

NEW ZEALAND SCRABBLERS' ANAGRAMS

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We have a close-knit, but highly competitive band of Scrabble enthusiasts here in New Zealand. There are upwards of a dozen tournaments held annually, ranging from six-game one-dayers to the National Masters event, where each competitor plays 23 games over a three-day period.

I sometimes amuse myself anagramming the names of my fellow Scrabblers. Current national title-holder Glennis Hale becomes the delightful 'English lane', Glenda Geard the equally charming 'garden glade', and Masters champ David Lloyd is 'oddly valid'. Playing styles vary: Kevin Edgeler may sometimes 'delve in Greek'

may feel as if she is 'foraging in a forge', looking for the right word. Andrew Bradley isn't really a 'branded lawyer', nor is Joy Hunter 'on the jury'. Correne James never 'jeers romance', and Kathy Solomon doesn't have 'many hot looks', even after a particularly bad day. A sense of humour is essential; Peter Jones is an 'open jester', Ngaire Steel 'retains glee', and Irene Smith will 'see in mirth'.

If you are interested in the Scrabble scene, 'come and browse', as Andrew Coombes might say. You would observe everything from the 'great fondles' of Glenda Foster to the 'redone doings' of Denise Gordon, and of course the redoubtable reversible Noel Maisley ('yes I am, Leon'). Paul Lister, who is well over six feet, would probably 'rise up tall' to greet you, while former National winner Michael Sigley, 'he gleams icily', but only during the intensity of competition, where everyone tries to be a 'real cool one' like Leonora Cole. After the last game of the day it is a time when brain-drained players relax together and talk about their families, sporting interests, and a myriad of other diverse topics including, not surprisingly, Scrabble.

In late 1986 American Scrabble buff Howard Feldstein visited this country. His name is a veritable gold-mine of anagrams--here are some of the best:

define lad's worth	feast on wild herd	won't hear fiddles
he inflated words	Thor adds new life	flows red in death
deafen this world	let's head for wind	worth final deeds
I'd draw on the self	wanted his folder	dawn of the slider
the fine-words lad	felines add worth	I led her down fast
he slid down after	send for white lad	heal frosted wind
feeds a thin world	I handle wordfest	he finds late word

the world fades in
 fled the arid snow
 led down this fare
 swift-handed role
 wonder lifts head
 dealt for end wish
 hide flower-stand
 drawn to shed life
 row is left-handed

folds thee inward
 flesh drawn to die
 death down rifles
 the law, finer odds
 wend his road left
 he fled town raids
 we led in hard/soft
 down federal hits
 filter-shaded now

disowned her flat
 what's refined old?
 the odd new flairs
 I draw the fondles
 find the lad worse
 slide down, father
 the lawn is fodder
 a strife held down
 we fold in threads

I can only rue the fact that my own name is not more conducive to anagramming. Even the full Jeffrey Grant yields only 'gaff jersey net'--hardly inspiring!

A LANDMARK TREATISE ON ENGLISH SPELLING

Word Ways has published numerous articles on the vagaries and inconsistencies of English spelling, particularly the lack of correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. It has also looked at such "rules" as "Q is always followed by U and a vowel" and the venerable "I before E, except after C", finding many exceptions to both. Yet, one needs to be reminded that English orthography does, in the main, make sense; there is an underlying structure which most words adhere to. In *American English Spelling* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1988; \$49.50), Professor D. W. Cummings of Central Washington University updates Jespersen and other grammarians, elucidating the rules of English orthography in meticulous detail. Why is the structure so stupefyingly complex? His basic thesis is that orthography is influenced by three other linguistic factors: phonetics, semantics, and etymology, which co-exist in an uneasy, ever-changing equilibrium (Cummins suggests the metaphor of magnetic poles of force).

This book is not to be read like a novel. It can be browsed with much profit, or used as a reference to answer specific questions, such as "what is the third syllable rule?" or "what vowels (and other letter-combinations) represent the sound of long E?" The book has an extensive bibliography and a 62-page alphabetical index of words discussed in the main text.