



Sounds Fascinating: Further Observations on English Phonetics and Phonology

By John Wells



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How do you pronounce biopic, synod, and Breughel? - and why? Do our cake and archaic sound the same? Where does the stress go in stalagmite? What's odd about the word epergne? Pontcysyllte is obviously Welsh, but Penge is Welsh too! How cool is Caol in the Highlands of Scotland? What can Wesley's hymns tell us about sound change in English? How do people pronounce Wroc?aw in Poland? How can anyone manage to say Gdynia as just two syllables? Why is the village of Frith in the island of Montserrat usually pronounced as if spelt Frits? What embarrassing faux pas in English did a Russian conglomerate make? Should I bild a cubbard instead of building a cupboard? How should we capitalize an exclamation mark, and why might we need to? What's a depressor consonant? As a finale, the author writes a letter to his 16-year-old self.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A key property of an insightful author is the ability to articulate observations about the world that a reader may have made only passively, and to force her to consider them more deliberately. Wells, long a talented guide to the world of phonetics in this way, lavishes us with more of his colorful contemplations in this new volume."

Jason B. Bishop, City University of New York

"Once again, John Wells shares his brilliant expertise through a series of new, informative anecdotes. Sounds Fascinating is an excellent companion piece to Sounds Interesting and will be deeply appreciated by those curious about the inner workings of language. Intelligent, entertaining, and eminently practical, this is another 'must-have' for the bookshelf of any language enthusiast."

Anne E. Schilling, Southern Methodist University, Texas

"Wells continues to draw his readers in with his good humour coupled with authoritativeness when he comments about how words are written and pronounced. In the background, but equally fascinating, is Wells's full life accompanying his phonetics: his childhood in the vicarage in Northern England, his school years, his travels, his work, and his retirement."

Peter K. W. Tan, National University of Singapore

About the Author

John Wells is Emeritus Professor of Phonetics at University College London and a Fellow of the British Academy. His interests centre on the phonetic and phonological description of languages but also extend to lexicography and language teaching. For seven years he wrote a daily phonetic blog. Based in Britain at UCL throughout his career, he has lectured in many countries around the world.

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