Thesaurus of Traditional English Metaphors

SECOND EDITION

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Also available as a printed book see title verso for ISBN details
Thesaurus of TRADITIONAL ENGLISH METAPHORS
To my wife, Joyce

The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt; and it is also a sign of genius.

[Aristotle, Poetics]
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INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is a means of expressing one thing in terms of something else. It provides us with a means of understanding the way language works, from the most common phrases to the most complex linguistic theory. Indeed much current linguistic theory ascribes to metaphor the organising principle behind all communication. In everyday life, metaphors take many different forms, including similes (a nose as red as a cherry), proverbs (don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched), transfer phrases (make heavy weather of...), wellerisms (everyone to his taste, as they said when the old woman kissed the cow), metonymy (the knife for surgery, the crown for royalty), synecdoches (sixty head of cattle, a cut-throat) and swearing (bloody bugger!) where the curser’s feelings are expressed in terms of what might justifiably have aroused those feelings. G.K.Chesterton noted that ‘Keats never put into a sonnet so many remote metaphors as a coster puts into a curse’. Clearly, metaphorical structures are present in a multitude of daily exchanges, both verbal and written.

As the main purpose of this collection is to trace the origins of folk metaphor in English, nearly all examples of metonymy, synecdoche and swearing have been omitted as being too marginal or personal. Instances of metonymy especially, because of its ephemeral, personal nature and multiplicity of applications—the ham-and-eggs is asking for mustard—are uncollectable.

Metaphor is often used to warn or conceal from a third party—your barn door’s open. In this category are all euphemisms, but they contain the seeds of their own decay. Many good metaphors have therefore been excluded because of this inevitable ephemerality. There are also two large groups which are not admissible as true metaphors because they derive arbitrarily from sound-similarities without the necessary sense-relationship. These are based on puns like camp as a row of tents, and on rhymes—plates of meat, Bristols etc. Occasionally rhyme and reason happily coincide, as in skin-and-blister=sister, but for true metaphors there must be some sense-connection, otherwise the substitute word or phrase is merely used randomly or like a secret code.

Another group of metaphors excluded are the names of natural species such as footman and emperor moths, lady’s slipper, shepherd’s purse, porpoise etc. These are all virtual similes and are indeed ancient evidence of the nature of metaphor. Just as the megalithic builders created useful relationships out of a bewilderingly varied environment, keeping faith with the unity immanent within nature, so these name-givers, through metaphor, bore witness to the same vision of a single reality shared by human and natural communities. For this is the nature and force of metaphor: it arises only because there is a relationship to be established between two different things, and its sole function is to make the connection. In this way it reassures by bringing the unknown or the fearsome into a familiar context. Whatever particular metaphors may say, the overwhelming message of their totality is that we are all in one world and the interconnections are everywhere. What Brown wrote about imagery is also relevant to
metaphor: ‘Imagery is a witness to the harmony between mind and matter, to the unity of all creation and thus to the oneness of its author’ [S.J.M. Brown, The World of Imagery].

Purely literary metaphors have been excluded, except for those which have become traditional by general acceptance, as have many Shakespearean sayings as well as titles and phrases from modern authors. Chaucerian quotations have been appended to several entries, not so much in order to ascribe their origin to him (for I understand that some, and suspect that many more, were already in everyday use when he wrote) but to show how long these images have endured in our language and how near-to-the-life he assimilated them into his poetry. Writers who have drawn on local metaphors are Sir Walter Scott, William Barnes, Thomas Hardy, Flora Thompson, Mary Webb and Hugh MacDiarmid. Other sources have been dictionaries and glossaries of dialect and folklore, collections of proverbs, similes and slang, early letters, such as the Paston, Cely and Stonor collections, and principally the common currency of everyday speech, including survivals from earlier metaphors which have now become ‘moribund’ or hidden.

Any metaphor can illuminate anything else, however unlikely, and as Dr Johnson noted, metaphor gives you two ideas for one, so that every metaphor points in two directions, back to its original idea and forwards to its meaning or message. I.A.Richards called these elements the vehicle and tenor respectively. In Not a person you could creel eggs with, the vehicle is the idea of two people co-operating to fill a basket with eggs, and the tenor is the identification of someone as an unsuitable partner in such a delicate task, a rough and ready character generally, and unlikely to act with consideration for others. The metaphors in this book have been arranged by their vehicles or originating images into groups. From this another use emerges, almost as a by-product or ‘spin-off’. For just as, by extrapolating the Homeric similes from the Iliad and Odyssey, we can obtain a composite picture of daily life in Asia Minor in the ninth century BC, we can likewise conjure up the historical characters of our own ancestors by looking back to the origins of our folk metaphors. References to the devil are predominantly jocular in tone, suggesting that many people thought of him as bogeyman rather than as a fiend actually at large. Personifications in church and graveyard were familiar from the sixteenth century on; he was the personification of evil. To preserve the memory of their ancestors, the Klinget people of Alaska erected totem poles containing their bones and an account of their deeds, but the nearest thing to a TOTEM our ancestors get is this acronym, a record not of deeds but of words that at least do preserve for us glimpses into their thoughts and their lives.

The intention has been to assemble those social or traditional metaphors that have become current in the English language, including those restricted to a dialect or district or to even smaller groups. Within close-knit groups such as schoolchildren, prisoners, the armed services and teams of workers, the most appreciated metaphors are those which are more recondite and exclusive. In such groups metaphor has a social and cohesive function in reinforcing intimacy, but to be effective the metaphor needs to be understood and appreciated and the users must be familiar with the attitudes and viewpoints of their hearers. Surprisingly, the more remote and abstruse a metaphor, the more effective it is, and this collection will shed light on the origins of some of those more obscure phrases.
The evolution of metaphor

It has been mooted that the emergence of metaphor occurred *pari passu* with the evolution of language, and just as there is an optimum age for children to learn their mother tongue, and any other languages they may have access to, so there is a maturation age when children begin to understand and appreciate metaphor. Indeed, some children begin to use metaphor soon after they start to speak, renaming objects, like ‘walking stick’ for the letter J or ‘large needle’ for pencil. (It has been shown that the age for recognising irony comes later, possibly because while metaphor is essentially conveyed as sentence-meaning, irony is speaker-meaning and usually critical, so that the listener needs to recognise the incongruity between what is said and what the speaker believes to be true—and these are often the opposite.) Thus, when they are old enough to interpret the comment ‘Little pigs have big ears’, children are also of an age when they will gleefully repeat the details of their mothers’ conversational indiscretions. Such a view of metaphor developing out of language is speculative and would presuppose a germ of metaphor intrinsic in language, ready to blossom forth as soon as the language-learner is ready for it. Attraction to either the metaphoric or metonymic pole (whether innate or acquired) has been shown by Jacobson and Halle to be present in young children and so profoundly that a brain-damaged person who becomes aphasic responds to one to the exclusion of the other. What had been an inclination towards poetry rather than prose, towards surrealist rather than cubist art, towards similarities rather than contiguities is so polarised by aphasia that the patient no longer has a grasp of anything belonging to the damaged region. [See R.Jacobson and M.Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*.

But in its beginnings metaphor is not likely to have been linguistic, but to have originated directly from life, generated out of our natural experiences. It is hard to conceive how linguistic forces *in vacuo* could have produced it. If we could communicate our metaphors wordlessly they would be just as potent, though not as accessible. Verbally the instant comprehension and the delight in felicitous expression greatly enhance their appeal, but even denied words we could still share our metaphors by means of signs or charades, though at the risk of much puzzlement and misunderstanding. It was probably by a kind of charade that the earliest metaphors began—in children’s games. ‘Watch me and guess what I am.’ And the grown-ups, laughing, ‘a regular monkey, that boy’. The tribal Americans named their children after animals, birds and, indeed, anything from the natural world around them, and in so doing they were giving metaphor its noblest work, to unify the diverse and establish kinship between humans and the seemingly infinite elements of creation. With life rather than language as the initial catalyst, there arose a natural impulse to comprehend diversity through making connections and to approach the unity of the universe by celebrating the similar in the dissimilar. ‘Good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of a similarity of dissimilars’ [Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b] or ‘Metaphor is an unusual juxtaposition of the familiar and unfamiliar’ [E.R. MacCormac, *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor*]. Thus it is, that by making metaphorical connections between what seems separate and disconnected, we create a unity out of diversity which refers back to the initial creation out of chaos, and also looks forward to its final dissolution into a unity of infinity in eternity. Metaphor drops us many a hint, but none better than this, that, for all that all is all, it will become one one day.
After the children, the farmers. At this distance words like ‘cogent’ and ‘delirious’ could almost be credited as having leapt into the language fully formed, but for many generations there must have been the relishing of a new way of understanding concepts of social coercion and mental states, concepts which, until then, must have entailed tedious descriptions and definings. To assign even remotely approximate dates to these ancient, prehistoric processes is rash. The examples above took place for speakers of Latin, a language which had fully evolved by about 2000 BC, but it seems there could have been ‘a non Indo-European substrate language in northern and central Europe on the basis of the non Indo-European appearance of an entire series of words associated with pigs and pig-breeding that are found primarily in the Celtic and probably the Germanic languages’ [Eric Hamp]. By 6000 BC farming communities were progressively expanding through northern Greece into the Balkans, while a generation of new metaphors was continually demanded by whatever different environment our ancestors were coping with. Their old lives gave them metaphors to live their new lives by. At this stage of language evolution, metaphor tended ‘to represent the relatively more cultural features of our life in terms of its more natural aspects’ [G.C.Fiumara, The Metaphoric Process]. Then came manufacturing, the media and computers, and since ‘it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh’ [Aristotle, Rhetoric II.1354–1420], the impact of these new conditions seemed to generate a flow of popular metaphors. ‘Put it into the context of the familiar and the skills I already have, and I can deal with the problem. Otherwise I am as helpless as if it had come in from outer space.’ Many of these metaphors are too local or too soon outdated by changing technology to make it into the dictionaries, but the immediate benefit of them should not be underestimated. An instance occurred in the Todmorden area of west Yorkshire in the 1880s when the pressure-level in steam engines was roughly indicated by a wooden peg floating in a vertical iron tube and the phrases peg-down, peg-up and peg-out illustrated the mental states of depression, elation and violent passion—originally in the stokers responsible for maintaining steam pressure. Such phrases are liable to persist in isolation, in family traditions, long after their origins have been forgotten.

There is a metaphysical and philosophical aspect of metaphor that works on political and religious levels. Metaphor is a concept resistant to a single comprehensive definition, but one step beyond the irreducible one that metaphor refers to one thing in terms of something else, is to recognise that there are elemental truths which we can apply in constructing our society on the principles of scientific laws and theories, codes of law, religions, art and literature. ‘Metaphor directs attention to similarity in structure across realms or events; it represents the logic of evolving organisms, and of structures by which different levels soar to further degrees of complexity, each level in a sense metaphoric for the other, thus creating “the pattern which connects” ’ [G.Bateson, as quoted by G.C.Fiumara in The Metaphoric Process, ch.2]. On this level metaphor is not an object or a concept, but rather a complex and living process. It necessarily has some stability but no permanence, for it is so much a part of life that it is not exempt from death and decay. ‘Once a newly discovered phenomenon is well understood and extricated from its originating context, the metaphor will vanish into the literal lexicon, its heuristic work completed’ [G.C.Fiumara, The Metaphoric Process]. Then, although we may not at first recognise it as a metaphor, we can remind ourselves of its origins and it will carry that element from the past like a germ which could revitalise it in the future. Other processes,
because they are non-linguistic and organisational, are not readily recognisable as metaphor. To hounds trailing a fox, the scent of the fox is not the fox, it is a metaphor for the fox; to help search for a word in a dictionary we have a useful metaphor—alphabetical order; if you forget a name or a word, to scratch your head and frantically to rack your brains is a waste of time and nervous energy. Think of the word as a disobedient dog that has run away, then, as often as the frustration of forgetting recurs, exclaim to yourself indignantly ‘has that dog not come back yet?’ and avert promptly to something else. The word eventually comes home, seemingly of its own volition. Such are daily life metaphors. Finding ideas by philosophical theories, natural laws by scientific methods and these ad hoc solutions to everyday problems are all non-linguistic metaphors. In this collection the metaphors are all on a lower, verbal level, but I wholeheartedly commend them; they have enriched our lives, they are still with us, and will long continue.

How to use the book

The metaphors in this book are arranged thematically according to the old cherrystone rhyme, ‘tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, richman, poorman, beggarman, thief’, with three additional categories, ‘at home’, ‘at school’ and ‘at play’. Within these themes, they are arranged into sub-sections of originating images and listed at the beginning of each of the eleven sections. Further information about the derivation of the metaphor is contained in round brackets; square brackets are used to show the definition of a dialect word which occurs in the metaphor, its geographical origin, relevant dates and the occasional written source that records its use. Many of the early dates given are the publication dates of collections of proverbs like those of Heywood [1546] and Ray [1670 and 1678], and it is well to remember that many of these sayings were in circulation for hundreds of years before this first recorded date. If chapter and verse references are required, these can be obtained for the majority of entries from either the Oxford English Dictionary, the Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs or Apperson’s English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases. Expressions from literary and biblical sources are, as far as possible, given in the form current when they first entered the language as metaphors. Biblical expressions are usually from Coverdale’s version of 1535 for the Old Testament and Tyndale’s version of 1534 for the New Testament. The text of Chaucerian quotations is from the 1895 edition by the Reverend W.W. Skeat.

(The metaphors can be accessed via two indexes, containing themes and keywords respectively. The index of themes presents a way into groups of related metaphors and phrases. The more extensive index of keywords guides the reader to particular metaphors by way of references to subsections. For example, Don’t cross the bridge till you come to it will be referenced under both cross and bridge and will be followed by a reference letter and number.)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indeed grateful to my family and to many friends who have helped me with this book, both wittingly and unwittingly; of the former I wish to thank especially:

Dr I.L.Gordon
Mr and Mrs J.W.Harvey
Dr I.M.Harvey
Mr N.Howlings
Dr J.Marshall of the Oxford Word and Language Service
Prof. W.Mieder of the University of Vermont
Mr G.Newsom

Since the first edition of TOTEM was prepared, several of those who assisted me have died. Dr S.A.N.Ashraf, Mr B.Batten, Mr C.Brook, Dr C.G.Chapman and Mrs J.C.Cooper are all sadly missed.
# ABBREVIATIONS

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A.1a Wood

**wooden** Expressionless, dull, stupid.
**wooden-headed** Dull-witted. slow mentally.
**hard as oak**
**strong as a yak** [oak—Cum]
**heart-of-oak** A stable, reliable character; sterling quality. ‘Hearts of oak’ [1591].
**close as the grain of an oak**
**tough as hickory** But when applied to a religious sect, as ‘hickory Catholic’, ‘hickory Methodist’, it takes its meaning from the wood’s flexibility, implying that they are lax, undogmatic and liable to lapse from the stricter principles of their church.
**bird’s-eye maple** [Amer] Light-skinned attractive black woman (from the colour and texture of the wood).
**hard as brazil/brazzin** [a hard wood, yielding red dye, found originally in the East Indies and subsequently in South America, so giving the country of Brazil its name after its discovery by Capt. Peter A. Capralis of Portugal on 3 May 1500: wYks sChs Wil]

Him nedeth nat his colour for to dyen With brasil, ne with greyn of Portingale

[G.Chaucer, Nonne Preestes Tale In. 4649–1386]

**brown as mahogany**
**black as ebony**
**seasoned** [1643] Well-tried, experienced—soldier etc. (from the seasoning of timber that makes it fit for service).
**sap (v)** [1755] Drain or gradually dry out vital element—as ‘sapped his energies’ etc.
**dry straight** Turn out all right in the end; survive a testing time.
**hazled** [dried out—midEng EAn] Crabby, surly, sour.
**warp** [1700] Corrupt, cause to grow twisted, perverted, of someone’s mind etc. (from the bending of badly seasoned timber).
**warped up like a plancheon** [=planch= plank, floorboard—Suf Som Dor Gmg Dev Cor]
**splinter group** A minority that secedes from the main body because of disagreements or a shift in policy (as a wooden splinter splits away from the main timber).

**splinter** (v) Form such a group.

**spelk** (n) [splinter, such as runs under the skin; spill for lighting fires or candles—Ayr Nhb eDur] Meagre, frail man; slip of a girl or boy.

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**A.1b Carpentry**

**go against the grain** [1650] Be contrary to nature. (It is very hard to plane against the grain.)

- **cross-grained** Intractable, self-willed, bad-tempered [Wm, 1693 nwLin].
- **rough-hewn** [1565] Plain, blunt, unpolished, ill-mannered [sLan].
- **unhewn** [1659] Rough, unpolished.

**don’t take the axe out of the carpenter’s hand** [Minn] Don’t deprive folk of the wherewithal.

- **rough side downwards** [nLin] Coarse-mannered, angry.
- **knock/rub the corners off** Remove awkward individualities, make more sociable.
- **dry/rough** [Tenn Calif sAmer] as sandpaper
- **sandpaper** (v) [1890] Refine, generally.

**by one and one spindles are made** Don’t expect to do everything at once.

- **flatten/stiff** [c. 1515] as a board

**swear his ears through a two-inch board** [1728] Swear vehemently and against the evidence.

- **as broad as narrow, like Paddy’s plank, too long at one end and too short at the other** [eYks Chs]
- **thick as two short planks/a short deal** [sc. board]
- **hard as a deal board**
- **look as if you had been pulled through a knothole (backwards)** [Neb Calif] Dishevelled.

**such carpenters such chips** As is the workman such is his work.

**the carpenter is known by his chips** [1546] His work is evidence of a workman’s character.

**the best carpenters make the fewest chips!** [1609] Commenting that whores seldom have children.

- **not care/give/worth a chip**
- **carry…(around) on a chip** [Mrld Ind Msri Ark] Pamper, treat kindly.
- **merry as three chips (in the wind)** [1546]
- **span-new, spick and span** [<ON *spann*=a chip, shaving] Fresh and smart. (The spick is merely for emphasis.)

**splinder-new** [=splinter—nSc ShI OrI]

**to a shaving** [Edb Cum wYks] Exactly, precisely.

**cute as a wooden box** [Calif] When used sarcastically, the wooden box is thought of as a coffin.
are you pulling the right string? Are you setting about this in the right way? (From the use of string for short measurements in cabinet-making etc.)

concise [<Lat con-caedere=cut together, reduce as if to make fit more closely]
precise [<Lat praecidere=cut short] Hence, reduced to the essentials.

veneer [1868] Superficial pretence for appearance’s sake. ‘Veneer of respectability’ (Much modern furniture is faced with a thin lamina of attractively grained wood concealing a structure of soft wood.)
done and dusted Completely finished, down to the last detail.

A.1c Hammer and nails

**hammer** (v) Force into. ‘Hammered it into his head.’
**hammer** (n) Hard continuous work, punishment. ‘Has taken some hammer’=has been overworked, sorely tried, roughly handled.

**dead as a hammer** [NCy Brks wSom Amer] Of men or animals.
**blunt as a hammer** [Cor]
**deaf as a hammer-head**

**hammer-toe** Condition where the knuckle of the second toe is distorted.
**claw-hammer coat** Dress or tail-coat (from the appearance from behind).

pray to God but keep hammering [Wis Ill] Combine faith with action.
kept hammering into me like a nail-maker in full work [sLan]

**spike** (n) Radio signal transmitted along electricity lines to detect faults.
**spiky** Of rhythms etc. Irregular, jerky, the opposite of smooth and flowing.

**deaf as a nail**
**hard/right [straight]/sure as nails**

**a bag of nails!** Utter confusion.

**squint like a bag of nails** Squint in all directions.

**nail** (v) [1880] Secure, catch hold of; fix someone or something formerly loose or elusive. ‘Nail him down.’
**busy as [Ire]/work like a nailer**

**bang like a hammer on a nail** [Aus] Have sex vigorously.

**hammer into the floor like a tack** [Aus] Punish, reprove.

**hit the (right) nail on the head** [1508] Do or say exactly what was needed; succeed.
**call** [hammer, drive: Abd eLth]/**drive the nail home/to the head** [1639] Push a matter to a conclusion; proceed to extremities.

**drive it home** Ensure full understanding, realisation of.
**drive the nail where it will go** [1655] Only attempt the possible.

ca’ [=call] **hardest at the nail that drives fastest** [Sc] Use, encourage those who show most promise or are most willing.

**you can’t drive a nail of wax** Boys cannot be made to do men’s work.
one nail drives out another [c. 1200: UK Ont] Two people performing the same service cannot co-exist; one danger or trouble dispels another. Said when there is succession or supersedure.

drive not a second nail until the first be clinched [UK Okl] Finish one job before starting another.

clinch [1716]/clint [wSom] Settle with final, decisive reason or statement. (From the final fixing of a nail or bolt by bending over the end or flattening the end to prevent it being drawn back through the wood.)

so small/tight, you couldn’t drive a tin-tack in with a ton monkey [a heavy machine hammer used for driving bolts and piles: Aus]

get down to brass tacks [1897] Reach the vital part of the work; work in earnest.
(Another possible derivation is from selling cloth by measuring it along the studs on the edge of a counter. You were really selling cloth when you got down to them.)

sharp [bright, intelligent] as a thumb-tack (and just as flat-headed) [Calif]

(But if you are a square peg in a square hole, you are much more likely to get stuck in it!)

has a bad/good nail in him/her [ShI OrI] Is naturally bad/good.

A.1d Glue

thick [close, intimate] as glue

glued to… Closely applied to…—‘eye glued to the keyhole’.

glued-on Added haphazardly without being integrated with the main part of the work.

glued-up Assembled at random. (Of a medley of scenes or incidents with little apparent connection.)

glue-pot Parson (because he joins couples together).

the glue-pot has come unstuck [1890] He smells of genital sweat or semen.

come unstuck/un glazed Miscarry; deteriorate into chaos; fail, variously.

come did not hold You were balked.

A.1e Woodworking tools and methods

tool-box [1990s] Rectangular box displayed on a computer screen showing functions and options available to the user. These are shown on bar-lines known as tool-bars.

serrate(d) Having an edge toothed like a saw [<Lat serra=a saw],

mallet-finger A finger whose tendon has been ruptured so that it is permanently flexed at the joint.

chisel (v) Defraud, treat unfairly.
the shank of the evening/day [Craven, wYks Nhp Amer] The last remaining part (from the shank or tang on files, chisels etc.; sundry other appendages are also termed shanks).

gimlet (adj from n) [1894] Acutely piercing (of eyes etc.).
gimlet-eyed [Yks Lin Nhp Som Dev] Keen-eyed, given to peering into things; [nwLin] with a cast.
handy as a gimlet [wSom] Quick, smart, useful.
you can’t bore an auger hole with a gimlet [NY] Some workers cannot in their nature perform some tasks.
sharp as a gimlick [=gimlet—Cum] Of bright eyes.
hasn’t as many brains as would grease a gimlet! [n&wYks]
small as a whotyel [=hot awl, used for boring holes when red hot—sLan]
gleg [keen, clever—Sc nEng Ken Hmp Dor Som] as a wimble Mentally alert, keen.
the little wimble will let in the great auger [1636] Small beginnings lead to great consequences.
pincer movement Twofold attack on enemy position, cutting them off from each side.
dovetail Fit together exactly, ingeniously, intimately (like the carpentry joint); follow what has just been said with linked, sequential matter [Amer].
dovetailed [Ire] Married. (From the above.)
give a handle to… Give cause for rumour, suspicion etc.
a handle to his name A title; courtesy title.
lay down guide-lines Instruct on the policy, principles to be followed. (From marking a line or stretching a wire etc. to mark where to saw.)
hew to the line (let the chips fall where they will) [UK NJ Kenty Ill Oreg] Adhere to your principles (and don’t be distracted by less important details).
it is as broad as long/as long as broad There is no difference whichever way you regard it; the same vice versa.
framework Basis, supporting design. (From the frame on which furniture or buildings are constructed.)
clamp down on… Suppress, restrict firmly. (From the clamp, brace or clasp used in holding carpentry etc. firmly in place.)
cramp—his style, freedom etc. (v) Restrict, confine (from the cramp or press with which joiners press wood together).
screw him up Bring him to the point of concluding a bargain or agreement.

A.2 Stone, stonemasonry

right [c. 1420]/straight [1374] as a line
lay/spread it on thick/with a trowel [1599] Overstate, exaggerate, flatter excessively. (From laying mortar.)
hard with hard never made good wall [1578] Refractory spirits will not agree.
the farther from stone the better the church [1865] More care is taken with scarce or expensive materials.

break a flint upon a feather bed Use means ill-matched to the task.
monolithic Intractable, unmanageable through its unwieldy size—often of government departments. (Vast stone pillars, statues etc. are monoliths.)

A.3a Metal, different metals

a jailer’s conscience and his fetters are both made of one metal [1659]
kink Aberration, abnormality (as when straight wire or metal gets kinked). Hence, kinky = perverted, eccentric to the point of abnormality.
tarnish—a good name, reputation etc. Spoil its lustre by an unworthy act (as metal is tarnished or dulled by oxidation). Honour or virtue that is untarnished is pure and unbesmirched.
bug [stuck-up, proud—Lin]bold as brass
safe as a wall of brass
face of brass/brassy/brazen Impudently bold (because brass is strong, hard and bright, and so brass statues seem shameless and impervious to criticism).
have brass/cast-iron balls [Amer] Be foolhardy, over-bold.
the man with the brass knackers [Can] The boss (a hard man).
the height of ten pennyworth of brass [nYks] Very small—of a child.
copper-arse/copper-bottom A driver who works long hours, especially a trucker who breaks the law by driving more than eight hours in a day. (As if a copper bottom would not get sore.)
copper-hearted [Amer] Untrustworthy, likely to inform.
cold/dull [i.e. witted—lead being seldom bright and always ponderous]/heavy/pale [1509] as lead [1481]
fit like lead [wYks] Exactly (because lead fills a hole completely).
stiff as London pewter
rear like London pewter Assume consequence.

A.3b Iron and steel

cold/hard as iron
iron-grey
stubborn as Muirkirk [a town in Ayrshire, noted for the tough quality of the iron mined and smelted there] iron
man of iron Strict character.
rod of iron Severe discipline [1577]—‘rule with a rod of iron’.
iron-bound coast Coast of granite, or rocks dangerous to ships.
nerves of iron/steel Very strong nerves.
an iron will A strong, inflexible determination.
grip/heart of steel
steeve [=stiff: firm, unyielding, stubborn—Sc 1750]/true as steel [1300]
steeely Hard and efficient (of eyes, looks etc.).
tough as pinwire
steel/metal to the back/rig [back—Sc Ire n&midEng EAn: 1579] Very courageous; thoroughly reliable—of men. (Probably from descriptions of tempered swords, knives etc. To the back=all through, to the backbone.)
cast-iron Irrefutable, unbreakable—of evidence, excuses.
rust (n) Deterioration through inactivity; lazy-rot.
rust’y Inactive through disuse, out of practice—of ability or skill.
eats like rust
idleness makes the wit rust
there’s nae iron sae hard but rust will fret it; there’s nae cloth sae fine but moths will eat it [Sc] All things deteriorate, decay.

A.3c Smelting etc.

crucible period—of history A time when radical change takes place.
put into the crucible Renew, restore in a new form.
in the melting-pot In the process of being changed, transmuted; in a state of reconstruction, flux, confusion. Also:
melting-pot Levelling, standardising influence/ effect.
at/in full blast In full operation (like a blast furnace).
in the heat of…—anger, passion etc. Under compulsion of…, from the impulse of...
at white heat Of intense passion.
sigh like a furnace
tried in the furnace Severely tested.
look like a Moray man melting brass [Sc] Look silly.
sweat the lead out of… Work to get the trouble out of a situation. (From a process of purifying copper by melting the lead out of it by mild heating.)
shake the lead out of your pants [Amer] Start some action, speed up (implying that the reason for the observed lack of action or haste was the extra weight in shoes or trousers).
get/take the steel out of… [swLin] Get the best, the goodness out of something, someone.
dross Refuse, rubbish, worthless matter generally; undercorn, inferior grain [Suf eYks],
dry as a sand-bed [the bed on which the molten iron is run from a blast furnace—Cum] Of an insatiable drinker. Also, sand-bed (n)=one such boozer.
in the calms [moulds for bullets etc.—Sc Ire nEng] In preparation.
casten in a calm Neat.
cast in (different/heroic etc.) mould Created in that character.
mould on… Try to imitate, take as your example or model…
break the mould [H.Howard, Earl of Surrey, On Wyatt’s Death—1542] Make further repetition impossible; prevent any return to previous ways of creation, methods of production etc.
steel your heart/yourself against/to do something Consciously brace or harden yourself to…
find flaws in… Find mistakes, disadvantages in…
flawed—argument, relationship, credibility etc. Unworkable because of an inherent defect.

A.3d Smithies, forging, tempering

they fed him with a fire-shovel when he was young! To account for his wide mouth.
an idle man’s head is the devil’s smithy [sLan]
from the same smithy [Shr] Just as bad; congenitally similar.
come past the smithy [Abd] Acquire a sharp temper.
small as smithy slack [small coals used in a smithy—sLan]
all wind and woo like the burnywind’s [blacksmith’s—Sc Cum] bellows Very talkative.
forge (v) Create something strong and durable, such as friendship etc.; of a horse, to make a clicking sound reminiscent of hammering in the smithy.
on the anvil In hand, under deliberation.
strike while the iron’s hot Seize your opportunity quickly, before it goes.

Pandare, which that stood hir faste by, Felte iren hoot, and he bigan to smyte,

[G.Chaucer, T&C II.1275—1374]

put the irons in the fire Prepare to do a job. ‘I could soon put the necessary irons in the fire’ [J.Austen, Sanditon ch.v—1817].
have many/other irons/heats [irons—Sur] in the fire [1549] Keep other possibilities in reserve.
put every iron in the fire Try every means.
ower many irons in the fire, some maun cool! [Sc] Some will get neglected.
rud [red] as the smith makes the pieces of ire [iron—Cor]
hammer-and-tongs/-pinsons [=pincers—Ayr Yks Chs Shr Nhp War Oxf Sus Hmp] Using full effort, all resources; violently; with determination.
hammer and pincers/pinsons [Cum wYks Chs Nhp nLin] The noise of a horse’s hind-shoes striking the fore-shoes. (See also above and carry the blacksmith below.)
mean as tongs [Sheffield, wYks] (Probably from the idea of pinching.)

strike sparks out of... Elicit something enlightening; stimulate to a sparkling performance, to witty conversation.

make the sparks fly Cause a lively reaction, rouse to fiery anger. (The derivation of this phrase could equally be from sword-fighting, quarrying or horse hooves on the road.)

kench (n and v) [a bend in a piece of irons] Strain, especially (to) the neck.

face like a smith’s anvil [nLan] Hard and unyielding.

hard as a stiddy [stithy or anvil—Craven, wYks]

steady as a stiddy [nYks]

I wouldn’t trust him as far as I could throw an anvil in a bog!

he gives one knock on the iron and two on the anvil Misdirects his energies.

when many strike on the anvil they must strike by measure [1640] Where anything is in demand, take turns; the larger a community, the more need for law and order.

big as a smith’s meitheal [team of friends volunteering to help with some urgent work, like haymaking etc.; a blacksmith would need, and attract, many helpers—Ire]

come down on someone like a hammer With crushing speed and finality.

between hammer and anvil [1534] Between two equally devastating evils.

the anvil does not fear the hammer Retort to a threat of violence.

an iron anvil should have a hammer of feathers Subdue the harsh with patience and gentleness; husband and wife complementing each other.

the smith has always a spark in his hause [= halse]/throat [1678] Thirsty.

the smith and his penny are both black [1640] The character of a person can be inferred from the state of his property or relations.

have a blacksmith’s eye [Chs] Be very competent in seeing and judging.

carry the blacksmith Of horses when they strike the hind-shoes against the fore ones [EAn].

like the smith’s dog that sleeps at the noise of the hammer and wakes at the crunch-ing of teeth [1595] Of one who is content to miss work-time, but not a meal-time.

blacksmith’s daughter Padlock or key to a door or gate [Wor] Hence, put the blacksmith on... Lock someone out.

make a wheelwright of... [Sc Slk—1858] Seduce (probably from sexual imagery suggested by fitting the boss of an axle-shaft into the nave of a wheel).

slockener [quencher, slaker—Sc Ire Eng] Snub.

sleck-trough [a blacksmith’s cooling or slaking trough—nEng] Prostitute [Wm]; immoderate drinker.

temper Mitigate, alleviate. ‘Temper justice with mercy.’

take the heat out of the situation Allow tempers to cool, start to pacify.

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A.3e Alloys, metal processes

alloy (n and v) Lower (ing of) quality by admixture of baser elements.

unalloyed Pure, unmixed, unspoilt.
amalgamate  Join together, often of rival firms. (Originally a process of alloying with mercury.)
butt-shut  (v) [join iron without welding, by pressing the hot ends together] Be consistent; fit the facts—of an excuse, explanation etc.
weld  Join into a homogeneous unit elements not naturally reconcilable.
face like a welder’s bench  Surly, disagreeable.
solder (up)  Repair, reconcile a quarrel [Sc Yks]; combine.
broken friendship may be soldered but will never be sound
soft sawder  [=solder: Ire Yks Lan Der War] Flattery.
case-harden  Make hard, callous. (From the process of carbonising steel to give a hardened surface.)

A.3f Metalwork

rivet  (v) Fix securely upon. ‘Eyes riveted to the scene.’ Hence,
riveting  Engrossing, fascinating. Also:
rivetted  Married (because joined together closely and durably).
fast as a rivet/rebbat  [=rivet—Dur Cum Yks Wor] Securely fixed.
serious as a cold chisel  [sLan]
time is a file that wears and makes no noise  [1666]
a voice like old files in a bucket
grate on… Annoy; irritate nerves and temper in the same way as a continual strident or discordant noise.
asperity  [<Lat asperitas=roughness] To the senses: hardship, severity; of literary works: a rugged and inelegant style.
abrasive  [<Lat ab-radere=scrape off]—personality, manner, style Rough, hurtful, obnoxious. An abrasive wit is a rather cruel one, always harsh.
scratch the surface of… Make only a superficial impression on; make very little progress with; not penetrate very far into something.
polish off… a meal, opponent, task  [Boxers’ sl. C19] Summarily dispose of…, despatch promptly (like removing blemishes or pro-tuberances by polishing).
polished  Cultured, refined.
unpolished  Uncultured, coarse.
it depends on what you’re made of whether you take a polish or get worn down [Utah]

A.4a Machines, tools, parts

hardware  A euphemism for machinery, armaments and equipment generally.
**cross-section** Typical sample.

**back to the drawing board!** Think or start again; that won’t work.

**fits to a T** Exactly. (Referring to the T-square that mechanics use for getting right angles. See also J.20c.)

**engineer** (v) Contribute, manipulate a result, sometimes by suspect means.

**I’m talking to the engineer, not the oily rag** In dismissing an interruption.

**Heath Robinson** Ingenious but absurdly fantastic and impracticable—applied to contraptions (after the contributor to *Punch* who depicted such crazy inventions).

**a mere machine** Someone who lives and works automatically, without thinking.

**in a groove** In a settled routine.

**supple as an S-link** (being obviously able to bend easily).

**great weights hang on thin wires** [1639] Important decisions may be taken on slender evidence; unimportant persons may be the instruments of great events.

**eccentric** Someone who has moved outside the central orthodoxy of a group or society; odd man out.

**cog** (v) Agree well (like cogs meshing).

**a cog in the machine** A mere worker without personal identity.

**ratchet-mouth/-jaw** [Amer] Person who talks a lot (from the continual clicking of a ratchet when it is used).

**ratchet up/down** [Amer] Increase or decrease by small amounts.

**reverse the ratchet** Start moving or working in the other direction; stop things going one way and start them going in the opposite direction—of the flow of money etc.

**a big wheel** [Amer] An important person.

**a wheel within a wheel** [Sc wYks midEng] Someone who acts from concealed or interested motives.

**wheels within wheels** [1670] A complexity of operation, complex influences at work; indirect, secret agencies or motives behind the operation [perhaps deriving from Ezekiel i.16].

**see what makes the wheels go round** Get familiar with the working arrangements in an industry, business, organisation etc.

**lever(age)** (n) Means of exerting influence, moral coercion etc.

**pivot** (n) The person or cardinal point whence others take their movement.

**pivotal** Playing an essential part; in a vital position—‘pivotal to the plot’.

**great engines turn on a little pin** [1658]/**small pivots** An unimportant person may have an important function in a large organisation; small causes may have large effects.

**king-pin** [king-bolt, a large vital pin taking the weight or controlling the whole machine] Main person in cast or company; essential member without whom the whole project fails; crucial point on which the whole argument turns.

**off the pin of the wheel/the wire** [Sc] Wandering from the point.

**spanner** [Aus] Sexually exciting woman (because she tightens up men’s ‘nuts’).

**face like a bagful of spanners** Rough and lumpy.

**throw a spanner** [1934]/**monkey-wrench** [1920] in the works Upset the proper working by a deliberate act of sabotage.

**grit in the oil** An obstruction, obstacle to smooth working.

**put grit in the machine** Interfere, thwart.

**screw the nut** See sense; pull yourself together; achieve self-realisation; pack it up.
the nuts and bolts of… The practicalities, working details of…; those basic essentials that make anything function.

**Birmingham** [Eng]/French/Irish/Yiddish [Amer 1939] **screwdriver** Hammer.

**has his head screwed on right** Is shrewd and practical, has common-sense.

**screw down on** Impose restrictions on…, apply pressure to…

**screwed up** [under tension] Highly nervous, keyed up, neurotic, emotionally upset, muddled.

**has a screw loose** [1810] His mind is not working properly; is slightly mad; there is a hitch; disagreement between friends [Nhp]; is eccentric in the extreme [Amer].

**get his screw out** Become angry [wYks].

**feeze** [screw—Sc wEng] **into**… Worm into the confidence of…; ingratiate yourself with …

**feeze up** Flatter; work up into a passion.

**spiral** (v) Keep increasing—of prices, costs etc.

**friction** Clash of wills, irreconcilability between persons.

**if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it** Leave well alone.

**better to wear out than rust out!** Better be active than stagnate.

**jack up** (v) Raise, increase, force up—prices, quantities etc. (from the piece of engineering equipment used for pushing up heavy weights and vehicles).

**grease/oil the wheels** Make things go smoothly—by courtesy, bribery etc.; pay the expenses; provide entertainment.

**oil the wheel that squeaks** Deal with the importunate ones first.

**the squeaky wheel gets the grease** The more fuss the quicker the response; importunity rewarded.

**a squeaking wheel never wears out** [Ont] Those who complain most last longest.

**have the oil-bottle in your pocket** [Craven,-wYks] Be double-faced.

**well-oiled** Complimentary—words, remark etc.; drunk.

**live on the smell of an oil-rag** [Dub, 1914 Aus] Live very frugally, refuse to spend money on food.

**grease in the fist** Bribe.

### A.4b Steam engines

**steam age**… Ancient and out-of-date; also **steam radio**=sound radio, considered old-fashioned in contrast with television. Steam…is applied—often with affection and nostalgia—to nearly anything that has been superseded by new techniques and technology.

**boilermaker** [Amer] Strong, rough drink (as if strong enough to descale the inside of a boiler).

**all fired up** Worked up to the point of action, fully prepared, eager for the task.

**get steam up/get up steam** Prepare to go into action; work yourself up into a state of readiness or anger.
get a head of steam behind… Obtain powerful support or driving force to carry through plans, legislation etc.

steamed up So angry or passionate as to urge immediate action.

like a steam engine Powerfully.

like steam [Aus] Furiously, with frantic energy.

driving force Compelling agency; person, ideal impelling to action. (The original term for the motive power of an engine.)

blow/let off steam Release surplus energy, suppressed emotions etc.

peg-down/peg-up/peg-out [wYks 1885] Dejected/in good spirits/in violent passion and turmoil. (From maintaining even pressure in a boiler, indicated by how far a floating wooden peg projected above the top of its iron tube. The stoker responsible for maintaining the right pressure would be affected mentally by the tell-tale position of this peg.)

lose/run out of steam Lose drive, momentum, urgency.

safety-valve Harmless outlet for excitement.

sit on the safety-valve Follow policy of repression.

keep your boiler clear! Look after your (especially abdominal) health.

burst his boiler [Amer: 1824] Come or bring to grief.

blow your boiler [Aus] Lose your temper. (From the river steam-boats of the C19.)

force of a steam hammer Irresistibly crushing.

steam-roller (v) Crush opposition by weight rather than by reason or skill.

steam-roller (n) The epitome of the forces of authority: slow, lumbering, insensitive, irresistible, levelling, slow to start, but once started almost impossible to stop.

light and speedy—as a steam-roller!

A.4c Railways

subtle as a freight train [Calif]

pull your freight [Amer] Depart soon or suddenly.

pull a train Of a woman, have intercourse with several men in succession.

steam ahead/along Make strong, vigorous progress.

even steaming! Said when one matches the effort of the other (like two engines pulling one train equally well).

go like a train Make haste.

grind to a halt Stop slowly but inevitably (like a railway engine with a fault or without fuel).

buffer state Country situated between two possible enemy states.

hit the buffers Run out of momentum, cease to make progress.

side-track (v) Divert from proper business; evade the issue. (From shunting a train off the main line.)

shunt (v) something somewhere else Remove something that is unwanted or in the way.

shunt into a siding Relegate, postpone, treat with less urgency, deliberately ignore.
pull the pin [Amer] Part company, quit a job (from the way rolling stock was uncoupled by pulling a pin from the shackle).

round-house [a round shed with a turntable for locomotives—Amer] pitch In baseball, a wide sweeping throw.

a roundhouse blow In boxing, a swinger similar to the above.

broad-gauge Of women with wide hips [Amer: 1880]; competent and versatile [Amer].

gandy-dance [work on the railroad track maintenance—Amer] Vacillate, delay progress in one area through slow progress in clearing the preliminaries (as train schedules are disrupted until track maintenance is completed).

go/run off the rails/track Abandon your usual routine; become demented; turn criminal; have an extramarital affair.

be on the right rail Think or act correctly.

a one/single track mind One that cannot be diverted (like a train on a single track); obsessional.

red ball [Amer] Vehicle officially permitted to travel fast (from the red ball on a pole used as a signal on the early railroads).

ball the jack [WVir Miss, c. 1925] Work fast; gamble and risk everything on one try (from the signal of a high ball to indicate a clear track ahead+jack=money).

asleep at the switch [Amer] Inattentive, generally.

whistle-stop [Amer 1948] A small, remote place with too few inhabitants to warrant a regular station, but where trains stop by request on being signalled with a whistle; rapid treatment of a series of items or subjects; rapid superficial visit; hasty political tour.

the steam that blows the whistle never turns the wheel [Kenty Iowa] While they’re talking they’re not working; mere talk gets us nowhere.

way-station [brief stop on the route—Amer] Intermediate stage; unimportant experience through which you (have to) pass.

make the grade [gradient—Amer] Surmount a difficulty, pass the necessary standard, work well enough to be accepted, do well enough to go forward.

railroad (v) [Amer] Unceremoniously hustle through or out, force peremptorily, convict innocent people summarily (from the tyrannous powers of the original railroad engineers).

no way to run a railroad! [Amer] A disastrous way to go about anything; you have made it unnecessarily complicated.

now you’re railroadin’ [Amer] You speak truly.

main-line Orthodox, traditional, middle-of-the-road.

main-liner An addict who takes drugs by injecting them directly into the bloodstream.

