect

v. 2

Chapter No. 1

1441-0125 (ISSN)

Publication Date:

1998

License:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/>

Link to license to see what you are allowed to do with this resource.

Downloaded from <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.4/11854> in <https://unsworks.unsw.edu.au> on 2024-03-29

Do You Mean *Draft* When You Say *Draught*?

P.J. Helmore

The University of New South Wales

Abstract

A recent publication says that the primary spelling of the word for the depth of water required to float a ship is *draught*, with *draft* as the secondary spelling. A survey of thirty practising naval architects was made to check the claim, and found that a large majority of Australian-educated naval architects spell it *draft*. The overall results are interesting and are given here.

Introduction

Language is a living and ever-changing chameleon, and dictionaries and style manuals document the changes at intervals for practitioners of the writing craft. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (first published 1884), and Fowler (first published 1926) have had a long influence as the final arbiters of English spelling and usage. However, Australian English and the parent language are diverging at an ever-increasing rate as both absorb influences from many different sources.

The changing face of Australian regional spelling is documented by *The Macquarie Dictionary* which is now accepted as the Australian spelling bible by the Commonwealth Government's *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (AGPS, 1994). This *Style Manual*, together with *The Australian Writers' and Editors' Guide* (Purchase, 1991) and *Modern Australian Usage* (Hudson, 1993) document Australian usage. These contain much technical information and are formal in style, and are not books you dip into to read.

The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide (Peters 1995) provides a breath of fresh air. It is an excellent reference for style, useful for spelling in general, very readable and is highly recommended. She uses descriptive accounts of many aspects of language, gives the facts about variants, and often leaves the final choice to the reader. It is written with a sense of humour, and it is the sort of book that one can dip into anywhere and find something interesting. The sort of book that one can leave beside the bed for night-time reading.

It was on one such nocturnal excursion that I came across the entry for "draft or draught".

Draft or Draught

Under this entry, Peters says that the spelling "*draught* persists in references to ... the draught of a ship". A quick check of *The Macquarie Dictionary* gave the definition of *draught* (Item 12 b) as "the depth of water a vessel needs to float it", with this as the primary spelling. Several other dictionaries also confirmed this finding.

I was taught *draught* when studying for my degree thirty years ago, but have been spelling it *draft* for the last twenty years. I was therefore interested to see how others spell it, and so conducted a survey of practising naval architects by phone and e-mail during the week of 8–12 December 1997.

Survey

In all, thirty practising naval architects were contacted, from recent graduates to seniors, from the naval and commercial spheres, classification societies, marine authorities (federal and state), shipbuilders, research and educational institutions, and those who received their education in the United Kingdom and in Australia. It is considered to be representative but, like all surveys, it has the potential for bias:

- (a) The sample is of limited size, mainly due to the time a wider sample would take. There are about 400 members of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects in Australia. Not all naval architects are members, and not all members are still practising. There may be 500 practising naval architects in Australia, so the sample would be about six percent.
- (b) The University of New South Wales has been producing graduate naval architects since about 1960, and the Australian Maritime College since about 1990. I am not familiar with many of the AMC graduates, but the two I know are included. This makes seven percent of my sample, which is probably representative of AMC in the overall scene.
- (c) The profession is heavily male-dominated. I have contacted three female naval architects, making ten percent of my sample, and probably over-representing them in the overall scene.

Results

Of the thirty respondents, four spell it both ways, *i.e. draft* and *draught*, for a variety of reasons. Excluding those, eighty-five percent of the remainder spell it *draft*.

Of those spelling it one way or the other, three were educated in the United Kingdom and spell it *draught*. If they are also excluded, then ninety-five percent of Australian-educated naval architects in the sample spell it *draft*.

There were some interesting comments:

- (a) Several of the Australian-educated naval architects felt that the spelling *draught* was archaic, and one thought it pretentious!
- (b) One of the reasons given for using both spellings was that vessels were being designed for both the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and spellings were tailored for the particular country.

Conclusion

The survey results indicate that a clear majority of practising naval architects in Australia spell it *draft*. Professor Peters (who is also on the editorial committee of *The Macquarie Dictionary*) has been advised.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who participated in the survey for their time and the frankness of their discussion. Names have not been used in order to protect the innocent.

References

AGPS 1994 *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 5th Edition, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Delbridge, A. (Ed.) 1997 *The Macquarie Dictionary*, Third Edition, The Macquarie Library, Sydney.

Gowers, E. (Ed.) 1965 *Fowler's Modern English Usage*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Hudson, N. 1993 *Modern Australian Usage*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Peters, P. 1995 *The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.

Purchase, S. 1993 *The Australian Writers' and Editors' Guide*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

The Oxford English Dictionary 1989, Oxford University Press, Oxford.