(all) down the line Through to the end, to a logical conclusion.

straight down the line Without deviation, frills or irrelevancies.

think/work along/on the same lines Independently of each other, but both using similar methods and moving towards the same destination, conclusion or solution.

lay…on the line [Amer] Put reputation, career etc. deliberately at risk (from putting your head on the line as the train is coming).

jerk-water [small, slow train on a branch-line—Amer] (From the early practice of train crews on American railroads who, because of small capacity boilers, had to pick up water
from streams near the line using a bucket on a long rope.) Remote, sleepy backwater of a
town; slow, unimportant person.

hop the last rattler [railway train—Amer] Die.
oiled [drunk] as a diesel train Very drunk.
light at the end of the tunnel [G.Eliot, Letter1879] A long-awaited improvement in
prospect, coming shortly.
tunnel vision Condition of a diseased eye that has lost peripheral vision; hence,
blinkered state of mind that recognises only one point of view, and that a limited one.

A.4d Motors

engine [1990s] Major computer program for running and managing a database.
search-engine [1990s] Computer program for finding words and phrases within a
document or database.
tank up (with...) Drink to capacity, drink heavily; fill up with…
drink like a funnel
run out of gas [Amer] Lose impetus, begin to fail, become ineffective.
spark-plug The brightest member in a group [Amer]; someone who gets things
moving; an inspiration.
flash-point [the ignition-point of oil] Political temperature at which war or a crisis
arises; the event that triggers a crisis.
crank up Inject with a stimulant or other drug (from cranking up an engine to start the
motor); excite, make eager, get started [Amer].
kick-start—the economy, business etc. Give a boost or subsidy necessary to start it
working again (from starting a motorbike).
jump-start (v and n) Reactivate a stagnant economy, falling production etc. with an
outside impulse (as a motor with a flat battery can be started with a jump-lead connected
to another vehicle’s good battery).
step on the gas [Amer] Hurry, increase speed (from depressing the accelerator pedal
and so increasing the flow of gas=gasoline= petrol).
red-line (v) Push to the limit (from testing an engine on a tachometer marked with a
red line beyond which the engine should not be revved).
at full throttle Using all your efforts, energies.
go all/flat out As fast as possible (like a motor with the throttle all out or with the
accelerator pedal flat to the floor).
click/hit/operate/spark/work on all cylinders/six Function properly, work at full
power; be successful, effective.
miss on one/four/all cylinder(s) Work badly, be in bad condition. (Opposite of the
above.)
seize (up) [jam, stick—of engines under stress of heat or lack of lubrication] Refuse to
function, fail under stress.
blow a gasket/fuse [Amer] Lose temper, lose control.
a load of VW radiators [Amer] An empty truck. (Volkswagen motors have an air-cooling system requiring no radiators.)

mesh with ... Work together with...; fit in with...(like the cogs in a gear box).
intermesh with... Be closely involved with...

brought up to speed Prepared for entry into a gang (from the mechanics of synchro-mesh gear-changing).

shift [change—Amer UK] gears Move from one system of working to another, from one way of thinking to another, from one attitude, policy, method or philosophy to another.

into top/bottom gear Into a higher/lower rate of production, effort etc.

shift into top/high gear [Amer] Begin to work more seriously and efficiently.
in high gear [Amer] In the most active, impressive phase.

geared to... Adjusted, adapted to...; dependent on...

put in your clutch Go quiet. (The engine no longer drives the wheels.)

throw out of gear/into neutral Stop someone or something from working; suspend activity or progress.

coast home/through (the exam, to victory etc.) Achieve an effortless success; proceed without effort (from the sense of coast= travel without engine-thrust and of a bird= glide without flapping wings).

tick over [keep running at low power, not enough to drive the vehicle, but merely to keep the engine turning over] Continue to merely function, to operate at minimum capacity; keep going satisfactorily.

overdrive [additional, speed-increasing gear in fast cars] Enhanced performance, over-response.

wrapped around the axle [Amer] Tangled up in minor details; bogged down in fruitless discussions.

shock-absorber Mitigating element in a potentially unpleasant or even horrific situation.

where the rubber meets the road [Amer] The lower ranks, grass-roots membership.

skid (v) Make a mistake, error of judgement; of prices, fall rapidly.

kick the tires [Amer] Make a superficial inspection.

on the rims [Amer] Verging on bankruptcy.

retread (n) [a tyre onto which a new tread has been moulded] A reserve soldier recalled for further temporary service [Aus Amer UK]; WW1 soldier re-enlisting in WW2 [Aus].

retread (v) Retrain people for new jobs (as/ from the above).

spins his wheels [Amer 1960] Works pointlessly, marks time, is ready for but prevented from action.

spare tyre Roll of fat round the middle of a stout person.

recharge the batteries Restore impaired faculties and energies by rest and other refreshment.

headlights [Amer] Eyes (a boxing expression); breasts; large diamonds.

diesel/diesel-dyke [Amer 1958] The dominant, predatory partner in a lesbian relationship (having the character of a diesel rather than a petrol engine, and who might well be the driver of a heavy goods vehicle).
A.4e Planes and spacecraft

earn his/her wings as… Acquit him/herself creditably as…(to gain the wings of a qualified pilot is the main achievement of air-training).

sky-pilot Vicar, spiritual guide, confessor.

pull the chocks away Depart. (A regular preliminary to taxi-ing to the runway for take-off.) Also, chocks away! = Be off; time you were going.

lift your undercarriage Be off with you! Get going!

get off the ground Get properly started, make a beginning of the work.

leading-edge [that edge of the wing that cuts the air] Avant-garde—in the arts and fashion.

you can’t fly on one wing [Amer Can] Have another drink.

has the gliding angle of a brick Of an aircraft with poor gliding performance.

bottom out Reach the lowest or worst point before an upturn (as out of a dive).

zoom [abrupt climb at full power, often to avoid collision] Burst of energy, zest, drive.

go into a flat spin Panic, lose control. (A plane, when it loses speed, starts spinning.)

spin out of control Go beyond set limits; exceed the point where restraints or sanctions are effective; cost more than was allowed for.

knock/throw for a loop Unnerve, unsettle, throw off course.

loopy Unbalanced, crazy.

side-slip [a flying phenomenon when a turning aircraft slips sideways in towards the centre of its curvature] Deviate laterally from the previous or planned direction.

tail-spin [an aircraft falling out of control develops a spiralling movement aft] Chaos; the state of panic resulting from loss of control.

sound-barrier [that high speed at which an aircraft exceeds the speed of sound and makes a loud report in passing through it, called a barrier because of the many problems and accidents that occurred in the experimental stages] Some serious obstacle or difficulty preventing further progress.

break the sound-barrier Break wind.

push the envelope [1990s] Explore, pioneer beyond the point previously reached. (In aeronautics the envelope is the line on a graph defining the limits of an aircraft’s capabilities.)

on automatic pilot Able to carry on confidently, undistracted by original thoughts, doubts etc.

in a holding pattern [Amer] In temporary abeyance (from the landing arrangements made by an airport’s flight control).

on the beam On the right course, relevant. (In ground control at airports, planes are guided in by a radio beam.)

off-beam/off the beam On the wrong track, mistaken. (As above.)

home (in) on… Direct attention to, concentrate on. (From the above.)

wheels down! Prepare to leave; I warn you to leave very soon.

Chinese three-point landing [Amer] Crash due to pilot error.

close the hangar doors! [RAF] Stop talking ‘shop’; stop bragging.

thrust (n) Force, purpose, gist of argument. (From the directional power given by jet and rocket engines.)
all systems go Everything ready and in working order (from countdown procedures in launching space rockets).

countdown has started Death is fast approaching (with the implication also of being launched into another world).

go into orbit [Amer] Reach heights beyond belief or control.
in orbit Escaped from what was previously holding you down or back; elated, exultant.

A.4f Factories

assembly-line justice Rough justice (as the overriding purpose is to keep the work moving).

somewhere along the line At some point in a chain of events.

end-product Final form; social or biological culmination.

ty they don’t make ‘em like that any more Spoken in admiration of something valued in its day but now outdated.

work overtime Work exceptionally hard, fast and effectively. (A worker on overtime receives extra money for working out of regular hours.)

on the afternoon turn now! Not as fit or healthy as before. (The afternoon shift in a mill or factory was the one allotted to the aged or infirm.)

Friday afternoon car Car, or other item of manufacture, that is constantly developing faults, as if the workers who made it were tired and careless at the end of a hard week.

you can’t judge a car by its paint job [Ill] Don’t judge on appearance alone.

night-watchman [man left on guard at night in a factory, warehouse or on a building site] The batsman sent in just before the close of the day’s cricket with instructions to stay in and resume next morning; also those batsmen who are still batting at the close of the day and who are expected to resume when play recommences; a night-watchman state is one whose government only functions to keep things ticking over.

rejig [replace, redesign or re-equip a factory’s machinery ready for new production lines] Alter completely, refashion.

back to the drawing board! Jocular expression used when the failure of a plan or contraption can be attributed to some earlier oversight or miscalculation.

A.4g Computers

hard-wired [with programs and operations on electronic circuits that have been originally installed in a computer, rather than being loaded by the operator as separate software when required—1971] Of inherent skills and talents that emerge with maturation rather than being initiated by specific teaching.
in the loop [sequence of instructions executed repeatedly until previous specification is completed] Well-informed, privy to all necessary information [1970].

put on ‘hold’ [a computer key suspending an operation until cleared] Suspend production; delay launching, implementation etc. for an unspecified time.

GIGO [1964] Initials standing for ‘garbage in garbage out’, the phrase used by computer-operators to explain why a wrongly programmed computer is not giving the intended results. Used to comment generally on disappointing results when preparation has been faulty.

interface (v) Are mutually compatible; communicate together; agree well together. (From the use of the word when referring to computers that can be used in conjunction, compatibly.)

core-dump on…[empty the central memory of a computer] Complain, explain fully to, pour your heart out to.

A.5a Crafts

of all crafts to be an honest man is the master-craft
masterpiece Of any excellent, masterly, consummate work or achievement, not merely of a test piece for becoming a master craftsman.

Jack-at-a-pin Figure someone on call for any job.
ide brains are the devil’s workshop
have at your finger-tips/finger-ends [1870] Be in complete control; be fully competent.

be all thumbs Fumbling and awkward.
candle-holder Abettor. (Apprentices would often assist the craftsmen, and learn at the same time, by holding a candle near the work.)

not fit to hold a candle to…[1562] Not to be compared with…(as if not to be trusted even to hold the light in the right place).

hold a (farthing) candle to the fire [Oxf/sun] Exert feeble efforts where they are not required; be completely outclassed in a competition or challenge; make an effort to hold your own, even in the face of an overpowering superiority.

A.5b Jewellery

try your skill in galt [clay: 1639]/gilt first and then in gold Practise on less valuable materials; also of the unsuitable liaisons of youth.

pinchbeck False, spurious. (In about 1732 Christopher Pinchbeck made cheap watches and jewellery of an alloy resembling gold.)

he is a goldsmith of thy craft [1420] He is a scoundrel as bad as you are.
diamond cut diamond [1593] Fight with your opponent’s weapon; only cunning will outwit cunning. (Of equal matches where no conclusion is without mutual injury.)
adversity is the diamond dust heaven polishes its jewels with [Wis]
a gem is not polished without rubbing [Ont] People only improve through life’s hard experiences.

facet Side, angle, different aspect generally. ‘A new facet to her character.’
clear-cut Sharply defined, unmistakable (like well-cut jewels).
agate Diminutive person (from the tiny carvings on agate seals).
foil [a thin backing of metal that shows lacklustre gems to better advantage: 1639] Someone or something juxtaposed so as to improve, by contrast, another’s appearance.
string together Link, arrange in sequence (like beads).

hang together (in/on a string) Cohere, be consistent—of argument; be united, mutually dependent—of associated people. (As above. See also F.32d,…pebbles in a with.)
every jewel needs a setting A beautiful woman, unpartnered, is wasted.
couched in [set among, as a jewel in gold etc.—C15] elegant language, strong terms etc.

A.5c Clock-maker

you may be a wise man, though you cannot make a watch [1664] No one can be skilled in everything; ignorance in one respect does not detract from ability in others.

like a clock/clockwork Smoothly, without hitch or interruption.
crazy/silly as a two-bob watch [Aus] Completely mad.
queer [homosexual] as a three-/nine-bob watch (which is too cheap not to be suspect).
go on shirt-buttons Be very erratic (like a watch with makeshift works).

regular as clockwork

what makes them tick [W.H.Auden, Age of Anxiety—1947] The secret of a person’s motivation, their driving force and the determinant of their actions.
mainspring Prime impulse—variously; motive power; incentive.
stem-winding/stem-winder—of a speech, speaker, sermon etc. [Amer] Powerfully persuasive, rousing, impassioned, going to the heart of things. (From stem-winding watches, a notable advance on key-winders.)

be wound up Under tension, ready for action, excited.
unwind/wind down Relax after a time of tension, exacting work or overexcitement.
be run down In poor condition, out of health, low; uncared for, decaying, lacking maintenance—of property and machinery.
a speck of dirt may clog the works of a watch [NY SC] It needs very little to damage complex operations.
stop ticking Cease to matter; die.
A.5d Other crafts

wiry Lean, sinewy and untiring.
wire-drawn Of extreme or idle subtlety.
sit like a wire-drawer under his work [Yks: 1670] (A wire-drawer is the name given to someone who spins out a matter to extreme length [1566]; also a stingy, grasping, penurious person [wYks].)
hammer it out Solve problem by hard application (from metal-beating).
blowed in the glass [Amer] Genuine (from the liquor bottles with the trade name manufactured in the glass itself).
fiasco The exclamation when something turns out entirely differently from what was intended. (If Italian glass-blowers spoilt a bottle, they would re-classify it as a flask [fiasco] for which the specifications were looser.)
go pear-shaped [RAF] Go wrong, amiss.
go through the flint-mill [where calcined flints were ground up for the production of porcelain] Endure problems; suffer badly.
drunk as a potter

A.6a Gas

gas (v) Talk idly, vainly.
gas (n) Empty talk.
gas-bag Empty but excessive talker, ‘wind-bag’.

A.6b Electricity

so mean he wouldn’t give you a shock if he owned the powerhouse [Aus]
electrify Startle (as if by an electric shock).
galvanise Rouse by shock into life or action. (This refers not to the protection of iron with zinc, but to the spasmodic jerkings caused by electric shock to the nerves even of a corpse.)
live wire Energetic person, lively character.
circuit-breaker Financial measures to prevent a sharp fall in stock market values. (From the mechanism for temporarily shutting off power in the event of an overload.)
short-circuit Apply or proceed directly instead of through the usual channels.
step up Increase. (A term used when increasing electrical voltage.)
glitch [surge of current—1962] Hitch, brief fault, ‘hiccup’ in the system; computer error or malfunction in either the hardware or a program [1990s].

AC/DC Attracted to both sexes, bisexual (by analogy with those appliances marked AC/DC to indicate that they can be operated with either type of current, alternating or direct).

plug in both ways Of a man, be bisexual.

wired up [Amer 1982] Nervously excited, ready for action (as if connected up ready for starting).

press/push the button Take a decisive initial step; perform a necessary action to produce the desired result (as when starting electrical machinery with a button-switch).

feedback Useful or necessary information about an ongoing process or experiment received during and as a result of this activity; emergent facts affecting a person’s behaviour or an animal’s reactions. (From the electrical device—in amplifier circuits for example—whereby part of a signal is reintroduced to a system to reinforce it.)

melt-down [Amer 1980s] Ultimate disaster; collapse of economy, government etc. (From a nuclear accident where the core of radioactive material melts down into the ground below.)

burn-out Physical, artistic or professional exhaustion through over-activity (as an electrical fuse or valve, burnt out).

on the blink On the point or in the process of going wrong, breaking down.

A.7a Hawkers, pedlars, packhorses

mean as a higgler [huckster or hawker, carter who bargains and carts for others—passim]

like the chapmen, you are never out of your gate [way: Sc] Always on the make.

cadge [<cadger, a pedlar or hawker] Beg or borrow.

cadgers are ay cracking o’ crook-saddles [saddles for supporting a creel or pannier—Sc] Of someone always ‘talking shop’.

packet-boys [Bck]/pack-merchants [neSc] Small clouds driven before the wind. (Because they could open up—and rain—at any time.)

plain as a packstaff [the stick used to support the weight of a pack while the pedlar rested : 1542]

like the chapmen, you are ay to hansel [supply with money or food first thing in the morning : Sc] (Pedlars, on first entering a house, would ask for hansel.)

ev ery pedlar must carry his own pack [1611] There are some things you can only do for yourself.

ev ery pedlar praises his own pack Self-advertisement is no recommendation.

open your poke and sell your wares [nYks] Open your mouth and tell your thoughts, your opinion.

loose/lowse/open the pack [Abd Per Edb] Tell the news.

he has brought the pack to the pins [1585] Has dwindled away his stock; has frittered away his goods.
pedlar’s mare! Who wants the mare must be prepared to have the pedlar too.
slip the girths Come to grief (like packs off the packhorse).

A.7b Tinkers

black/drunken/noisy/quarrelsome/raffy [idle—Cum] as a tinker/tinkler [Cum]
as pat [fit, proper, appropriate, relevant, natural, spontaneous] as thieving to a tinker[Ire]
black as a tinker’s pot
swear like a tinker
has a tongue like a tinkler [Cum]
wad deave the lugs o’ a tinkler [Dmf] Of an incessant talker.
not care/give/worth a tinker’s curse/damn
up and down like a tinker’s elbow Often of something that has worked loose.
merry as tinkers
pedlar’s/tinker’s news [neShr] Old news.
menseless as a tinkler’s messan [ill-bred as a tinker’s dog—Sc]
tinker about.../at.../with... Potter; work at a task in a desultory, clumsy and bungling manner.
fly brass, thy father’s a tinker [1659] Spend freely.
the tinker stops one hole and makes two Implying that something was better before the repair.
like Banbury tinkers—in mending one hole make three [1576]
a character is like a kettle, once mended it always needs mending [Ill]
a clash-tae [banging together—Sc Ire nEng Lin] An irregular union.
knap the rust [Nhb Nhp] Merely start a job; take offence and leave. (As if a man had proceeded with a job no further than to clean off the rust.)
much rust needs a rough file [Ont]
a Tom Prodger’s job [Nhp] Clumsy workmanship.
budget (n) Statement of government fiscal policy for the ensuing year. [Deriving from the idea expressed in an C18 pamphlet, The Budget Opened, of the Chancellor of the Exchequer (then Sir Robert Walpole) opening his bag like a tinker and producing all sorts of quack cures etc.]
budget (v) [1945] Make financial provision.
rough as a tinker’s budget
lazy as the tinker who laid down his budget to fart
open your budget Speak your mind.
you must wait while you get it, like the tinker and his budget (which was often in pawn) [sNot]
set a caird [<>Sc-Gael ceard=travelling tinker] on a cuisser [=cooser=courser, stallion—Sc], and he’ll ride to the devil [Gall] None so proud or reckless as those who have risen in the world.
A.7c Scrap-merchants, rag-and-bone men

it ought to be scrapped! Should be discarded as obsolete.

scrap-heap (n) Pile of useless metal—often describing a ruined vehicle.


he is the sort who would sell his mother for what she would fetch as old bones
rattle like old bones

ready for Blind Charlie’s cart [a Tunstall rag-and-bone merchant—nStf] Of something so decrepit that only a blind person would accept it.

A.7d Gipsies


once removed from a Bozzill [=Boswell. a common gipsy name—Not] Of one bad-tempered and restless.

gipsy’s warning Sinister, enigmatic warning.

swift as a gipsy’s curse [Cum]

gipsy stew Dish of rabbit, onions and potatoes (so-called because the main ingredients are readily available to gipsies).
B TAILOR

B.1a Tow

**flaxen** Pale golden, blond—usually of hair (From the colour of dressed flax.)

**he wexe as pale as any herd** [coarse flax—Paston Letters C15 Nrf]
That not of hempe ne herdes was [G. Chaucer, *Romaunt of the Rose* ln. 1233–1366]

**head of tow** With very fair hair (tow being the fibres of flax for spinning).

**tow-coloured** Blond, fair—of hair (as/from the above.)

**have other tow to tease** [Nhb n&eyks] Other things to do.

**everything has its time, and sae has a rippling kame** [a coarse comb for de-seeding flax—Sc] A proper time for everything.

**tease** [1679] Torment, vex. (From the action of combing or carding wool etc. with a teaselbur.)

**tease out** Elicit—a meaning, solution to a problem etc.—by persistently trying.

**carminative** [<Lat *carminare*=card or teasel wool] Medicine to expel stomach wind (from the idea that it combs out the retained humours like knots out of wool).

**be a heckle to** [Sc Cum Wm] [A heckle is a steel comb for dressing flax and hemp—Sc nEng EAn wSom] Be an annoyance to, a thorn in the side of.

**rough as heckles** [nEng EAn wSom]

**come over the heckle-pins** [teeth of the heckle comb] Be strictly examined; be severely handled during a course of probation [Sc].

**heckle** (v) Scratch—‘with his hard hurcheone skyn sa heklis he my chekis’ [W. Dunbar, *Twa Mariit Wemen*…—1508]; publicly question, disconcert with abuse and interrupt parliamentary candidates [1808]; rigorously catechize. (From the above.)

**kamesters/kemsters** [wool-combers] are ay creeshy [greasy—Sc Ire NhB] People take after their work; you can expect their environment to affect folk.

**pot o’ one** [Bradford, wYks] Bachelor, eccentric, loner; someone different from the others. (From wool-combing: A comb-pot was used for heating the combs and the number of men working together was described as a ‘pot o’ fower’ etc.)

**wammock(y) as a cardin’** [feeble as a carding =a hank of wool dressed on the carding combs—Lan]

**bedizen/dizen** [charge your distaff] Dress someone up in what is (usually) unflattering or unsuitable—‘bedizened in fripperies’.
I have (other) tow on my distaff/rock [distaff—Sc Ire nEng Not EAn] Have (other) business in hand [G.Chaucer, The Milleres Tale ln. 3674–1386]; trouble in store, hard times coming (from the labour of spinning that is waiting to be done).

they have more tow on their distaffs than they can well spin [eLan] More to do than they can manage.

an old woman’s rock-staff [distaff—EAn] Fanciful superstition; old saying.

give her rock another tow [Rnf] Give her something else to think of.

heckle [comb with the steel heckle or dressing comb] her her tow [Wm] Scold severely.

sets the low [fire, flame—Sc nEng] to her own tow [Sc] Brings on herself the misfortune planned for another.

B.1b Hanks, hasps, ravelling, skeins

intricate as a flea in a bottom [skein, ball] of flax

eleven cuts to the hank [Ant Dwn] Mentally lacking.

straight as a hank of cotton [War 1859]

have/make a cottered [tangled—Yks Lan Lei]/ ravelled1 hank [nEng]/hasp [hank of yarn or flax—Sc] Have/make confusion, difficulty.

raffled [wYks]/ravelled1 hank [Uls] Intricate, involved business.

get a revell’d1 hasp [ravelled hasp] in hand [Sc] Engage on intricate business.

redd [dress, comb, tidy up, disentangle—passim]/wind a ravelled2 hasp [Sc] Restore order; put things right.

leeze [leese, loosen, release—Sc] out the tangled hank [Ayr] Sort out the problem, mix-up, confusion.

ravel2 [unwind/tangle up the thread] Confuse, complicate.

ravelled2 [Sc] Confused in mind (as/from the above).

unravel1 Clear up, solve—problems etc.

ravel3 out Restore something complicated to its original elements, for scrutiny or reassessment;

Ravel has three different meanings:
1 Tangle up, get entangled.
2 Unwind, become unwound.
3 Unweave, fray out.
(2) and (3) refer to a similar process: (2) for hasps, skeins or bobbins of thread or yarn, and (3) to woven fabrics. Unravel is used as the opposite of (1) only.

reorganise; sort out what was involved or confused.

Must I doe so? and must I ravell out
My weav’d up follyes?

[Shaks, Rich II IV.i—1595]
dénoûement [<Fr dénoûement=untying< Lat disnodare=unknot, unravel] The final solution and unravelling of a dramatic plot.

worn to a ravelling3 [a thread unravelled out of cloth: B.Potter—1903] Reduced to exhaustion.

worn to a frazzle [a thread of cloth, torn or unravelled, a frayed end—EAn Amer] Utterly exhausted (as above).

ravelling1 [Cum] Confused, wild, disordered—‘a confusing, ravelling way’.

fools ravel2 and wise men redd Fools spoil things and wise men put them to rights.

ravel2 the clue [ball of worsted—Cum] Fail in business.

eye maun redd your ain ravelled1 clue [Sc] You must get out of the difficulty without assistance.

ravel1 the skein [Sc] Bring things into confusion.


snick-snarl [overtwisted thread, worsted gone into lumps—Nhb Yks Lan Lin Chs] Quarrelsome person [wYks].

drive to snick-snarls [midYks] Rout decisively.

**B.1c Spindles, spinning wheels**

spindle (n) [Sc Dev] Thin, small person.

spindly Thin, weak, of legs etc. (From the tapering shape of a spindle.)

spindle-shanks/spindle-shanked Person having long, thin, tapering legs.

that’s a different rub of the spindle [sLan] A different matter.

get thy spindle and thy roke [rock=distaff—Sc]/distaff ready and God will send the flax/tow [1659] Make yourself ready for your hopes; do what is right and prudent, and leave the rest to providence.

that which will not be spun, let it not come between the spindle and the distaff [1670] Do not ask for trouble by putting yourself in the way of it.

dead as a whorl [the fly-wheel of a spindle, often made of black stone—Sc Nhb nYks Lan Lin EAn: Nhb]

out of the worra [centre of spinning wheel (see whorl above); grooved pulley—Som Dev Cor] Out of sorts [nwDev].

a wheelstring job [Wor] Interminable. (From the endless string linking the spinning wheel to the spindle.)

tough as a wheelstring [Ire]
B.1d Spinning

**spin a tale/yarn** [1812] Tell a story, usually a long one.

- **spin a long yarn** Exaggerate.
- **yarn** Long and/or incredible story (as/from the above).
- **the first thread is not part of the yarn** [wCla] One word or saying should not be taken as the whole meaning.

- **spin a fair/fine thread** [1546] Do something of advantage; achieve much.
- **spin out** [1603] Last out; protract an account (as a spinner stretches out the flax or wool); be spent, run out [Cromwell—20 April 1657].
- **spin it fine** Run it close.
- **fine as Kerton** [Crediton spinning—Dev]
- **thick spinning** [wYks] Bad behaviour, generally.
- **spin him/her to the length** [wYks] Exhaust their patience.
- **white as a plucking** [the bunch of worsted fluff plucked off the end of the sliffer (=sliver, a loose unspun ribbon of fibres ready for roving) and held between the fingers while turning—Craven, wYks]
- **spin streetwebs/street-yarn** [Shr Nhp] Idle about the streets, gossiping.
- **she’s spinning clues to the midden and wae to the wabster** [Sc] She is doing as she likes and cares not for the future.
- **he that labours and thrives spins gold** [1640] True prosperity.
- **keep the (wheel-)band/bant in the nick** [small groove in the periphery of the driving wheel of a spinning wheel and on the pirn—Nhb n&wYks Lan Der] Keep things running smoothly; make steady, uninterrupted progress in life or work; be able to continue; keep in favour; avoid giving offence [wYks]; keep the drink flowing; keep on drinking. (Unless the band stayed in the nick, the spinning wheel could not turn and, especially if the twist-bands of a spinning mule were to fly out of the groove of the twist-pulley, all the ‘ends’ or threads would break.)
- **keep the wheel in the nick** [wYks] Keep on good terms (as/from the above).
- **raffle** [Wakefield, wYks]/ravel1 coppin [ravelled coppin, the ball of yarn spun onto the spindle in a tangle, caused by one thread catching another and riving many threads off at once—wYks] A wild, disorderly, careless fellow.
- **packed like cops** [coppins—Lan] in a skip
- **strait/streek the pin** [tighten the temper-pin of a spinning wheel to keep it at the right pitch, an operation requiring close attention while spinning—Sc] Concentrate, attend to your work.
- **has lost her temper-pin** [Sc Ire] Has become angry, sulky.
- **reel (n)/reeling** The flying about of drones around the hives in fine weather, probably from the humming sound [Sc]. (See also E.30j.)
- **a man cannot spin and reel at the same time** [1678] Cannot do two jobs at once.
- **if you can’t turn you can’t spin** [Lan] Spoken when someone has found a way out of a difficulty.
B.1e Thread

**homespun** [1600] Unrefined, but serviceable.
**long-spun** Lengthy, tedious—of stories.
**slack-spun** Lacking, mentally [Ant Dwn].
**fine-drawn** [of wool, long-stranded—Som] Over-subtle, exaggerated.
**fine-spun** [1647] Over-subtle, over-refined—of theories etc.
**a thread spun too fine will easily break** Too strict a discipline will destroy resilience and robustness of character.
**the thread breaks where it is weakest** The failure of a person or enterprise originates from some flaw or feebleness.
**break the thread** Interrupt the continuity—of a story, dream etc.
**nick the thread** Put an end to life.
**my thread is spun** [1565] My life is over (cf. Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos of Greek myth).
**a gentle heart is tied with an easy thread** [1633] There is no need to place controls on good nature.
**a twine thread could have tied him!** [Ant] Of one weakened by coughing or laughing.
**there's ay a wimple** [ripple, twist—Sc nEng] in a lawyer's clue [Sc: 1818] Some irregularity, double-dealing.
**slender as a thread** starts as a thread and ends up like a cart-rape [Sc] Rumour magnifies it.
**thin as threadpaper**

B.1f Winding, pirns

**wind up** [1780] Bring to an end; tidy, clear up a business. (From winding up the coils and ends of thread into a compact mass.)
**wind up in**… End up in…; finally find yourself in… (As/from the above.)
**end your flite** [scolding] and wind your pirn [reel/bobbin for yarn or thread—Sc Ire Nhb Cum Chs: Sc] Get on with something more worthwhile.
**wind intil a pirn** [Sc Ire Nhb Cum Chs] Come into a difficulty.
**wind him a pirn** [Shl Sc: 1535] Prepare trouble for him; take revenge on him.
**wind a bonny/queer pirn** [Sc] Get into a difficulty. As also, ‘you have wound a goodly clewe’ [Shaks, *AWTEW* I.iii—1601].
**I’m no a pirn the waur o’t** [Sc] Am not at all the worse for it.
**spin a muckle pirn out o’ a wee tait** [tate, small quantity, tuft of wool, hair etc.] o’ tow [Sc] Make much of little.
**wind up a/your pirn/bottom(s)** [Sc: 1633] Finish up, bring to an end; sum up.
go/run like a skeiner [the revolving frame for winding a skein of twine, usually for repairing nets—Dev Cor; pronounced ‘skeaner’] Go very fast.

the pirn will get ravelled\(^1\) in the reeling The affair will not go off well; things will go wrong when you try to do it [Edb].

ravel’ the pirns [Edb] Throw things into disorder; prove troublesome.

ill-favoured/ill-winded/ravelled'/sad pirn Difficulty; confusion, complicated business.

play a (bonny) pirn on… [Bwk] Play tricks on; confuse.

redd [dress, comb, tidy up, disentangle—passim] a (ravelled\(^1\)) pirn [Abd Ayr Nhb] Clear up a difficulty; get out of trouble.

knotty [1225] Of a problem: full of intellectual difficulties, complexities; hard to unravel.

has a lang clue to wind [Sc] Has much to do before he can do what he wants.

put a night on the yarn-winds [yarnwindles, implements for winding yarn—ShI nSc] Spend an uninteresting evening.

bobbin-winding Feeble effort; something of small account [Lan].

bobbin-turner Useless, effeminate worker [Chs].

the end of the bobbin! That’s finished.

out of/stopped for bobbins [Lan] Unable to continue working because of a shortage of necessary materials.

spool-footed [Sc] Splay-footed, with feet twisted outwards like a weaver’s shuttle.

wrapped up in yourself like a spool [Amer]

uptight [Amer 1934] (from wound up tight, originally a hippy description of someone under great tension and, as it were, wrapped up in themselves). Later accretions of meaning include formal, strait-laced, embarrassed, angry, anxious, withdrawn and reacting more than might be expected because of some inhibition.

B.1g Mills

high/tall as a mill chimney


B.2a Weavers

lint-white [Ant Dwn] Very white. (Lint is linen prepared for spinning; also the fluff from it.)


lint-head [Amer] A mill-hand, someone held in contempt.
it 'ud melt the heart o’ a weight-stone [weight for weighing on scales—wSom—as wool was weighed with a weight-stone in the C15, as in the Plumpton Letter of 21 August 1469: ‘I have a counterpais wheith of the weight stone that the wooll was wayed with, and that ye see that the stone be kept that the shipman brings’; weight used to balance certain parts of a loom—Lan], or what’s harder, a putter-out [the firm’s man who gave out handloom work to be done at home—Yks Lan Chs]

quill-boy [boy who winds yarn on spools for a weaver—Uls] One incapable of doing much work.

Shurat/Surat weaver An inferior person or worker. (From the poor quality of the cotton from Surat, one of the East India Company’s stations in India.)

jack-weaver [prob.=waver] The coloured dancing refraction of sunlight cast by a swinging prism [wSom].

wight [strong, valiant] as a webster’s waistcoat that every morning takes a thief by the neck [Sc]

mad as a weaver Crazy with anger.

close/great/kind/thick [close, intimate, conspiratorial—Lan]/thrang [busy, crowded together—Cum] as inkle-makers/-weavers [Sc Uls nEng Shr Nhp War Brks Wil wSom Dor Dev Cor] (The inkle was a linen tape and the work necessitated working close together, and so was suitable for a pair of cronies. Some of the first inkle-weavers were Flemish refugees from the Spanish religious persecutions in the C16. They naturally stuck together and protected the mysteries of their craft—which included weaving the red tape used for tying up official documents.)

all inkle-weavers together [neYks] All equally bad, troublesome.

there’s another old weaver dead! [Lan] Spoken when a donkey brays.

B.2b Weaving

weave (v) [1332] Fabricate, concoct, contrive—a story, explanation; introduce details or embellishment into a story, poem etc.

get weaving! Start work, generally; go to it with a will.

weave (v) [1941] Of an aircraft, move from side to side, through or over other aircraft to give cover; of motorway vehicles, frequently change lanes.

1 See note (1) at B.1b.

weave about/in and out Move in a twisting, threading or intricate manner.

interweave Intermingle, blend intimately (more closely than interlace).

weaves gingerbread [sLan] Walks knock-kneed; in ungainly fashion.

he is woven out of a poor piece Of a meagre man.

have woven my piece [Lan] Have reached the end of my life.
B.2c Gear and looms

he has taken his gears in [Yks Lan Chs] Has finally ceased to do anything.
he has taken his reed [tool for separating the threads of the warp and beating up the weft] and gears in [sLan] Has died.
get into th looms [sLan] Get to work, generally.
square his loom [Chs] Put him to rights; punish him.
rest on the bone is as good as cloth on the beam Said by handloom weavers out on a bunting spree. (When weavers completed a set stint of work they bunted [bundled] it, took it to the manufacturer and were paid for it. They might then go on a ‘bunting spree’ [Yks Lan].)
slack drawn-on/wound-on [with thread from bobbin to shuttle not taut—sLan] Of a lethargic person.
shuttle-witted Changeable, inconstant [Paston Letters C15 Nrf].
shuttle-gabbed/gobbed [sSc Cum] Of a sheep with a misshapen mouth.
life is a shuttle Never constant, sometimes up, sometimes down.
shuttle diplomacy [1947] As conducted by an ambassador continually passing to and fro between the negotiating powers.
clean [wYks]/right as a bobbin [Cum]
he is a bad bobbin! Worse than most.
as much use for it as the Queen has for a yeld-hook [heald-hook, a fine iron weaving hook for threading the warp-threads through the healds—wYks sLan Chs]
straight as a picken-/picking-rod [the rod by which a weaver’s shuttle is thrown—sLan]

B.2d Warp and weft

[The upright threads are the warp, and the weft is woven across and between them.]
go far to warp and the mill so near [Uls] Go further than necessary for something.
cross as a pig-footed (q.v. E.25b) warp
clean/clear shed [the opening between two lines of warp in the loom—Sc Yks Lan Chs] Clear the course.
out of our shed Off our course.
make abb [woof’, always spun from carded wool—Glo wSom]/woof or warp of it [1640] Use it for something or other.
weft Streak of cloud; thin layer of smoke or mist.
true love’s the weft of life, but it sometimes comes through a sorrowful shuttle waiting for weft! When any job stops through lack of material.
he’s gotten no weft in him [sLan] No energy, influence, strength of character.
put in the weft too fine [Uls] Push an analogy too far.
ill-spun weft will out either now or eft [later : 1300] Bad actions, bad breeding will come to light sooner or later.
when the knot reaches the comb of the loom, you have to break the thread [NY]
When the expected trouble finally arrives, action must be taken.

B.2e Webs, tissue

ill-spun web Describing a case where there are repeated failures. (An ill-spun web is always coming out.)
will find web o’ life very twitty [full of twits= faults in the thread that make weaving difficult] and moity [full of moits=small pieces of wool] and will no doubt make lots of fleyks [flaws in cloth—wYks]
all fluzzings [the loose fibres that fall from threads in the weaving—Yks Lan] and beggar-berm Rubbish; of people, worthless.
weave a tangled web Get into complicated difficulties, inextricable problems.
tangle with [Amer 1928] Become involved with; confront; strike up a close but unfriendly relationship with.
cotted [matted, tangled (of wool, hair, cotton etc.)—n&midEng War Nrf Som Ken Sus] Short-tempered, cantankerous. Hence:
cottery Vexed [nYks].
cottered Exhausted [wYks]; frustrated [Cum].
it is hard to make a good web of a bottle of hay [1640] A good result from unsuitable material.
make causey webs [causeway webs—Abd] Neglect work and idle in the streets.
seamless web [E. Dickinson—1862] An indivisible and integral whole, something where there is no break in continuity—often of history.
fell [finish a warp—wYks] the web Finish off anything.
cut off at the web’s end [Lnk] Peremptorily finished.
let the want come at the web’s end [Uls] Wait to repair a deficiency until the very last moment.
the best o’ wabs are rough at the roons [edges: Sc] People can be worse than average at the beginning or end of their lives—or in their marginal activities.
the selvedge is ay the worst part of the web [Sc] (As above.)
neither side nor selvedge [Walsden, wYks 1885] In debt and difficulties (as if there was no margin left for error).
tissue [Addison, Spectator no.62—1711] Complicated series or intricate network—of lies etc. (as in a woven fabric or tissue).
text [<Lat texere=weave]
texture [<Lat textura=a weaving] Structure, constitution, surface ‘feel’.
tessitura [<It tessitura=texture] The tonal range of a piece of music relative to the compass of the intended voice or instrument.
context [<Lat contexere=weave together] The relationship of a part of a work of art, literature or life to its immediate surroundings and to the whole, knowledge of which ‘setting’ being essential to full understanding of the meaning of that part (just as individual threads can be appreciated only when seen in their proper place).

B.2f Threads, thrums

wambly [shaky, weak, feeble—sLan] and slamp [tottering—Lan] as a barrow-full of warp-sizing [the dressing used on the warp-threads]
  thread [1642] The logical continuity—of an argument, narrative etc.
  thread way through [Shaks, Rich II V.v—1595] Pervade, penetrate, make way through—a crowd etc. (like a thread through fabric).
  pick/take up the thread(s) Resume something previously interrupted.
  gather up the threads/pull the threads together Bring disconnected elements into a coherent whole, or at least an orderly interrelationship.
  thread and thrum [the lengths of warp-yarn, and the tuft where it is fastened to the loom] The whole of anything; good and bad together; miscellaneous scraps.
  not care/give/worth a thrum [loose superfluous thread cut off after the weaving—Sc Nhb]
    thrum-head [sLan] Fool.
    thrummy-thrum [Dur] Useless, incapable person.
    he’s nae gude weaver that leaves lang thrums [Sc] A criticism of one who leaves others unhappy.
  a thrum in the graith [a loose thread in the material or among the twisted threads through which the warp runs in the loom—Sc] A hitch in the carrying out of an undertaking.
  at a loose end [1851] Temporarily idle; not knowing what to do.
  strand Recurring thread or streak in a character; continuing process, theme, policy etc.
  have a loop down somewhere [wYks] Have something going wrong somewhere (from one loop in the warp not working).
  put a loop in your life Make a new start.

B.2g Leese

get the leese/lease/lees of [the crossing of the yarn up and down over the warp in regular order] Understand rightly [Ayr nIre wYks].
  lose the leese/lease/lees [nlre] Be confused, lose the thread of the argument; be broken down. (If the warp is divided, the leease is lost and the weaving is at a standstill.)
have your dressings near the lease-rods/ lees-rods [rods that divide the threads of a warp—Uls Lan] Be reaching the end; be unable to carry on much longer in the present state of affairs.

**B.2h Linderings etc.**

he’s getten into t’ linderins/lindrins/linderings [the cords fastened to the end of the handloom warps when the woof is nearly finished to enable the weaver to weave up to them—sLan] Towards the end and past the useful part of his life.

roving [fine woollen threads—Yks Lan] Remnants, last remains.

bring to cloth Accomplish, finish.

not catch a fell [the final yard or so in weaving out a warp; also the junction of the last filling thread with unwoven warp threads] Be doubtful if a piece of work can be finished in time [Nhp]. (A workman has caught a fell when he has completed his work. See also fell the web, B.2e above.)

**B.3a Fulling and dyeing**

look like a bazed [bemused, bewildered, alarmed, at a loss—Sc Nhb Cum] waker [walker, tucker or fuller—Sc Ire n, w&midEng] seeking wash [stale urine used as detergent in fulling and dyeing] Look foolish [Sc].

lit(t) (v) [dye—Sc nEng Nrf] Blush.

of the deepest dye [1601] Extreme.


dyed in the wool [1579] Thoroughly, from the beginning, unchangeably.

the cloth is all of another hue [1430] The case is entirely different.

ingrained [1599] Deeply rooted, inveterate. (Wool dyed ‘in grain’ is dyed in the fibre before manufacture. Originally it was dyed in scarlet grain or kermes.)

So depe in greyn he dyed his coloures

[G.Chaucer, *Squier’s Tale* ln. 511–1386]

imbued with…[dyed or saturated in…: 1555] Permeated by feelings, opinions etc.

there is no wool so white but a dyer can make it black [1580] No one is incorruptible, however pure.

there’s nae wo’ sae coarse but it’ll tak some colour [Sc] Even the worst character is not beyond improvement.
it is a bad cloth that will take no colour [1546] A criticism of neutrality. ‘It is a bad wooll that can take no colour’ [J.Hayward, The life and raigne of King Henry the Fourth—1599].

true as Coventry blue (Coventry blue thread and cloth was noted for its permanent dye.)

true blue will never stain [1579] True constancy will never betray. (Blue is the colour of constancy. The original reference was probably to butcher’s blue aprons which do not show the bloodstains.)
dyeing scarlet Heavy drinking (because it made the face red).
grey and green make the worst medley Marriage of age with youth.
motley [cloth of various colours—1383] company/crew Composed of several different types, characters etc.
of all stripes [colours, types—Amer] Of all kinds, trends.
that won’t wash! [C.Brontë, Shirley xviii—1849] It is unacceptable, will not work or stand up to examination—of a feeble excuse etc. (as if to say the dyes would run, if washed).
washed out [with colours washed pale] Pale, limp, exhausted, weak, demoralised; killed in an air crash.

B.3b Finishing, teasing and combing cloth

on tenterhooks [1748] In painful or anxious suspense. (From the rows of hooks round the frame where cloth was stretched after milling or dyeing.)

spick and span Absolutely new. (Originally of cloth just taken off the spannans [stretchers] and spikes [hooks]. See also A.1b.)
cotton together Agree, prosper together. (From the finishing of cloth, which is complete when it ‘cottons’ or rises to a regular nap.)
cotton on to [1907] Fall in with, understand. (From the above).
pull over the rolls [wYks] Call to account; criticise, examine harshly. (From examining cloth for defects by pulling it over a roll in front of a window.)
stand the perk [wYks] Stand examination—of character etc. (Cloth was draped over a perk [wooden frame] for scrutiny.)
unruffled [1659] Unperturbed in crisis. (Cloth was sometimes intentionally puckered up and crinkled; the word was then used of a brow, ruffled by worry. See also G.45c.)
apply [<OF aplier=Lat ap-plicare=fold up to, spread up against]
complicate [<Lat com-plicare=fold together]
explicate, explicit [<Lat ex-plicare=unfurl, unwrap, fold out, spread out]
reply [<OF replier=Lat re-plicare=fold again] Similarly, replica
involve [<Lat in-volvere=roll up inside]
B.4a Cloth

the best cloth may have a moth Imperfection even in the best.
moth-eaten [1551] The worse for wear, decrepit, dilapidated generally.
a spot is most seen upon the finest cloth The better the quality, the more glaring a fault.
yellowed Old-fashioned, past its best, less vivid.
in the cloth market [1678] In bed.

B.4b Measuring cloth

yardstick [1848] Criterion, standard of comparison.
where perfection is the ellwand [yardstick—Sc], it’s nae marvel gin ordinary mortals come scrimply [hardly, seldom, with difficulty] up to standard [eFif]
measure another by your own yard [Shr: 1589] Use standards that are not applicable.
every man should measure himself by his own foot rule [NC] Should apply the same standards to himself as he does to others.
go the full yard [Amer] Pursue, carry through to the limit.
rule of thumb Method derived solely from practice or experience without any scientific basis, a roughly practical method. (From the C17 use of the thumb in measuring, a thumb’s width being allowed on every yard of cloth.)

B.4c Wool

plum [soft=soft in the head—Cor]/warm as wool [1593]
woolly [1815] Indistinct, vague, with blurred edges—of style, mind, voice, painting, etc.
a pope’s bull, a dead man’s skull and an old trull [whore] are not all worth a pound of wool
(skin as) soft as Lemster ore [the fine wool produced by sheep in the Leominster district of Herefordshire]/wool
flannel (v and n) [from flannel-mouth=flatterer—Amer 1927] Flatter(y); give small presents or flattery in the hope of future favours; nonsense and fabrication.
red flannel Tongue (connected with the above).
warms you like a yard of Welsh flannel
all wool and a yard wide [Amer] Unbeatable, top quality; unimpeachable, impeccably honest.

B.4d Different materials

limp as a rag
boiled to rags Much overcooked, usually of meat.
feel like a boiled rag Very limp, floppy, waffly.
shoddy [1862] Inferior goods both in material and workmanship. (From the rough woollen cloth made from a coarse yarn reconstituted from rags.)
coarse/tough as raploch [coarse woollen cloth, homespun and undyed—Sc Ul.]
coarse as Cupar harn [harden=burden, a coarse flax and hemp cloth—Sc n, mid&mid-wEng]
a burden [coarse, brown, hard-wearing cloth—Hrf] mother is better than a golden father
tweedy [1928] Hearty, casual, homely (this being the type of person favouring clothes of tweed [tweed is a rough-textured cloth of coarse wool and cotton]).
speak drugget [a coarse cloth made of a flax and Wool mixture—Sc Ire] Speak a mixture of local and Queen’s English. Also, disparagingly, of mixed marriages—They’re drugget!
pale as linen the finest lawn is soonest stained It is hard to maintain top quality; the best sooner worsens.
he that sells lawn must learn to fold it [1580] There is drudgery in every occupation.
put your mouth into small pletts [pleats, folds—NCy: 1846] Be careful what you say.
fret like gummed taffety ‘he frets like gumd Velvet’ [Shaks, Hy IVi II.ii—1597].
taffeta Florid, overdressed, flashy, fastidious—talk, style. ‘Taffata phrases’ [Shaks, LLL V.ii—1595]. (The composition of the material seems to have changed through time, but not its lustrous quality.)
time and patience will turn a mulberry leaf into silk [1659] Take heart! this too may happen—in time.
silkworm [1712] Woman who examines drapers’ fabrics without buying.
pluffy [light and downy—Cor]/soft/smooth [NC Tenn Calif; often=deceptive] as silk
hit the silk Resort to a parachute (which would originally be made of silk).
a wavering man is like a skein of silk (because of the play of light on its sheen).
the fairest silk is soonest stained [1575] See above, the finest lawn....
lack-lustre Generally mediocre, lacking their (usual) attraction.
tabby [1695] With wavy markings—usually describing cats. (From the Arabian silk that had a ‘watered’ surface giving this effect.)
flossy [nAmer] Saucy, fresh, fancy. (Floss was rough silk broken in winding the cocoons.)
all that rustles is not silk [I11]
you are mistaken of the stuff; it is half silk [Sc] Not as bad as you think him/her.
shine like shot silk in the sunshine
slick [sleek, smooth—Sc Ire Eng Amer] as satin
shine like satin
on velvet [1769] In wealth and luxury.
bet/prophesy on velvet Bet on a certainty (from the above meaning of a comfortable, sure thing).
smooth [NC Tenn Calif]/true as velvet
a velvet true-heart [Chs: 1678] Someone absolutely loyal.
velvet revolution One achieved without violence (as in Czechoslovakia in 1989). Hence, also:
velvet divorce Peaceful independence of states formerly united (as in Czechoslovakia in 1993).
buckram Stiff, starched, ‘stuck up’. (From the nature of buckram, a coarse gummed linen used for linings.)
in buckram Stiff-necked, stuck up.
stiff as buckram Of a formal, over-precise person [wYks 1885].
corduroy (v) [Aus] Reinforce a road with logs (from the ribbed effect).
linsey-wolsey [a woven mixture of flax and wool: 1592] A strange medley; confused nonsense in talk or action.
bombast [1589] An inflated, rhetorical style of speech or writing. (Bombast or bombasine was used for padding out clothes.) Hence:
bombastic. Often of an overblown, exaggerated windbag of a character.
fustian [a cotton velvet used for facings etc.] Inappropriately lofty, turgid or pompous language.
I am not going to put one in cloth and the other in fustian Said by a Broughton Mills farmer refusing to let his younger son go to grammar school after the older boy had not gained a place.
dirt shows the quickest on the cleanest cotton [Can Amer]
velcro [an artificial fabric used for fastenings, consisting of thousands of hooked bristles which make the attachment] Lesbian (from the fantasy of two pubes meshed together).
ribbon (v) Of a road, to stretch out ahead, like a ribbon.
right as a ribbon [War]
ribbon development [1927] Where the buildings of an expanding town radiate out beside its arterial roads, like ribbons from a maypole.

B.4e Leather and furs

tough as leather [1533] Usually of meat.
thodden [solid, sad, dense—NCy Lan Der Chs] as leather [Lan] Of a firm-fleshed person.
nothing like leather! [1692] Your own goods are the best for all purposes; a criticism of someone’s biased recommendation of his own product or materials—even when inappropriate. (Probably originated from an anecdote about a council held in a besieged town. Each speaker extolled the defence advantages of his own material, this being the currier’s contribution.)

raw leather will stretch [1583] Youth is adaptable.

the rotten leather first breaks The poor character cracks first under strain.

cut your thong according to your leather Live according to your means.

you cut broad thongs of another’s leather [1300] You are too free with someone else’s property—‘…men cut large thongys here of othere mens lethere’ [Paston Letter 1465 Nrf].

it’s easy cutting whangs [long thongs—Sc Ire n, mid&eEng] off other folks’ leather

boondoggle (v) [nonsense name for a Boy Scout’s thong—Amer] Attempt to create work where none exists; waste time, money [1983].

leather and prunella A difference in clothes only. But, after A.Pope, mistakenly used to mean something to which you are quite indifferent, a thing of no consequence. ‘Two centuries of leather and prunella’ [G.B.Shaw, musical criticism—1932]=pedestrian, uninspired compositions.

tough as whitleather [a leather specially cured and prepared so as to be pliant as well as tough, and pale or natural in colour]

tough as wengby [whangby=anything tough, usually leather, sometimes cheese—Lakel Yks ne&eLan]

consciences like chiverell [1583] Too accommodating. (Cheverel is from the skins of wild goats and will stretch every way.)

retch (v) [stretch—Sc Eng passim] Exaggerate; tell lies.

streeker [stretcher—nYks]/stretcher [Cum wYks War seWor Cor] Lie; exaggeration (as/ from the above).

by no stretch of the imagination Not even by straining the imagination beyond its normal capacity.

what more can you have of a cat than her skin? [Ire Lan Yks: 1564] Of someone or something good for only one purpose; you have taken all we have, there is no more.

chagrin [<Fr chagrin=a rough skin used for rubbing items smooth—1656] (From the idea that the mind is similarly fretted by anxiety, mortification etc.)

black as Alaskan sealskin

ready for the fox-farm [where horsemeat from the knackers is fed to foxes] Dying.

every fox must pay his skin to the furrier The crafty shall be undone by their own wiliness. ‘You can have no more of a fox than his skin’ [1546].

vicuña coat [Amer 1950s+] Someone who accepts bribes to exert influence on behalf of another. (Sherman Adams received such a garment when presidential adviser and had to resign later.)

fur coats and no knickers! [Lan nStf] Of those affected women who aspire to high society in the county. (An example of metonymy.)

you can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear [1579] Coarse materials will not produce a fine result; sometimes of the impossibility of improving the incorrigible.
mothball (v) [Amer 1946]/put into mothballs Lay up, store for future use—of battleships etc. (like fur coats stored in mothballs).

B.5a Tailors, tailoring

a thread is always on the tailor [NY] There is usually some small clue to a person’s trade.

a man of Dursley [Glo] One who promises much but performs nothing (from one Webb of Dursley in Queen Mary’s time, a clothier who took cloth but never made the ordered clothes).

want to piss like a dress-maker (Desperate in a sewing shop?)

tailor (v) [Amer 1946] Adapt; design specifically—‘tailored himself to the firm’s requirements’, ‘tailored the ship for the tropics’.

tailored to his requirements Specially designed for him.
tailor-made Exactly suited, appropriate; a factory-made as opposed to a hand-rolled cigarette.
bespoke application [1990s] Describing computer software or facility designed for one particular use.

a good wife must be bespoke, for there’s none ready made
made to order Exactly suited to what is wanted.
reach-me-down [G.B.Shaw, Letter—11 July 1907] Ready-made, pat, specious, inferior—of arguments, excuses etc.

frippery [old clothes/shop where they are sold—1598] Tawdry articles, trifles; specious, worthless talk [C18–C19].

the tailor’s wife is worst clad [Texas] (See also B.9a, the cobbler’s children…)

B.5b Pins

pin [Sc] Small person or animal.

not care/give/worth a pin [c. 1492]/preen [pin—Sc Nhb Lakel Yks Cth Pem]/row of pins [wYks]/crookled [bent—nLin] pin ‘For two pins I would do it!’

mean as a pin
like as two pins
set at a pin’s fee Value or regard at next to nothing.

pinhead Stupid person; very small item.

like as a silvered pin, fair without but foul within [1813]

fait/feat [neat, tidy—Sc] as a new preen/prin [pin—Sc]
pin (v) [1579] Affix firmly on—faith, hopes, blame.

pin down to Hold or bind strictly to a promise or obligation; restrict someone’s actions or activity.

don’t pin your faith/soul on another’s sleeve Preserve your independence (as if pinning on a badge of partisanship).

pin-point (v) [1917] Locate precisely (as with a pin-point on a map).

pin-point target One so small as to need precise bombing or shelling aim.

you could have heard a pin drop! [1834] Of a pregnant silence.

pin-prick Trivial annoyance.

pins and needles The pricking or tingling felt when circulation returns to numbed or frozen extremities.

B.5c Measuring and cutting out

take his measure Form an opinion of his character, abilities etc.

measure him for a warm suit of clothes [sWor] Flog soundly.

cauk [<cauk=chalk, mark out] the claith ere the wab be in the loom [Sc 1832] Anticipate the end of a work before it is even started; jump to conclusions; do a job before it is necessary.

chalk is no shears [Sc] A thing may be proposed that will never be executed.

there’s but a pair of shears between them [1579] Nearly identical—as are the two halves of one piece of cloth cut in two.

a good shape—in the shears’s mouth [Sc] A fine plan—if executed!

scither-mouth [scissors-mouth—wYks] With clipped speech.

give someone scissors [Miss] Attack them verbally.

cut him a little slack [Amer] Make allowances, relax the rules for him.

cut it fine Allow barely sufficient time, money or materials; allow only a minimum margin.

cut the clothes Proceed with his plan; carry out his intentions—‘…and said he would cutt the clothes notwithstanding’ [Plumpton Letter—5 December 1469].

cut your coat according to your cloth [1546] Spend within your income; adjust the quality of the work to the material available; limit yourself to what is feasible.

make use of the cloth you’ve got Know what your resources are and make full use of them.

we can shape our bairns’ wyliecoat [petticoat—Sc Ire nEng], but canna shape their weird [destiny, pattern of their life—Sc 1721] When prosperous folk come to bad ends; when the children you have cared for pass out of your control.

cabbage Pilfer. (Originally when a tailor appropriated surplus pieces of cloth after making the garment for which it was provided. Connected with carbage=shreds and patches, and garbage.)

he’s not made of midge-clippings! [small, fine cuttings of any material—sLan] Of a robust man.

snippet Isolated fragment, short extrapolation—of information etc.
it’s a snip! A very easy task, question etc.
cut out of whole cloth Completely false (because without foundation).
a lie is made out of the whole stuff (As/from the above.)
cut out for Entirely suited for the job etc., fitted for something as if by specific design.
your work is cut out for you [1843] You have a hard task ahead, as much as you can manage; it is predestined, waiting ready.
gusset-house [Sc] A house on a corner, dividing two streets, just as a gusset is necessary between the two legs of a garment.

B.5d Needles and thimbles

acute [<Lat acuere=sharpen, give a point to] Keen, sharp, effective—look, brain etc.
acuity [<Lat acus=needle] Sharpness of wit.
acuminate Pointed like a needle [derived as above].
not care/give/worth a needle [1200]
blue/naked [1350]/sharp [c. 1000]/slape [smooth, polished—Cum] as a needle
Sharp-witted, very intelligent.
there’s steel in the needle-point, though little o’t [Sc] Quality, but no quantity!
steel in my needle’s eye! [Sc 1641] When the fault is lack of quantity.
in a needle’s ee [Ayr] In a nutshell, concisely.
get/have the needle Be in disagreeable, nervous or irritable mood. Hence:
needle (v) Annoy, goad into anger.
tine needle, tine darg [lose the day’s work—Sc] Identifying those who do more grumbling than working.
a needle of differ [Lnk] The least possible difference.
deep [cunning, crafty] as a tailor’s thimble [wYks] (Which has no bottom.)
you could pour his brains into a thimble and they wouldn’t fill it!

B.5e Stitching and sewing

he wants to know from thread to the needle and the hare and the hare-gate [wYks Lan] Inquisitive about every particular from start to finish. (See also E.10d.)
told it from thread to needle [Yks] With full details.
put a rope to the eye of a needle Attempt the impossible.
thread her/the needle [Ire] Have sex with her.
your tricks are sewed with white thread [1736] They are too obvious to deceive.
sew the eyes with red thread [Ire] Have red eyes from weeping, or bloodshot from weariness etc.
put together/sewn with a red-hot needle and burning thread [sLin neWor Oxf Sur wCor—1678] Of apparently hasty work; terribly impatient.

hot needle and burnt thread [nLin] The explanation for when a thread keeps breaking, or for unsatisfactory work generally.

you are made of butter and sewed with sour milk! [Sc] To those who never complain.

he that doesn’t tie a knot will lose the first stitch [Ire NY Miss: 1732] Take necessary precautions.

like a knotless thread [Sc Nhb Dur Ul] Describing one who slips away easily and unobtrusively.

where the needle goes, the thread follows [Ont Kenty Tenn Ill] Said when a person is apparently under some compulsion to follow another.

talk pack-thread [the rough-quality thread that was used in tying up packs and packages] Talk nonsense [Cum Wm wYks n&eLan]; talk smut, but by innuendoes and insinuation—‘wrapping it up’.

pack-thread gang [Lin] Assemblage met for one particular purpose and unlikely to stay long together. (Because packages were only tied with pack-thread for short duration.)

leave a loose thread Omit an important detail; be careless in the finishing off; leave untidy work.

bite off short Refuse, dismiss peremptorily. (Possibly associated with the Greek Fates who spun a life-thread for everyone—see also J.9b.)

stick [a loop or stitch in knitting—Sc] The smallest article of clothing or bed-linen.

clean steek [a loop or stitch in knitting—Sc Ire nEng] Thoroughly, severely [eFif].

keep steeks with [Sc Ire nEng] Compete on equal terms with; keep up with someone [Edb Gall Nhb] (From a group of tailors working together.)

put in hard steeks [Gall] Do anything vigorously or fervently.

put in a stitch for a friend [wCor] Do a job hurriedly and badly.

go through stitch [wYks, in general use C16–C18] Perform anything thoroughly.

stop stitch while I put needle in! [1847] To check someone’s impatience or over-haste.

every wide stitch [sChs] Every now and then.

sew/stitch up (a person, situation etc.) [1904] Obtain a conviction on overwhelming or fabricated evidence; overcharge, defraud; manipulate or organise a person or situation to further your own purpose, even by bribery or unscrupulous means. ‘The victim of a political stitch-up’; make sure of victory [Amer].

stitched (when playing dominoes). Shut or hemmed in so that you cannot play any more dominoes.

rhapsody [<Gk ῥαψῳδία =a poem stitched together] At first, the poems thus described were longer epics recited by a bard who ‘stitched’ together the different books and episodes, but now the use of the word is confined to poems of enthusiastic and vatic qualities—the main surviving elements from Homeric times.

sewing machine A style of musical performance for which the rhythm is precise and even, but unimaginative, and is thus reminiscent of the regularity of a sewing machine.

put your name into it Guarantee, promote or support some venture or undertaking. (From stitching the maker’s label into a finished garment.)
B.5f Knitting

**knit** (v) [1578] Unite together in a working whole—as in marriage or setting broken bones.

**knit up** Conclude, finally settle. ‘Knit up this tragedy’ [Henry VIII, Letter to the Duke of Norfolk—1537].

**well-knit** Compact, not loose-jointed—of the human frame.

**loose-knit** Casual (relationships); sloppy, unstructured—writing etc.

**close-knit** Binding (relationships); carefully interconnected, intricately constructed—narrative etc.

**knitting** [naut] Girlfriend, girls.

**her knitting’s out** [naut] Said when a mine-sweeper has its gear over the side.

**mind your own knitting** [wYks Nhp] Mind your own business.

**stick to your knitting** [Amer] Attend to your own affairs—a dismissive remark implying ‘that is all you are fit for’.

**you have got your knitting twisted** Are mistaken, misinformed, have mixed up two different things.

**taken down a loop** [wYks] Taken down a peg; reduced in esteem.

**loop together** [Rnf] Marry.

**tie my wool** [Sus] Give me trouble, problems to solve.

**rough off the needles** [Som] Rough in manners, unfinished.

**tie up the ends** Do the final tidying up to a job, put the finishing touches to it.

**take up a loupen-steek** [broken or dropped stitch—Sc] Remedy an evil.

**have it sewed/sewn up** Complete the business, tidy up the loose ends, details etc.

B.5g Sewing seams

every whip-stitch [Hrf Nhb WVir Vir Kenty Ark] Frequently; every now and then; each and every item, everything without the least exception. (From the fine, close stitches in whipping or oversewing.)

**in a whip-stitch** [Nhp War Glo] In a quick, darting movement.

**rip-stick/rip-stitch** Harum-scarum, boisterous child, hoyden [Lakel wYks Lan Der Chs Lin War].

**don’t stitch your seam before you have tacked it** Make sure of your preparations, especially for work hard to undo; be circumspect; look before you leap [Chs].

**down on/on your back-seam** Out of luck; having come to the end of your resources, opportunities.

**seamy side** [Shaks, *Oth* IV.ii—1603] The worse, sordid or degraded side, the side not fit or not intended to be seen. (From the way in which the rough edges of the seams are turned to the inside of a garment.)
B.5h Paddings and linings

padding [1861] Superfluous and unnecessary material intended merely to fill up space in a book, speech etc. (just as in padded garments).

lawyers’ gowns are lined with the wilfulness of their clients [1707] Obstinacy at law is costly.

a silver lining to every cloud [1871] Consoling element in misfortune.

his stay-tape [a binding used on hems and edges of garments] is scorched (Probably in pressing with a hot iron.) He is ailing.

strapped for Given strength and body by the inclusion of a stronger element; reinforced generally—usually of works of entertainment containing a serious message or comment. (In dressmaking, seams etc. were reinforced with ‘straps’ of a stronger material.)

B.5i Buttons

not care/give/worth an aglet [tag] of a blue point [1533]/a band’s end/blue point/brass button/button/button-top [Cum]/point [tagged lace for fastening or attaching clothing instead of a button]

buttons [1743] Small mushrooms, before they have spread.

bright [intelligent, quick, alert]/cute [NC Tenn Calif sAmer]/snug as a button

buttons and button-holes Entirely, completely.

button-hole (n) Woman’s vagina.

take him a button-hole lower [1595] Reduce him in his own and in others’ esteem.

hook and eye Arm in arm—‘intimate as hook and eye’.

B.5j Embroidery, lace

embroider [1614] Elaborate, embellish an account with colourful detail, as in

Merely corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative

[W.S.Gilbert, Mikado]

put on frills Give yourself airs; parade showy but useless accomplishments.

frills and furbelows [flounces or other decorations added to ladies’ gowns] Ostentatious and non-essential extras.
no-frills [Amer] Down to essentials, the irreducible minimum.

there’s always a trimming for every cloth [swDur neYks] A suitable partner for everyone.

hem in/about [1538] Enclose, restrict someone’s movement or actions.
lace his jacket Beat, flog him.
lace (v) Beat in competition.
spangled with—villages etc. Dotted, scattered about like spangles on a robe.
sewing on the sequins Finishing off a work by adding inessential improvements.

B.5k Wigs, hat-making

blockhead [1549] Stupid person (from the block on which a wigmaker fits a wig).

stand as stiff as a stookie [blockhead, fool—Sc Ire Nhb Cum Yks: Sc]

drunk/mad as a hatter [1837–40] (The lead and mercury used in curing skins for hats affected the mind.)

like a hatter [Sc NhW wYks] Boldly; with vigour.

not care/give/worth a dad [knock, clout. flip—Sc] of a bonnet

give a dad with the blue bonnet [Sc] Use counter-charms against curses or illness.

is cloth-eared/has cloth-ears [heavy ear-flaps on caps—1549] Is (intentionally) deaf, obtuse, unreceptive, insensitive.

if his cap be made of wool (—and it certainly will be) Of whatever condition or degree.

thin as cap-paper [cat-paper by mistake—sLan; a thin whity-brown paper such as milliners fold their hats in—Lin C19. Various wrapping papers have been so-called from the C16].

Billycock hat (After William Coke, the C19 sportsman who designed it.)

B.51 Coats, skirts

don’t have your coat to make when it starts to rain [1595] Don’t leave preparations till the last minute.

you may as soon make a cloak for the moon Of an impossible task.

skirt (n) [c. 1470] Edge, shore etc.

skirt (round) (v) Go round the edge, avoid tackling.

outskirts [1596] The adjacent surrounding parts, especially of a town.
B.6a Wearing clothes

cast cloths together Marry.

God sends cold after [according to] clothes Only as much suffering as we can bear.

God gives the cold according to the cloth (As above.)

try it (on) for size [1956] Consider the possibility, plausibility, credibility—of a theory, suggestion, new project etc.; try out a sample.

she shaped her own cloth; let her wear her ill-fitting clothes [OrI] Must now put up with a disadvantage of her own making.

borrowed garments never fit Of plagiarism.

don’t show your skin to the person who won’t cover it [Ire] Don’t expose your weaknesses to the unsympathetic.

anything will fit a naked man [wCon] In extremis anything is acceptable.

he is in his own clothes Let him do as he likes.

good clothes open all doors [1732]

the mohair suit doesn’t hide the bog-dirt under the fingernails [Ire] Mere externals will not disguise origins.

the gentleman in black velvet! The toast of the C18 Jacobites in honour of the mole that made the molehill in 1702 that caused William III’s horse to stumble and the king’s consequent death.

dressed like Sally Hatch/Sal Scratch [Cor Dev] Overdressed.

like Lady Fan Todd, dressed to death and killed with fashion [Nhb Cor]


old-fashioned Out of date generally; of a person—a relic of a former age, retaining the views and virtues of a past generation.

drinking/spending money etc. as if it was going out of fashion/style With unnecessary haste or urgency, profligately.

in vogue Popular, in favour; in accord with modern thinking.

B.6b Clothes wearing

wear (v) Gradually impair by friction, use or attrition—‘the water wears a channel’.

wear/rub off Diminish with use and experience—‘the novelty wears off’, ‘his awkwardness will rub off’. (The nap of a cloth disappears with use.)

well-worn Overworked, frequently used—‘a well-worn cliché’.

wear thin [1931] Weaken with use. (Used of a person’s patience or of arguments that lose their force with repetition.)

sear [threadbare, worn out—Ess Ken Cor] Aged, decrepit; out of health.

thin as a seeter [worn, threadbare area in a garment—nYks]

reasons are not like garments, the worse for wearing

he wears like an old horn button Carries his age well.
wide will wear, but tight will tear A plea for freer discipline.

B.6c Holes

make a hole in [1617] Cause the loss or consumption of a large part of something.
pick holes in.../pick a hole in a man’s coat [1533] Find fault; demonstrate the inherent flaws or weaknesses in an argument etc.
when a man’s coat is threadbare, it is easy to pick a hole in it A poor man is soon ruined.
out at elbows Shabby, threadbare; of an estate, mortgaged [wYks].
frayed [1896] Ready to give way—‘frayed nerves’, ‘frayed tempers’.
not a shred of evidence! Not the least clue. (From the use in c.1400 of shred=scrap, very small part of a person’s nature, the metaphorical meaning developed through the centuries to this present use in the C19.)
tear an argument/case to shreds Demolish and refute it completely.

B.6d Dressing

invest (v) [1533] [<Lat investire=clothe] Envelop, surround with robes of office (and so with the authority of that office); with qualities and attributes; with besieging forces.
buck up [<buck=dress up for the occasion—Lan] Make an effort>move>work more quickly; cheer up.
look on the bright side Console yourself with the more cheerful aspects.
suits her down to the ground [1878] Completely (like a garment that suits from head to foot).
get a wooden suit Be dead and buried.
a bonny bride is soon buskit [busked, made ready—Sc Ire nEng] and a short horse is soon wispit [wiped, rubbed down with a wisp of hay or straw, rough-curried—Sc Lakel wYks midEng c. 1350] (See also E.15f.) A task is the easier when nature helps.
pretext [<Lat praetextus=covering, outside appearance]

B.6e Cloaks, coats, jackets

cloak (v) [1509] Conceal.
palliative [<late Lat palliare=cloak] (The original meaning of cover-with-a-cloak developed through the idea of disguising the pain or discomfort into its present meaning of a temporary remedy to alleviate the worst features of a disease.)

under a cloak of [1526] Under pretence, pretext of.
a cloak for the rain An expedient for every turn of fortune.
hypocrisy can find out a cloak for every rain (As/from the above.)
though the sun shine, leave not your cloak at home Be prepared even for an unexpected change for the worse.

he has coosten [cast] his cloak on the ither shoulder [Sc] Has changed loyalties.
you’re a big man, but a wee coat fits you [Ant] You may be powerful and important, but you are none the better for it.
sure as the coat is on your back [1575] if you lend your coat, don’t cut off the buttons [Ire] Don’t follow a generous act with a mean one. (See also B.6l, if you give the loan of your breeches…)
be Humphreyed [Children of St Helens, Lan] Be caught without something. (There is a ‘Humphrey’ coat—made with pocket-holes, but no pockets—and the saying may well have arisen from not finding what you wanted in a nonexistent pocket. There is also the possibility of a sense-connection with Dine with Duke Humphrey, q.v. E.6a.)
kilty-coat Peggy [Peggy with her coat tucked up—Cum] A careful woman.
turn your coat [1546] Change sides (showing the other side’s colour).
turncoat One who changes sides.
don’t judge a man by the coat he wears [Kenty Tenn III] on his own coat-tails [Fif] At his own expense; on his own account.
sit/stand on your own coat-tails [Amer] Find yourself in a dead-end situation and unable to proceed because of being in a position that itself inhibits any further progress; use a circular argument that defeats its own ends.
trail your coat/coat-tails Pick a quarrel (by inviting tread); be an agent provocateur.
reap up [gather dirt by trailing clothing in the mud] Recall old grievances; remind someone of past unpleasantness [nwEng Lin War Shr Nrf Hmp Dev]. (See also F.20b.)
hang on to the coat-tails of… Acquiesce in, and even derive advantage from, someone else’s action; benefit from dependence on someone powerful.
on someone’s coat-tails [Amer] Deriving benefit from their prosperity, electoral success etc.
mantle (n) [1609] Term applied to several and various (often technical) coverings or surrounds.
dismantle Take to pieces. (Originally only of removing clothing.)
had I revenged been of every harme, my coat had never kept me half so warme [1575] Satisfaction in law leaves you the poorer.
anorak [1980s] Narrow-minded person obsessed by a single interest.
brush his coat/dress his doublet [Sc]/dust his jacket for him Give him a thrashing.
straighten his jacket/riq Chastise him.
jacket-and-waistcoat [Cum] The combination of long wool on the outside and soft wool on the inside of a sheep’s fleece.
speak fancy waistcoats Speak exactly, meticulously.
put on the green waistcoat [Som] Lie buried under grass.
pine overcoat [Amer] Coffin.
your wooden overcoat won’t have any pockets [NY] You can’t take anything with you when you die.

**B.6f Gowns, robes**

the gown is hers/his that wears it and the world is hers/his that enjoys it [1573]
give her a green gown [1586] Lie with her in a field; end her virginity there. Conversely,
get a green gown [Rxb]
get on the green gown [Lth] Lie buried.
a fair woman and a slasht gown find always some nail in the way [1642] Both are vulnerable.

bode [bid, try for, borrow] a robe and wear it, bode a poke and bear it [Sc] Be careful what you ask for; you will have to live with it.
bode for a silk gown and ye’ll get a sleeve o’ [Sc] Don’t expect to get all you ask for; be ambitious, and you may get some part of what you want.
dress upon the spine [Dev] Spread manure on the greensward.
hang heavy on Become onerous—of responsibilities, time etc. (like robes of office).

**B.6g Shirts**

bad as Swath Hoome [Hulme], who was two hours getting his shirt on and then he didna do it right [Stf]
ragged as Jy with his shirt hanging out [Cor]
he rides wi’ a sark tail in his teeth [Sc] When a new-married man is hastening home.
shirt-tail relative [Ind 1938] Distant relative.
in a shirt-tail relationship [Amer 1845] Occupying a subsidiary or inferior position.
shirt-tail [Amer] The editorial column in a paper. (His appendage!)
man and shirt [wYks] Proud of his authority, position.
keep your shirt on! [Aus NZ, C20] Calm down, don’t lose your temper.
he has got his shirt out/is shirty Is in a bad temper (possibly from the action of a man stripping for a fight).

get your rag [shirt] drawn/out/up, lose your rag Be in a temper. (As/from the above.)
boiled shirt—attitude, behaviour etc. Pompous, over-formal (like the occasions at which boiled shirts are worn).
stuffed shirt—types, characters [1913] Pompous but useless establishment figureheads, all show and little substance.
you are as supple sark alone as some is mother-naked [Sc] To those who boast of their activity.

sarkless [shirtless—Sc Ire nEng] Poverty-stricken.

ye cannot tak t’ sark off a niakt [naked] fellow’s back [Lakel NY WVir Calif] Cannot obtain from someone what he has not got.

has no more sark than will cover his back [nYks] Has no superfluity of means.

would take the shirt off your back Would rob you of all you have.

smock-faced [Sc nEng War seWor Brks wSom Hmp IW] Smooth, clean-shaven, sickly, modest.

nerre is my kyrtyl [kirtle, short coat] but nerre [nearer] is my smok [Paston Letters C15 Nrf] The closer your relations, the more help you should give and get from them.

near is the kirtle, but nearer is the sark [shirt—Sc] (As above.)

near is my shirt/sark but nearer my skin Personal safety more precious than property; blood is thicker than water [Yks].

close as shirt and shitten arse

another white shirt will finish him [wYks] He is weak and not likely to live long.

lennock [pliable, accommodating—Cum] as a wet shirt

B.6h Sleeves

sleeve (n) [1864] Tube-shaped fitting that slides over pipes etc.

creep up her sleeve [nLin Nhp War Oxf] Obtain something by coaxing, wheedle your way (back) into favour (like a wayward child reaching up for its mother’s sleeve).

hang on her sleeve Depend on her; surrender your own independence of action or judgement. [Sir T.Wyatt, Satire I—c. 1530]

laughs in/up his sleeve [1560] Indulges in surreptitious mirth.

never put thi arm out furr [further] nor thi sleeve’ll cover [Lan Miss Okl] Do not incur reckless responsibilities.

stretch the arms further than the sleeves reach/put out your arm further than the sleeve will let [neSc Ohio Miss: 1541] Live beyond your means; attempt something beyond your powers or resources.

twist your sleeve-lining Change your opinions, attitude.

another pair of sleeves Something entirely different.

the riven/broken sleeve keeps the hand back Poverty, want of power and consciousness of a deficiency can all inhibit a willing helper.

they that have a riven sleeve must hold their tongue Those who are themselves blameworthy should not blame others.

see down the sleeve of the ways of men Have experience of human nature.

when folk canna get the gowden [golden] gown, they should be thankful when they get the sleeve [Sc] Be thankful for what you can get, even though it is not all you want. (See also B.6f, bode for a silk gown…)
B.6i Hats

hat (n) [1961] Office, position, loyalty, occupation, assumed authority, alternative rôle—‘I am wearing my Commission hat this morning.’

be given a bowler hat [1925] Be demobilised or dismissed prematurely from the services—invariably of officers.

hard hat Conservative and reactionary person (possibly from the idea that new ideas are unlikely to penetrate through to the mind).

useless/worthless as an old hat
old as grandfadder hat [Cum]
old hat [1911] Long-outmoded, superseded, out of fashion (as an old hat would be).
silly as a hatful of worms [Aus]
plain as a hat on a rack
your head will never fill your father’s bon-net [1721] You will never be as wise as he is [Sc].

rive [tear, split—passim] his bonnet Excel him [Sc].

get a green bonnet [Sc] Go bankrupt. (Bank-rupts in Scotland used to be required to wear a green cap.)

he that has no head needs no hat Where there’s no sense there’s no feeling; no need of protection where there is nothing worth protecting.

don’t let your head grow higher than your hat Don’t cherish ambitions that you are incapable of achieving.

his head is too big for his hat Is swell-headed, full of his own importance.

high-hat (n) Person of affected superiority (as might be expected from those who ‘sport’ such hats).

high-hat (adj) Superior in attitude, condescending.

high-hat (v) Treat condescendingly [Amer].

keep it under your hat [1923] Say nothing about it.

talk through your hat Make wild assertions, talk nonsense.

drite [shite] in your bonnet and set it on your head [Sc] Marry a whore.

let ilka head wear its ain bonnet [Sc] Everyone must tackle their own problems, mind their own business.

a hat is not made for one shower You must be ready to withstand any number of troubles.

pull down your hat on the wind side [1640] Use your protection or resources where they are most needed.

give a cob a hat and a pair of shoes and he’ll last for ever [sDev] Provide a stone foundation and a slate coping for a cob wall.

straw hat [Amer] Theatre or production operating only in the summer (when straw hats are worn).

cute [Lani]/curst [Shrl]/fine [Chs]/fond [silly—eYks]/odd [Amer]/queer [swDur ne&wYks nwLin Oxf Amer et al.]/short [wYks] as Dick’s hatband, that went nine times round and would not tie at last/went half-way round and tied in the middle [Oxf] Applied to morose, sullen, temperamental folk, difficult to get on with; originally
of Richard Cromwell, Lord Protector in 1658, though in his case it may have referred to his suspected homosexuality—he was certainly not difficult to get on with.

**go all round my hat** [Dev] Proceed circuitously.

**cap** (v) [Yks EAn Suf] Go one higher, better; surpass.

**you shall have the red cap** [Shr 1678] To a marriage-maker. (No known origin.)

**set him a cap** [EAn] Challenge someone to surpass what you have done yourself. (As above.)

**if the cap fits, wear it!** [1714] If you think the remark applies to you, act accordingly.

**set her cap at** [1772] Try to attract (as if a woman were to so arrange her bonnet as to show herself to best advantage in the desired direction).

**a woman has eyes in her ribbons** [1874] Can intuitively assess her influence without taking overt notice.

**make her ribbons reel** [whirl about—Sc Dor Pem] Dismay, disconcert her [Sc].

**cast your cap at**...[C15] Show indifference; give up for lost; defy.

**fling/throw your cap after** Make a final, useless gesture of despair.

**throw your cap against the wind** [wYks] Attempt something hopeless, futile.

**pull caps** [1754] Quarrel, wrangle, struggle together in an undignified way.

**hat full of feathers** [Shr] Long-tailed tits’ nest.

**make him a hood above a caul** [woman’s hairnet] Befool, deceive him (from the idea of putting him at one remove from yourself, using him as second-best). ‘Maken him an howve above a calle’ [G.Chaucer, T&C III.775–1374]

**every man may not wear a furred hood** There is only wealth for a limited number.

**have a hood on** [nLin] Take offence.

**have a monk on** [Millom, sCum] Be in a bad, sulky, resentful mood. (As/from the above.)

**the hood does not make the monk** Appearances can deceive; merely assuming the appearance does not work the implied change.

For habit maketh no monk, ne weringe of gylte spurres maketh no knyghte

[T.Usk, *The Testament of Love*—1387]

**veil** (n) [1619] Concealment, pretext, disguise—‘under the veil of…’.

**veil** (v) [1538] Partly conceal the real nature or meaning so as to (actually if not technically) mislead.

**veiled** Allusive, covert, thinly disguised—‘veiled threats’.
reveal [<Lat re-velum=un-veil, uncover]
  she has lost/tint her (silken) snood Has lost her virginity. (A custom of Scottish girls was to braid their hair with silken ribbons before marriage.)

B.6j Collars and ties

no man ever wore a scarf as warm as his daughter’s arm around his neck [Ire]
  turn your tippet [collar of fur or armour—1546] Recant, become turncoat.
  Tyburn tippet [1549] The gallows.
  St Johnstone’s tippet [Sc 1816] The gallows noose. (Johnstone was a hangman.)
  wear a hempen cravat Be hanged.
  old-school-tie [1932] The quality of being very conservative and uncritically loyal to your class or group.

B.6k Gloves

fits like a glove Exactly.
  kind [Craven, wYks]/linnow [supple—Shr] as a glove
  right as my glove (Jocularly—the opposite of left.)
  if the glove fits, wear it [Ont] (See also B.6i, if the cap fits...)
  be hand and/in glove [1680] In close collaboration or familiarity.
  a clean glove often hides a dirty hand [Ont NY Ind Ill Oreg] Wickedness may be disguised.
  semmit [soft—NCy] as a lady’s glove
  dead as a mitten
  get the mitten [Cor Amer Can] Be rejected. (It was an old French custom to give an unwelcome suitor a pair of mittens instead of the lady’s hand.)
  better a wet mitten than a cold hand [Shl] Better something than nothing.
  glack the mitten [Bnff Abd] Put a bribe in hand. (A glack is as much as can be held in the hollow of one hand.)
  claw [strike, beat] up his mittens [Sc] Kill; overturn; finish him off.
  muff Woman’s genitals. Hence:
  muff-diver One who performs cunnilingus.
B.61 Nether garments

zone [=Gk ζώνη=girdle] Defined area of particular interest.

belt Narrow strip—of rain, trees, open country etc.

have under the belt [Aus 1930] Possess in your past experience; have enjoyed (like an eaten meal).

tighten the belt/galabieh [Egyptian army belt—1920] Make the best of worsening conditions (like a man combating hunger by constricting an empty belly).

bring your yule belt [time of feasting] to the Beltan [time of fasting] bore [Sc] Reduce your allowance.

ilka man wears his belt his ain gate [in his own way—Sc] A defence of acting eccentrically.

wear belt and braces [1940s] Take twofold precautions.

he’s got his braces twisted Is awkward, unhelpful.

the more the storm tries to whip off your happern [happin<hap, wrap—Sc Ire nEng EAn], the more you should grip your galluses [gallowses, braces—Ire Lan Maine Vmt NY Conn Penn WVir Ind Tenn Geo Ala Miss Ark] In times of trouble hold firm to your supporting friends, faith etc.

tine [lose] the twopenny belt for the twa-penny [one sixth of a penny] whang [thong—Sc] Incur a large loss through a small economy.

leather breeches [NY NC WVir Kenty Tenn] Beans dried and cooked in the pod.

in his breeches Competent, fully equipped [Not]. Also:

it’s no in your breeks [Sc] You’re incapable of it.

she wears the breeches [1567]/trousers The wife is the dominant partner.

let the women wear the breeches [Miss] Give the women the authority.

if you give the loan of your breeches, don’t cut off the buttons [Arm] Said when the kindness of an act is cancelled out by subsequent meanness or thoughtlessness.

too big for his breeches/britches [Maine Ind] Arrogant.

by the seat of your pants By human intuition or hunches rather than technical skill, originally in the context of flying or driving. Also:

seat-of-the-pants electioneering, approach, attitudes etc. Basic, down-to-earth [Amer].

keep your pants on Keep calm.

keep your pants zipped Control yourself—variously.

bore/scare the pants off Do so to an extreme degree.

caught with his pants/trousers down Discovered in an embarrassingly unprepared or compromising situation; at a disadvantage.

a man can no sooner let down his breeks, but you are ready to kiss his arse [Sc] Said when a bargain is lost by someone else offering more.

he thinks his breeks a burden [Sc] So, he will soon weary of…whatever!

a wife knows enough that knows the good man’s breeks from wyliecoat [petticoat—Sc Ire nEng] Knows his and her own place in the home.

red as a petticoat

the lass in the red petticoat [the wife with a good portion] (shall pay for all) [1662]

petticoat régime [1702] Where the women give the orders.
juped [Cum] Domineered over by a woman. [The jupe is a woman’s petticoat or, sometimes, a bedgown—Sc Cum.]

your slip is showing! You have not yet quite rectified your mistake; your previous bad habit is still in evidence; it is now noticeable that you are expecting a baby; (to the man) it is obvious that you have made her pregnant.

give him Maggie’s drawers [a red flag used to signal a miss in target practice—Amer] He has failed miserably; has missed the point.

as if her knickers were on fire In a fluster of panic and excitement.

get your knickers in a twist/twisted [1950s] Get things the wrong way round; be confused.

has both legs in one knicker Of someone, often a footballer, who appears hampered or incompetent.

gripped at the knickers On edge, under stress, nervously tense.

long underwear Highbrow music (being old-fashioned and favoured more by older folk).

ventilate his shorts Rebuke him severely (from the idea of firing buck-shot at his backside).

corset (v) Force into; restrain, control.

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B.6m Socks

limp as an empty stocking

a conscience as large as a shipman’s hose [1540] (Sailors traditionally wear large, thick woollen socks.)

make a Welshman’s hose of Interpret the words to suit yourself; force the words to fit your purpose.

finish in your stockinged feet End up by losing the beat or rhythm. (A musicians’ saying.)

mix moggans with [long, footless stockings—Sc Stf] Have sex with.

he came in hosed and shod [1678] Was born to good estate.

pull your socks up [c. 1910] Improve your effort or performance.

come round—like the heel of an old stocking [wYks] Have sex with.

have leaden socks in your boots Are lazy [Wor].

has crooked stockings on [Nhp wEng] Is too drunk to walk straight.

wear yellow hose/stockings [c. 1590]/breeches Be jealous.

make his own garlans [garters] bind his own hose [Sc] Take his expenses out of his own money.

wear green garters [Slg] Remain unmarried. (From the Scottish custom whereby the older maiden sister wore green stockings or garters on her younger sister’s wedding day.)

blue-stocking Educated woman. (In the C15 literary society in Venice the women were distinguished by their blue stockings.)

a small stain will smear white stockings [Ire] In the pure a fault is all the more noticeable, shocking.
silk-stocking neighbourhood [Amer] Affluent residential area.
sew up his stocking Silence his argument, confute him.
see the back-seams of their hose [Bch] Make them turn and run.
take off by the stocking-tops Prune plants, roses etc. low, leaving only just enough stem for new growth.
bore the socks off [Amer] Bore someone to an extreme degree.
sock away [Amer] Save (from storing coins in a sock).
fit like a stocking on a man’s nose [Cor] Fit badly.

B.6n Pockets

pocket (n) [1918] Enclosed area containing something different—‘pocket of resistance’, ‘pockets of larch in a spruce forest’.
soft as my pocket [Lan] Foolish.
in his pocket Close to him; under his control.
dark as the inside of a nigger’s pocket [Calif]
pocket handkerchief A very small yard or garden.
white as a kerchief [1571]
look as if you were strained through a silk handkerchief! To an undersized or weedy child. (Possible, also, with reference to the use of silk handkerchiefs as contraceptives in France in the C18.)

B.6o Laces and buttons

interlaced Intermixed; interwoven; interpolated; involved together (like laces or withes when loosely united).
strait-laced [1546]/tight-laced [1741] Severe; puritanical, morally scrupulous. (From the stiff and restricted state of a woman in a tightly laced gown.)
highly-strung [1840] Nervous; near to breaking-point with stress (like the strings or tapes on a tight garment).
stretch a point [1565] Do something you really should not do in order to accommodate someone. (Points were the tagged laces on clothing that were meant to be fastened without stretching.)
a buttoned-up man Reserved, uncommunicative; neat [Amer],
buttoned up the back like Achmacoy’s dogs [Sc] Who were so thin their spines shewed.
button it up Complete satisfactorily.
have it buttoned up [Forces c. 1935] The business nearly completed.
button your lip [1868] Say nothing. Also:
button up Refuse to admit.
buttondown/buttoned-down [Amer] Orthodox, respectable.
ready—to the last gaiter-button!
have all your buttons [Amer 1860] Be sane, shrewd, mentally alert.
he has not got all his buttons on [Dor 1860] Is of weak intellect.
have a button loose Be crazy, slightly mad.
unbuttoned Vigorous and informal, unrestrained, uninhibited, relaxed, expansive.
come unbuttoned [Forces WW2] Be greatly upset, visibly perturbed.
zip [1990s] Way of compacting and linking computer files. To unzip is to expand/separate them again. zipping is where two parallel lists of candidates are drawn up, one of men and one of women.

B.7a For mending

hole in his coat [Nhp] Blemish in his character or conduct.
rent [1610]/torn [1845] Divided violently—as ‘a heart torn with emotions’, ‘party rent into two factions’.
a rent is better than a darn A blunder is often made worse by attempts to explain it away.
torn between two… Painfully divided between equally conflicting alternatives.
bursting at the seams [1962] Much too full—of overcrowded housing etc.
come apart at the seams [1965] Lose your temper or composure; disintegrate generally.
a mouth like a torn pocket [nire] Over-wide.
threadbare arguments etc. [1598] So well-worn as to be of little worth.
threadbare friend [‘a good thredbare frend’—Paston Letter 1462 Nrf] Someone who has little influence or power, but is at least familiar and a known quantity.
jarbles [rags—Ir-Gael] drop off quicker than tift [fine clothes—Ir-Gael] A person is more reluctant to come down in the world than to rise.
don’t throw out old clothes before you get new ones [Miss]

B.7b Mending clothes

a stitch in time saves nine [1732] Timely repairs are the least costly.
tak up the steik [stitch] in your stocking [Sc] Reform.
he was scant o’ [short of, in need of, lacking—Sc Yks EAn Dev] grey cloth that soled his hose wi’ dockens/I’d be very loth and scant o’ cloth to sole my hose wi’ dockens [Sc 1528] Proud lasses rejecting suitors.
ay thrang, little thing doing, soling the minister’s hose [Sc] Busy over nothing.
you must go behind the door to mend old breeches Keep private affairs out of public notice; a case for discretion.

**take in the slack of your pants** [WW1] Reform, start afresh, get organised.

**darn the streets** [Sc Irre Yks] Take a zigzag, drunken course.

**darn the water** [naut] Steam to and fro maintaining a blockade.

**turn and type** [do up old garments—sLan Chs] Contrive to make things do.

**an old cloak makes a new jerkin** [1592: Shaks, *MWW* I.iii—1597] On the renewal or rejuvenation effected by a change in employment or purpose.

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**B.7c Patches**

**vamp** [patch, repair roughly—Sc Wm wYks ne&sLan sChs War Dev] Improvise on a musical instrument; accompany a singer by ear.

**patch up** [1573] Repair, variously—‘patch up a quarrel.

**patched up** Bodged, hurriedly constructed—‘a patched up affair’.

**patch in with** [Amer] Tie in with, correspond, be of a piece with, chime with.

**the best patch is of the same cloth** He who offends should make amends.

**marra/marrow** [mate, match—Cum NCy] to the patch [Chs] Well-suited (as when even the patch matches).

**purple patch** [*purpureus late qui splendeat, unus et alter Adsuitur pannus*—Horace, *Ars poetica* 14] Colourful and heightened passage of writing among mediocre surroundings.

**patchwork** [1713] A discontinuous piece of work, an incoherent mixture of connected but unrelated elements.

**not a patch on** [1860] Not fit to compare with.

**she has a tongue that wad clip clouts** [cut out patches of cloth—Sc nIre Nhb nwDur] Is sharp-tongued.

**tongues sae gleg** [keen, active, sharp—Sc] might clip a clout’ [Edb]

**clip-clouts** (v and n) Argue snappishly about trifles, talk much; quick-talking woman [Sc Cum Yks].

**rag-bag of** Motley collection of items or people, miscellaneous collection of (usually) incompatibles.

**like a rag-bag** Very shabbily clad.

**tag** [a dangling strip of torn cloth] and **rag** [Abd] The whole of it, all parts included.

**new collar and cuff** Bring an old sermon up to date.
B.8a Cobblers

drunk as a cobbler/Chloe [the cobbler’s wife of Linden Grove who associated with the poet Prior, and was a notorious drunkard]

grin like an owd sowter [cobbler—midYks Nhp]
not care/give/worth a cobbler’s curse
cobbler’s Monday An idle day. (From cobbler’s custom of not working on a Monday.)
thrang as cobbler’s Monday [Yks] (Ironic; see above.)
the richer the cobbler the blacker his thumb (A sign of industry.)
in half a dozen cracks of a cobbler’s thumb In a moment.
like a snob’s [cobbler’s] cat, all piss and tantrums
cobbler’s pork Bread with bread [Nrf].
cobbler’s lobster Cow-heel [Cmb].
knock at the cobbler’s door/shoe the cobbler When sliding or skating, tap on the ice hree times with one foot while sliding or skating on the other.
shoe-the-cobbler [Nhb] A trick when sliding whereby an upset is caused by a foot collision from behind.

B.8b A cobbler’s tools

elsin grooin [awl-groin=snout, nose—wYks] The mosquito.
sharp as (a/the) (cobbler’s) elsin [awl—Sc Ire nEng Lin]
thrill (n and v) [<OE þyrlian=pierce] The sense-succession here has passed from the purely physical penetration by an awl or drill to the invasion of a person’s body by emotion, and thence to the resulting sensation commonly known as a thrill. Thus the phrase ‘thrilled me through and through’ is still close to the original idea.
gleg [sharp, keen, clever—Sc nEng] as Mac-Keachen’s elshin that ran through sax plies o’ bend-leather [the thick leather from the back and flanks] into the king’s heel (Mac-Keachen, a Galloway cobbler and no supporter of King Robert the Bruce, did this on purpose.)
gleg [ready, quick] wi’ the knife as a souter [cobbler—Sc nEng] wi’ his elsin [Gal]
pack up your awls! [Elg Kcd] Be gone! (Probably a pun on awl and all.)
stick your awl(s) in the wall [Elg] Give it up as a bad job.
ingle [shoemaker’s thread—Sc Ire nEng] Anything unusually long. Hence:
clean as a lingle [Edb] Absolutely.
ingle-back [Ayr Gall] A person with a long, weak back.
hard as a cobbler’s lapstone [the stone that a cobbler lays in his lap to beat leather on—sLan]
dateless [stupid, insensible] as a lapstone [wYks 1885]
it’s enough to make a lapstone grin/sing Of good ale etc.
big as Sammy Liank’s lapstone [Cum 1821] Of lumps of bread and cheese.

stick to your last [1613] Do not meddle outside your province.

measure another’s foot by your own last Apply your own standards to the conduct of others.

make all shoes by one last Apply general laws to inappropriate cases.

what the shoemaker threw at his wife The last!

B.8c Making shoes

tan (v) Turn or make the skin brown by sunlight instead of by infusion of oak bark; chastise by smacking or thrashing, originally always ‘tan your hide’ [C17–C19].

he that makes the shoe can’t tan the leather An excuse for poor materials; also, a comment on chastising your own children.

the full Monty [Montevideo] Complete, with nothing subtracted. (A tanner’s term for a hide imported from Montevideo, renowned for top quality ox hides.)

thick [close, intimate]/tough [Sc] as ben’-/ bend-leather [the thick leather from the back and flanks] Close friends.

close twice before you cut once [1688] Warn before punishing; make certain of what needs doing before you start a job.

tough as shoe leather

shape shoon by your own shauchled [shachled, twisted out of shape, crippled—Sc Nhb: 1737] feet Judge others by your own standards.

make little shoes [EAn] Work only on odd days, without regular work.

make children’s shoes [EAn] Trifle with, make sport of; appear ridiculous; submit to ridicule.

I work for young shoes, not old shoes [NJ] Spoken by a woman rejecting the suit of an older man.

watertight Unassailable, faultless, flawless (as new boots)—‘a watertight argument’.

staunch Originally meant watertight, hence the current meaning of reliable, unfailing.

shoe the anchor Add broad triangles of wood to the anchor-flukes to obtain a better hold on a soft bottom.

not care/give/worth shoe-buckles [1670]

heel-tap [one thickness of leather making up a heel] Last drops of a drink left in a glass or bottle; the last of anything, fag-end.

cobbler’s knock Tapping the ice with one heel while sliding [Wil wSom].

B.9a Wearing shoes

black as a shoe
shoehorn (v) Force something unwanted to be accepted or admitted; make false bids at an auction in order to force up the price [Nhb Cum Wm, 1869]; squeeze someone or something into too small a space or time, compress [1927].

shoeing-horn [1536] Something used to procure acceptance for something else, as (1) an appetiser for food and drink, (2) some prelude to a transaction or condition, and (3) a person used as a decoy or the tool of another.

every man’s nose will not make a shoeing-horn [1510] You have succeeded in amazing us with one marvel, do not expect to do so again; do not make a rule out of an exception; just because one man has humoured you, it does not follow that others will; every man is not to be imposed upon—spoken to them who have found the man with whom they were dealing more sagacious and cunning than they expected.

buttonhook [Amer] Football manoeuvre resembling the path of a shoe-buttoning hook.

tie your shoes [Amer] Improve your behaviour.

have it laced up Have the business nearly completed.

lift/pull yourself up by your bootlaces/bootstraps [J.Joyce, Ulysses—1922] Gain promotion, succeed by your own unaided efforts.

bootstrap (v) Succeed by personal and unorthodox efforts and methods. (From the above.) Hence: bootstrap

bootstrap (n) A starting impulse, force or ability that generates a self-stoking activity. The word is used in this sense in electrical engineering, rocket engineering and computer programming. A bootstrap problem or situation is one that is resolved by the use of paradox or apparent impossibility to overcome an initial inertia. The derivation is from the expression above, a fanciful idea akin to that of lifting yourself off the ground by lifting up the two buckets in which you are standing.

a lie with a latchet [thong for fastening a shoe—NCy 1610] A self-evident, monstrous falsehood.

a thong is no shorter for having been in water [Ire] Trouble and grief do not shorten life.

dry as a bootjack [Cor]

the shoe will hold with the sole [1546] You cannot easily part man and wife.

while my shoes are good [Ire] While I have the chance.

wear round heels Of inferior boxers (who are easily knocked down) and compliant women (who easily go down on their backs).

well-heeled Obviously prosperous [orig. Amer]. (See also K.58a.)

the cobbler’s children run barefoot and the doctor’s children die young A comment on the reluctance of a man to use his work-skills at home.

none worse shod than the shoemaker’s wife and the smith’s mare [Sc] (As/from the above.)

slip-shod [1815] Sloppily, carelessly done, unsystematic—of work, workmanship, writing, speaking etc.

put him in another’s shoes [1842] Into the position vacated by another.

stand in/step into another man’s shoes [1767] Take his place, supplant or succeed him.

don’t criticise a man’s gait till you are in his shoes [Ont] Understand their circumstances before you blame folk.
in my/his etc. shoes [C18] In my situation, predicament.

you find fault with my shoon and bring me no leather [Sc] You should make your criticism constructive.

walk in the shoes of Emulate.

has a straw in his shoe Is a perjurer. (Those who loitered about the law courts, prepared to perjure themselves for money, advertised their business with a straw in the shoe.)

straw-shoe Loafer and perjurer. (As/from the above.)

keep your toe in your pump [Ire] Don’t get over-excited.

take your pumps off [Ire] Lay aside all restraint.

drop the other shoe [Amer] Conclude something hitherto left unfinished; end the suspense (as if a sleeper, disturbed by the sound of one shoe dropped on the floor of the room above him, were waiting to hear the other before settling down to sleep again).

tread/walk the shoe straight [nLin] Conduct yourself correctly; be circumspect and honourable [wYks].

tread the shoe awry [1530] Lapse from virtue.

had you sic a shoe on ilka foot, you would shauchle [shuffle—Sc] Be thankful things are no worse.

ill-trodden [badly worn—nYks] Evil, wicked.

scruff/scuff [graze the surface, touch lightly—passim] Work superficially.

as good/honest a man/as bonny a lad as ever stepped in/trod upon neat’s leather [1577]/shoe-leather [1608]

comfortable/easy as my/an old shoe [nwDur Ire wYks Nhp War NC Calif sAmer] Comfortable, accommodating, lazy.

time to part with your guide when you have got your boots off Said when someone rejects help too soon.

that’s another/a different pair of shoes [NZ 1849] Another matter entirely.

have your heart in your boots [1767]/heels [1548]/hose [1410] Be despondent; fearful.

die in your boots/shoes By hanging or violence.

B.9b Fitting shoes

one shoe will not fit all feet [1574] Different people, different treatment.

every shoe fits not every foot [1587]

if the shoe fits…I If that applies to you too, act likewise (=if the cap fits…).

make one boot serve for either leg Make one thing do two jobs; one word have two meanings; speak or act ambiguously

put the shoe on the right foot Blame the real offender.

the fairest-looking/finest shoe may pinch the foot Beware of appearances; however attractive a partner may be, that is no consolation if you are incompatible.

we never feel the shoe till it pinches our own feet [Ont] Personal experience registers best.
feel the pinch [1861] Notice how things are worsening—usually of lack of resources.
where the shoe pinches Location of the trouble.

But I wot best wher wringeth me my sho

better cut the shoe than pinch the foot Drastic remedies are sometimes best.
he whom the shoe is pinching has the right to rip it [Ire] A man is entitled to remedy his own distress.
sit in tight boots Be ill-at-ease with your host.
a great shoe fits not a little foot [1548] Of a humble man in high office.
too large a shoe will trip you up Unwieldy organisations come to grief.
shoe-box housing Cramped, crowded accommodation, usually consisting of prefabricated units fitted together like boxes on the shelves of a shoe shop.

B.9c Clogs and pattens

sad [heavy—of cakes or puddings] as a weaver’s clog

clog up [Cum nLan] Clear up before leaving, prepare to leave.
slappe-clogs [slippery clogs, clogs without calkers—Lakel] Cheat, unreliable person.
clogs to clogs is nobbut three generations [Lan] However rich a poor man becomes, his grandchildren will relapse into poverty.
pop clogs [pawn them, something you would never do without being convinced you would never need them again] Resign yourself to your death; spend your last days—‘a good way for an old woman to pop her clogs!’; die.
empty his clog Have a piss.
cock [stick up—Sc NhbwCum n&wYks] his/her clogs [Cum nLan]/kick the clog [wYks] Die.
her tongue runs on pattens [wooden under-shoes, strapped on to raise the shoes out of the wet—1566–7] She talks with noisy energy.
as like as two pattens [wYks]
snow pattens [Cum] Snow packed under soles and heels.
spats [1934+] The streamlined wheel-covers over aircraft landing wheels (being very similar in shape).
gum-shoe/gumshoe (n and v) [Amer] One (like a detective or prying individual) who wears silent footwear so as to move about stealthily; thus, to move stealthily. [An instance of metonymy.]
B.9d Boots

new pair of boots Something quite different, variously.

dark as a boot [wYks]

boot-faced Inexpressive, wooden, insensitive, miserable, thwarted in countenance.

hob-nailed Unnecessarily rough, injurious, insensitive, crude.

hobnail(ed) liver [1847] Liver with many small bumps caused by cirrhosis, being the new liver tissue growing out from its surface.

they that are booted are not always ready Physically prepared is not enough.

he whose boot pinches thinks the world too narrow The immediate environment predominates.

the man with boots doesn’t mind where he puts his feet When a man is himself protected, he is less scrupulous about his actions.

the way to keep a man out of the mud is to black his boots [1909] Improve his position in life.

boot-eater An over-lenient person; a juror who would rather ‘eat his boots’ than find the accused guilty.

while the leg warmeth, the boot harmeth [1500] One man’s boon is another man’s bane; often the remedy brings equal harm with it; bystanders or friends often suffer much before a renegade is reformed or punished.

muckle skaith [harm—Sc Ire nEng] comes to the shae before the heat comes to the tae [Sc/ mickle sorrow comes to the scrae [old, shrivelled shoe—Sc] ere the heat comes to the tae (As above.)

warm boot [1980] Way of reloading systems or changing programs without switching off a computer.

B.9e Slippers

have oiled slippers on [Lin] Be in high glee.

draws enough to suck your slippers off Of as tove.

stand on your pantofles [high-heeled shoes or slippers—1569] On your dignity.

wear mules [slippers] of velvet to save your shoes of leather Go to great expense or trouble in making a small economy.

there never was an old slipper but there was an old stocking to match it [Crl] Of old partners.

even a young foot finds ease in an old slipper (Sexual.)

slipper (v) [Amer 1920+] Renounce a life of crime (from retiring into more casual footwear).
B.10a Old, worn-out shoes

**worn out** Exhausted, fatigued.

**seam-rent** [with parted seams—wYks nwDer Chs] Crushed completely.

**so cheap he wouldn’t pour water out of a leaky boot** [Calif] Mean with the drinks.

**common** [Neb Calif]/**full of faults** [Calif]/**useless/worthless as an old shoe**

**old shoe** [Cum] Cast-off sweetheart.

**there never was an old shoe without an old stocking to fit into it** [Ire] There is a mate for everyone.

**there’s a foot for every old shoe** [Ont] A customer, worker, spouse etc. can be found, even for the unlikeliest…

**like old boots, past all hope of mending** Of an incorrigible.

**play old boots with**… [Lan] Play havoc with.

**buy/ride in old boots** [C18–C19] Marry/associate with another man’s mistress.

**cast/thrown aside like an old boot/clog/shoe** [1600]

**foul** [ugly] as a ripped/busted clog [wYks]

**there’s never an old brog** [boot—Ir-Gael], but there’s the shape of a foot in it A person’s character is formed by the influence of his/her friends.

**flung out like an old bauchle** [worn-out boot, shoe—Fif]

**shauchled-shoes** [shoes distorted, twisted out of shape—Sc Nhb] Dismissed lover; reject generally.

**face like a twisted sand-shoe** [Aus]

**down at heel** [1732] Slovenly; indigent (like one who cannot afford to have his shoes mended).

**have a pair of slape** [slippery—Cum Lan] **heels** Cheat.

B.10b Mending shoes

**go meddle with your old shoes** [1538] Mind your own business.

**sole your boots** Make a profit.

**clog again** [swLan] Start courting again, often of widows and widowers; remarry.

**he’ll clog ageean** [wYks] He’ll live long enough to wear out another pair of clog-soles.

**wisdom sometimes walks in clouted shoes** A poor person may be a wise one.

**clouterly** [S.Pepys—24 October 1668] Clumsily (as if roughly done by a patching cobbler).

**buckles borrow, brassen tag-holes beg** [nYks] Folk will lend things of value more readily than smaller things and it is easier to obtain a large loan than a small one.
C
SOLDIER

C.1a Weapons

weapon [888] Means of persuasion, coercion etc.—‘tears are her best weapon’; penis.

wight [brave] man ne’er wanted weapons [Sc III: 1628] It is guts you lack, not arms.

strike home [1694] Make a strong, profound impression (as when striking home with a weapon or tool).

with silver weapons you may conquer the world Money overcomes all.
armed with (good arguments, a letter of introduction etc.) Provided, equipped with, generally.

arsenal Amply-stocked storehouse; repository.

C.1b Stones

a stone’s throw A short distance.

slander flings stones at itself

better than a thump on the back with a stone An understatement in celebration of something (hardly) enjoyable.

like a stone from a sling [Sc 1819] Hurled forcibly.

a slung stone [a stone slung from a sling] Person of unknown antecedents to whom little regard is to be paid [nSc].

pale as a pellet [whitish stone used as a missile—W.Langland, Piers the Plowman V.78—1362]

the thrown stone or spoken word—you cannot call them back

peg [aim a missile] away at [1837] Keep trying to complete a task etc.
catapult into [1929] Project forcibly and quickly into, introduce too quickly.
C.1c Sticks, clubs and cudgels

a staff for his own head A policy or action that will recoil upon himself.

beat him with his own staff Confute him with his own words or argument.

stave off [1609] Foil or, at worst, postpone a threatening event.

undeflected Without being diverted from the original aim and purpose.

counsel breaks not the head A way to settle disputes that is not destructive.

it is easy to stand your ground when only skitogs [strips of bogwood—Ir-Gael] are being flung Don’t exult until you have withstood the real opposition.

sure as a club

knobstick [1826] Man who works while his mates are on strike. (Implying that he is injuring them as much as the cudgels used by the police and military.)

a knob-stock [knob-stick, bludgeon—Yks Lan EAn Lon] wedding An enforced one.

cudgel (v) Labour to elicit a response—‘Cudgell thy braines no more about it,…’ [Shaks, Hamlet V.i—1600].

take up cudgels for [1654] Undertake the defence of.

C.2a Bows

England were but a fling [thing of no importance], save for the crooked stick and the grey-goose wing

I have a good bow, but it is in the castle [Sc] Said when you would do some service, but the means are not to hand.

a man without money is a bow without an arrow

by the string rather than the bow By the most direct way.

have a second string to your bow/more strings to your bow than one [1477] Have another resource, trade, skill, alternative in reserve.

who seaketh two stringes to one bowe, the may shute strong, but never strait [Elizabeth I, Letter to James—1585]

to unstring the bow will not heal the wound Useless to take precautions after the damage.

tough as bow-strings [Sc 1819] Of meat.

draw not your bow till your arrow is fixed Have everything ready before you begin.

draw the bow up to the ear Act quickly and with energy.

hold or cut bowstrings [Shaks, MND L.ii—1595] Settle on that or abandon the whole enterprise.

aim (v [1602] and n [1625]) Intend; intention.

strung up/out [Amer 1860] In a state of emotional or nervous tension.

the bent of his bow His intention, disposition.

bent on/to [1740] Determined to do, or aiming to do, something.
a bow long bent grows weak People kept at work, in subjection or under restriction lose their drive and energy.

the young are not always with their bow bent [1678] Should not be kept too long at labour or under rule.

to the top of his bent To his limit. (The final point of bending before a bow breaks.)

They foole me to the top of my bent

[Shaks, Hamlet III.ii—1600]

beyond my bend Beyond my power. (As above.)

he that hits once is ever bending [1640] Of much encouragement from a small success.

bring him up to your own bow To your own methods, habits.

shoot in another’s bow Practise an alien art.

draw the long bow [1678] Exaggerate.

draw the bow at a venture Make a shrewd guess, random attempt.

take through the bows Call to a severe reckoning.

go over/through the bows Go beyond bounds; behave in a disorderly manner.

C.2b Bolts

bolt (v) [arrow, esp. for a crossbow: 1513] Go away quickly, like an arrow.

dog-bolt [a poor sub-standard bolt, fit only to be shot at or by a dog] Weak-willed person, content to be the lackey or tool of another.

…wurchepfull men ben mad but here doggeboltes…

[Paston Letter 1465 Nrf]

bolt upright [1771] Straight as an arrow.

at first bolt At the first go.

shoot your bolt [1475] Exhaust your resources in one attempt.

a fool’s bolt is soon shot [c. 1225] (Because he has not the sense to hold back.) His contribution or arguments are soon given and soon exhausted.

this bolt never came out of your bag! [Yks] You were not the originator of this. Also, ‘This arrow came never out of your own bow’ [1500].

every man will shoot at the enemy, but few will gather the shafts Few follow an easy action to its hard but logical conclusion.

feather into [Msri Ark] Shoot at, attack.

shot with your own feathers [1545] Defeated by your own argument, policy.

no more like than the fletcher/Jack Fletcher and his bolt [1571] Of people completely dissimilar, often a parent and child.

mend, as the fletcher does his bolt [1530] Makes it worse.
cut a feather Make fine distinctions, split hairs. (See also G.45c.)
make a shaft or a bolt of it [1594] Use it for something or other; take a chance—whatever may come of it.
you cannot make a good shaft of a pig’s tail! [1659] Said of one inherently unsuited for his work, or for schooling etc.
shaft of wit, ridicule etc. (because it flies and wounds like an arrow).
barb the dart Make more cruel what is already cruel enough.
barbed remarks [1777] They wound and stick in the mind.

C.2c Arrows

quick/straight as an arrow
like wood like arrows! [1616] Children are like their parents. (You cannot expect them to be any better than what they are made from.)
let fly [1590] Make an offensive remark, discharge—word, accusation etc. (as when the bowmen attack).
watch out for the returning arrow [Ohio]
swift as an arrow out of the bow [1551]
rushed away—like an arrow from the bow [Still to be heard locally—Cum 1980]
the spoken word and the sped arrow—you cannot call them back [Still to be heard locally—Cum 1970] (See also G.45b, spoken words...)
shoot a second arrow to find the first Set a trap; send a second messenger to find out what has happened to the first

In my schoole-dayes, when I had lost one shaft, I shot his fellow of the selfe same flight The selfe same way, with more advised watch, To finde the other forth; and by adventuring both,
I oft found both:

[Shaks, Merchant I.i—1597]

up like an arrow and lighted in a cow tod [turd] Quickly prosperous and soon poor again.

the good archer is not known by his arrows but his aim Skill counts more than tools.
he that always shoots right, forfeits his arrows Constant success debilitates.
a long shot [1867] Wild guess or attempt that is unlikely to succeed.
an inch in a miss is as good as an ell A miss is still a miss, whether a close or distant one.
quiverful [1535] (see Coverdale, Psalm 127) An ample abundance, generous number—of children etc.
an arrow left in my quiver A resource.
stand by/to your tackle/tackling [arms, weapons (especially and originally arrows); implements and instruments: 1534] Remain determined, unmoved, refuse to budge.

**C.3a Axes**

a battle-axe [1896] A formidable and assertive woman. (The use was reinforced, if not initiated, by an American women’s rights movement periodical, *The Battle Axe.*)

poleaxe (v) Overpower, overwhelm. (A pole-axing experience is a shattering one.)

two-edged/double-edged [1791] Of an action, argument or saying that tells against the user as well as his opponent.

cut both ways [1605] Of actions or arguments that could be turned against the user; have good and bad effects at the same time.

take the edge off Spoil the effect—of an argument etc. (as when sharp weapons are blunted).

fan-flung Widely scattered.

hang up your axe [Nicholas de Guildford, *The Owl and the Nightingale*—c. 1248; Sir Gawaine—c. 1370: passim: NS 1964] Retire from business; finish.


**C.3b Spears**

impinge [<Lat impingere=strike into, thrust against] Intrude, encroach on, exert an alien influence on.

impact (n) Striking effect, strong impression, variously. (From the above.)


keep a pike in the thatch [nIre] Be prepared for trouble; be always ready to speak or act in self-defence.

straight as a pike [long pole, for various uses—Wil]

pass the pikes [1560] Get through the danger, difficulties.

spearhead [1929] The leading unit or individual in an attack.

hastate Spear-shaped [<Lat hasta=spear]—often of leaves.

takes a spear to kill a fly Uses means far in excess of those required.

a sure spear at need Someone to be relied on in a crisis. ‘Thou art a sure spere at nede that leves a man stykkyne in the breres’ [R.Whytinton—c. 1500].
C.3c Knives and daggers

sidearms [Amer, 1920+Forces] The condiments on a table.

have ay a good whittle at your belt [Sc] Be always ready with an answer.

stiletto heels [1953] High-heeled shoes coming to a sharp point.

lose the sixpenny dagger for the halfpenny thong A false economy.

tine the half-mark whinger [dagger] for a ha’penny whang [Sc nIre Nhb: 1628] (As above.)

whittle and whang [Uls] Touch and go.

look daggers at...[1622] Scowl offensively, regard with enmity.

speak daggers Attack verbally.

never draw your dirk [dagger—Sc] when a dunt [blow—Sc Ire Nhb Yks Nhp Glo Suf] will do [1832] Don’t use more power or persuasion than is necessary.

swear a dagger out of its sheath [1678] Swear vehemently, convincingly.

at daggers drawn [1540] Mutually hostile; on the point of fighting.

go for the jugular Attack where your foe is most vulnerable; try for a decisive conclusion.

retort [<Lat re-torquere=bend back, twist back]

C.4a Swords

sword (n) [nYks] Hot-tempered person.

of ice-brook temper Of highest strength and quality. (From the icy Salo River in Aragon in which the Spanish swordsmiths tempered their blades.)

rapier-thin

teniform Shaped like a sword [<Lat ensis= sword]—often of leaves.

love rules his kingdom without a sword [1640]

he that’s not used to a sword, leaves it where he shites [Sc] A criticism of those who, unaccustomed to power, omit something important.

with a handkerchief in one hand and a sword in the other Pretending to be sorry, but ready to take advantage from a calamity.

he that striketh with the sword shall be stricken with the scabbard [1546] Beware of unexpected repercussions.

those who live by the sword die by the sword Violence recoils; a man’s later life follows out of his earlier life, will not be incompatible.

Put up thy swearde into his sheathe. For all that ley hond on the swearde shall perisshe with the swearde

[Matt xxvi.52]

throw my sword into the scale/balance Back my claim with arms or the threat of force.
throw...into the scales Ensure that proper account is taken of...
don’t poke fire with the sword Don’t aggravate a fiery person.
one sword keeps another in the scabbard [1836] A deterrent.
draw not a leaden sword out of a golden/ivory scabbard [1540] Let the event match up to the expectation; of an unworthy utterance.
it is ill putting a naked sword in a child’s/madman’s hand [1539] Giving power to the irresponsible.
gluttony kills more than the sword
the pen is mightier than the sword [1571] Law and reason will prevail where force cannot.
words cut more than swords [c. 1200]
slander [Wis Iowa]/the tongue [Ont] is sharper than the sword
the tongue is not steel, yet it cuts [1386]
use your wit as a buckler, not as a sword To defend yourself, not in attack.
swashbuckler [one who makes a swash (= bang) on his or another’s shield with his sword: 1560] Noisy, swaggering fellow.
brandish [originally=flourish a brand or sword—c. 1325] Flaunt, make show of...in triumphant or aggressive manner.

C.4b Hilts, scabbards

up to the hilt [1687] To the limit, completely.
who has the hilt has the blade [Wal] Management has the control.
true as hilt to blade
loose in the hilt [1623] Living loosely; unfaithful in marriage.
draw/sheathe the sword Enter/retire from the conflict, dispute etc.
the blade wears out the scabbard The active element is detrimental to the passive and receptive element.
vagina [<Lat vagina=sheath]

C.4c Sword-fighting

too late to whet the sword when the trumpet blows for battle This points the same moral as (and may well ultimately derive from) Aesop’s Fable of the Wild Boar and the Fox, where the boar is whetting his tusks on a tree.
within striking distance [1767] Conveniently near, generally.
cross swords Start a controversy, declare opposition, enter into dispute. (See also K.72c, play cross-swords.)
sword-play Verbal conflict, repartee, cut and thrust of debate.
rapier-thrust Delicate but telling piece of satire or argument.

cut and thrust—of debate [1838] Hostile and lively exchange.

by dint of...[1664] By means of; through effort and...(The full and original phrase was ‘by dint [blow] of sword’.)

carry (off) with a high hand/high-handed [1631] Arrogantly, imperiously (as if with raised sword).

pummel (v) [1548] Thump repeatedly, bludgeon (as with a succession of bruising blows with the pommel of a sword).

C.5a Armour, shields

armour of proof Impenetrability, invulnerability. (The original meaning was that the armour had been tested or proven.)

religion is the best armour in the world, but the worst cloak It protects you from the world but not from nature; a defence, not an escape or a disguise.

find a chink in his armour A weak point in his argument, defence.

a clear conscience is a coat of mail [NY III]


laden with iron, laden with fear

shield (v [1200] and n [1400]) Protect and protection, variously.

blazon [<OF blason=shield] Proclaim proudly and defiantly. (From the heraldic description of a coat of arms as depicted on a heraldic shield. See also C15a.)

right-hand man Trusted and reliable helper. (From the support and protection given in battle by a companion on the right with his shield on his left arm.)

human shield [1990] Prisoners or hostages deployed in the vicinity of military targets in the hope of deterring an enemy from attacking them. (First used of Saddam Hussein’s practice in Iraq.)

target (n) [1757] The object or butt generally. The meaning of something to be shot or aimed at derived from the use of an old shield (targe/target) for that purpose. Off-target describes generally what fails to achieve its object.

bread and cheese are the two targets [shields] against death

C.5b Boots, gauntlets and helmets

jack-boot methods, attitude etc. [1768] Oppressive, bullying, pitiless (from the harsh characters in cavalry and, recently, in Nazi regiments who wore such boots).

crush under an iron heel [1954] Suppress brutally; keep in absolute subjection.
gauntlet (n) [1548] Challenge. (From the custom of medieval knights who threw
down a gauntlet to challenge an opponent—or took it up to accept a challenge—to mortal
combat or, more recently, a duel.)
cast/throw down/take up the glove Offer/ accept a challenge.
should regard it as a challenge Spoken in acceptance of a suggestion that the
proposer might conceive is beyond the will or capability of the person—often an
interviewee—to whom the suggestion is being made.
mailed fist/iron hand in a velvet glove [1850] Power parading as gentility; to all
appearances courteous and gentle, but hard and inflexible underneath. (A phrase of
Napoleon’s.)
panache [a plume or tuft of feathers worn on medieval helmets: 1898] Flamboyant
aplomb, swaggering courage, verve.
put the tin hat on…[steel helmet—WW1] Finally stop, conclude, finish it off.

C.5c Equipment, buckles

studded with… Set or diversified with a thick scattering of…(as are belts, shields etc.
with studs).
buckle…/buckle to…/with… Join in marriage [Sc Nhb Cum].
up to the buckle Elated, tipsy.
midge’s knee-buckle Something very small [Ant Dwn].
buckle and thongs [wSom nDev] Lean, scraggy, empty, poor.
bare buckle and thong Poverty-stricken; stripped of everything.
bring/hold (bare) buckle and thong/tongue together Make ends meet.
buckle and thong [1658] Closely, in close partnership; strictly restrained.

C.6a Cavalry

war-horse [1884] Veteran soldier, full of campaign stories; obsessive theme, often-
repeated concert item, argument given an over-emphasis—‘it has become a war-horse
with him’; tough, formidable woman.
cheval de bataille [war-horse—Fr] Strong argument, favourite subject.
horse and man/horse and foot [Lnk: 1600] Completely.
on the trot [1822] In immediate succession.
the cavalry are coming/are here [late C19] Help (generally) is near or has reached
us.
keep…on the trot Give him no rest.
trample/tread underfoot/on…[1596] Oppress, violate, treat with contempt, without
consideration for—feelings, rights etc.
tread in the mire Repress vilely.
down-trodden [1595] Suppressed, victimised.
override (v) [1827] Supersede; cancel out; assume a superior attitude. (From the
cavalry action of riding over the enemy’s infantry or fallen.) Overriding is often used in
the sense of dominant, major or prevailing.
rattle the sabre [cavalry sword first used in C17:1928] Strike an aggressive attitude;
publicly declare hostility. sabre-rattling is aggressive blustering.
dragoon (v) [1689] Force into a course by rigorous means (as if harassing with a body
of dragoons).
inroad [<in-ride=a hostile cavalry incursion: 1637] A forcible encroachment, serious
reduction.

C.6b Heralds, trumpeters, squires and
henchmen

herald (n) [Shaks, R&J III.v—1596] Precursor, one who announces the coming of
another.
herald (v) [1855] Introduce, give early notice of an arrival etc.
trumpet forth [Shaks, Oth I.iii—1603] Make far-reaching declaration,
announcement.
trumpet Of a flower—tubular corona, like that of a daffodil.
would make a good trumpeter— for he has strong breath! Of one with bad breath.
it is not the trumpeters that fight the battles [NY] The words of one make trouble
for others.
blow your own trumpet/horn [Cum: 1783] Praise yourself. (In the old tournaments,
a herald usually bugled for a knight's entry into the lists.)
blow-horn [Penn Mrld] Boaster. (As/from the above.)
is your trumpeter dead (q.d. that you have to praise yourself?) [1721] As a
playground taunt ‘when did your trumpeter die?’ (As/from the above.)
a dry cough is the trumpeter of death [1654]
he cannot hold a horn in his mouth but must blow it Cannot keep a secret; has no
self-restraint.
come/be squeezed out at the little end of the horn [War] Get the worst of the
bargain; be reduced in circumstances; fail conspicuously, especially in a pretentious
undertaking. (As if the clarion call of success were reversed and issued back through the
mouthpiece. There are also moralistic illustrations of prodigals who easily go in at the
broad end, but are cruelly squeezed when trying to emerge at the narrow.)
welcome as eighteen trumpeters Not at all.
satellite [servant or attendant in a great man’s retinue: 1665] Moon in orbit round a
planet; town, country or airfield subsidiary, dependent and subordinate to a more
powerful neighbour.
esquire=squire [<OF esquier<Lat scutarius=shield-bearer]
**C.6c Jousts, spurs**

**sworn enemy to...**[1576] Totally opposed to; incompatible with. ‘Pride is the sworn enemy to content.’

**champion—a cause etc.** [1844] Support actively (as a knight would the lady whom he championed).

**enter the lists** [the jousting area in medieval tourneys: 1647] Join the competition, controversy by offering or accepting a challenge.

**trappings** [the ornamental horse-cloths and caparisons paraded in medieval cavalry processions: 1596] The symbolic outward show.

**fight in armour** Use a condom [from c. 1780].

**knight in shining armour** [1965] Man whose gallantry to women is exaggerated, a paragon among eligible bachelors, an exemplary gentleman—the expression is often used ironically.

**knight of the...**[1508] A title given to ridicule someone with pretensions or with a suspect reputation in his field—this being the word supplied: e.g. ‘knight of the thimble’=a tailor.

**tilt at...**[1733] Direct satire, criticism at... (from the jousting event for lancers on horseback).

**run full tilt against.../at.../into...** At full speed, without any holding back.

**straight as a lance**

**couch your lance** power it to the position for attack] Begin the action.

**break a lance with...**[1591] Enter into contest with, pit yourself against; have sex with (a woman).

**break a lance for...** Espouse or lend support to a cause.

**a stickler** [the organiser and umpire in tournaments—Cor: 1613]—for detail, trifles etc. Punctilious person.

**to stickle for...**[1642] Strive hard on behalf—of a cause, of someone.

**win his spurs** [1425] Make his name, reputation. (A pair of spurs was the award to a successful jouster.)

**gilt spurs do not make the knight** Merely assuming the appurtenances does not effect the desired change.

**hotspur** [the epithet given to one whose spur is hot with constant riding, first applied (as far as is known) to Henry Percy, who fell in the rebellion against Henry IV in 1403] A rash, impetuous man,

**true steel as Ripon rowels** [the spiked wheels on a spur: wYks: 1625]
C.7a Explosives

**explode** Suddenly expand, as do detonated explosives (see K.61d). Hence:

- **explosion** Sudden expansion (as in ‘population explosion’); outburst, as from a person in a passion.
- **explosive** Violent, of inflammatory words etc.
- **dynamite** [1922] A powerful force, explosive in character—of a person, book etc.
- **spread like wildfire** [an incendiary composition used in warfare from C13, readily ignited and very hard to extinguish] Swiftly and forcibly.
- **quick as gunpowder**
- **spark off** [1912] Start—especially of a small factor or incident that starts a larger one, like a spark on a barrel of gunpowder. (See also I.73a.)
- **a spark in the powder magazine** Small but dangerous intruder.
- **sit on a barrel of gunpowder/a powder-keg** Be involved in a dangerous situation or operation; risk imminent ruin.
- **up in the air** Excited, especially with anger.
- **blow sky-high** [1840] Discount, refute, contradict, ‘explode’ finally.

C.7b Mines and bombs

**undermine** Injure a person or their reputation, authority etc. by subversive means; injure health etc. insidiously and imperceptibly. (From the operation of mining or tunnelling under enemy positions in order to blow them up with a mine.)

- **sap** (v) main strength, foundations of faith etc. Insidiously damage and threaten the main support and fabric; reduce, drain it away. (Sappers used to dig saps [besieging trenches] when undermining enemy foundations.)
- **strike at the foundations** Try to undermine or overthrow utterly.
- **pull the trigger/trigger off** [1930] Start a series of explosive events; set in action, precipitate a process (as in switching a trigger to detonate a minefield).
- **apply a match to the train** Start a chain of events; take a small action to bring about a large result.
- **has a short fuse** Is quick-tempered; has quick reactions.
- **fizzle out** [1884] End feebly (like a fuse that fails to detonate the main charge).
- **demolish—an argument etc.** Destroy, reduce it to ruins.
- **hoist with his own petard** [a type of bomb for blowing open doors etc.—<Fr pêter<Lat pedo=fart: a dire fart to force a fort door (fort dure)] Become the victim of his own weapon or idea. [First used, Shaks, Hamlet III.iv—1600]
- **defuse—an explosive situation etc.** Render harmless; remove the primary danger (as does a bomb disposal engineer when he defuses a ‘live’ bomb).
- **time-bomb** [1990s] Computer program timed either to be activated or to cease functioning on a certain date.
minefield [1963] An area or operation full of hidden, treacherous and almost insuperable difficulties; a dangerously complicated situation.

C.7c Guns and gunpowder


blunderbuss (n) Clumsy idiot (from the nature of the gun); loud, truculent talker (from its noise).

take not a musket to kill a butterfly Do not use more force than is necessary.

notch a first Perform something that will go into the records as the first ever. (From marking a notch on the butt of a gun for each man killed.)

notch up [1623] Officially attain, achieve for the record. (As above.)

gunning for... Seeking with hostile intent.

hollow/sure [1622] as a gun

gun-shot The loud click made by sperm whales to stun their prey.

sudden as a gun-shot

proof-shot [1648] Test-piece, trial task for new worker.

crack [gossip—Sc Cum] like a gun Talk very loudly, vivaciously.

small-bore [Amer] Trivial, of small account.

he carries too big a gun (q.d. for me) Of a formidable opponent.

a running fire [continuous discharge of firearms from the ranks] A rapid succession of talk, shouts, heckling etc.

round as a bullet [Cum Yks]

bullet-headed Stupid; of birds (like short-eared owls), having blunt, rounded profiles.

threats without power are like powder without ball

put more powder into it Use more force, strength.

dry as a powder horn

keep your powder dry [1658] Don’t leave all to providence. (From Cromwell’s speech to his troops, who had to ford a river before attacking: Trust in God and keep your powder dry’)

the smell of powder Battle experience; baptism of fire.

drinking to drown sorrow is like trying to slake a fire with gunpowder

lock, stock and barrel [1817] In entirety. (The main parts of a gun. By a coincidence the phrase also describes the complete property of a business or public house.)

all on one side, like the lock of a gun

sure-fire Certain to succeed, work; reliable. (Cf. sure as a gun above).

hang fire [1801] Be slow in acting or in going off. (From the slow burning of the touch-hole paper.)

flash in the pan [1687] Brief show of promise, but without results. (In early types of firearms the main charge was fired by preliminary detonation in a ‘pan’.)

fix the flint of...[Aus] Serve him out (from tampering with a flintlock gun).

misfire Fail to produce the intended result—of a joke, plan etc.
backfire on… Injure the one who uses it (like a gun that misfires and injures the gunner).

**shoot himself in the foot** [Amer] Injure himself, intentionally or stupidly.

**shoot his wad** Do or say all he can; be unable to continue. (When the wad had been fired, so had everything else.)

**shoot** (v) Ejaculate semen.

**spike his guns** [1871] Render him harmless; foil his plans. (To plug the vent of a gun with a spike made it useless.)

**cry cock and pan** Arouse rudely; bring someone to his senses, as if with an awakening conscience.

**half-cocked** [Nhb IW Aus] Half-drunk, tipsy.

**go off at half-cock** Speak or act prematurely; ejaculate before fully erect. (A gun at half-cock has the hammer not fully raised, instead it is held by a catch that should prevent it from firing even when the trigger is pulled.)

**cold/stiff/straight as a ramrod**

**straight as a gun-stick** [ramrod—Lin]

### C.8 Rifles

**at the high port** [the position for carrying a rifle when at the double] Quickly and vigorously.

**zero in on**…[zeroing the sights of a rifle consists in setting them to a known range and then adjusting them to the shooter’s idiosyncrasies] Move inescapably towards, concentrate on, variously.

**raise/set your sights higher** [1950] Be more ambitious. (By altering the height of rifle sights you allow for the distance of the target.)

**lower your sights** Abandon the remoter parts of your plan; be less ambitious.

**score a bull with your first sighter** [a non-scoring shot to check calibration] Make a woman pregnant at the first attempt.

**set your sights on**…[1962] Take…as your objective.

**have/keep in your sights** Keep an objective before you; not lose your purpose.

**Kentucky windage** [Amer] Adjustment suggested by intuition as well as experience (from C19 long musket Kentucky riflemen allowing for local cross-winds).

**shoot into the brown** (sc. earth). Fail completely.

**make a good/bad shot at**… Guess right/ wrong.

**have a shot at**… Attempt. Also:

**shooting for**… Hoping to attain—centenary, century etc.

**call the shots** [Amer: 1967] Assume control over proceedings; take the dominant rôle; make the vital decisions. (From the announcements of an officer or referee on a gunnery range of where the next shots should hit.)

**shoot the breeze/bull** [Amer] Converse idly.

**a (random) shot in the dark** [1895] Wild guess, random attempt.

**shoot the moon** [1837] Do a moonlight flit to evade rent.
**C.9 Artillery**

*big guns/heavy artillery* [Amer] Powerful, persuasive arguments; important man.

*calibre* Weight, importance, ability, potential—‘of equal calibre’.

*it’s wonderful how they make guns, let alone touch-holes* Said by a woman to deflate a man—with sexual nuance.

*level accusations against...* Direct them. (Levelling a gun was one of the preliminaries to taking aim.) Also:

*in/within the level of...* [1548] Within the range or influence of...

*bring to bear on...* [direct, aim at] Apply, generally.

*round/swift as a cannon ball*

*double charge will rive a cannon* [Sc: 1628] Too much of anything is injurious.

*fall short of...* [1590] Disappoint expectation; run short of funds.

*undershoot* (As/from the above.)

*have him taped* [J.Joyce, *Dubliners*—1914] Size him up, know enough to render him harmless (from knowing the precise range of enemy positions as if the distance had been tape-measured).

*bombard—with questions etc.* Ply repeatedly (as in an artillery bombardment).

*soften up* [reduce resistance potential of an enemy position by bombardment prior to attack] Forestall possible opposition to a forthcoming proposal or policy by insidious dealing and propaganda beforehand.

*bombshell* Astounding remark, shattering announcement.

*go like a bomb* With speed, irresistibly—often of vehicles running well.

*rocket* Severe reprimand (from soldiers’ slang in WW2, when to ‘stop a rocket’ was so used because military discipline resembled the power and speed of a rocket missile).

*run away from your own guns* Eat your words; withdraw from your principles.

*mask his batteries* Conceal his strength, understate.

*flak* [anti-aircraft fire] Hostile criticism.

*flak-catcher* [Amer 1970] One who takes the heat out of a protest by meeting the aggrieved party and answering questions, without having either the intention or the power to effect a remedy.
don’t push the panic button [that fires the nuclear rockets: 1955] Keep calm, do not take the irrevocable step.

C.10a Preparing for battle

soft beds make hard battles Life can prove hard for the pampered.
campaign (n) Organised effort—to sell more, keep Britain tidy, for careful driving etc.
on the alert [<It alla erta=to the watch-tower]
fighting fit
take alarm [<It all’arme=to arms]
up in arms Protesting indignantly.
take up arms for... Help, defend—variously.
pioneer (v and n) [go ahead of the main body of troops to make the route passable by repairing the road, clearing minefields and building bridges; soldier so employed] Go or be first in a field, generally where others follow; explore(r), initiate(r) in new area.
task force [armed force with specified objective under one commander—Amer 1940s] Group, often a committee to whom a particular task has been given.
hard as a turnpike [Yks] (The turnpikes, their points hardened or even iron-shod, were stuck in a road to form a barrier.)
go through fire and water [c. 825] Endure all conditions.
he that is in is half-way over The decision to start is vital.
the danger/river past and God forgotten! [1670] When the crisis is past men cease to pray.
battle-lines have been drawn Those involved in the dispute have now committed themselves to one side or the other.
stand up for... Back, support.
send the balloon up End the respite; start the disaster. (From 1915 campaigning, because when the observation balloons were sent up, an imminent attack was expected.)
slogan [outcry of the host, war-cry of the Highland clans—Sc-Gael: 1704] Rhetorical, advertising catch-phrase, motto.
clarion-call Loud, clear call to action. (Clarions were shrill trumpets much used in war.)
trumpet call Urgent call to action—variously.
excursion A move beyond the usual limits; trial of something new or unfamiliar.
go over the top Take a final decisive step; react excessively, lose all sense of proportion. (From the WW1 expression meaning to go over the trench parapet at the start of an infantry attack.)
march up to the cannon’s mouth Boldly tackle the opposition at its strongest point.
look down the barrel Face imminent disaster.
come out into the open [1942] Cease to be secretive; confess; act publicly; reveal plans, thoughts etc.

climb on their backs Gain promotion, advantage by suppressing others; use others for your own advantage (as the troops used to climb over barbed-wire defences by stepping on the bodies of their comrades).

C.10b Shooting in battle

reach for your gun React aggressively.

quick on the draw/trigger Quick to react, respond.

slow on the draw [Amer]/uptake Mentally lethargic.

hip-shooter [trigger-happy gunman who shoots from the hip—Amer] Impetuous, hasty person.

the opening shot in a new campaign Start of new negotiations.

fire a gun Raise a matter clumsily or tactlessly.

fire away!/shoot! Say what you have to say; ask your question now; make your request.

get the drop on...[shoot before your enemy can do so] Be in a superior position.

oft ettle [take aim—Sc Ire NCy], whiles hit [1721] If you try often enough you will sometimes succeed.

(right) on target Having achieved precisely what was intended.

shoot him through the nose [wSom] Supplant him in love.

shoot to pieces Destroy, especially of a person in debate by an opponent with devastating arguments. Also of ideas, personalities etc. shattered by hostile attacks.

the first casualty in war is truth [NY SC UK]

envy shoots at others and wounds herself

his number’s up [WW1] Is doomed (as if his number was written on the bullet). Also: ‘have your name on it’.

every bullet has its billet [lighting or lodging place] Every word or act has an effect.

caught between two fires [1885] Trapped between two equally unpleasant alternatives (like troops caught between fire from opposite sides).

outgun Gain the advantage by superior numbers or power.

stand to be shot at [neLan] Stand by your bid in an auction, solely to let the seller get a higher offer.

under fire Heavily criticised.

ricochet words Pairs of words in which the second element seems to have flipped off the first, as in flip-flop, mish-mash, hiccup.

keep a low profile Remain inconspicuous; keep out of the public eye.

high-profile—policy, advertising, product etc. Prominent, well-publicised, vigorously promoted.
C.10c Starting to fight

**Impetus**: [<Lat impetus=falling against, attack]
- assailed—by doubts etc. Beset by them.
- attack—of illness, disease Sudden onset, spell, bout.
- come under attack Meet with opposition, criticism—variously.
- boots and all [Aus NZ] Wholeheartedly.
- go for someone bald-headed [Amer] Without restraint or preparation; heedless of consequence (as a man might rush into a fight without hat or helmet; at the Battle of Warburg on 31 July 1760, the charging Marquess of Granby’s hat and wig blew off to reveal a bald head).
- Marquis of Granby A bald man. (From the above.)
- affront [<OF affronter=strike on the forehead<Lat ad frontem=upon the forehead/face]
  - be/run in his beard Oppose openly.
  - take by the beard Attack resolutely.
  - in the van [vanguard;<OF avangarde= advanced guard: 1661] In the forefront, the progressive, leading position in various organisations—industry, the arts etc.
  - riot—of colour, sound etc. An extravagant confusion.
  - clash (v and n) of colour Where two colours—like pink and orange—do not match well together, seem to be in conflict.
  - blow (n)—to pride etc. Damage, setback, upset.
  - strike a blow for… Make a committed and determined effort on someone’s behalf.
  - strike a blow [Aus] Do some work.
  - it takes two blows to make a battle A dispute is never entirely one-sided.
- repugnant [<Lat re-pugnare=fight back against]
  - fight back the tears Resist a strong compulsion to weep.

**Better be at the end of a feast than the start of a fray** [Sc: 1546] Be sure of a little rather than run risks for a lot; a good thing in the past is better than a bad thing in the future; better be late for something good rather than early for something bad. An echo of this occurs in Shaks, Hy IVi IV.ii—1597.

**Thrift and he are at a fray** [1546] Are not working together.

**Passage at/of arms** Controversy, dispute. fight [c. 1000] Employ various means to oppose, other than actual battle.

**Fighting chance** Opportunity to succeed by your own efforts.

C.10d Woundings

**Hamstring** [J.Milton, Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England—1641] Cripple; destroy the capability and efficiency of (as a soldier is put out of action if his hamstrings are cut).
high/fair words break no bones You need neither fear nor regard mere talk.

a jest breaks no bones
the tongue breaks bones though itself has none [c. 1225]
the tongue wounds more than the arrow [Oreg]
catch it in the neck [1882] Be severely reprimanded or punished.

hop in his neck [sChs] Have revenge on him.
break the back/neck of... Finish the worst part of a task; overcome the first difficulties [Lin Nhp],
a scald [sore with scabs, ringworm etc.] head is soon broken [c. 1350] One already vulnerable is soon overcome.

it is no time to stoop [duck] when the head’s off [Sc] Take care betimes.
a light hand makes a heavy wound Of woman’s love.
the wound that bleeds inwardly is the most dangerous [1579+]
a green wound is soon healed [Ont] Deal promptly with an injury. (A green wound is a recent, fresh, raw wound.)

back-blow [blow coming from behind] Unforeseen setback or misfortune.
astonish/astound/stun [each<MedEng astone=stun, strike senseless; and just possibly<Lat attonare=smite with a thunderbolt] Impart such a blow, shock, powerful impression, remarkable experience as to reproduce the effect of concussion—'an astounding revelation’, 'a stunning girl’.

afterclap [Sc Yks Eng, s of Lan: 1375]/arterclap [Oxf] Unexpected repercussion, relapse, something unpleasant occurring after it had no longer been feared [nwLin], further event or misfortune after an affair is thought to be over [Sheffield, Yks], ‘Thynk of after-clappes and have prevysion in all your werk…’ [Paston Letter 1469 Nrf]; getting out of a bargain or obligation [wSom].

transfix (with horror etc.) Pierce deeply, paralyse.
cut to the heart Deeply grieved.
twist the knife in the wound Exacerbate an injury already grievous.
walking wounded The casualties of a society, citizens who are mentally or physically damaged but who manage to carry on.
am as much use as two men gone sick malinger [<Fr malingre=scabby, sore] (At one time soldiers used to evade military duties indefinitely by aggravating their own leg ulcers.)
slander leaves a scar behind it
bear the scars of...[1583] Remain affected by something, suffer the after-effects of...
open old wounds Revive former griefs, grievances.
old wounds soon bleed [Ont]
unblemished—reputation, honour etc. [C14] Undamaged, as good as ever.

C.10e Battle tactics

command—of language etc. Consummate control, ability to deploy.
commanding—position, height, views Good enough for a general to direct a battle from. Extended to games such as chess—‘in a commanding position’=likely to win the game.

strategy [<$Gk$ στρατηγία=generalship] Contingency plan, policy generally.

manoeuvre (n and v) (Perform) complex exercise to gain an advantage.

outgeneral Outmanoeuvre, often in a sporting or conspiratorial context.

the sole object of the exercise The main and prime purpose.

echelon Grade, rank generally, even in civilian organisations. (From the way in which some echelons are in advance of others when facing the foe.)

swell the ranks of… Increase support for a cause.

our ranks are thinning Others of our company, generation have died.

fill the ranks Restore losses, recoup, reinforce.

close ranks [1941] Unite; show ourselves unanimous—often of the members of a family or firm showing unwonted loyalty at a time of crisis.

concentrate [$<Fr$ concentrer=join in one centre=$Lat$ con-centrum=centre together] (From the root idea of bringing scattered elements into a central point, the use extended to mental processes, especially the single-minded direction of thought.)

rally round (the flag) [1862] Demonstrate loyalty or support, especially in a crisis. Hence:

rallying point Place, principle, event or slogan that focuses the loyalty and enthusiasm of a party or even merely of a group with that common interest.

bring/come into line [C18–C19] Make to conform/conform, generally. (Originally only of the line of battle.) Hence:

in line Orthodox, conformable, having the same aims and opinions as the rest of the group.

all along the line In every way, completely.

shoulder to shoulder Closely supporting each other.

back-to-back loan One that is set against an equal loan, but in a different currency. (When combatants stand back to back, they can give each other mutual support and defence.)

constant [$<Lat$ con-stans=standing together, and so standing firm]

cover your ass/tail [Amer] Make provision for protection; devise a cover-up, excuses.

make a foray into… Venture into an unfamiliar area of learning, society, religion etc.

break-through [Amer 1949] A significant advance in knowledge, research or technology; the creation of an opportunity for progress.

outflank Outmanoeuvre by devious means or superior experience and skill.

work a flanker Practise an underhand trick, unfairly outmanoeuvre.

circumvent [$<Lat$ circum-venire=come (all) round] Deceptively trap, outwit, cheat, evade.

half the battle [1849] The early and major part of a task.

run for cover Take steps to avoid approaching trouble.

fall back on… Have recourse to reserves when all else fails.
C.10f Winning and losing the battle

hold/keep/conquer/leave (open) the field  Continue or gain or give up the contest.

*take the (moral) high ground*  Claim a (morally) superior position; justify an action by showing it to be ethically unassailable. ‘My answer took strong and high ground at once’ [C.Brontë, Letter—26 August 1846].

*gain/lose ground*  Make progress or fall back—variously.

*make up lost ground*  Recover losses, variously.

*keep/hold/stand your ground*  Maintain your position, refuse to yield, having the courage of your opinion.

*shift your ground*  Try a different plan, argument.

*battle (your way) through*  Gain objective after a struggle.

*drive/push him into a corner*  Trap variously.

*cut the ground from under his feet*  [1567] Deprive him in advance of his main defence, argument.

*cut him off at the knees*  [Amer] Disable, deflate, cut short his activities.

*bring him to his knees*  Force him to submit.

*prostrate*  (v) Render someone helpless, reduce someone to an unresisting weariness, weakness etc.

*be on top of—work etc.*  Be in control, have it well in hand.

*hold down (a job)*  Be in control of, retain.

*strike at*… Try to overthrow or destroy in other ways than with physical blows.

*the taller they are, the harder they fall*  Downfall from a lofty position is all the worse.

*kill off*  Set too fast a pace for a rival runner and so put them out of the race.

*kill time*  Occupy time, help it to pass, especially with drudgery or futile work.

*kill a story, rumour*  Suppress, deny it.

*kill an engine*  Turn it off.

*kill a light/cigarette*  Extinguish it.

*dressed to kill*  Dressed very specially, in order to impress.

*catch not at the shadow and lose the substance*  Distinguish between illusory and genuine objectives.

*beat the air*  Waste effort.

*ward off*  Avert, parry—variously.

*hand over head*  [c. 1440] Pell-mell, confusedly, recklessly (like untrained fighters).

*down-daggered*  [unable to hold up the dagger-hand]  Daunted, confounded.

*never tell thy foe that thy foot acheth*  [c. 1300] Do not reveal personal weaknesses to an opponent.

*tell not thy foe when thy foot’s sleeping, nor thy step-minny [step-mother] when thou’rt sore hungry [Sc]  (As above.)

*battle on*  Continue the struggle—variously.

*one trouble on the neck of another*  Frequent; following closely [nwLin].

*jump down my throat*  [1879] Interrupt with contradiction, answer violently.

*eat sand*  Shorten a watch (usually the helms-man’s) by turning the hour-glass before all the sand has run through.
he’ll as soon eat sand as do a good turn Most unlikely.

throw dust in their eyes [1581] Try to distract from the truth.

kick up/raise a dust/sand [Sc nEng Shr Nhp Brks Ken Sus Amer Aus] Confuse the issue by causing a turmoil; create a disturbance, outcry.

he that blows in the dust fills his eyes with it [1670] The mental or moral blindness attendant on vile preoccupations.

bite/lkcthe dust Be brought low.

C.10g Retreat and defeat

fight shy of... Avoid contact with, evade an undertaking.

fight a losing battle Continue a hopeless opposition.

it is a hard-fought field where none escapes Of a dispute where everyone incurs loss.

trench/entrench upon... Infringe on.

entrench [1594]/take up entrenched positions Establish yourself, settle securely, be obstinately resistant to change.

trench warfare [1973] A long-lasting dispute where both sides consider their own position to be impregnable.

put your head above the parapet Declare your position; boldly assert your opinions.

bob down—you’re spotted! Stop trying to fool us, we’ve rumbled you; that argument is too feeble to use on us. (As if to a fellow soldier looking out over the trench parapet.)

bunker mentality An attitude of final defiance and resignation—of one who holes up in a static though desperate situation (like the leaders of a defeated nation in underground bunkers).

blow his cover Betray his secret (inadvertently); bring his private dealings into the open; nullify his disguise and reveal his true identity [Amer].

die in the last ditch/dike Resist to the utmost. Hence, last-ditcher and last-ditching

The Prince of Orange, later William III, used this expression in 1672.

a last ditch attempt Final, seemingly doomed and hopeless attempt; one made at the last minute in a desperate bid to avert disaster.

flinch (v) From the original sense of giving ground in battle, the meaning has narrowed down to the common present sense of wincing away from pain [1677], showing intolerance of what is unpleasant, even by involuntary reflex; hence again, to flinch from is to avoid something repugnant.

back out of... Retreat cautiously.

back down from... Withdraw downwards from a position taken up (as in climbing down a ladder).

break ranks Throw into disorder.

beat a retreat Depart worsted. (From the signal to retreat given on the drums.)

subterfuge [<Lat super fugere=escape, evade] Crafty, underhand trick; avoiding defeat in debate by evasion or deception.
in a retreat the lame are foremost [1640] In altered circumstances a handicap may prove an advantage.
run away from… Avoid through fear.
a truce to…! Put an end to…, stop…
give no quarter Be unsparing—in a report, criticism, sentencing etc.
succumb [<Lat succumbere=lie down under, as one who can resist no longer, or as a woman with a man]
insult [<Lat insultare=leap on the body of a defeated foe]
jump all over… [Amer] Rebuke, berate vigorously.
death-blow [1811] Final destructive event; the end to hopes, plans etc.
defeat (v) Nonplus, prove too much for. ‘This problem defeats me.’
havoc Destruction, variously. (From the old army order commanding pillage [1385].)
up for grabs Available, accessible, open to negotiation, unsettled, undecided, in dispute.
compile [<Lat compilare=plunder, pillage]
in the bag [Amer] Ruined (from the plastic bag into which the remains of battle casualties are collected).
bonfire [<bonefire, being either a crematory fire on which the corpses were burnt after a battle, or else a ritual fire of bones surviving into the C15 from ancient pagan custom, possibly originating in human sacrifice]
bite (on) the bullet Suppress reactions; behave courageously; accept the cost and consequences of a particular decision [Amer]; do something painful but necessary [Amer] (Before anaesthetics, patients for surgery were given a lead bullet to bite on during the operation.)

C.10h Air and nuclear warfare

point of no return [WW2 airmen 1941] That place in any journey, sequence etc. after which it is better to carry on than to return; irreversible decision.
shoot down (in flames/from a great height) [1943] Rout an opponent; utterly demolish someone’s case/argument. Also, shot down in flames=jilted, crossed in love.
hit the ground running Go into instant action from the moment of arrival (like paratroopers).
nose-dive Sudden, drastic and sometimes fatal decline, turn for the worse; acceptance of religion at a revivalist meeting.
grounded [Amer 1939] Deprived of transport, confined to quarters—often for disciplinary reasons. (Originally of airmen unable to fly because of fuel shortage or damaged machines.)
red alert [the warning to key services like hospitals and airports to make ready to cope with a crisis situation—1961] A general state of readiness and preparedness.
blitz [<Ger blitzkrieg=lightning war; in English mainly used 1940+ of the heavy bombing raids on London and other cities] All-out drive to dispose of something
troublesome; rapid and energetic assault on a recalcitrant or long-standing problem. ‘Have a blitz on…’ = resolutely clear away.

**blockbuster** [name given to a large bomb capable of demolishing a whole apartment block—WW2] Something devastatingly powerful of its kind.

**overkill** (v) Use larger forces than necessary to achieve your object (from the policy of holding more nuclear arms than would be needed to wipe out a possible enemy).

**overkill** (n) [Amer] An excess, variously.

**bikini** [1948] Skimpy bathing suit for women (comparing its explosive effect on men with that of the nuclear tests on Bikini Atoll in 1946).

**debriefing** [the exchange of information after a military or space mission in order to evaluate results and avoid mistakes in the future] A letter to unsuccessful candidates giving reasons why they were not chosen. (See also H.18c, **brief**.)

**in/under wraps** Stored away; in abeyance.

**pull/take the wraps off** Restore to use; reveal again.

### C.10i Military signals

**has Baker flying** [the red ‘B for Baker’ flag—Amer] Is menstruating.

**I’m a bit off-net** I don’t understand what you are trying to say. (To have a radio that is off-net means that you are not properly tuned in to all the other operators in your ‘net’ or group.)

**network** (n) [Amer 1947] A wide association of people having a mutual interest.

**network** (v) [Amer] Solicit aid or views for such an association.

### C.11 Prisoners

**set his foot/tread on the neck of…/keep foot on throat** [1642] Tyrannize, establish dominance over, completely master.

**cast/throw yourself at his feet** Be submissive, at his mercy.

**white flag** [1600] Token of surrender (the traditional way of asking for a truce).

**disarm** [G.Chaucer, *Boethius* I metre iv, In. 18—c. 1374] Overcome hostility or suspicion—‘a disarming smile’ (often implying that this takes place contrary to good sense, first impressions, other evidence or someone’s better judgement).

**sit down under…** Submit to—insults, harsh treatment etc.

**give a hostage to fortune** [1612] Make yourself vulnerable to fate; leave too much to chance. ‘He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune’ [F.Bacon, *Marriage and a Single Life*—1607].

**hold…to ransom** Exploit an advantage or situation for your own profit—‘hold your employers to ransom’, ‘hold the country to ransom’.
king’s ransom Fabulous amount of money.

a bushel of March dust is worth a king’s ransom (A dry spring promises good crops.)

deadline Final date before which work must be completed. (The deadline point in a military prison is that beyond which a straying prisoner is liable to be shot.)

only their chains to lose! Whatever the outcome, they cannot be worse off.

send to Coventry Exclude from society because of objectionable conduct, especially excommunicate at work—a form of social punishment whereby workers refuse to talk to a workmate of whom they disapprove. Of many conjectures about the origin of this expression, the likeliest is:

At Bromigham, a town so generally wicked that it had risen upon small parties of the king’s and killed or taken them prisoners and sent them to Coventry [then strongly held for the Parliament]

[Earl of Clarendon, History of the Rebellion—1647]

C.12a Forts and castles, fortifications

castles are built stone by stone [Ire] A great result can be achieved by doing a little at a time.

Holyrood was not built in a day To discourage haste in a job. (A vast castle.)

stronghold [1690] Place, institution where a particular cause, belief or method is dominant.

bulwark [1577] Strong safeguard, defence—often of a person or principle giving security.

palisade tissue The part of a leaf that contains its main green tissue and is composed of elongated palisade cells arranged defensively under the epidermis.

bastion [1679] Defence generally.

tower (of strength) (n) [1597] Protector, champion, person much relied on.

pour (—scorn etc.) on… Rebuff with an overwhelming amount (of scorn etc.)

loophole [1663: narrow slit opening, mainly used for shooting arrows through; < MDu lupen=wait, peer, watch out for; as meaning an outlet as way of escape probably derives from the Dutch loopgat=runaway gate] Way of evading the intention of an act or regulation.

a mouth like a Low-country loop-hole [Yks] A wide one. (Probably confused or connected with loopgat, above.)

pitfall [1586] Disadvantage, trap for the unwary, any hidden danger or error into which a person is liable to fall unawares. (Originally a bird-trap with a trap-door, but it was also used for, and since the C18 has been exclusively envisaged as, a concealed pit.)

scandal [<Gk σκάνδαλον=a snare or trap for an enemy]
stumbling block Difficulty, bar to progress. (In the C13 Dover Castle there is an arrangement whereby attackers who stormed a postern would rush through dark tunnels and then, dazzled by daylight ahead and upward, were tripped by irregular stone blocks set in the floor.) The phrase recurs in translations of the bible from the time of Tyndale [Lev xix.14; Isa viii.14, lvii.14; Jer vi.21; Rom xvi.13 (and elsewhere in the Epistles)].

obstruct [<Lat obstruere=erect (something) in the way, block the way]

Chinese wall Barrier to understanding etc., wilful unintelligibility.

Maginot-line—mentality, complex One obsessed by defence, maintaining the status quo; an inability to adapt to change. (From the French Maginot Line, upon which the French command placed unwarranted confidence in 1939.)

C.12b Sieges

propolis [<Gk πρό πόλις=in front of the city] Bee glue, used to protect the colony from draughts, wet or other invaders.

a castle's easy kept as is never stormed [1628 : Shr] Of untried virtue.

he thinks that he himself is the very stone that was hurled at the castle [Ire] Of self-importance ill-justified.

beleaguer Importune; bring powerful or concerted opposition against a sect, clan, household, industry etc.

besetting [besieging]—sin/temptation [c. 1000] One that is ever present, surrounding.

obsession, obsessive [<Lat obsidere=besiege] (An obsession is an idée fixe that haunts the mind and becomes a hostile presence as hard to break as a besieging army.)

besieged by—applications, enquiries etc. Subjected to many, and with no chance to escape.

siege mentality [1969] Defensive attitude, refusal to contemplate change or to take action necessary to improve things.

lay siege to...[1597] Importune, keep on trying to persuade.

lay siege to her heart Woo her constantly.

devastate (v) Bring to hopeless ruin, desperation. (The policy of laying waste the surrounding countryside before retreating into a fortress or stronghold was so as to deny supplies to the beleaguering force, but the same policy after a victory was vindictiveness.)

hold the fort [General Sherman, Amer 1864] Carry on unaided; cope with a crisis; stand in for another.

ram the argument/point home Forcefully emphasise it; put the weight of irresistible reasoning behind it.

gifts break through stone walls Bribery succeeds where force cannot.

hunger breaks through stone walls [1350] Is an irresistibly driving force.

given out with the rations [1925] Presented indiscriminately without regard to merit.
discuss [<Lat discurtere=shatter, break up, disperse] (The sense development proceeded from late Latin=disperse→judging a law case by examining it part by part [C14]→examining similarly the parts of an argument through debate [C15].)

widen the breach Exacerbate the quarrel; make the rift worse.
step into the breach Bring much-needed help, help in a crisis.
stand in the breach [1611] Expose yourself to the brunt of an attack.

a castle that speaketh is near a surrender Of a woman courted.

backs to the wall Hard-pressed, struggling against odds.

his back is at the wall [Sc] He is in trouble or financial embarrassment; in hiding (in this sense after the 1745 rising).

let down the portcullis Take refuge, ensure your own safety.
pull up the drawbridge behind us Exclude further possible membership.
scale the heights Mount swiftly to a position of eminence (as if by scaling a ladder up to the top of a tower).
take by storm [C.Brontë, Jane Eyre ch.xxxiii—1847] Get an enthusiastic reception from the audience, almost against their inclination.

preoccupied [<Lat praecoccupare=capture beforehand] Mentally absorbed, distracted [1849].

bridgehead [originally fortifications protecting a bridge, especially on the side nearest the enemy; later used for a position established in enemy country, as by a landing force etc.] A position of advantage generally from which there is the chance to advance or expand.
barn-stormer Strolling player—depreciatively; second-rate actor, especially one with an exaggerated or declamatory style; daring acrobat who does stunts in the air, like wing-walking.
barn-storming Boisterous and forceful, but unpolished. (As/from the above.)

ransack—your brains Try frantically and desperately to remember something forgotten or to solve a problem.

C.12c Barracks, camp etc.

fits like a sentry-box Very loosely.
on the qui vive [‘Qui vive?’ was a French sentinel’s challenge, requiring the answer ‘le roi’ or ‘la France’] On the alert.
cordon sanitaire [military defensive line to enforce a quarantine between contaminated and uncontaminated districts—Fr] Protection against unsuitable company or possible sources of corruption.
go deolali (tap) [UK Army] Become queer, eccentric, ‘jungled’. (From the military staging camp at Deolali, India, where both medical cases and repatriands were kept waiting so long for a berth from Bombay that their condition, both mental and physical, deteriorated.)

get him on the inside of the tent pissing out Win over a troublesome critic or opponent to your side.
dead as a tent-peg

**barrack-room lawyer** Soldier who parades a knowledge of Queen’s Rules and Regulations.

**as much chance as a virgin in a barracks!**

**walk your chalks!** [wYks Lan Chs Suf] Clear out! (In old times when a sovereign made a journey, lodgings were procured by turning out the occupants and putting chalk-marks on the doors. The phrase could either mean ‘Walk through the town and look for the chalk-marks’ (addressed to the retainers) or else ‘Walk out, your home is chalked’ (addressed to the evicted tenants). There is, however, some doubt about this explanation because the earliest use recorded in OED is for 1835, though DOPAF records that when Marie de’ Medici came to England in 1638 Sieur de Labat was employed to mark ‘all sorts of houses commodious for her retinue in Colchester’. See also D.1a, Chalk it out.)

daft as an army cat

**all Sir Garnet**—Wolseley, 1833–1913, victor over the Egyptians in 1880. He so improved conditions for other ranks in the army that he gave his name to this army phrase [still used 1985 Cor] meaning ‘All is going well’, ‘Everything’s fine’.

**next in line for…/to…**—promotion, the throne etc. Next in order to receive something (like a file of soldiers drawing rations or equipment from the stores).

**the stuff to give the troops!** Of anything really needed, desired, appreciated, implying that after much that was unsatisfactory, the full requirement has now been met.

**C.13a Kings and princes**

*merry* [c. 1512]/happy/proud as a king

**be a king to…**[Shl Nrf Oxf Glo Ess] Be superior to.

**the king of…** The best, the supreme type.

**king** (n) Dominant industry, commodity [1855]—‘where coal/cotton was king’.

**king-size(d)** [UK Amer] Extra large (an advertising description).

**every man is a king at home**

**power behind the throne** *De facto* ruler.

**every man cannot speak with the king** Unequal opportunities.

**must not be more royalist than the king** [1881] It is neither necessary nor advisable to outshine those in authority.

**the king’s chaff is better than other men’s corn** [1788]

**the king’s cheese goes half away in parings** [1659]

**he that eats the king’s goose shall be choked with feathers** [1611] It is a suffocating thing to be in a powerful man’s debt.

**the king’s keys** A crowbar and a hammer.

**must is a king’s word** You need supreme power to enforce commands.

**the people’s love is the king’s lifeguard** [C16]

**noble as the race of Shenkin and line of Harry Tudor** [Shr] There is an old Welsh song ‘Of noble race was Shenkin’.

**all Stuarts are no sib to the king** [Sc] There are exceptions to everything.
nearest the king, nearest the widdie [withy, the tree customarily chosen for a
gallows tree]

happy as a prince
princely—sum etc. [1889] Generously large, often used sarcastically, disparagingly.
who draws his sword against his prince must throw away the scabbard [1604]
Rebellion is irrevocable and unpardonable. (To throw away the scabbard is to commit
yourself to fighting it out.)

Prince Alberts [1888] Wrapped-around rags instead of socks. (From the rumoured
poverty of Prince Albert before he married Queen Victoria.)

C.13b Ruling, loyalty

reign over… Take violent hold, tyrannize, prevail over…

reigning—beauty, champion etc. Current, present (but only until superseded).
vice rules where gold reigns

crown (n) The very top of hat, head, hill, road.
crown (v) Consummate, put the finishing touch to something—‘the crowning insult!’,
‘to crown it all!’
crown jewels The brightest and best specimens.
cachet [the seal of confidence or secrecy under which the French kings despatched
important orders] Distinguishing feature, stamp of excellence.
patent [king’s or queen’s written permission to make and market a new invention]
Evidence that someone possesses a certain personal quality—‘patent of his courage’,
‘patent of her faithfulness’ etc.
pay homage to… Acknowledge the worth, superiority of…—variously. (Homage was
the feudal bond of allegiance to king or overlord.)
defiance [OF defiance, renunciation of loyalty]
dethrone (v) [1648] Remove from high office, from controlling position.
interregnum [Lat inter regnum=in-between reign] The gap between one authority
ending and its successor starting.

if it was raining palaces I’d be hit on the head with the dunny door handle [Aus]
So unlucky!

C.13c Queens

be a queen to… Be much superior to…
happy as a queen
better have the queen to be your aunt than the king to be your uncle Women have
more influence and more sympathy than men.
hardly know the queen’s cousin Be haughty.
he’d make the queen believe he was her brother! Of a plausible liar.
maids of honour [Sur: 1769] Small cheese-cakes or almond tarts (from a connection with queen of puddings).
bug [proud, conceited—Lin] as the queen’s coachman
tell tales out of the queen’s coach [1603] Betray confidences; abuse a position of trust.

C.13d At court

hold court Preside over the company, assume a central or dominant position.
friend at court Influential friend.
take for granted [1615] Assume permission has been given (as if a man had taken possession of land before the king had granted his petition).
wear the cap and bells [part of the gear of a court jester] Be a regular joker.
coxcomb [jester’s cap, after the shape: C16–C19] Vain, pretentious fool.
fine as a fool [court jester—Dev]
unceremoniously With undue haste and lack of courtesy or even consideration.
take the shine from/out of...[1819] Surpass, outshine, cause to appear inferior.
red carpet [an honour accorded only to visiting royalty or Very Important People—1934] To get the red carpet treatment is to be received with deferential ceremony.

C.13e Emperors

drunk as an emperor
born in the purple In a highly privileged situation.
scrape acquaintance with...[1600] Establish a connection by sly or irregular means. (When the Emperor Hadrian saw an old soldier in the baths scraping himself with a potsherd, he gave him money to buy himself a proper scraper. On the following day the place was full of old soldiers with potsherds, scraping away, but he said: ‘Scrape on, men, you will not scrape acquaintance with me!’)
Mogul [title of the emperors of Muslim India] Autocratic ruler, rich and powerful man, top man in a large firm.
Potemkin village False front, sham façade. (From the prettification policy of Prince Gregory Potemkin who thus protected Catherine the Great from the harsh facts of Russian poverty when she took her rides in the country.)
C. 13f Aristocracy

in line for… Next in succession, due to receive…

in her/his/its own right By virtue of nature rather than bestowal (like an inherited title).

lord it over… Domineer over.

drunk as a lord

rich as lords

swear like a lord [1531]

fine/proud as a lord’s bastard

Jock, the laird’s brother [Sc: 1721] Of one treated with scant respect or ceremony. (Because of Scottish inheritance law whereby most of the estate went to the elder son.)

constable [<Lat comes stabuli=count of the stable]

be at staff and the burdon [baton, from the Scots legal phrase ‘by staff and baton’, used when resigning a feu to your lord] Quarrel, come to open rupture [Rxb].

make a duchess… Have intercourse while still shod. (From the saying of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough [1660–1744]: ‘Today my Lord returned from the wars and pleased me twice in his top-boots.’)

marshal Dispose, arrange variously (as a marshal would arrange his forces, or the guests at a banquet).

rank high/high-ranking Of greater importance, variously. ‘Loyalty ranks high on my list.’

martinet Strict disciplinarian, even in small details (after the Marquis of Martinet in the army of Louis XIV); a light whip with twelve straps, used by Frenchmen to chastise their wives and children.

dub (v) Name, often with a ridiculous appellation, as ‘dubbed him Admiral of the Serpentine’. (From the naming ceremony when the monarch pronounces ‘I dub thee Sir Thomas’—or whatever.)

accolade [affectionate neck embrace or sword tap on shoulder given when bestowing a knighthood;<It accollata=embrace round the neck] Token of esteem, honour paid, public acknowledgement of loyal service, the reward of merit.

C.13g Military rank

like Mevagissey volunteers, all officers and no privates [Cor]

yeoman(’s) service [1600] Good, because voluntary and given at a time of need.
swear like a gentleman
goess like/mad as a dingbat [dingo batman, an officer’s servant in the Australian army] Of a daredevil motorcyclist, crazy racer.
lie/swear like a trooper [1739]
come the old soldier [1824] Try to deceive by assuming a false seniority.
the Old Guard/Old Brigade Sticklers for tradition, old-time values, morality etc.
beat/thump the (big) drum for…[1907] Make a public stand, appeal for…; protest; recommend emphatically.
drum up Recruit, muster hastily and for a specific purpose.
enlist the aid of…[1753] Engage to help. (From the formal entering of names on the list of men willing to serve as soldiers.)
badge Token, sign. ‘Badge of servitude’—of a livery.
degradate [<eccles Lat degradare=down a step, reduce in rank] Hence, dishonour, shame, humiliate, devalue.
lose his stripes [WW1] Incur disgrace, disfavour.
he has got his stripes back [WW1] Of someone who has done something to regain favour (as a corporal might lose and regain his stripes because of his conduct).
go off with a ral, like the old woman’s son [Not] Be successful. (She had a son in the army who had been promoted, but she could only recall the last syllable of his new rank—corporal.)
white sergeant Wife who is the boss of her husband. A man ‘arrested by the white sergeant’ has been haled from the alehouse by his wife.
sergeant-major A fat shoulder of mutton. (From the ingratiating and propitiatory policy of regimental butchers in reserving the best joints for the sergeants’ mess.)
wait for dead men’s shoes [1530] Expect promotion only when your senior has departed.
rank and file The ordinary undistinguished members or workers.
take his number Assess his personality.
have his/her number [Amer] Know all I need to know about them. (From the above.)

C.13h Military discipline

the order of the day The prevailing custom, condition, required behaviour etc. (From the posting of daily regimental orders prescribing uniform, equipment, parades etc.)
drum-head— inquiry, verdict, punishment [C19] Summary and unceremonious.
be on the carpet/mat Be brought before your seniors for rebuke.
run the gauntlet [1649] Face the combined and continuing criticism of your fellows. (From the old military punishment of making a man run the ‘gantlope’ [Sw gatlopp=lane, course] between two ranks of men who struck at him with a stick or knotted cord.)
tear a strip off… Severely reprimand (probably from tearing off a corporal’s or sergeant’s stripe [RAF from c. 1938]); have a bout of sexual intercourse.
corporal’s guard [UK Amer] Very few men. (A corporal under close arrest needed only a small escort.)

no names, no pack-drill A plea for discretion, implying that if the culprit is not known, no one will be blamed.

C.14a On the march

precursor [<Lat praecursor=forerunner, advanced guard] Predecessor, herald; advance warning.

afoot In progress, started—of plots, plans etc.
marching order In efficient, working order.
marching orders [1937] Dismissal, usually peremptory.
dodge the column [1899] Dismissal, usually peremptory.
an army marches on its stomach [Napoleon] Feed well if you want results.
ye ay cry death ’or ye’re by Durham [Bwk] Cry before you’re hurt.

once through Berwick doesn’t make a man of war Don’t confuse the preliminaries with the main thing.

he may be a rogue but he’s no fool on the march You can tolerate his dishonesty for his usefulness in time of need.

steal a march [1771] Gain an advantage by devious or surreptitious means (such as by making an early start).

walk into—a dangerous or foolish situation ‘Walked into it with my eyes open’, implying that ‘I was careless and should have known better’ or, at best, ‘I was aware of what I was doing and in spite of that decided to go ahead’.

ambushing/ambush marketing A stratagem whereby an advertiser implies a connection between his goods and those of the actual possessor of the marketing right.

insidious [<Lat insidiae=ambush]
circumspect [<Lat circumspicere=look all round]
bring up the rear Follow at the back of a procession etc.

beat the devil’s tattoo Tap the table with the fingers, or otherwise with annoying persistence.

dry as a drum-head [Sc 1819] Thirsty.
drum up [1656] Summon, canvass help; gather further funds.
pay with a roll of the drum Not at all. (A soldier on the march could not be arrested for debt.)
march to a different drummer Follow principles different from those of the majority.

without beat of drum Secretly, discreetly, without advertisement.
throw up the drumsticks [Yks] Cease an attempt (like a drum major tossing up his drumsticks).
fife-and-drum Martial, militant—‘fife-and-drum supporters’.
sound off [chant in march time ‘Hup, two, three, four’ in response to the US Army command ‘Sound off’] Speak your mind [Amer]; boast at length [Aus]; become angrily vociferous about something [UK],

beat the band Surpass all opposition; do something to excess (as if making enough noise to swamp even the band).

C.14b Parades and drill

parade (v) Display ostentatiously—knowledge, possessions etc.

fall in behind… Accept the leadership of…; modify, pattern your own views, policies etc. to conform with…

fall in with…[1632] Agree; meet; comply; join.

lined up for… Waiting in readiness to be appointed to, or awarded, something.

step out of line Do something at variance with your fellows or with previous practice; flout tradition.

out of step Not conforming.

pass muster [1575] Be satisfactory, but only just. (The muster was the first inspection parade of the morning when standards were not very high.)

all we can muster! All we can manage to collect—generally. muster up=gather together.

have a kit-check [a barrack-room parade of everything issued to a soldier, which had to be spread out for ease of inspection and accounting] Vomit (usually after drinking).

stand out Catch the attention, be immediately recognisable, pre-eminent.

outstanding Exceptional, pre-eminent. (Like a tall, smart soldier in the ranks.)

keep in touch with… Retain contact, communicate with… (From old methods of military drill and night manoeuvres, probably by touching elbows in the ranks.)

lock-step [1955] Close-following system; inevitable succession (as in the old marching routine where the pace of one soldier was almost interconnected with another’s).

go through the motions [1816] Pretend to be functioning although unable to do so (as when soldiers perform rifle drill though they have no rifles); perform perfunctorily.

about-face/about-turn (n and v) Change to the very opposite—(in) policy, behaviour etc.

right-about face Complete reversal of policy or position. (From the drill movement.)

send to the right-about Send packing. (From the drill movement that wheels the ranks round until they face the opposite way.) Also:

get the left-about [Lnk] Be dismissed.

go to the right-about Have a complete reversal of policy.

change front [change direction of facing or marching during drill] Change policy, position.

mark time [march on the spot—1837] Deliberately halt progress or production, while holding themselves ready to resume.

cry halt Stop a particular action, process etc.
field-day [one of military exercises and reviews, very exciting] Time of opportunities and success.

C. 15a Heraldry, military colours

(em)blazon (v) Celebrate, praise, extol; proclaim publicly and in glowing detail (like the blazoning of heraldry on shields etc.).

the other side of the shield Other aspect of the question. (From the story of the two knights disputing about whether a shield was made of gold or silver—it was really gold on one side and silver on the other.)

look at only one side of the shield Refuse to consider another point of view, remain obdurately partial. (As/from the above.)

blot on his escutcheon [D.Osborne, Letter—c.1660] Shameful event in his life, stain on his reputation.

arms [War 1697] Fossils resembling the heraldic mullet [<OF molette=rowel]

spread-eagled Lying with limbs spread out (like the spread eagle of heraldry); lashed in this posture in the rigging for a punishment [naut]


ture to his colours Loyal to his principles, professions.

come off with flying colours Succeed. (Either from the ensigns held high after a successful battle, or from naval colours flown from the masthead after victory.)

raise the standard of—revolt, independence etc, Take up a declared position.


flag-waving Partisan activity of an uncritical nature.

flag-waver [Amer] Conspicuously patriotic person.

flag-flying Overbidding at bridge. (A sense connection with the next entry.)

run it up the flag-pole and see who salutes it Try out the idea and see if it works.

at half-mast With only a partial erection. (A flag flown at half-mast is a sign of mourning.)

C.15b Uniform

wear the king’s/queen’s coat Serve as a soldier.

knock into a cocked hat Beat shapeless as one. Also, when ninepins are bowled over so as to leave only three in the triangle, they are said to be ‘knocked into a cocked hat’.

put him through his facings Check on his credentials (as if by examining a soldier’s right to wear the facings on his uniform).

pipeclay (n) Pointless routine. (Used for whitening military equipment.)
**pipeclay** (v) Put affairs into meticulous order; cover up defects in work or materials. (From the above.)

**red-laced jacket** Military flogging.

**khaki election** [1913] One so timed as to exploit war enthusiasm.

**clean as a button-stick** (which, being brass and used behind the brass buttons when they were polished, became even cleaner than they were)

**regimental as a button-stick** Rigidly authoritarian, the acme of military discipline.

**the reverse of the medal** The other version, other side of a question.

**putty medal** Fit reward for small service; reward promised to a stupid person [Oxf]; sometimes the opposite of a reward.

**time-honoured** Enduring—of customs, traditions etc.

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**C.16 Military history**

**macédoine** [Macedonia—Fr] A mixture of fruit or vegetables cut small; a hotch-potch or medley of unrelated things. (Macedonia was an empire of many peoples.)

**subjugate** Make subordinate, repress—feelings, performance etc. (It was the custom of the ancient Romans to make defeated peoples pass under a yoke *sub iugum* in token of their subjection. See also F.15a.)

**interval** [<Lat inter vallum=the space between the ramparts or palisades]

**false as Fortager** [=Vortigern, the British king entrusted with the task of defending the realm when the Romans quit, who in 449 betrayed that trust by inviting Hengist and Horsa into Kent, a fatal day which resulted in Britain becoming England as far as the Celtic lands. His intention was to make a strategic alliance with Hengist and Horsa, but six years later he was fighting against them] It is interesting that his reputation was still current 1001 years later: ‘but rather the sayd trayturs of the affinite of Pole that was false as Fortager…’ [Proclamation made by Jacke Cade, Capytayne of the Rebelles in Kent—1450].

**night of the long knives** Ruthless purge, terror, cabinet reshuffle (from a treacherous massacre of the Britons by Hengist in 472, as they sat together with Saxons).

**crusade** Aggressive movement or enterprise against a public evil; idealistic campaign. (Originally a war to free the Holy Land.)

**bold as Beauchamp** [the Earl of Warwick, who is reputed, with the help of one squire and six archers, to have overthrown 100 armed men at Hogges in Normandy in 1346]

**every man for his own hand, as Henry Wynd fought** (He was co-opted to make up the numbers in a 30-a-side clan-battle fought in 1392 on the North Inch of Perth, and although bandy-legged and partial to neither side, he fought well—for his own survival.)

**half-done—as Elgin was burnt** (In 1452 the Earl of Huntly burnt the half of the town belonging to the Douglases, but left the other half that belonged to his own family.)

**great/thick [intimate] as the devil and the old Earl of Kent** [Godwin in the time of Edward the Confessor]

**Montezuma’s revenge** Severe diarrhoea suffered by visitors to Mexico. (Montezuma was the Aztec ruler, 1466–1520, when the Spaniards invaded Mexico.)
King Harry loved a man [c. 1600] The valiant love the valiant.

that’s Barney Castle! Said in remonstration at a deceit or at a poor excuse in a bad cause. (From the holding of Barnard Castle by Sir George Bowes in 1569 during the ‘Rising of the North’.)

not a word of Penzance [Cor: 1678] No help when needed. (On 20 July 1595 Mousehole was attacked by four Spanish galleys.)

that’s Basing! Said when clubs are turned up trumps. (Supposedly the Royalists were playing cards when Basing House was captured on 13 October 1645, but they were certainly doing so when surprised at Bovey Tracey on 8 January 1646.)

vanish in/do a Bokanki [Dr Balcanqual, Dean of Durham, who fled the city after the Battle of Newburn] Act the coward.

after a sort, as Costlet served the king (One Captain Costlet, boasting much of his loyalty, was asked how he served the king when he was a captain in Cromwell’s army, and answered ‘After a sort!’)

a Cromwell in petticoats Someone who, though a woman, has the same qualities of leadership and command as Oliver Cromwell had.

treacherous as an Englishman [Ire] white horse [Ire] Sign of cowardice (from the tradition that James II fled from the Battle of the Boyne on a white horse [11 July 1690]).

Sherrymoor [Sheriffmuir, scene of a battle in 1715 between Jacobite supporters of the Old Pretender and government forces. The outcome was indecisive and confused, but left the Jacobites in irreparable disarray] A tumult, disorderly fracas [Nhb].

Darentwater lights [Cum] The aurora borealis, so named from its unusual brilliance on the night of 24 February 1716 when the Earl of Derwentwater was executed.

shrapnel (after General Shrapnel who invented an exploding shell during the Peninsular War).

eat crow Be forced to do something very unpleasant and humiliating. (From an incident in 1812 during the war between Britain and America when, during the armistice, a British soldier forced an American at gunpoint to take a bite out of the crow the American had shot. However, the American on recovering the gun forced the Briton to eat the rest of the crow.)

whiff of grapeshot [T.Carlyle, referring to a policy of Napoleon—1837] Repression of the opposition by just as much military force as is required.

meet his Waterloo Reach his farthest point, end of the line, crisis he cannot overcome, time of defeat (like Napoleon at Waterloo).

take care of Dowb! [1854] Said when imputing shameless nepotism. (Dowbiggin was in the Crimean War, and his uncle, as Secretary for War, sent a cable reading ‘Take care of Dowb’—the -iggin end having been cut off.)

Maffick Exult riotously (as happened when the siege of Mafeking was lifted in the Boer War).

Stellenbosched Relegated to a less important job; sent somewhere where he can do no harm. (Stellenbosch was a base depot in the Boer War.)

quisling Traitor, collaborator (after Vidkun Quisling who co-operated with the Germans when they occupied Norway in 1940).

the Battle of the Bulge [WW2 battle in the Ardennes campaign—December 1944-January 1945] The endeavour to reduce obesity.
you wouldn’t give it to a Jap on Anzac Day Condemning an article as worthless, unacceptable, repugnant. (Anzac Day is a Remembrance Day likely to revive painful memories.)

C.17a Different countries and peoples

speak the same language Have sympathy and understanding with—because of similarity of outlook and background.

divulge [<Lat divulgere=spread around among the people]

wild as an Indian [Calif sAmer]

straight as an Indian’s hair

squaw winter Short cold spell often experienced before an Indian summer.

soft as a moccasin [Mass 1879]

Indian summer An unseasonable spell of mild dry weather occurring in autumn (named after the periods of such weather in late autumn in the northern states of America).

totem pole A spirally constructed slide rule, giving greater accuracy; an elevated lighting arrangement on an airfield.

bottom/low on the totem (pole) Well down the social scale; carrying little weight.

totemistic Hierarchical.

Indian sign [Amer] Curse, jinx, run of bad luck.

good nature is stronger than tomahawks [NY]

bury the hatchet [1884] Cease all hostilities. (Native Americans symbolically buried a hatchet when peace was established.)

nobody ever forgets where he buried the hatchet [NY SC] Quarrels are readily resumed.

dig up the hatchet Resume hostilities.

keep your ear to the ground Listen out for news, keep on the alert for further information. (From the way in which Native Americans would listen for enemy movements.)

head for the long/tall grass (as, on a prairie, there would be no other cover). Take evasive action, make yourself inconspicuous; avoid embarrassment.

a prairie-fire activity Something that, if started or permitted, would rapidly increase beyond control.

out for scalps In belligerent or severely critical mood. Hence:

take the scalp of… Humiliate, defeat, subject to savage critical attack.

a feather in his cap [1657] An honour gained. (A Native American brave added a feather to his head-dress for every enemy slain. It is equally probable that this expression derives from the idea that adding a decorative feather to the hat denoted a rise in the wearer’s status.)

the Indian will come back to his blanket [Oreg] Seek people where their strongest attachments lie.

all chiefs and no Indians! Everyone is of importance.
all chiefs and no Indians, like the University Regiment [Aus] (As above.)

blaze a trail/path Show a new way to do something; innovate generally. (From the practice of Native Americans, blazing the trees in unknown forest.)

on the war-path Out with hostile intent; looking for trouble; angry enough to use violence.

straight arrow [Amer] Decent, honest, honourable, normal (after a Native American brave of that name).

in Indian file In single file.

make tracks Get going, promptly and purposefully.

in his tracks [Amer] Where he was at that moment, instantly.

cover (up) his tracks Disguise, conceal the evidence of what he has done.

tote your own skillet [Geo Ala Miss Tex] When it concerns you, deal with it yourself.

the Great Divide [the watershed of the Rocky Mountains—Amer] A powerful boundary like that between life and death; a woman’s cleavage.

ride shotgun [the seat on the old stagecoaches where the armed co-driver sat] Ride next to the driver.

work like a black/nigger [Amer] Work very hard.

run like a black [escaping slave]

in tall cotton [Amer] Very successful, enjoying good fortune.

shit in high cotton [Amer] Live in luxury. (Well-grown cotton connotes wealth.)

cotton-picking [a social gathering in the southern states of America to pick the seeds out of cotton—1958] Used as a form of abuse or mild swearing, tedious, unpleasant, wretched, despicable.

spit cotton Be very angry; thirsty [Tenn Calif].


cotton-white [Msri Ark] A white-coloured grey fox.

corn-fed/corny [1932] Out of date, banal, old-fashioned, rustic in style; naïve, sentimental [Amer]. (Originally applied to the hackneyed, commercial type of music to be found in the maize-growing areas of America; now in widespread use in dismissing jokes, stories and entertainments for being dull, unimaginative, trite and derivative.)

I’m from Missouri Show me, I’m not easily persuaded. (The Missourians have a reputation for scepticism.)

go down the Swanee [the river Suwannee—Geo: 1977]/down the drain Go bankrupt, go to ruin.

a long hot summer A trying time. (Heat waves in New York are times of tension and social disturbance.)

about east [Amer] In proper style (because higher society in America lived in the east of the country).

sleigh-ride (n) [Amer] Easy and enjoyable experience; drug-induced euphoria (especially cocaine intoxication, ‘snow’ being slang for cocaine); hoax, impossible story, confidence-trick, deception. Hence:

take for a sleigh-ride Deceive, defraud.

it’s either Sydney or the bush [Aus 1924] The exclamation of someone who has just made a drastic and irrevocable decision.

like a Ballarat jewshop [Victoria, Aus] In chaos.
back o’ Bourke [town in far north of NSW] The back of beyond, somewhere indescribably remote.

further behind than Walla Walla [remote place—Aus] Settle down after much wandering.

been via Alice Springs? A criticism of someone who has taken longer than expected.

outback An unofficial, unorganised, ill-defined and rough-and-ready area in an organisation.

go through without a water-bag [Aus] Be in a desperate hurry.

go bush Run wild; go berserk. (From going away from home into the bush.)

shoot in the bush [Aus] Ejaculate externally.

two-dog night One so cold that two dogs were required for additional warmth in bed.

cold and dark as a bushman’s grave [Aus]

boomerang (n and v) [1845] (Thing that will) recoil on the originator; a book lent and required to be returned [Aus]; a return ticket on the railway [Aus]; a cheque that ‘bounces’ [Aus].

make a boomerang of it [Aus] Be sure to give it back.

could sell boomerangs to the blacks [Aus] Is very persuasive.

game as Ned Kelly [famous bushranger, 1857–80, known for his reckless courage and for bold, unscrupulous business deals]

tough as ironbark [a solid-barked eucalyptus—Aus]/seasoned mulga [a type of acacia—Aus]

ironbark (n) Tough, unyielding (in) character [Aus C19+].

fix the gum-tree [Aus] Settle down.

have gum-leaves growing out of your ears [Aus] Be a country bumkin, a yokel.

solid as an ironbark stump [Aus]

has seen his last gum-tree [Aus] Is dying; has sailed away from Australia.

have/on the (Darling) pea [a plant, poisonous to animals, growing by the River Darling—Aus] Be irritable, moody, mad, deranged. (From the effect on cattle.)

cabbage-tree hat One named after the cabbage-tree of New Zealand and the West Indies.

fire in the fern [NZ] Trouble, smouldering discontent.

spread like fire in the fern [NZ: 1940] Spread rapidly—of rumour.

spread like a bush-fire [Aus] Of infections.

get on like a bush-fire [Aus] Make good progress.

full of bush-fire [Aus] Full of energy.

like the heatwave from a bush-fire [Aus] Very hot.

so mean he wouldn’t give you a light at a bush-fire [Aus]

bush-fire blonde [Aus] Redhead.

eat toot/tutu [a shrub, poisonous to newly arrived cattle, but safely eaten after gradual inurement—NZ: 1857] Go through a difficult initial period of acclimatisation.

pariah [drummer-Tamil, a lower-caste Hindu, predominant in Madras] Social outcast; rejected member.

lose caste Lose prestige, social standing (after the Hindu caste system).

water-buffalo—people, attitude, culture Of an uncomplicated, basic, down-to-earth nature. (The Asiatic buffalo is a regular farm animal of the peasants of India and SouthEast Asia.)
street Arab Homeless child wandering the streets.
harem Female breeding animals, usually in a herd dominated by one male.
Serbonian bog [a morass, now covered with quicksands, between Suez and the Nile]
A great mess from which you cannot extricate yourself [1790].
rare as a sunflower in the desert
mirage [1812] Delusion, often self-induced.
like a Turk [Ayr] With energy and diligence; violently.
hard as/work like a Turk [an inhuman person, indefatigable in work—wYks]
Turk’s head brush One where the bristles, together with their rounded wooden holder, are reminiscent of a wild head of hair.
Tartar Awkward, intractable person. (From the national character of a race which includes the Turks and Cossacks.)
Tartar-nosed Snub-nosed.
catch a Tartar [S.Butler, Hudibras—1663] Find your intended victim more formidable than expected. (Soldier, to his officer, ‘I’ve caught a Tartar’—‘Bring him here’—‘He won’t come’—‘Then leave him and come yourself’—‘He won’t let me!’)
merry as a Greek [possibly a corruption of grig]
Greek meets Greek Equal encounter. ‘When Greeks joined Greeks, then was the Tug of War’ [N.Lee, Rival Queens—1677].
when in Rome do as Rome does [1530] Conform to the customs of those among whom you are living.
dead as the Roman Empire
ghetto [that quarter of an Italian city to which Jews were restricted—1892] Word used disapprovingly of any minority crowded together.
cruel as a Spaniard [wCor] (The village of Mousehole was looted and burnt, four men killed and the church in Paul was burnt by them on 23 July 1595.)
German comb Fingers and thumb.
the German’s wit is in his fingers
take French leave [1771] Depart without permission.
Dutchman (n) Children’s name for the splash and ripple made by a drop of rain falling in water.
dull/dumb as a Dutchman
Dutch comfort Thank God it’s no worse!’
Dutch courage [1826] Only induced by drink.
talk like a Dutch uncle [1837] Paternally, patronisingly; reprovingly.
that beats the Dutch! That is beyond belief; is amazing.
worser than the state of China! Of a state of utter confusion.
Chinaman (n) A left-hand bowler’s leg-break in cricket. (From Chinese writing, which goes from right to left, and also because it is diabolically devious.)
mad as a Chinaman [Aus]
Chinese compliment [C19] Sympathetic hearing given to opinions that are opposed to your own.
iron Chink [Amer] Machine that cuts and guts fish. (Many Chinese used to work in the American salmon-canning industry.)
Mandarin (n) [Chinese of superior education and intelligence] Pedantic official; one of high position and influence.
Mandarin (adj) Bureaucratic; describing government by high-ranking officials; highbrow, esoteric, high-flown, over-refined—of literary works, often in derogatory sense.

lose face Suffer damage to self-esteem, reputation, or public image. (From a Japanese attitude whereby in certain circumstances a man who lost face would even commit harakiri.)


wooden kimono [Amer] Coffin.

Bolshie/Bolshy [<Bolshevik, the Russian revolutionaries] Obstructive, obstreperous, recalcitrant.

cold as Greenland [Cor]

been there! done that! got the T-shirt [1980s] I have experienced that to the full (sc. and do not wish to repeat it).

pack for England Make sure nothing is overlooked (as if, when finally returning from abroad, ensuring that nothing is left behind).

C.17b Tribal people

cannibal—trout etc. [<Sp canibales, applied to the Caribs, a fierce West Indian people who ate human flesh; Caliban is another variant] One that eats its own species; boat that bumps another in its own college [Cambridge ‘Bumps’].

cannibalise [1943] Utilise a spare vehicle or machine for spare parts.

head-hunters Agencies that undertake to find a suitable person to fill an important vacancy.

head-shrinker/shrink [Amer 1950] Psychiatrist. (By jocular comparison with the practice of tribal head-hunters who shrink and preserve the heads of their victims.)

tribe Whole set of people who can be lumped together under one category, as ‘the tribe of reviewers’.

war-paint A woman’s make-up; official and ceremonial clothes.

snake-pit General scene (usually political) of corruption and devious dealings; sergeants’ mess [Aus WW2]; lunatic asylum.

has more cheek than a white man! Arrogantly insolent.

nigger-head Lump of coral grown above the surface [Aus naut]; dark clump of swamp vegetation [Amer]; lump of coal sticking out of a grate and smoking into the room [WVir].

niggers in a snowstorm/the snow Stewed prunes and rice [naut].

lilies are whitest in a blackamoor’s hand Where contrast enhances.

jungle Anarchy, primitive conditions; place of ruthless struggle for survival (as ‘blackboard/ concrete jungle’=the anarchy in schools or large cities).

slash (v)—prices, salaries etc. Reduce drastically to a basic level. (From slashing down undergrowth to ground-level ready for cultivation.)
slash-and-burn business mergers  Reorganisation with drastic restructuring and dismissals.
astonish the natives  Shock or greatly impress public opinion.
go native  Adopt the local way of life.

C.17c Lions

bold as a lion
  lion-hearted  Strong and courageous.
  wild as a mountain lion
  shake it off as dew-drops from the lion’s mane Make light of it, think little of it.
literary/musical lion [1715]  Important man of letters or music.
lionise [1809]  Treat as a celebrity (from the above).
a lion is no pet for a wee bairn [Ire]  Of dangerous associations generally.
lion-hunter  Host/hostess given to inviting celebrities.
  …won’t eat you!  An impatient reassurance to someone who is reacting with unnecessary alarm.
  devour—with curiosity, anxiety, looks, kisses  Consume voraciously.
  voracious  Indefatigable in consuming, insatiable—reader, film-goer etc.
  eaten up (with pride etc.)  Morbidly consumed.
  kill the lion when it is a cub/whelp [1732]  Tackle the problem or danger while it is still manageable.
  even the lion must defend itself against flies  Even a great man must attend to trivialities.
  every lion has his fleas  Every great man has his petty critics.
  little birds may peck a dead lion  Only after someone dies or becomes helpless, do his feeble opponents become active.
  patch a fox’s tail to a lion’s skin  Supplement strength by craft.
  beat the dog before the lion  Chastise or humiliate a mean person in the presence of a great one.
  a lion among sheep and a sheep among lions  Of one who is bold only in the company of timid people.
  a lamb in the house and a lion in the field  Of an assertive man who becomes submissive or henpecked at home.
  March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb  Stormy at the beginning of the month and mild at the end.
  bold/fierce as a Cotswold [1440]/Lammermoor [Bwk: 1721]  lion [sheep]
  enough to dant [daunt, terrify, discourage] a lion [wYks]  Of a fearful prospect
  wake not a sleeping lion [1581–90]  Do not antagonise a formidable person.
  beard the lion in his den [1749]  Tackle an opponent boldly, even on his own ground.
  in the lion’s den  In great danger, facing a fearsome adversary on his own ground.
  twist the lion’s tail  Plague the mighty, as when American journalists wrote provocatively of Britain.
twist the tail of Deliberately antagonise.
he that has his hand in the lion’s mouth must take it out as well as he can [1696: Sc] In an emergency you cannot be too particular about means.
paint the lion [naut] Strip a malefactor and paint with tar.
the lion is not so fierce as they paint him [1599] He is not as bad as his reputation.
toothless lion/tiger Someone with a ferocious appearance and formidable reputation, but in fact no longer harmful.
jackal (n and v) (One who) play(s) a subservient or secondary rôle (as the jackal was once thought to serve the lion by going ahead and hunting up the lion’s prey for it); an accessory to another’s crime.

C.17d Other cats

a tiger for… [Aus NZ] Having a ravenous capacity, appetite for…
tiger-cat A fierce, ruthless woman.
fierce/savage [Cor] as a tiger
brave as a Bengal tiger [Edb Lnk]
taste blood Be inspired, stimulated by early success.
clipping a tiger’s claws will not make him lose his taste for blood [Ill] Deprivation does not stop the desire.
sharp as a tiger’s tooth
I’ll turn you inside out like a tiger A dire threat (referring to how a tiger devours its kill).
he who rides on a tiger can never dismount [1902] Those who only retain power by a reign of terror cannot relax. To ‘ride a tiger’ is to start something you cannot safely stop.
have a tiger by the tail You are in a nasty situation, but worse is to come.
buck [try to throw off as a horse bucks to unseat its rider] against the tiger Face an impossible task, too great odds against you.
buck the tiger [Amer] Gamble heavily. (A picture of a tiger was shown outside those gambling dens where faro was played. The tiger as an emblem of gamblers derives from early Chinese myth, where the God of Wealth rides on a tiger as guardian of the money chests.)
man-eater A woman with predatory intentions on men.
where did you spring from? An expression of surprise at someone’s unexpected appearance.
paper tiger [1946] A power formidable only in reputation or appearance.
in a leopard the spots are not observed Small faults get overlooked in one whose faults are many.
gay as a leopard
lynx-eyed [1597] With keen eyesight. (The lynx has been long famous for its keen sight.)
ring-tailed [Amer] Remarkably, exceptionally. (From the ring-tailed painter, a fierce wild-cat of western America.)

C. 17e Apes and monkeys

ape (v and n) Imitate in a thoughtless and derogatory manner. One who behaves thus.

_**go ape(-shit)** Be_ reduced to animal instincts, especially to a strong sexual attachment; go wrong mentally; act crazy, go wild, be overenthusiastic [Amer].

_drunk/wise as an ape_

_**old apes have old eyes** [Cum: from early C17] Experienced people see things that younger ones do not notice.

_**the higher the ape climbs, the more he shows of his arse** [1594: NY Mich Minn] The more elevated a man’s position, the more he betrays his vulgar origins.

_**gorilla** [Amer] Stupid, savage ruffian.


_**monkey** (n) Imitator.

_**monkey-see, monkey-do** [Amer Can: 1925] A warning not to do something that could be imitated by a child or less competent person, with possibly dangerous results; also refers to the complex machines and processes that can be operated by unskilled workers who do not need to understand the intricacies.

_**monkey-man** [Amer] Weak, submissive husband.

_**melancholy as a sick monkey**_

_**ugly as a dead monkey**_

_**monkey (about) with**…[1884] Tamper with, spoil.

_**monkey around** [1881] Spend time idly and irresponsibly.

_**monkey with the buzz-saw** [Can Amer] Meddle with something dangerous; ask for trouble.

_**get/put my monkey up** Become/make me angry (as if bringing out lower, animal passions).

_**make a monkey of…** Make nonsense of; cause to appear ridiculous.

_**monkey-business** [1883]/_**monkey-tricks** Mischievous, deceitful acts.

_**when the monkey jumps** When inclination prompts.

_**monkey-puzzle tree** Chilean pine (because of its prickly branches).

_**softly, softly (catchee monkey)—approach, policy, method** Cautious and unprovocative, as calculated to give the best results.

_**monkey-run** [Bretherton, Lan 1940s] A time and place, usually on Saturday or after church or chapel on Sunday, when young men and women would walk out together.

_**monkey-trap** Article or decoration to help a woman charm the man.

_**bleed the monkey** [rum-tub—naut] Filch rum therefrom.

_**monkey’s fist** Heavy knot at a rope’s end to facilitate throwing it.

_**hold on by his monkey-tail** Take his word for the truth of it.

_**if you offer peanuts** [low wages], _**you’ll get monkeys** [bad, irresponsible workers]
peanuts! A scornful dismissal of a poor offer or a low wage. Hence, insignificant generally—‘a peanut qualification’ [Amer].

monkey’s breakfast Slovenly and untidy piece of work.

anything sets [goes with—Sc] a good face, quo the monkey with the mutch on [nightcap, women’s linen cap—Sc]

women in state affairs are like monkeys in glass-shops [1659]

bandar-log [monkey people—Hind] Body of irresponsible chatterers.

snatch at… Seize an opportunity eagerly and promptly.

snatch up… Take immediate possession of something.

C. 17f Elephants and other pachyderms

like feeding buns to an elephant! Of a situation where demand inevitably outstrips supply.

only an elephant can bear an elephant’s load Only a great man can do a great man’s work.

see the elephant [Amer 1830+] See the world, life, the sights of the city; see all there is to be seen; have a night out in town. (From a wellerism: ‘That’s sufficient’, as Tom Haynes said when he saw the elephant.)

have a rhinoceros-hide Be impervious to outside events; unfeeling towards others.

C.17g Bears

gruff as a bear [Calif]

rough as a bear/bear’s arse/paw [Cor]

cold as a polar bear’s backsie [Aus]

a long-tailed bear A lie (bears have no tails).

go through the bear-land with… [Sc] Go through all the details of a quarrel with a third party.

fall into the clutches of… Come under the control of a dominant, predatory person or organisation.

bear-hug An embrace with both arms where the victim is strained to the breast by main strength; such a powerful and overmastering experience, meeting, performance etc. as to leave you overwhelmed and crushed.

clumsy as a cub-bear handling his prick [Can]

when you get your hand in a bear’s mouth, work easy until you get it out [NY] (See also C.17c, he that has his hand in the lion’s mouth..., and G.2d, when your hand is in the dog’s mouth...)
houri [<Arab hur=with eyes like a gazelle] Voluptuous, mysterious woman.

live on your hump Be self-sufficient, live off resources (as the camel draws
nourishment from the reserve in its hump).

if the camel once gets his nose in the tent, his body will soon follow [Ill Oreg] With
the slightest encouragement this person will take advantage of you.

restless as a hyena

porcupine Spikey machine for heckling flax (from the similarity to the spines of a
porcupine); frayed wire hawser [Amer naut,WW2].

have more points than a porcupine [Aus] Be alert to a situation’s possibilities; be
ready to take unfair advantage of a situation.

free as a mountain goat

lemming One who is compelled to join the crowd in a mad and dangerous course of
action.


touchy as a scrub bull in a bog/Queensland buffalo [Aus] Dangerously irritable.

buffalo (v) [orig.=hunt buffalo—Amer] Outwit, circumvent; confuse in order to cheat.

in the buff [buffalo hide—1654] In your bare skin (like a buffalo in its skin).


bull-moose Very large, strong man.

strong as a bull-moose

snore like a moose [Amer] (Probably from the loud call of a cow-moose.)

busy as/work like a beaver [NC Calif]

eager beaver Someone who tackles work with more energy than skill. Hence:


beaver-tail Woman’s hairstyle where the back hair was netted and flattened like a
beaver’s tail.

a howling coyote ain’t stealing no chickens [NMex] Those opponents who are most
in evidence are the least troublesome ones.

even a coyote will fight when you have him cornered [Iowa]

river-hog [capybara or water-hog] C19 lumberjack who rode logs downstream to the
sawmill.

skunk (n) [1841] Mean, offensive and despicable man (widespread in America as a
term of abuse).

skunk (v) [Amer] Defeat utterly, rout (from the effect produced by a spraying skunk).

you can’t keep from getting soiled if you fight with a skunk [Ohio NC] Associate
with the worst and you will be contaminated.

create more commotion than a skunk in a hen-house [Calif]

so hungry I could eat the arse out of a dead skunk [Can] (The skunk emits a fetid
stink when alive, worse when dead.)

every man must skin his own skunk [Amer] Must do his own dirty work; solve his
own problems.

mink (n) [Amer] Sexually over-active person.

fuck like a mink [Can] Of a woman, acting both amorously and promiscuously.
raccoon (v) [1855] Wander about at night; pace up and down.
coon (v) [Msri Miss Ark] Crawl on hands and knees, often along a log.
not care/give/worth a pinch of coon shit
a coon’s age [Amer 1844] A very long time (raccoons being reputedly long-lived).
play coony [Amer] Act slyly, with cunning.
gopher ball A baseball hit for home run (when the ball disappears into the outfield stands like a gopher into its hole).
like pouring water down a gopher’s hole [Calif] Of an insatiable thirst.
pack-rat (n and v) [the bushy-tailed woodrat, notorious for collecting and hoarding sundry objects—Amer] Compulsive(ly) hoard(er); someone who refuses to part with anything.
chipmunk cheeks [Amer] Puffed-out cheeks.
groundhog (n) [Amer Can] A weatherman (the fable being that on February 2 [Groundhog Day], the groundhog comes out of its winter burrow to check the weather, but even if it is then fine and sunny goes back for another six weeks on the assumption that winter has still to come).
woodchuck [Amer 1931] Yokel.
groundhog case [Amer] An extreme or urgent affair; something to be settled immediately [WVir Miss: 1885]. (Because when groundhogs [woodchucks] get at a clover crop they do such damage that speedy and drastic action becomes necessary.)

To a boy watching a groundhog’s hole where he has set a trap, ‘You don’t expect to catch that woodchuck, do you, boy?’—‘Ketch him? I’ve GOT to ketch him, stranger; the minister’s comin’ and we’re out of meat!’

groundhog day [1998] A day of stress and crisis, usually at work, requiring urgent action.
slick [smooth, well-worn] as the path to a groundhog hole [neKenty Miss]
prairie-dogging (n) The action of office or factory staff when they all peer across at some interesting occurrence (as will a warren of American prairie-dogs when alarmed or curious).
a kangaroo loose in the top paddock [1908] A mad, crazy person.
kangaroo closure [1913] The situation in a committee where the chairman selects some amendments for discussion and excludes others. (Because of jumping about.)
kangaroo court [1853] An unofficial, ‘jumped up’ one, dispensing kangaroo (that is, summary) justice.
kangaroo petrol! [1974] The exclamation when an inexperienced driver makes the vehicle jerk forward.
kangaroo freight transport A system of containers for rail-freight. (From the way in which small kangaroos are carried in the pouches of their mothers.)
kangaroo ship Supply and repair ship for submarines. (As above.)
kangaroo election [Amer] One where the choice is limited by the linking of offices, as when a presidency carries with it a certain vice-president, like a kangaroo with a young one in her pouch.
boomer of a… Very large, exceptional specimen [boomer=large kangaroo—Aus].
on the wallaby track [Aus] Tramping the outback in search of work.

koala Motorist enjoying (diplomatic) immunity from prosecution for parking offences (the koala bear being a protected animal).

(sit) like a koala [Aus] Placid(ly).

safe as a koala in a reserve [Aus]

ingo (n) [Aus] Coward.

bingo on… [Aus] Betray; act the coward.

mournful as a scrub dingo [Aus] (From its howling.)

ingo’s breakfast [Aus] A piss and a look around.

cunning as a Maori dog [NZ] Used abusively.

a roll (of banknotes) big enough to choke an ant-eater/bullock [Aus]

flying fox [Aus NZ] Carrier operated by cables across a gorge.

bald/bandy/barmy/brainless/lousy/miserable/poor as a bandicoot [small Australian marsupial named after the similar Indian bandicoot or pig-rat, and usually living on the poorest ground]

bandicoot (v) Steal root crops, especially potatoes, out of the soil without disturbing the tops.

fleeing like bandicoots before a bush-fire [Aus]

like a bandicoot on a burnt ridge [Aus] Lonely and forlorn.

C.17i Parrots

parrot (n) [1581] Repeater of what is said.

darrot-fashion By unthinking repetition.

parrot-fashion [1575] Repetitiously.

melancholy as a sick parrot [C17+]

sick as a parrot Mentally distressed, depressed. (See above.)


ground-parrot [Aus] Small farmer.

cockatoo (n, v and adj) Convict; look-out or sentinel for criminals, a corner-man (from the belief that a flock of cockatoos post a sentry to give warning) [Aus]; be a small farmer (because, like the cockatoo, he was trying to live off a small area of land) [Aus NZ]. Hence, cocky roads are the rough dirt tracks leading to such farms; cockatoo’s weather is the sort that suits such farmers, fine by day and wet at night, fine on weekdays and wet on Sundays.

boss-cocky [cockatoo—Aus] A farmer who both employs farm-workers and works himself.

a proper galah [a pink and grey cockatoo—Aus] A very fool, simpleton.

mad as a gum-tree full of galahs

rosella [a bright scarlet parakeet—Aus] A whiteman sunburnt red by working bareback; a sheep without wool on the ‘points’ and so easy to shear, and hence a bald man in a barber’s [nAus]; army officers, because of their red facings [Aus].

popinjay (n) [parrot] A vain, dandified and prattling person.
proud as a popinjay/papingo [Sc 1505]
gilded cage Quarters whose luxury does not compensate for the loss of freedom.
a fine cage won’t feed the bird [Vmt III]
mouth like the bottom of a parrot’s/cocky’s cage [c. 1920] Dry, gritty and dusty.
what’s rattled your cage? What has caused this (unusual) reaction?
rattle his cage [Amer] Arouse; cause trouble, disturbance, excitement.
the parrot must have an almond [1522] A confidence has been betrayed; someone is repeating secrets. (One Phyllis was turned into an almond tree for telling tales.)
make a din like a parrot with the toothache
put/set up a squawk/squawk (v) [Amer] Make a complaint, protest; lay information.

C.17j Other birds

jabber like a bunch of blackbirds [Calif]
in the catbird seat [a perch of vantage for singing from—Amer] Sitting pretty; in a good position; in control. (The catbird is a black-eyed thrush.)
raincrow don’t sing no chune, but you c’n ‘pen on ‘im [NY Miss] His speech may be inelegant, but what he says is reliable.
the bluejay never screams for nothing [Minn] (As in G.47c, it’s no for naught…)
one robin doesn’t make a spring [Amer] (See G.57, one swallow…)
bower bird (n and v) [Aus] Pilfer(er); collect(or of) odds and ends. (The bird collects and hoards small objects.)
look like a kookaburra that has swallowed the kangaroo [Aus] Incredulously delighted.
wary as a mallee hen guarding her eggs [Aus] (She lays them in a mound of fermenting vegetation.)
emu [Aus] Ground staff to airmen. (The emu cannot fly.)
long streak of pelican shit [Aus] Tall person.
penguin suit [1967] Formal evening dress (all black and white).
lady penguin [Aus] Nun (because of their black-and-white habits).
low as a penguin’s backside [Aus]
dodo (n) Old-fashioned, inactive, unenlightened person.
dead as the dodo/moa [NZ] (Both extinct: the last dodo seen alive was on Mauritius in 1680.)
ostrich stomach One that will digest anything. (Ostriches swallow stones or pieces of metal into their crops.)
vulture (v) Borrow books without right or permission.
vulture (n) Rapacious, voracious and insatiable person, not in the least particular.
the vultures/buzzards are circling People are arriving to await the death of a wealthy relative.
mouth like a vulture’s crutch A very unsavoury state of the mouth due to overdrinking.
C.17k Reptiles

crocodile (n) File, usually of schoolchildren; gripping tool with flat jaws for squeezing iron [Yks Som Ken Dev].
crocodile shears Shears for cutting metal bars.
crocodile squeezer Machine with a pivoted upper jaw for removing impurities from metal under pressure.
alligator boots [orig. railways] Boots like gaping mouths because the uppers have parted from the sides through diesel oil damage.
fascinate [<Lat fascinare=cast a spell by a look, as snakes are reputed to do by hypnotism]
strike the serpent’s head with your enemy’s hand! [1732] Said when someone delegates the unpleasant work to the person they dislike.
crooked as a snake [NC Tenn Calif sAmer]
wake snakes [NewEng: Amer passim] Cause/get into trouble; look lively.
there’s no snakes in Virginnny [Amer] I shall certainly do what I have promised. (In full: ‘if I don’t do it, there are no snakes in Virginia.’)
hot enough to melt snakes [Calif]
blacksnake [Amer] Coal train.
copperhead [Amer 1860s] Supporter of the Confederacy in the Civil War (regarded as a traitor in the same way as the venomous copperhead which, unlike the rattlesnake, gives no audible warning of its hostility).
sidewinder [species of American rattlesnake capable of travelling quickly over smooth sand by moving its body as much sideways as forwards] Devious troublemaker [1906]; a ‘dark horse’, but a very swift one [Can]; wide, sweeping blow with the fist [Amer]; dangerous and aggressive man [Amer].
bang/fuck/root [have sex—Aus Amer, 1959] like a rattlesnake Do it with enthusiasm, vigorously.
keep your ears open: even a rattlesnake will warn before he bites [Ohio Geo Ark]
mad as a cut snake [Aus]
wriggle like a cut snake [Aus] Behave very evasively.
touchy as a taipan [a very poisonous Queens-land snake growing up to ten feet in length—Aus] Nervous and dangerous.
undergrowth too thick for a black snake to wriggle through [Aus]
death-adder man [nAus] Bad-tempered recluse (liable to react savagely if approached before noon).
has death-adders/fish-hooks in his pocket [Aus] Is incredibly mean with money. (What else could account for him being so reluctant to put his hand in his pocket?)
chameleons [1586] Changeable, inconstant person. (A chameleon can change its colour to match its background.)
live on air, like the chameleon [1589] A popular fiction, probably deriving from the speed with which it snaps up flies.
melt into the scenery [Amer] Deliberately make yourself inconspicuous.
lizard [Aus NZ] Shepherd, boundary fencer (because he creeps along the fence like a flycatcher lizard or fence lizard).
fast as a lizard [Calif]
flat out like a lizard drinking/on a log [Aus] Lying on the stomach; working at great speed.
blue-tongue [the blue-tongue lizard—Aus] General handyman around a ranch or station.
mad as a goanna [monitor lizard—Aus] (Because they are slow and stupid.)
short round like a great goanna [Aus]
dog and goanna rules [Aus] No rules at all.
mad as a frilled lizard [Aus]
Arkansas lizard [Amer] Louse.
the venom is in the tail The trouble, difficulty comes at the end (as in a wasp or scorpion).
stamp down on… Suppress vigorously (as if crushing underfoot a pest or dangerous creature).
carapace Defensive recourse, often mental. (Like the shell of a tortoise.)

C.171 Spiders and insects

tarantula-juice [Amer] Strong but low-quality liquor, poor whiskey.
white-ant (v) [Aus, c. 1920 NZ] Devastate someone, spoil his chances furtively—often by stealing his girlfriend. (From the insidious and long-undetected damage that white ants can do to the foundations of a building.)
have white ants (in your billy-can) [Aus] Become exceedingly foolish, even insane. (One Australian myth is that white ants can affect a person’s sanity and intelligence by destroying parts of the brain.)
aggressive as a bull ant [Aus]
termite Subversive, destructive element in society [Aus].
bot-fly [Aus]/bot [NZ] Interfering nuisance; persistent borrower (from the pestilential nature of this insect).

C.18 Peace and war

patience conquers
better an egg in peace than an ox in war
the bible and a stone do well together (Complementary means of persuasion.)
knowledge has no enemy but ignorance
in conflict Of any incompatibles.

on the war-path Looking for trouble; angry enough to use violence.

invade (v) Of forces like disease, loud noises, powerful emotions and obsessions that neither body nor mind are able to repel.

carry the war into the enemy’s country Start attacking after being on the defensive—of negotiations, litigation etc.

in the wars Showing signs of personal injury; in trouble generally. Often jocular—The boy looks as if he’s been in the wars!’

C.19a Mercenaries

militate against Tell against; lend weight against—of evidence, facts etc.

no money, no Swiss [1652] No help without payment.

law, logic and Switzers may be hired to fight for anybody [1593]

sure as a check [Exchequer pay—1591]

free-lance [1864] One who sells services or writings where they like (just as a medieval mercenary lancer was free to fight for any side that would pay him); notorious adulteress.

soldier on Continue serving or working in spite of difficulties.

forlorn hope [=verloren hoop Du=lost troop—1768] (Originally applied to a body of soldiers sent out on a hopelessly dangerous mission; now used to mean a remote chance, a venture with very slight hope of success.)

C.19b Spies

forewarned is forearmed

spies are the ears and eyes of princes [1651]

smoke (v) Detect, suspect the position, existence of. (Probably from observing enemy fires.)

speculate [<Lat speculari=observe military movements from a watch-tower] Make a mental forecast; buy with an eye to profit.

cloak-and-dagger—story, situation, mystery etc. [1841] One where secrecy, espionage and intrigue are rife. Often in humorous exaggeration.

a blessing in disguise Someone or something that, in the event, proves better than at first appeared.

undisguised Openly admitted and/or enjoyed.

indecipherable Illegible—of bad writing.
C.19c Treachery

treacherous—ice, weather, roads [1807] Liable to change or fail at need.
  have a foot in both camps Have connections with both parties; stand to gain from either side’s success.
  carry fire in one hand and water in the other Say one thing and mean another; lull suspicion in order the better to work mischief.
  sell the pass [Ire 1850] Betray your own cause, countrymen. (After the Irish tradition that a pass betrayed for money resulted in the subjection of the Firbolgs to the invading King Trathal.)
  wear Hector’s cloak The reward of treason. (Hector Armstrong never prospered after taking a reward in 1569 for betraying Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland.)
  take Hector’s cloak Deceive someone who has trusted you. (As/from the above.)
  unimpeachable [<Lat impedicare=fetter (the first action in a legal process where someone is accused of crimes against the state)] Beyond criticism or reproach.

C.20a Messengers

watchword [a word to tell to the watch or guard who challenges you, as evidence of being friend, not foe—1738] Guiding principle, rule of action—‘Cheerful service is our watchword.’
  a sleeveless errand [1546] A futile errand. (It is recounted in The Mabinogion that the sign of a sleeve on the messenger’s cap gave diplomatic immunity.)
  in a tift [breathless—Cum] In earnest, serious.
  stay till the lame messenger come if you would know the truth of the thing (He will not have rushed off before the event was concluded.)
  harbinger [originally the man who finds lodgings for the soldiers<OHG hari=army+bergan=lodge—1572] Announcer.
  prevent [<Lat prae-venire=come before, come first]
  forerunner [one who ran in front to herald a great man’s coming] Precursor, someone or something inevitably followed by important events; the first of a sequence of events.
  take a message to Garcia Accept responsibility and have enough courage and resourcefulness to complete a task. (From the exploit of Lieutenant Rowan in 1898, who took a message to the Cuban General Garcia through the Spanish blockade.)
**C.20b Ambassadors and diplomacy**

**the Welsh ambassador** The cuckoo [1608]/owl [1683].
**golden bridge** [1579] Honourable retreat for an opponent, worth providing at any cost.
**carte blanche** [the blank sheet of paper on which a negotiator could write his own conditions—1707] Full discretionary power.
**scrap of paper** Treaty made with no intention of keeping it.
**disappoint** (The original sense of removal from office has been extended to the present meaning of the frustration of hope or expectation.)
**Ugandan affairs** Casual or extramarital sex. (An ambassador purporting to be discussing Uganda was discovered to be doing no such thing.)

**C.20c Governing an empire**

**empire-building** Expansion into new areas, diversification by an entrepreneur or businessman.
**grass widow** [1846] Wife parted temporarily from her husband (as were those soldiers’ and diplomats’ wives in India sent for the period of the hottest weather to cooler hill-stations, where the grass stayed green).
**go/come with the territory** [Amer] Be an unavoidable accompaniment—often an unpleasant one.

**C.21a Territory and citizenship**

**territory** Province, scope or sphere of a science or subject.
**province** Speciality, particular work—The chemistry of lichens is his province.’
**in the realm/ domain of**… In the (often remote) sphere, region variously.
**draw the line at**… Set a limit beyond which you will not go, usually in behaviour. (From marking boundaries on a chart.)
**transgress** Sin (by crossing a moral boundary).
**go south** [Amer] Disappear, fail. (From taking refuge south of the Mexican border.)
**south of the border** [Amer] Failed, rejected generally. (As above.)
**border-line case** [1907] Where it is difficult (1) to choose between two similar alternatives, or (2) to assign something to the correct one of two contiguous and very similar categories.
**borderland** Intermediate state (as between sleep and waking).
**Balkanise** Divide an area up into separate, and often mutually hostile, units, as was done in the Balkan peninsula in the late C19 and early C20.

**exterminate** [Lat *ex-terminate*=drive beyond their borders] Kill off completely.

**denizen**—of the forest, deep etc. A dweller. often remote or rarely encountered. (From the citizen status accorded to aliens by Letters Patent in C15. Such citizens would naturally be few in number and retiring in habit.)

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**C.21b Counsel**

**take not counsel in the combat** Consultation must come in good time to be of use.

**take counsel of your pillow** [1530] Sleep on a problem; postpone a decision till the next morning.

**round-table conference** One in which all parties have equal status, so that they may freely debate. (From the legend of King Arthur’s Round Table, at which no knight had preference.)

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**C.21c Elections**

**calculate** [Lat *calculus*=a pebble counting as one vote in the election urn; also an abacus bead] Estimate mathematically.

**ambition** [Lat *amb-ire*=go round (canvassing votes)]

**platform** Political policy (on which the party stands).

**plank in his platform** Vital part of his policy.

**do a line with...** [Aus NZ] Have an affair with. (From having a settled policy, like a political line.)

**stand up and be counted** Come to a decision and commit yourself publicly

**all on one side, like a Bridgnorth election** (where the Whitmore family from Apley near Bridgnorth were returned from 1663 to 1870, almost without exception) [Shr] Of something leaning out of perpendicular.

**vote with their feet** Register an opinion by their actions, by going or returning.

**like Nicholas Kemp, he’s got occasion for all** (He was a voter in a Cornish borough who, when told to help himself—to prevent suspicion of bribery—from a table covered with gold in the election room, swept the lot into his hat saying ‘I’ve occasion for all.’ Another Cornishman, Blacker, is also credited with this opportunism.)

**Limehouse** (n and v) Violent abuse of political opponents (from the speech made there on 30 July 1909 by Lloyd George).

**and that’s another county heard from!** [Amer Can] Said when someone farts, belches or interjects some remark. Irritated response to an unwanted contribution. (From the announcement of election results.)
see how it plays in Peoria [Ill: Amer] Try out for possible reactions. (Peoria is a town where conservative opinion and politics are so polarised that it can be taken as a reliable indicator of public reception of new plays etc.)

C.21d Parliament and laws

proud as a government mule
soft as a government job
false as a bulletin [C18–C19]
cross-bench mind [1884] One that can see both sides of a question.
take a back seat Accept an inferior position; retire into obscurity (like a backbencher who no longer seeks to be in the forefront of debate).
root-and-branch policy/men etc. Seeking total abolition of something. (From the London Petition of 1640 for the abolition of episcopal government. The phrase was originally suggested by Mal iv.1 in the OT.)
buncombe/bunkum [Amer 1850s] Rubbish, political clap-trap (after the member from Buncombe [NC] who resisted protests in the 16th Congress in order to ‘make a speech for Buncombe’).
Asquith [British Prime Minister, now remembered for little else than his favourite saying ‘Wait and see’—1908–16] A French match, the lighting of which required patience.
Watergate (v) [Amer] Elicit and publish corruption scandals. (From the 1972 Watergate scandal in Washington.)
Nixon (n and v) Fraud, swindle (because of the Watergate scandals in Nixon’s presidency—see above).
Rooker (v)/do a Rooker on… Make inaccurate accusations from a position where retaliation is impossible (from the name of an MP who in 1980 made allegations against an employee of Rolls Royce which he could not substantiate).
handbag (v) [1982] Coerce with strident criticism. (After the aggressive use of a handbag reputedly swung by PM Margaret Thatcher to enforce cabinet support of her policies.)
take it as read Assume knowledge or understanding of it. (From law-making procedures and in committees and board meetings.)
lay/leave on the table Postpone action or decision on…
legislate for… Cater for, make arrangements—generally.
lay down the law State imperatively.
seal (v) Ratify, decide irrevocably—as ‘his fate is sealed’.
set the seal on… Give full justification to; make final and irrevocable. (From the final act that makes an edict law.)
make a Federal case out of it Take it too seriously; over-react, exaggerate, over-emphasise.
self-denying ordinance Decision or course of action by which people deprive themselves of some benefit. (From a parliamentary decision ‘appointing that no Member
of either House, during the Time of this War, shall have or execute any Office or Command Military or Civil’ [Jrnl Ho, 11 December 1644].

**declare an interest** Admit to a connection that might affect the issue. (It is incumbent on Members of Parliament who wish to speak to ‘declare an interest’ if they have any connection with the subject of debate that could bring them profit or personal advantage.)

**read the Riot Act** Warn authoritatively. The first action of a military or civil authority faced by a disorderly mob should be to read out the pertinent sections of the Act of 1714. If the mob do not then disperse, force may be used.

**where his writ** [written authority/legal instrument] **runs** As far as his authority or influence extends.

**corridors of power** A situation of potentially high office and influence (as if opportunities come to those who are in the right place at the right time).

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### C.21e Taxation, bureaucracy

**pay tribute** [a tax in Roman times] to… Acknowledge esteem of…

**contribute** Give help or a part or a share towards something. (From the C16 meaning: join together in paying taxes or into a common fund; the sense widened to the present one.)

**immune** [\textless \text{Lat immunis} = exempt from public service or taxation]

**control** [\textless \text{MedFr contre roller} = hold a copy of a roll of accounts—and so possess powerful knowledge and evidence about others]

**what is won in the hundred, is lost in the shire (and vice versa)** [1520] What is gained by one activity or department is lost by another.

**out of his hundred** [EAn] Strange, out of his element.

**sure as death and taxes**

**certain as the cess-gatherer** (The cess was a rate or tax collected in Scotland, Ireland and India.)

**pay (him) scot and lot** [municipal tax] Settle with a person finally and completely.

**scot-free** [without having to pay the tax or fine—1531] Unpunished.

**Morton’s fork** [1874] A cruel quandary, an inescapable dilemma. (Archbishop John Morton was Henry VII’s Lord Chancellor in 1487 and levied forced loans by arguing that those who lived well could obviously afford them, while those who lived frugally would have adequate savings.)

**silhouette** An outline portrait which, being cheap and economical, was named after Etienne de Silhouette, a French politician [1709–67], notable for his mean economies.

**black-coated workers** Prunes (reputedly effective in making constipated bowels ‘work’).

**white land** Land where no further developments will be allowed. (So-called because uncoloured on planning authority maps.)

**he’s off the rate-book at last** Has died.

**red tape** Obstructive formal administrative procedures. (From the Civil Service practice [C17+] of tying up files etc. with red tape.)
rubber-stamp Of a person, unquestioning obedience; of an administration, automatic authorisation.

C.21f Political parties, trade unions

a card-carrying member A fully committed, bona fide member of an organisation.

get your card punched [Amer] Have your credentials verified.

whistle-blower One who alerts the authorities to an injustice, malpractice, crime etc. (like a union shop steward who blows a whistle to bring members out on strike when something is wrong; see also K.32a).
D
SAILOR

D.1a Ship-building and repairs

novette [little boat—Fr] That cut in jewellery which, being a pointed oval, resembles the shape of a ship.

on the stocks [1669] In preparation.

chalk it out Show the course to be followed—as a shipwright or carpenter plans the work with chalk. (This could just as well be derived from the marking of soldiers’ billets—see also C.12c, walk your chalks!)


high-pooped [naut] With heavy buttocks.

double-decker A sandwich with two layers.

scow (n) [old, clumsy boat—Sc Ire Amer] A large, gaunt woman [ShI OrI 1866]; a large, ugly and/or unpleasant woman [Amer 1960].

hulking Large and unwieldy (like a hulk [cargo vessel], or the body of a dismantled ship, used for stores etc.).

harmony [<Gk ἱματισμός=fit ship’s timbers and planks together with joinery]

oak-bottomed Insensitive, self-sufficient, without feeling for others.

copper-bottomed Thoroughly sound, of investments etc. (Copper-bottoming was first used in 1761 on ships of the British navy as a protection against the teredo and incrustations of shell and weed.)

bilge [the bottom of the hull where refuse and dirty water collected]/bilgewater [1878] Nonsense.

figurehead Nominal or honorary head of a state, business etc. but with no useful function.

from stem [the curved end-timber at a ship’s bow to which the planks are scarfed] to stern Right from one end to the other.

head-rails Teeth.

equipped Endowed, naturally able—‘ill-equipped to cope …’

tackle (v) Grapple, come to grips with (from the idea of making a ship amenable to control by fixing tackle and rigging on it).

rig someone out with… Equip (as you equip a ship with rigging).
schooner-rigged—job, firm One inadequately equipped.
derf as the mainmast
def jury (v) Wear upside-down. (From the jury-mast—a makeshift mast, used in emergencies.)
carryes the broom (at the mast-head) [naut] She is a whore. (When a ship had been sold, a broom was attached to the mast-head.)
a ship and a woman are ever repairing/trimming [1594]
dergird [prevent splitting in a boat by securing ropes or chains under and round it, and so binding it together] Support from below; give cohesion to individuals and organisations.
clamper [metal patch for repairing a boat—Sc] Trumped-up charge; concocted argument.
smack it about Cut out the refinements and/or trimmings, just be quick (from instructing ships’ painters to work more quickly, even if they have to be slapdash—‘smacking their brushes about’).

D.1b Pitch and tar

black/dark as pitch/pick [pitch—Ags Per P eb Nhb C um W m Yks Lan Lin Not Der]; pitch-black; pitch-darkness
a touch of the tar-brush [1859] Some black ancestry, however remote.
at loggerheads [1680] In dispute, conflict. (A loggerhead is a long-handled ladle for melting tar, and if two sailors were on the job of melting tar, frayed tempers were likely and the loggerheads would be used as weapons. Another likely derivation is from whaling, where the loggerhead was the channel in the bow of a whaling boat through which ran the harpoon-line. When the line was running out fast, water had to be poured on it to prevent the friction causing fire. When at loggerheads thus, the fight with the whale was at its height [see H. Melville, Moby Dick xlviii & xlix—1851].)

pitch-kettled! Puzzled, stuck, caught out (from being stuck in a cauldron of cold pitch).

the devil to pay and no pitch hot! [1788] Of a desperate situation. (The ‘devil’ was a seam between the garboard strake and the keel, and to ‘pay’ [<ONF peier] was to pitch, so that in careening a ship it was urgent to get this seam pitched before the tide turned.)
don’t spoil the ship for a halfp’orth of tar [1869] Don’t jeopardise a big work for lack of a small but essential addition. (This originally derived from sheep; see E.23f.)

seal the leaks Make sure a case, argument etc. is ‘watertight’ and has no flaws; tie up the details.
caulk the seams (As above.)
D.2a Small boats

wait for a lay [calm, lull in the waves—Sc] Wait for an opportunity.
boy/little man in the boat Clitoris. Similarly:
canoe inspection [Can army] Service women’s medical inspection for VD.
ship towing her punt [St Ives, Cor] The new moon with Venus showing close behind.
cut the painter [rope by which a boat is tied to its ship, buoy etc.—1699] Part company, secede—especially of colonies; depart, decamp; die; remove someone’s opportunity to cause trouble or do harm; send someone away.
launch (v)—a scheme, school, company, society etc. Inaugurate, get properly started. Also, relaunch, when it needs to be done again.
launch out into.../on ...Start a new venture, career etc.; spend freely, extravagantly.
push the boat out Make a conscious effort; go to extreme lengths; pay readily for more drinks.
push/shove off! Go away, get started. (An abrupt and forceful order.)
who takes the devil into his boat must carry him over the Sound [1678] Of marriage.
his boat is kittle to trim [Sc] He is difficult to manage.
sail all in one boat/ship Belong to the same group.
in the same boat [1584] In the same predicament.
God is good, but don’t dance in a currach [small boat made of wickerwork and hides—Ir-Gael] Don’t tempt providence.
rock the boat [1931] Risk failure by not cooperating; upset the arrangements by selfish action; act or speak in a way likely to reduce the efficiency of an organisation.
there’s another side on the boat [Ire] You don’t have to do it that way; there is an alternative.
subversive [<Lat subvertere=turn over from below]

D.2b Rowing

galley-slave A cooked cockroach, white and nauseating in the Sunday’s plum-duff [naut].
work like a galley-slave [1841]
chained to the oar Trapped in a hard, heavy job; in work from which there is no escape.
all men row galley way [towards themselves] Work to their own advantage.
the first in the boat has the choice of oars First come, first choice.
every man must row with such oars as he has Make the best of his resources.
row past your reach Attempt more than you can manage.
work the oars [IMa] Get on.
cross-handed [Nfld] Alone (probably from those who prefer to row cross-handed if alone).

pull the stroke oar Be in control, lead the operation.

vogue [<It vogare=row, have the chief place in rowing]

ply/pull the labouring oar Take the greater or more arduous share of the work.

pull on/tug at the oar Take your share of the labour.

he looks one way and rows the other [1579] Has a different purpose from the apparent or declared one; is inconsistent.

put/shove your oar in... Meddle, interfere in a matter.

have an oar in another’s/every man’s boat [1542] Interfere; involve yourself in their affairs.

row with one oar [Amer]/not have both oars in the water [Amer] Behave irrationally, be crazy, stupid.

paddle your own canoe [1828] Live your own life, be independent.

everyone should row his own boat [Ill] Have control of his own affairs.

the man who rows the boat does not rock it [Ire] Those in charge are not subversive.

row against the flood/(wind and) tide [C9] Oppose the majority; work under difficulties.

when you stop rowing you start downstream [Utah] Keep active to stay healthy.

pull together Co-operate, work in harmony.

pull your weight Do your share of the work, take on some of the responsibility.

rest on his oars [1784] Relax after initial labour—often of those who work less after promotion.

scull around [Cor] Wander about aimlessly; kill time by doing something and nothing.

up the creek (without an oar) [c. 1920] In trouble; pregnant; crazy.

D.3a Sails and ropes

make not thy sail too big for thy ballast [1577] Don’t overreach yourself—to a boaster.

pay with the topsail/(fag-end of the) foretopsail Slip away to sea without paying your debts.

with studding-sails [studdensails/stunsails/ stunsels, the extra sails attached in a fair wind to the outer edge of mainsails] on both sides With a girl on each arm.

cut of his jib [1823] Personal appearance, the impression he gives. (Sailors could tell a ship’s character by the shape of her jib-sail.)

from clew to earing [from bottom corner to top corner of a sail] Completely; from head to toe; in every detail.

mainstay [1787] Chief support.

walks backwards like an old twiney [rope-maker—Nhb] going down the ground

Roper’s news [nDev wCor] Old or no news.

rope (n) A system of inheritance that passes from father to daughter and from mother to son (because it patterns like the plaighting of a rope).
thick as a rope
ropy Shabby, of poor, rough quality; bad, unhealthy, in poor condition (via the rope-like fungal growths in infected beer and milk).
tough as an old lanyard knot
in a clove-hitch [a sailor’s knot which fastens a rope to a spar etc. in such a way that both ends are concealed] In a dilemma or predicament without any obvious solution [R.L.Stevenson, Treasure Island iii & xv—1883].
two ends and the bight of… The whole of… not care/give/worth a rope’s end
take a snood [coil, twisted rope—ShI] Be sulky.
know/learn/put up to/show the ropes [1840] Be familiar/become initiated/initiate another into how a system or organisation is made to work.
a man who lippens to [relies on] a straw rope may hang himself [Sc] A man’s downfall is his own fault if he trusts an unreliable person.
pick/pull to pieces (like an oakum-boy put to shred old ropes) Criticise exhaustively.
he has unrove his life-line He is dead.
bent on a splice On the look-out for a wife.
splice (v)/get spliced [1751] Marry. (From the sailors’ method of joining two ropes’ ends together.)
splice the main-brace [1805] Serve out grog, drink freely, start a drinking session. (The naval custom of serving out a double tot of rum to those sailors who had just spliced the main-brace started because it was a difficult job and in a dangerous position.)
chock-a-block Crammed close together. (From the expression used when the two blocks of a tackle run so close together that they touch each other—the limit of hoisting.)
swivel-eye A squinting eye (because it turns independently of the other).
swivel-headed Describes a man who keeps looking round at girls who pass him in the street.
yard-arm to yard-arm [the spar that projects outwards from the mast and supports a sail] In very close proximity—as two ships must be whose yard-arms meet.
blow marlinspikes Blow a full gale (strong enough to blow even marlinspikes about the deck).
look marlinspikes Look very fierce and angry.
marlin [the fish] Named after the marlinspike whose shape the fish’s snout resembles.

D.3b Winds

give the… a fair wind Pass it (bread, bottle, whatever) to me.
he that will not sail till he has a full fair wind will lose many a voyage You miss much by being a perfectionist or over-cautious.
whistle for… Ask or apply or hope for something in vain (like whistling for a wind, a futile exercise).
sail quoth the king; hold quoth the wind [1721] However great your power, you are powerless to command the impossible.
raise the wind [1785] Obtain a required amount of money (like whistling for a wind).
know/see which way the wind blows [1546] Understand the trend of affairs.
as the wind blows you must set your sail [1846] Be adaptable.
he that will use all winds must shift his sail Adapt to different company.
veer Change, alter policy, opinions.
women, wind and fortune are given to change
sail with every (shift of) wind [1530] Turn every change to your advantage.
have the wind behind you Enjoy favourable conditions.
sail before the wind Make good, unimpeded progress.
sail with wind and tide Not contending with irresistibles.
have/take the wind of... Beat, excel/get the advantage over. (As when a ship gets the advantage of position to catch a sailing wind before another ship.)
take the wind out of his sails Deflate him; frustrate by anticipation (as in the sea-fights of old where it was good tactics to sail between the wind and your enemy).
all of a dead wind [calm—nYks] At a full stop, standstill.
I am becalmed—the sail sticks to the mast [naut C18] My shirt sticks to my back.
in the doldrums [light, unreliable equatorial winds] In a depressed, stagnant state of mind, a sleepy and dispirited condition where the sufferer wishes only to stay in bed [Sc Ire n&swEng Not Pem] (resembling, as it were, a sailing ship becalmed in the doldrums).
get/go to leeward of Fall foul of; find yourself at a disadvantage.
keep the lee-gauge of Be circumspect, defer to.
down in the wind [Dev] Bankrupt.
knock to (the) windward of... Get the better of; get on the right side of, in favour with—someone in a position of influence or authority.
put some wind in his/her sails Give a chance in life; an opportunity for fulfilment; the means to complete a work; the chance to ‘go places’.
sail close to/too near the wind [1586] Come near to breaking the law; come perilously close to transgressing the moral code; take risks.
give sheet Run away.
three sheets in the wind Drunk. (The sheets were the ropes holding the corners of the sail, so that if these blew slack, control was reduced or lost.)
a sheet in the wind’s eye (q.v. I.23a) Only slightly drunk.
have/shake a cloth in the wind Be ragged in clothing; slightly drunk. (From sailing too near to the wind, so that the sails shiver.)

D.3c Sailing

up sticks Pack up and go, move on without delay. (In naval slang from the early C19, the ‘sticks’ were the mast and yards; ‘up sticks’ meant to set up the mast ready to sail. See also E.3a, move/pull up your stakes.)
sail (v) Move smoothly and with dignity. (Often used humorously.)
loom large[ ] [<>Fris lômen+Sw dialect loma=move slowly—of ships on the sea or the sea itself] Assume greater importance in the mind; receive disproportionate attention. (When a ship was indistinctly sighted at sea, it was vital to know whether it was hostile and which way it was going.)
keep close tack tox… Keep close behind.
sail on the same tack Follow, agree with, pursue the same policy etc.
on the right/wrong tack [1795] With the right/ wrong idea, purpose, direction.
off on a different tack On a digression, discursively.
go on another tack Change plan, policy.
sail on another board [tack, sideways direction—as larboard, starboard; <Fr bord=tack/side of a ship] Take, try another course of action.

it’s not the gale but the set of the sail that determines the way you go [Ont NY] Internal forces rather than external circumstances should direct your life.
sail a long course [1614] Stretch the truth.
climb the rigging [naut] Lose your temper.
lubber’s hole [an opening in the maintop, alternative to climbing up the shrouds—c. 1770] An evasion, easy way out [naut].
on the high ropes [1694] Head in air, cock-a-hoop, disdainful. (The foretopmen were scornful of lesser sailors.)
sway on all top ropes [naut Aus C19–20] Live extravagantly, cut a dash.
bear sail Be exalted, prosperous.
carry too much sail Behave rashly, take risks.
crowd (on) the sail Try or work harder; apply pressure.
under full sail Of a business venture or other enterprise that has survived its critical early days and is all set to succeed.
in full sail [wYks] Prospering well.
come with a wet sail Make swift progress to victory or success. (Sails were wetted to enable the ship to sail closer to the wind.)
top and topgallant In full array; in full career.
topsail Vital and valued element in someone’s practices, beliefs etc.
both sheets aft [naut] Having both hands in your pockets.
double-reef the topsails Act very cautiously, be less ambitious, take fewer risks.
bear low/shorten/take in sail [1557] Lower your ambitions, humble yourself.
clew up [the act of clewing up, i.e. taking up the lower edge to the yard preliminary to furling a sail] A case or act of despair.
lower/strike sail Give in, surrender to one more powerful (as in naval warfare before the days of steam).
carry on—without reefing Continue as before, undeterred.
take in a bight/reef Retrench, be more economical, proceed cautiously. (Taking in a reef reduces the area of a sail.) ‘Take a reef in your topsail’=calm down, steady up.
under easy sail Gently, quietly, without haste or ambition.
trim your sails to the wind Adapt to changing circumstances.
trim your sails Spend less, be less ambitious.
top your boom [naut] Go away.
lower the boom on [Amer] Dispose of an opponent with one crushing blow; borrow money from.
a close-run thing A contest or endeavour that comes near to failure. (From the times of clippers and the grain runs or races. Said by the Duke of Wellington after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815: ‘a damned close-run thing’.)

veer [slacken a rope] and haul [heave a rope tight] Tackle a problem by skilful and complicated manoeuvres.

overhaul [1705] Examine thoroughly. (From the way in which sailors released ropes and blocks by hauling in the opposite direction to the hoisting direction and then slackening them until parted conveniently for repair etc.)

overhaul Pass, overtake. (Now used generally, though originally solely at sea and connected by sense with the above, but also with over-hale in the C16.)

take aback [1840] Stop progress (as sailing ships are ‘taken aback’ by a change of wind forcing square-rigged sails back against the masts).

back and fill Be irresolute, shifty (from a method of tacking when the tide is with the ship and the wind against it).

under bare poles Reduced to the last extremity (as when all sail is taken in during a storm).

a man without a woman/money is like a ship without a sail [NY Mich SC Colo]

D.4 Modern ships

trial run [test journey or voyage for a new vehicle or ship] Experimental and evaluation period to allow a new idea to be tried out—variously.

Norwegian steam Brute manpower (because the Norwegians, with their fine sailing ships, were scornful of the first steamships).

under your own steam [1912] Without help (like a ship without tugs).

steamboat course The direct and easy way (in contrast to the tacking etc. forced upon sailing ships by variations in the wind). Hence:

steamboating A bookbinders’ term for cutting a pile of books in one operation.

all parts bearing an equal strain [naut 1930+] Lying comfortably.

work your passage Earn the right to whatever progress you may make (as a stowaway might be required to work as a seaman to earn his keep).

posh [1915] Self-important, very smart (as were those who, when visiting India, booked a cabin Port Out, Starboard Home in order to obtain the cooler side of the ship).

you want portholes in your coffin! [naut] To someone exasperatingly hard to please.

shaft-alley [the passage between the engine-room and the stern along which the propeller shaft runs] news, rumours Unofficial information derived from gossip and speculation between sailors working down there.

the whole caboosh [caboose, ship’s galley—RN sl. 1960s] Everything without exception.

a fight between a fox and a chief steward One where any dirty trick can be expected, where neither side has the least idea of, or wish for, fair play.
D.5 Weather at sea

befog Confuse.

fog in the channel [Cor] Phlegm in the throat causing croaky speech.

fog-horn Loud, resonating voice.

the darkest hour is before the dawn [1650] Things improve after their worst.

difficult as a sea breeze

a sea wind changes less often than the mind of a weak man [Ire]

to a crazy ship all winds are contrary [1616]

every wind is ill to a broken ship

by a side-wind [1648] By indirect agency or influence; slyly.

the cat has a gale of wind in her tail (Sailors forecast a storm when they see a cat unusually playful.)

storm-clouds Sign(s) of war or other impending trouble, threat of disturbances.

keep your weather-eye open [1839] Be especially cautious, vigilant for trouble and alert to the possibility of a change for the worse.

the calm before the storm [1590] An ominous lull—variously.

doister [doistered, caught unexpectedly by a storm—Sc] Overcome by surprise generally [Ayr].

look out for squalls Expect trouble, especially from discontented parties.

squall Quarrel.

williaw [sudden squall] Rumpus [Amer].

take the rough with the smooth [1590] Endure the bad for the sake of the better—referring to any variety.

afflict [<Lat affligo=dash against, as wind and waves against a ship] Distress.

it is good to have a shelter against every storm An unshakeable faith.

blow high, blow low [Amer] Whatever may happen.

tempestuous Riotous, violent—meeting, relationship etc.

storm (v) Bluster, rant, rage; take by violent attack [Army].

brain-storm Violent disturbance of the mind; happy insight, sudden idea, brain-wave [Amer].

stormy Angry, turbulent, where feelings run high—of meetings, debates etc.

Irish hurricane A calm sea [RN]; drizzling rain.

bad-weather Geordie Cockle-seller (because his trade is busiest when the weather is stormiest).

the good seaman is known in bad weather [NJ]

make heavy weather of… [1915] Labour at; accomplish with difficulty; find inexplicably difficult.

have a rough passage Have a hard time, be badly treated.

God promises safe landing but not a calm passage

weather the storm [1655] Come through troubles; survive opposition.

let it blow over! [1617]/blow itself out! Wait until the crisis is past; until passions subside; let it pass away in its own time.

ride out the storm Carry on through period of adversity.

ride the whirlwind Control or direct revolutionary, violent forces.
a whirlwind—visit/romance etc. [1942] One where everything happens quickly and violently and is soon over.

after storm comes a calm [1377]
the storm blown over The crisis past.
spent force Someone or some movement once powerful, now grown weak (like a storm died down).
calm down Of people and situations as well as weather.
a vow made in the storm is forgotten in the calm [NY Mich SC Ill]

fair weather friends/Christians Only while things go smoothly.

D.6a The properties of ocean

sea (n) Vast expanse—of trouble, blood, flame, upturned faces etc.
ocean (n) As above, but, paradoxically, not as extensively used. ‘Oceans of time!’
deep/green/salty as the sea
salt as brine
drunk/full as the Baltic
deep as the bay of Biscay [Cor]
fierce as Pentland Firth
cast water into the sea/the Thames Waste effort.
to do good to the ungrateful is like throwing water into the sea [NY: 1732]
seek water in the sea A superfluity, the obvious.
al l rivers do what they can for the sea Every little helps.

the sea refuses no river [1601] All contributions gratefully received; the rich cannot help but get richer.

the sea complains it wants water! [1541] Ungrounded complaint.
a drop in the ocean [1844] Insignificant amount.
‘every little helps’, as the old woman said when she pissed in the sea
‘t is an ill gathering of stones where the sea is bottomless Trying to do something without the means, attempting the impossible.

he may remove Mort-stone [a large rock in Morte Bay, never to be removed except by someone who is master in his own house—Dev: 1662]

float a currency Give it a fluid exchange rate to prevent it sinking beneath the tides of speculation.

float an idea Try it out.
set afloat Get something started, under way.
floating [1853] Shifting, inconstant—population, voters etc.
buoyant [c. 1661]—spirits, economy etc. Cheerful, healthy.
keep afloat Prosper, avoid disasters, especially financial ones.
smooth water Conditions allowing easy progress, especially after difficulties.
cross-currents Differences and disagreements within a larger organisation.
undercurrent [1817] A suppressed or unperceived influence working contrary to the observed one(s); social movement likely to surface in the future.
turnpool [whirlpool]—of doubts [Ire] Unsettled state. ‘…the hurlpole of bottomles discreditt’ [Elizabeth I, Letter—4 January 1597–8].
ingurgitate [<Lat in-gurgitem=into a whirlpool] Swallow quickly.
engulfed [C17] Overwhelmed by distressing circumstances.
ground-swell After-effect of mental or political agitation (just as the ground-swell at sea is the result of a distant storm).
ground out (v) Reach a logical conclusion; settle down to…/as…, be resolved; be sorted out.
run high Mount up, become turbulent, forceful—of passions, tempers.
in rough water In trouble, difficulties.
pour oil on troubled waters [1731] Calm violent feelings, tempers, usually by some sort of conciliation.

D.6b Waves

wave/surge A powerful increase—of emotion, disgust, common feeling etc., followed by a subsidence. A wave of attackers etc. is a moving multitude, usually with more to follow.
crime-wave An increase in the incidence of crime.
abound [<Lat ab-undare=send out waves]
surround [<Lat super-undare=cover over with waves, flood over/round, and so enclose all round, the modern meaning]
redound (v) [<OF redonder<Lat (red)undare=surge back] Be turned back to its source, recoil, return to its originator with increase [mid C15] (from the action of a wave that flows back again after breaking on the shore or against a cliff or bank). Also, redundant.
fluctuate Rise and fall alternately.
jabble [condition of agitated water where there are many small, broken waves—Sc nIre Cum] Confusion, turmoil—variously.
he numbers the waves Acts futilely; is attempting a hopeless task.
washes over him Passes, leaving him unaffected. (Of those experiences which leave a person unmoved.)
seventh wave Culminating or overwhelming experience in a series where you can cope with the normal, but not the abnormal.
decuman [<Lat decimus=tenth] Enormous, overwhelming. (From the belief that each tenth wave is abnormally large.)
D.6c Ice

look for/seek hot water under cold ice [C16] Expect or suspect what is not there; friendship from the unfriendly.

iceberg (n) [1840] Regular swimmer, undeterred by cold water [Aus]; chilling, unemotional person [Amer].

the tip of the iceberg [1961] The obvious part of a problem, implying that it is much larger than is at first apparent.

débâcle [<Fr débâcler=unbar—usually applied to the break-up of ice in a river] General rout, confusion.

D.7a Marine life, sharks and monsters

slimy and sliddery as the sea-weed [Slk]

burroë [tangle, a straggly seaweed—Ire] Long, lanky person.
hobran [blue shark—ShI] Large repulsive person.
shark (n) [1713] Extortioner, swindler.
swim with sharks Associate with swindlers and criminals.
so mean he wouldn’t give a shout if a shark bit him [Aus]
land-shark Person who preys on seamen ashore.
box of sharks [Can] An expression of shocked surprise—‘nearly gave birth to a box of sharks!’
surface (v)/come to the surface Come into the open, into full consciousness—of subliminal ideas etc.
raise/rear its ugly head [1822] Obtrude its unwelcome presence, begin to be apparent (like a sea-monster).

D.7b Sea mammals and dolphins

a whale in the bay [Aus] An extraordinary situation, event.
kens nae a selgh [seal] frae a salmon [Sc]
al right, you did hear a seal bark Indicating the speaker’s disbelief, but willingness to a token agreement.
walrus moustache [1918] A thick bushy one overhanging the lips and drooping down at the sides (as do the large whiskers of a walrus).
blow/puff like a grampus [type of dolphin, noisy and snorting: 1836] Hence:
grampus (n) Person who snorts, snores or breathes loudly.
blow the grampus [naut 1790–1918] Drench someone; play about in the water.
tip the grampus [naut 1860+] Duck a sailor as punishment for sleeping on his watch.
(From the above.)
grassed [fat] as a mereswyne [porpoise—Morte Arthure Lin c.1400]
fat as a porpoise
porpoise (n) Fat man [Lin].
fou’ [foul, ugly—Lan] as a porpoise pig
like a porpoise playing before the storm [1577] When merriment seems to be the prelude to trouble.
harpoon a bottle-nose [dolphin] Make a big mistake.

D.7c Cuttles, turtles etc.
cunning as a cuttle (because of the cloud of ink through which it escapes).

octopus Formidable ramified power or influence; manual interferer, persistent groper of women.
turtle (n) Woman as sex-object.
turtle-back Hill or hump (so-shaped).
shell-back Old sailor, hardened and experienced; now used also of other die-hard traditionalists, long impervious to change. (From the phrase originally applied to the marine turtle.)
take off like a herd of turtles Of a plan or venture that has no hope of success—not get started; be in confusion.
turn turtle [1818] Capsize, turn upside down (from the practice of old sailors on the shores of equatorial Africa when they turned turtles upside down by their flippers to immobilise them); tip a sleeper out of bed or hammock (usually, in this sense, turn the turtle); come to grief generally.
jellyfish (n) Spineless person, one lacking in positive qualities and moral fibre.
soft as a jelly fish
stick like a remora [a sucking fish with the reputation in classical times of being able to delay the progress of any ship to which it attached itself. Both its Greek name (‘εχενηίς =hold-ship) and the Latin (remora=delay, hindrance) derive from this belief.]
burr [sea-urchin—Abd] Stocky, strong, stubborn person [Bnff].

D.7d Sea birds

booby (n) [kind of gannet, often victimised by other birds: 1599] Dull or stupid person.
a booby will never make a hawk The victim of others will not become the aggressor.
booby-trap [1868] Practical joke to catch the unwaried.

beat the booby [naut] Flap hands under the armpits to warm them. (As also beat goose, see E.27f.)

cormorant/gannet [mid C19] Greedy, rapacious person. (Although, in respect of gannets, and probably cormorants too, irregular fishing opportunities make it vital to gorge themselves when fish are available, as they sometimes have to pass several days without food.)

gull (n and v) Dupe. The sense sequence of this word is probably from the voracity of the gull (n), gull (v)=to cram with all sorts of rubbish the foolish bird, gull (n), which can be stuffed with nonsense and so duped; hence, gull (v)=delude.

seagull [Amer] Sailor’s wife or sweetheart who follows his ship; casual wharf-labourer [Aus].

thirsty as a gull [Cor]
black as a tulgy [a dark gull—Cor]
sick [Cor]/wet [wSom Sus Hmp IW Dev] as a shag
skart [cormorant—Sc] upon the top o’ the craig Someone in a position of exalted isolation.

shag on a rock [Aus] Someone in an isolated, vulnerable, even outcast situation.
lonely/miserable as a shag (on a rock) [Aus] (As above.)
stood like a mazed willock [guillemot—Nrf nDev nCor] Bemused.
mad [daft] as a willock [Nhb Suf] (Because it reveals where it is nesting.)
as fat as a testie [black guillemot] and as round as a pellick [pellock, porpoise—Sc: ShI]
plump as a puffin
stormy petrel [sea bird untroubled by stormy weather] A person revelling in trouble or opposition; someone at the centre of every dispute.

scissor-bill [Amer 1913+] Nagging woman; nasty character; non-union worker, person with bourgeois pretensions; also used as a term of general abuse. (Probably from the harsh screaming in breeding colonies of scissor-bills [black skimmers, shearwaters—NJ])

D.8a Sailors at sea

at sea Confused, at a loss.
worse things happen at sea! Phrase of comfort, a reminder that things could be worse.

women are ships and must be manned
let him that will learn to pray go to sea [1655–62]
one on shore we pray no more Blasé about past dangers.
every man to his trade, as the boy said to the bishop (‘Can you say your prayers, laddie?’—‘Can you say your compass?’—‘No.’—‘Every man to his trade.’)
fearnought A stout woollen cloth used at sea.
fetish Thing or practice invested with greater significance than it intrinsically has, and even becoming emotionally charged for such as sexual perverts. (The name feitiço was given by Portuguese travellers to charms and amulets that they met with on the coast of Guinea.)

yellow flag Sign of infection.

a taut/tight ship [the term for a ship with tight ropes and everything secure] An organisation efficient because tidy and orderly.

a ship is often lost because of one man [Ire] Any one in a group can make or mar the enterprise.

a happy ship [one whose crew work well together] A firm or organisation whose workers are harmoniously efficient.

shipshape (and Bristol fashion) [1823] All in order, tidy.

get his sea-legs Adapt to a new environment, become accustomed to the change.

feel his legs Learn what he can do in his new position (q.d. ‘sea-legs’).

face like a sea-boot Glum and wry.

homeward-bound stitching With large stitches (not needing to last so long); the stitches used in sewing up a dead seaman in his hammock for burial at sea, his last home.

hammock (v) ‘Hang’ a minority TV programme, or one with a doubtful audience, between two strong and popular programmes, in order to take up the ‘sag’ in numbers of viewers.

sagging—fortunes, support etc. Gradually falling, diminishing.

face like a scrubbed hammock Pale and sour-looking.

standing up in a hammock! In an impossible and ludicrous position—whatever you are trying to do!

rows [rolls—Sc] his hurdies [buttocks—Sc] in a hammock Takes a sea voyage.

tangle his hammock [1990s] Provokes him into trouble; keep him under observation.

in the big locker Overboard.

every man is not born to be a boatswain

every ship needs a captain [Colo]

sea-lawyer Seaman who arrogates a knowledge of maritime law.

ancient mariner Seagull (from the belief that the souls of dead sailors took the form of seagulls).

three turns round the longboat and a pull at the scuttle! [a small hatch in the deck; its lid] Describing someone avoiding work.

a man does not get his hands out of the tar-bucket by becoming second mate Your position does not exempt you from all menial tasks. (In the days of tarring the rigging, the second mate had to share this work with the men below him.)

tar the fingers to do it Do it unwillingly or with difficulty.

beat/knock the tar out of [Amer] Beat helpless.

to as much purpose as to wag your hand in the water Uselessly.

I didn’t come up in the last bucket! [naut] I have more sense than that; that doesn’t fool me.

down the hatch! A toast among drinkers.

under hatches Depressed; henpecked; put to silence; dead and buried.

that cuts no ice with me! [1895] In dismissal of a lame excuse or an inadequate explanation (like a useless ice-saw).
scuttlebutt (n) [butt or barrel of drinking water on shipdeck and therefore the resort of everyone at some time during the day] Rumour, speculation, gossip and unofficial information.

light out for… Depart for…[light=lift tackle in a certain direction—naut Amer mid C19].

clear the decks Make a thorough clearance.

keep your decks clear Keep business arrangements up-to-date, pay bills promptly, have your affairs well-ordered.

rescrub Do work all over again.


hit the deck Go to bed; fall to the ground; get up from bed.

fall between two stools Be neither one nor the other; fit neither category; miss both objectives by not deciding on one. (A sailors’ trick on a young seaman is to invite him to sit on a seat of canvas stretched between the two stools they are sitting on. When they rise, he falls into a tub of water.) ‘Betweene two stools my taile [arse] goes to the ground’ [J.Heywood, Proverbs—1546].

tarpaulin-muster Collection of money, clothing etc. among the crew for some immediate or imminent necessity.

work double tides [1776+] As hard as possible (as sailors must, if they are to use both tides in one day).

stale as a ship’s biscuit after a voyage

Which is as drie as the remainder bisket After a voyage:

[Shaks, AYLI II.vii—1593]

D.8b Working with ropes

double Dutch coiled against the sun [Nhb] Perversely incomprehensible. (To coil widdershins or against the sun’s direction is an awkward, left-handed way; double Dutch is gibberish anyway.)

lie a rope upright [Dev] Tell any number of lies.

pull at the same rope [Lan] Be in the same predicament.

get/keep in/on a (tow-)line End the suspense; keep someone distracted or preoccupied while they are being robbed.

give the old one-two Give an ogling look that betokens a sexual interest. (The opposite of the (old) heave-ho/one-two that rejects—see D.17f—being the difference between hauling on a rope and hurling overboard.)

girls are hauling on the tow-rope [naut] Of a ship on its way home to pay off.

haul upon the right tow [rope—ShI] Say the right thing.

let the tow run slack [Lnk] Let the business manage itself.

hang/sling on the slack rope [Cor] Be lazy.
take up the slack [1930] Become more efficient by employing someone to the full or by using an allowance (tax etc.) that has not previously been fully taken up; avoid having a lull in the proceedings.

give some slack Make allowances, give a chance, give credit [Amer].

taut (adj) Under tension, in tight control—of thought and works of art; well-organised.

he pulls on a long rope who waits for another’s death [1640] Achieve a result, obtain the desired effect.

one hand for yourself and one for the ship Do your work or duty, but look after your own interests at the same time.

to the bitter end [before 1850] To the last point possible. (The bitter is the last turn of a cable round the ‘bits’ or biting edges of a winch drum.)

kinky Deviant, especially sexually (as a rope with a kink in it deviates from the line).

tuck strands [naut C20] Curry favour, ingratiate yourself with those in charge (like a sailor fussily tidying loose strands of rope for appearance’s sake).

keep on a split yarn [naut] Keep on the alert; ready to start without delay. (The yarn is a thread or several threads making up a rope.) ‘Have it on a split yarn’=have a plan worked out ready.

spun-yarn trick An unfair, underhand method (from the use of spun yarn, contrary to rules, in competitions for repairing tackle).

seek a knot in a ring See or make difficulties where there are none.

hard in a clinch, and no knife to cut the seizing [small cord lashing—naut] In a very difficult situation, and no way out of it.

keep kinches [loops, twists, nooses of rope—Sc Dur War Amer] with Act in conjunction with; keep up with; cope with any eventualities [Slg Ayr].

bring/fetch someone up with a round turn [to throw a round turn round a bollard enables a sailor to hold a prodigious pull] Stop someone abruptly.

hitch Temporary stoppage or hold-up (as while a rope is being hitched to something).

hand over fist/hand over hand At top rate, as fast as a man can work. (From the action of hauling a rope.)

junk [the name given by sailors to inferior rope] Discarded material that might come in useful.

pay it out! Keep on talking; ‘get it off your chest’.

go with a run Smoothly, without hitch. (When a rope is paid out, it can either be slackened gradually or ‘with a run’.)

came out like rope [Cor] Of an eloquent speaker.

end’s-a-wagging The end of the job is in sight.

turn it up at that! That will do; finish the job and dismiss. (From turning up a rope before belaying.)

on wires [Cor] Frightened, anxious, on edge.
D.9a Entering the sea

it is not safe wading in unknown water/ unco(uth) waters [unfamiliar water—Sc: 1588] Taking risks with the unknown.
that water’s not wadeable [nYks] That difficulty will not easily be overcome.
ever venture out of your depth till you can swim Acquire your skill first and then use it.
up to the ears/eyes/eyeballs/eyebrows in Deeply involved in; well in.
up to the chin/neck in Completely involved in.
keep your head above water [1742] Avoid disaster; remain solvent—just.
keep your end up Keep in business; stay active.
(get) out of his depth [1709] (Get) in(to) difficulties he cannot overcome unaided;
unable, mentally, to cope with the work.
get into deep water(s) [1861] Meet problems you cannot solve.
in deep waters Struggling against great difficulties and afflictions.
gets wet [Aus] Loses his temper.
get…wet [NZ] Get the better of someone; have them at your mercy.

D.9b Man overboard

give a man luck and throw him in the sea [1576] (That is all he will need, even in extremities.)
go overboard on… Lose proportion; make a serious error of judgement about…; overreact, enthuse immoderately over…
go over the side Commit a (first) criminal offence.
over the side On personal business when he should be on duty.
plump for… Side unreservedly with…
make a splash [1804] Cause a sensation, stir; attract attention.
if he fell overboard he’d come up with his pocket full of fish [Nhb] Bad luck for others is good luck for him.
afloat upon a grating In a dangerous and hopeless plight.
plunge (v) [Amer 1946] Of prices and values, drop dramatically.
take the plunge [1863] Follow hesitation by action.
plunged in…[c. 1374] Completely surrounded by, immersed in—gloom etc.
over head and ears in—love etc. Totally submerged in.
make a hole in the water Drown yourself.
go under Succumb, fail—in business etc.
sink (v) Submerge, suppress. ‘Sink your differences, personality.’
sink money in Commit it irretrievably to, make a firm investment in.
be under water Fail; be in financial trouble.
immersed in [1664] Completely occupied, preoccupied with.
touch bottom Reach the lowest depth—of suffering, squalor, depravity etc.; reach a point of certainty (like a diver).

dead-six (v)/send to the deep six [six fathoms deep, the proper depth—or deeper—for burial at sea] Dispose of finally, consign to oblivion, abandon.

D.9c Swimming

don’t try to swim where there is no water [WVir] Certain conditions are essential for most projects.

tread water Cease, intentionally, to make progress; remain inactive.

he needs must swim that is held up by the chin [1530] The comment on anyone whose success is attributable to outside help or luck.

 teach iron to swim Attempt or perform the impossible.

in the world who knows not to swim goes to the bottom [1599] You must look after yourself or succumb.

sink so low/to such depths as to… Become so depraved, unprincipled, morally or socially degraded as to…!

sink or swim [1368] The alternative between success or failure.

swim between two waters [i.e. midway between the surface and the bottom] Maintain an impartial or temporising position between two parties.

swimmingly Smoothly, unobstructed.

swimmy [1976] Booming and indistinct—of acoustics. (From a resemblance to liquid turbulence.)

strive against the stream [c. 1300] Oppose the majority.

go/swim against the stream/tide Decide on your own direction, oppose the majority.

float/go/swim with the current/flow/stream/ tide Conform, acquiesce with the majority; resign yourself to the state of affairs [Amer].

on the crest of a wave Elated; at the very moment when everything seems most favourable and success assured.

D.9d Drowning

a drowning man will catch/clutch/snatch at a straw [1534] Desperate men will try anything, and resort in desperation to hopelessly inadequate remedies.

life-line Anything that might help someone out of a dangerous or desperate situation.

all I have left to cling to My last remaining hope.

come safe from the East Indies and be drowned in Thames [1732] Fall victim to a minor danger after surviving great ones.

wine has drowned more men than the sea
drown (v) cares, sorrows [1538] Dispel them, usually by drink.
look like a drowned man Glum and melancholy.
the sea and the gallows refuse none [1614]
breathe new life into Reinvigorate generally (as in mouth-to-mouth resuscitation).

D.10a Barges

barge in/about Move or intrude heavily and clumsily, like a barge.
squabble like barges
I would not touch him/her/it with a barge pole [UK, passim: 1931]/a forty-foot pole! [Aus] An exclamation of repugnance.
daft/sackless [feeble-minded, ineffectual—Yks] as a boat-horse

D.10b Other inland shipping

bump against Jarrow Run into trouble. (A common expression of keelmen or barges when they run foul of anything.)
safe as a gabbart [lighter used on the Clyde]
all on one side, like Guyhirn lighthouse [Cmb] (It was built all on one side of the River Nene.)
he ay keeps the coble [fishing boat—Sc] head down the stream [Sc 1816] Acts so as to secure the favour of the influential; follows others.
pole in [Sc 1770: NC] Arrive late, usually after being delayed by travel difficulties.
ferry over Defer, postpone, pass over [Paston Letter 1477 Nrf].
raft (n) Dense flock of swimming birds [Amer 1848]; hence, a considerable number of people, children etc. [1830].
like the man on the raft who thought the river banks were moving and himself standing still Of someone who blames others for his own actions.
sluice-gate policies Those involving a sudden withdrawal of control.
open the sluices Remove controls and allow freedom.
keeps his locks clear/clean Gives himself room to work, proper conditions.
backwater [1820] Stagnating place, undisturbed by the flow and turmoil of worldly ‘progress’.
row him up Salt river [a Kentucky river rising in the remote backwoods—Amer] Consign him to oblivion; end his (political) career.
blow her stack [boiler on a riverboat—Amer] Vent her anger; ‘let off steam’.
blown over the creek [Amer] Died an unnatural death.
snag [1830] Difficulty, obstacle. (After the trunk or branch embedded in the bottom of a waterway and with one end pointing up, so causing danger to shipping.)
slower than a jell-poke/jill-poke [log stuck in the mud of a lake or stream—Maine NH]
make the riffle [catacict or rapids—Amer Can] Succeed in a tricky, difficult attempt.
back-log [1952] Accumulation of work (as in Canadian rivers when the logs pile up against each other).
log-jam [1890] Obstruction, delay—generally; static, stagnant situation [Amer].
in a jam In trouble, difficulties, held up by congestion (as in a log- or traffic-jam).
loosen the log-check Start everything moving by removing one obstacle. (From the technique of loggers bringing timber down the Canadian rivers.)
let in/let in for… Involve in loss by financial fraud or failure. (From ice-breaking and allowing someone to fall in.)
ship of the desert [1823] Camel.
prairie schooner Large covered wagon, as used by American settlers.

D.11 Beaches

on the beach Unemployed; broke (and therefore beachcombing).
just between the driftwood and the hard wood [Cor] Just managing to keep going.
rolled on Deal beach [a very pebbly beach] With face pitted by the small-pox.
not the only pebble on the beach! [1896] There are others to be considered! Also, ‘Other pebbles on the beach’=other fish in the sea (q.v. D.13a).
longshore lawyers Unscrupulous lawyers (from the reputation of those longshoremen who were loafers, beachcombers and swindlers).
numberless as the sands
weave a rope of sand Attempt, achieve the impossible. (One of the tasks that the schoolmaster of Cockerham [Lan] set the devil to do, was to plait a rope of sand and then wash it in the River Cocker.)
ropes of sand [1576] Worthless, delusive security; organisations that lack the necessary cohesion or binding power; parting, disjunction.
you won’t make a rope from the sand of the sea [Ire] This (whatever) is something you are not capable of.
happy/jolly/merry as a sandboy [one who sells sand in the streets]
send you to the sea and you’ll no get saut water! [Sc: 1641] Said when people foolishly come home short of their errand.
D.12 Shell-fish

**hard-shell** A stubborn or unemotional person. The **hard-shell Baptists** were those in Georgia who stuck to the letter of their principles, impervious to any mellowing influence.

**convoluted, involuted** Of a style or argument whose parts seem to turn back on themselves, overlapping intricately (as the edges of curled-up leaves, or the spirals of convoluted shells, which are folded over each other).

**barnacle** Follower or official hard to get rid of; someone who keeps uncomfortably close; troublesome adherent [Yks].

**clam** (n) Secretive person; tight-fisted character [Aus].

**close** [secretive, reticent] as a clam/wilk [willock, periwinkle—Sc Ire Nhb Lin Oxf Ken]

**shut up like a clam/clam up** [1916] Refuse to talk.

**happy as a clam at high tide** [UK, passim Maine New Eng coast] (They are gathered at the low.)

**bearded clam** [Amer] Woman’s genitals.

**close as a cockle** [1614]

**warm the cockles of your heart** [1671] Thoroughly cheer you up. (From the spiral form, like cockle-shells, of certain fibres round the heart.)

**cockle-shell** Small, unseaworthy boat or ship—‘our Cockell Shell tooke Every Sea over…’ [Letter to Samuel Pepys—24 September 1680]

**land crab** [naut] Obnoxious landsman.

**crab-wise** Sideways.

**you cannot make a crab walk straight** Attempt the impossible.

**(nose as) red as a partan’s tae** [crab’s toe—Ayr]

**partan’s tae** [Sc] Clay pipe.

**tight as a crab’s arse (—and that’s water-tight!)**

**the greatest crabs be not all the best meat** Quality does not usually go with quantity.

**catch a crab** [1785] Miss the surface of the water with the oar-blade; get an oar jammed under water by a clumsy stroke.

**all on one side, like a crab going to jail** [Cor]

**crawfishing** Working hard to obtain, ‘angling for…’ [Amer].

**crayfish** (v) Act in a cowardly, crafty manner [Aus].

**crayfish** (v) Withdraw without hesitation from an untenable position [Amer army 1850+]; renege. (From the ability of the crawfish to swim backwards.)

**crawdad** [crawl like a crawfish—Msri Ark]

**limpet** (n) One who clings to you; a State employee who is superfluous, but clings to office.

**limpet bombs, mines** Explosive devices designed to stick to a ship’s hull by magnetism.

**spend money like flitters** [limpets—IMa]

**small as a croggan** [limpet-shell—Cor]

**lobster** (n) [Amer] Awkward or gullible fool.

**lobster-eyed** With protruding eyes.
lobster-tailed Describes helmets that carried overlapping plates to protect the neck. These were similarly arranged to those on a lobster’s tail. Hence, the nickname of ‘lobsters’ for Cromwell’s soldiers.

mussel mou(th) [Abd Lnk] Tight-lipped, tightly closed; shaped like a mussel.

oyster (n) Retiring, taciturn, uncommunicative person; an unmoored marine mine.

gape like an oyster (for the tide) [1550]

dumb as oysters

oyster-part Non-speaking part in the theatre. (Oysters keep their mouths shut.)

close [secretive] as a Kentish oyster (Good oysters are always tight shut.)

pearl-diver [Amer] Dish-washer in kitchen of café etc.

ostracize [<Gk =banish by voting on potsherds or oyster shells] Exclude from society, club etc. a person who has incurred general disfavour.

shrimp Undersized child or person.

until shrimps learn to whistle A time in the future both distant and unlikely.

whelked Ridged, wealed, wrinkled (and so resembling a whelk’s shell)—‘most deformedlye welked and crumpled’ [T.Nashe, The Terrors of the Night—1594].

like whelks behind a window-pane Describing the eyes of someone wearing thick-lensed spectacles.

now you’re shaping—like a basket of wet whelks! [Lan]

that’s no way to run a whelk-stall! [latter half of C20] We must organise things better than this!

not fit to run a whelk-stall! [1894] A comment on someone’s lack of organising ability; lamentably incompetent.

has come over on a whelk-stall [Cockney] Is over-dressed, very showily dressed.

winkle-pickers [1960] Shoes with pointed toes (implying that they are sharp enough to use for extracting winkles from their shells).

winkle out Extract—information, confession, money—with trouble and from a reluctant source; hunt out from house to house or from hide-out to hide-out, especially with rifles and bayonets [Forces 1930+].

bag of shells [Aus] Something easily accomplished.

D.13a Fish in the sea

there are more/other fish in the sea Said, usually, to someone who has lost a lover.

there are better fish in the sea than ever came out of it (As above.)

in the swim Well up with the fashions; one of a clique; among the right people. (From the way that fish shoal together. See also F.7a.)

swim like a fish [1591]

shoals of… Large numbers, multitudes of people.

the great fish eat the little [1410] Powerful men ruin the weaker—of big businesses etc.

feed the fishes Drown; be seasick.
blue/red/white/yellow about the gills Looking depressed or flushed with anger, drink or indignation, frightened, sickly.
red round the gills [Cor] Has been crying.
down i’ t’ gills [wYks] In low spirits.
sticks in the gills [Nhp] Of an unforgivable injury; is long resented.

D.13b Sea-fish

cod’s head and mackerel tail A phrase used to describe a sailing ship whose greatest width is well forward.
fluke The liver-fluke in sheep (so-called because of the similarity of shape).
flatt-mouthed as a fluke [Morte Arthure Lin c. 1400]
fluke-mouthed [neLan] With crooked mouth, mouth awry.
flat as a dab/flounder/flooke [1611]/fluke
dumb as a flounder
flounder-mouth With a large mouth.

flying fish Oddity, curiosity.
deaf as a haddock (in changy weather) [wSom Dev Cor]
(turned) as white as a haddock in the gills [sSc]
herring-dub/pond The sea [Cum]. (A modern kenning.)

thick as herrings (in a barrel) Very numerous, superabundant.
mouth like a keddle-aul [fishing frog (lophius piscatorius), a fish that mauls and damages the kiddle-nets of fishermen—Ken Sus] Large and wide.
clean as a mackerel [Lnk wYks] Completely, entirely.
mute [1760]/mush [cautiously silent—EAn mid-Eng] as a mackerel

heart playing like a mackerel [Cor] Of emotional excitement.
mackerel-back(ed) A long lanky body (with a long back).
mackerel sky [1669] One where light white cloud shows like ripples against the blue (reminiscent of the markings of mackerel).
silly as/like a/out like a stunned mullet [Aus] Stupid; unconscious.
mullet-headed Stupid.
prawn-headed mullet Great fool.
rough as guts/mullet guts [Aus] Vulgar, coarse, crude.

it’s a weak plaice that can’t swim Folk will act according to their nature if they possibly can.

patched as a whaleman’s shirt (Reputedly nothing but patches.)
there she blows! Cheeky call on seeing a fat woman bathing.
beached whale [Amer] Very fat person or pet.
a whale of a… [Amer] Something very good or large.
like a whale In vigorous, effective, energetic manner.

whaleback Steamship with main-decks rounded over, making her like a whale in shape; of hills so-shaped [UK, passim NZ]

whalebelly [Can] Capacious railway wagon.
lobtail [smack the water with the flukes—naut] Play, lark about.
peak/turn the flukes [go under, of whales—naut] Go to bed, turn in.

D.13c Sea-fishing

the bait must be gathered when the tide’s out [Sc] You must act when there is the opportunity.
lobster shift [Amer 1933] Early morning shift on a newspaper (because that was when the lobster boats set sail from New York).
fish—or cut bait [Amer: 1876] Do it properly or let someone else take over; you have a choice, but the alternatives are too similar to make much difference; do one thing or the other, stop dithering. Usually spoken with urgency, as if the cramped quarters on a fishing boat made it necessary for everyone to do their share.
fish for [1563]—compliments, information Try to elicit indirectly.
fish out/up Extract, generally. ‘Fished his watch out of his pocket.’
fish the anchor Draw its flukes up to the gunwale.
fishing fleet [India C19] Group of young unmarried women hoping to ‘catch’ husbands.
fish/sail in troubled waters [1568] Take advantage of a confused situation.
fish for himself Get all he can.
it is a good fish—if it were caught [1678] Doubtless all right—if true.
a wet arse—and no fish A wasted outing, fruitless errand.
the best fish swim near the bottom Valuable minerals are underground; nothing of worth is to be got without trouble.
gone westward for smelts! [1607] A wench’s excuse to be away from home. (Smelt are small sea-fish—with a play on the other meaning of smelt=a simpleton.)
the weather is so foul, not even a Caper [notoriously hardy Irish fishermen of Cape Clear] would venture out [IMA]
network Complex system—of canals, communications etc.; any interconnected system, e.g. of customs, laws etc.
reticulated [<Lat rete=net] Given or having the appearance of a net, with criss-cross lines.
reticulum The second stomach of a ruminant. (From the net-like appearance of the cytoplasm. As/from the above.)
enmesh Entangle, involve, trap within complications.
trammel (n) [originally a fishing net, and then a hobble for a horse] Restraint, fetters.
trammel (v) Hinder the true action of, hamper.
he’s fishing wi’ Hoy’s net [Sc] Is courting.
his head is in Hoy’s net [Sc] Is married.
cast a (wide) net Seek materials, candidates from a large area.
al is fish that comes to net [1520] Reject nothing; everything has its use.
sweeps everything into his net Accepts, seizes anything and everything he can.
the net fills though the fisherman sleep Luck is better than skill or diligence.
**net** (v) Gain, variously—a profit etc.

**slip through the net** [1902] Avoid entanglement in the system; evade all your pursuers.

**little fish slip through the nets, but big fishes are taken** [1509] In time of trouble, the insignificant citizen is more likely to escape than the prominent.

**a dog in a tayser** [the first net to be shot and so the last to be hauled in—Cor] Someone in quite the wrong place; a square peg in a round hole.

**trawl** (v) Make a wide-ranging search for an individual or information, increasingly through computer search programs [1980s].

**trawl notice** A notice circulated to all likely departments in order to attract a large number of applicants for a job, award etc.

**there’s a time to fish and a time to dry nets** [Ont] Both need doing, but you cannot do both at the same time.

**neither fishing nor mending your nets** [Cor] Doing nothing useful, doing neither of the two acceptable alternatives.

**tears coming like cag-byes** [cork-buoys used for floating the nets—Cor] Of someone weeping copiously (like the quick succession of letting out).

**throw a tub to a whale** [1591] Distract from one bad thing with others not quite so bad (as seamen are fabled to do by throwing a tub to a whale); divert a threat from yourself to some other possible victim.

**loose fish** One of irregular habits; dissolute person; prostitute; independent MP. (From the whaling term given to an unclaimed whale that is fair game to anyone who can catch it.)

**soft under-belly** That vulnerable part of a man or nation, weakened, it is implied, by easy-living [used by W.Churchill—1942].

**shark-bait** [Aus] Lone, reckless swimmer, dangerously far from the shore.

**hook, line and sinker** [1838] Totally and undoubtedly, especially of a gullible person who ‘swallows’ a tale without examination.

**he can wile flounders out o’ the Firth** [Sc 1818] Is very persuasive.

**you’ve plunked your foot on it, like Phelimy caught the fluke** [Don] Have guessed correctly, hit the mark.

**let leap a haddock/whiting** [1546] (Out of the net, and so lose it.) Miss an opportunity.

**gone to the herring-drewe** [drove of herrings] Gone missing to avoid his creditors [Abd].

**don’t cry herrings till they’re in the net** [Okl Texas]

**what we lose in hake we shall have in herring** [1602] One will compensate for the other.

**set a herring/sprat to catch a whale** Risk a little to gain much.

**cast a sprat to catch a hake** [Ire] (As above.)

**set a sprat to catch a herring/mackerel** [1810] (As above.)

**take sturgeons with pilchards** Get large returns for a small outlay.

**hope and a red rag are baits for men and mackerel** [NY SC]

**gut** (v) Remove interior fittings (of a house), often of fire; remove vital or valuable parts—variously.
don’t gut your fish till you catch them [Sc Ont] Don’t do work before the proper time.
don’t count your fish before you catch them [Kan]
keep your ain fish-guts for your ain sea-maws [mews—Gall: 1721] Keep your gifts or leavings for your own folk.
whitefish Flattery [Cum].
catch no more fish than you can salt [NJ] Don’t take on more than you can cope with.

D.13d Fish caught

like a fish out of water At a loss; out of your element; in strange surroundings.

How sholde a fisshe withouten water dure?
[G.Chaucer, T&C IV.765–1374]
a cold fish [1857] Someone, usually a man, without feeling or passion, a negative character.
odd/queer fish [1750] Unusual (but not unlikeable) person.
reject [<Lat re-iacere=throw back]
scaly fish/back A sailor, rough but honest.
bolley-eyed, like a bothak [bib or whiting-pout—Cor] With protruding eyes.
thirl [gaunt, thin, hungry—Som Dev Cor] and slipper [slender and supple—Dev Cor]
as a conger
conger-eel eyes [sLan] Protruding eyes.
think no carg conger [salted conger] of yourself [Cor ScI] Have a good opinion of yourself.
morgye [dog-fish—eCor] Ugly girl.
harske as a hunde-fish [rough as a dog-fish—Morte Arthure Lin c. 1400]
rough as a mergy [dog-fish—Cor] (From its coarse skin.)
sick as a gurnet [gurnard—Cor]
glaze [stare, glare—Cor] like a git [great—Cor] gurnard
bring haddock to paddock [frog or toad—1546] Reduce in value; ruin an estate; spend or lose everything (on the same pattern as ‘bring a noble to ninepence’).
hake’s teeth Deep holes in the Bristol Channel (being similarly exceptional and well-defined).
straight as the backbone of a herring Not at all straight.
every herring must hang by its own gills/ head/neck/tail [1639: Ant] There are some things that no one else can do for you; each person has their own responsibilities; must stand on their own merits.
above your hook  Beyond your comprehension (as if everyone has a hook to hang on like a herring).

herring-bone [1659] A zigzag pattern in draining or stitching, cloth woven in zigzag pattern; zigzag arrangement of bricks or stones in building; a skier’s ascent of a slope by pointing skis outwards; cloud-formations or carpentry designs where a central line is flanked on each side by a series of oblique lines, stones etc. that form a mirrored correspondence with those opposite—as do the smaller bones on either side of a herring’s backbone.

herring-ribs  [Dor] Lanky, bony person.

it is but kindly  [natural] the bag/poke savour  [smell] of the herring  [Sc: 1611] Children take after their parents; you can expect associates to develop similarities.

the barrel always smells of the herring  [Ill] (As above.)

neither barrel better herring  [1546] Nothing to choose between them.

close as/like herrings in a barrel  [1881] Overcrowded.

like not barrel nor herring  Dislike the whole of it.

dead as a herring  [nYks/mackerel/smelt] [small sea-fish, the sparling]

lean/thin as a (shotten [shot, recently spawned]) herring  [UK, passim Mass: 1588]

shotten herring  Miserable and enfeebled person.

pindert  [pindered, thin, wizened] as a yerrin  [herring—Yks Lan]


salt as a herring

not care/give/worth a haddock/herring

hasna the pith  [strength-cum-energy-cum-gumption] to pull the head off a rotten herring  [Sc]

ling (n)  [Eng, C19 Aus, C20] A woman’s sexual odour; the source of it. (From a similarity of smell.)

tough as ling  [Cor]

nuss  [nurse-fish, shark or dog-fish—Cor] Glutton.

wives be like pilchards, when they be good they be only middlin’, and when they be bad they be bad  [Cor]

yellow as train  [fish oil, usually squeezed out from a hogshead of packed pilchards—Cor]

skate-rumple  [the hinder part of a skate-fish—ShI Sc] Thin, awkward-looking person [Sc].

mute as a stock-fish  [cod or similar fish when split open and dried hard without salt]


tuna  [Amer] The vagina (from a similarity to the sexual odour).

white as whalebone/whale’s bone  This is an early simile, dating at least from the first part of the C14. For about three centuries it was addressed almost exclusively to women of outstanding beauty and/or moral excellence. (The bone was probably the ivory of walrus tusks.)

white as a whale’s tooth
D.14 Fishmongers

**like a fish-wife** Raucous, vulgar, abusive.
**squabble like fish-wives** Ferociously.
**it stinks!** Is offensive; thoroughly bad.
**stink like a fishmonger’s sleeves**
**a fish begins to stink at the head** [1611] The rot sets in at the top.
**cry stale/stinking fish** [nYks] Disparage your own wares, efforts, achievements; repeat stale news [Cor].
**cry ‘stinking fish’ ahint your own cart** [Nhb: 1656] Reveal what is to your disadvantage.
**chucked about like stinking fish** [Cor]
**daughters and dead fish won’t keep**
**fish—and company/fresh fish—and new-come guests—stink in three days** [1580]
**ped-belly** [EAn] Round, protuberant stomach. (Ped=wicker fish-pannier or hamper.)
**coup** [upset—Sc Ire nEng] (over) the/your crans [herring barrels of fixed size]/creels
[Sc] Cause or sustain an upset; fall; tumble head-over-heels [Nhb]; turn a somersault [Nhb Dur]; come to grief variously; beget a bastard; make a mess; meet with a mishap; die. (See also F.33b.)
**in a creel** [Sc] In a state of mental confusion, agitation.

D.15a Approaching and in port

**the shoe is on the mast** Now is the time to be generous. (A C18 sailors’ custom near the end of the voyage, for passengers’ gratuities.)
**haven** Refuge, generally.
**harbour** (v) [1460] Cherish, make room for, indulge—suspicions, vermin etc.
**dock** [late C18] Hospital (where people go for repair as ships go into dock).
**port of call** [1884] Place where you can call or find lodgings during a journey; temporary stopping place.
**any port in a storm!** [1749] You cannot afford to be choosy in an emergency.
**many a ship is lost near the harbour** [Ire]
**run into port** Seek safety.
**blowing for a tug!** [naut] Out of breath (from the puffing and hooting noises).
**it is safe riding in a good haven** [1572] Anyone can manage in untroubled times.
**the worse the passage the more welcome the port** [1732] The greater the trouble, the more appreciated is the reward.
**ex undis** Escaped out of peril; home and dry; with our troubles over; salvaged.
wobbles like a drunken sailor with two left legs Often of an erratically steered ship.
I didn’t come in with the last boat I have more sense, experience than that; that
doesn’t fool me.
gone ashore for two eggs, by the time he has taken The answer to: ‘Where has…
gone?’
spend money like a sailor (on shore leave) Very extravagantly
ancient/formal as the Mount [St Michael’s—Cor] Most often used of a precocious
child or a droll young person.
set the Thames on fire [1770+] Distinguish yourself, achieve something remarkable.
Often as ‘He will never set the Thames on fire!’= shows little promise. (See also E.34h,
set the temse on fire.)
common as Ratcliff Highway [River Thames] Ratcliff/Redcliff was a riverside parish
in the district of Stepney, London, connected since medieval times with the maritime
history of England and notorious in C18–C19 for its drinking dens for sailors.

Spithead [RN anchorage off Portsmouth] pheasant A kipper or bloater.
Shanghai (v) [1871] Drug or knock unconscious a sailor ashore and ship him aboard a
vessel short of hands (from the practice for which this Chinese seaport became infamous
among sailors); treat roughly; alter treacherously.
give a wide berth to…[1829] Keep well out of the way of anything or anyone
unpleasant or untrustworthy. (It is advisable to give a ship enough space in port to allow
it to swing at anchor.)

buoy up [1645] Raise the spirits—with hopes etc.
swing round the buoy Hold down an easy job (as if at a safe mooring).
go right round the buoy again Go through the whole performance or manoeuvre
again from the start; get a second helping from the dish. (Either from a docking attempt
that went wrong and had to be repeated, or else from yacht-racing where the turn is
marked by a buoy.)
bottom-of-the-harbour [Aus] Tax-avoidance scheme which involved stripping a
company of its assets and then dumping it—to sink without trace.
dredge up [late C19] Bring up (out of the depths of the past or of the subconscious)
insalubrious debris best left undisturbed.
keep the channels open Keep in touch; continue negotiations.
Saltash luck Getting a soaking while doing a job. ‘A wet arse and no fish!’ (Saltash
[near Plymouth] anglers fish from the bridge and catch nothing but the tide.)

D.15b Anchors

anchor (n) Security; point of stability.
anchor (v) Stabilise, fix firmly.
rusty as an anchor [Cor]
anchor-man/-woman Secretary or company servant regularly available for contact by
a mobile work-force.
the hob is a good anchor [Ker] Home comforts keep a man at home.

sheet-anchor [a large anchor] One last thing to rely on when all else has failed.

like the anchor that is always at sea and never learns to swim Of one who fails to profit from experience.

Dutchman’s anchor Anything which, when needed, is found to have been left behind (from the explanation of the shipwrecked Dutch captain, that he had a good anchor, but had left it at home).

fall foul of Antagonise. (From when one anchor cable falls foul of another.)

hook the bight Get into a mess, trouble (from when an anchor-hook gets caught on a bight or bend of the rope).

freshen the hawse [the holes or pipes in the bow through which ropes and chains (especially anchor-chains) are passed; to freshen the hawse meant to renew or let out that part of the rope which was getting frayed in the hawse-hole] Take or issue an extra drink (all the more apt because the word ‘hawse’ is derived from ON hals=neck, throat).

go aft through the hawse-hole/hawse-pipe [1850] Gain promotion from the lower deck.

hold your kedge [anchor—lMa] Keep quiet.

a babe is a mother’s anchor, she cannot swing from her moorings [Ariz]

bring your arse to an anchor Sit down.

ride at anchor Come to rest; cease travelling for a while.

ride at a single anchor Live or behave carelessly, recklessly.

ride at two anchors [1549] Be doubly sure, have a reserve.

keep/put the anchors on Control yourself in intercourse so as to delay orgasm.

cast/have an anchor to windward Seek security, take precautions where most needed.

let go an anchor to the windward of the law Keep it legal; avoid trouble with the police.

the anchor comes home Failure, in spite of precautions (as when the anchor is dragged from its hold).

never cast an anchor in shifting sand [Ohio] Do not hope to settle down with an unstable person or in insecure circumstances.

a bad ship never casts her anchor in port To those who malign a bad man who has died in his bed and not on the gallows.

up-killick Depart, run away. (A killick is a makeshift anchor for a small boat, often merely a heavy stone.)

swallow the anchor Retire from the sea; change occupations [Dor]; finish [Amer].

D.15c Cables, winches and chains

he only needs a hair to make a cable/tether [Sc] Give him the slightest chance or excuse and he will make much of it; is apt to exaggerate. (See also E.24b.)

a mouse in time will bite in two a cable [1546] A small person in a small way can make a big effect in time.
cut and run [1861] Depart quickly.
cut the cable/your cables Depart; finally sever connections with family, profession, country etc.; die.
coil up [Yks] Quieten down; get in order (like a well-coiled rope).
coil up his cables/ropes Die (being the last task of the day’s work—‘Thou thy worldly task hast done’).
his cable has parted He has died. (The nautical version of severing the thread of life.)
slip the cable [Bnff] Die. (A ship sailing hurriedly would disengage an anchor or mooring cable from the ship’s end.)
slip the timbers [legs—naut] Die [Abd] (by extension from the above).
give them the slip [the looped end of the mooring rope] Elude them. (By cutting it and sailing away stealthily, you give it, by default, to your pursuers. See also E.10b.)
spun from the winch [naut] Entirely fabricated—of a story.
chain—of events, ideas etc. [1593] A connected sequence; also a mountain-chain, bucket-chain, grand chain (in dancing) and chains of atoms or cells.
chain reaction [1947] A series of events each initiated by the previous one.
like chain [Cor] Of material—strong, serviceable.
chain-store One of a series of stores all under one management.
chain-smoker Smoker who lights each cigarette from the stub of the preceding one.
concatenation Closely connected series (as are the links of a chain).
linked Joined, associated, connected, related—of various complex systems.
link to/with… Demonstrate an association, continuity with…
link up with… Join forces with…; interconnect with…
weak link [1926] Undependable member of team or work-gang.
a chain is only as strong as its weakest link A comment on the limitations on the potential of a team or organisation.
let out the links Increase the effort or power (probably from those engines whose output is controlled by a mechanism adjusted by chains).
depend [<Lat de-pendere=hang down from]

D.15d Cargoes, cargoships

a shipping order A large task; a much larger quantity than usual (as when provisioning a ship).
stive [pack tightly in a ship’s hold—Sc: 1615] Crowd together into a small space.
get a load of… Become aware of, examine.
take on board Undertake generally; accept responsibility for.
loaded—question/word One with additional implications or underlying suggestions; biased.
loading dose [1961] Initial, larger dose of medicine prescribed when it is necessary to give impetus to a course of treatment.
fraught with Laden with; beset by; attended with, doomed to produce.
fraught—situation, feelings, mental state [1576] One laden with stresses actual and/or nervous.

bulk large Figure prominently, be of consequence—as of considerations in a debate.

rummage (v) Search for one item among many others. The original use [C17] was to search through the cargo in a ship’s hold.

sign the coal-warrants Have a farewell drink on board just before the ship sails.

up to the mark [1821] To the accepted, recognised standard (as on a fathom-line or Plimsoll-line).

to the mast-head To the limit; in abundance.

down at the head with Overloaded with; top-heavy with; carrying a disabling surplus.

trimmer [1662] Politician who changes sides to keep the balance between parties (as if trimming the weight in a boat to keep on an even keel).

ballast (n) [1612] Those qualities and experiences that give stability to a person’s character.

throw over/overboard [1641] Abandon, jettison—variously.

don’t risk all in one boat [NY Minn]bottom [vessel—1513] Don’t rely exclusively on one (of anything).

unload (v) Unburden the mind; confess the secrets that are troubling you.

be landed with Be encumbered with; be committed to; have something foisted off on you.

thick as a docker’s sandwich (Heavy work, hearty eaters.)

wise as a dockyard pigeon [Lan] Sharp, keen-witted.

deliver the goods [1641] Perform your part of the bargain.

deliver your words not by number but by weight Speak briefly and to effect.

oil-butt The black whale (from the quantity of oil yielded).

carry/take coals to Newcastle [C17+] Take something to a place where it is already plentiful; act superfluously.

take owls to Athens [C16] (As above.)

sends to the East Indies for Kentish pippins Goes to unnecessary lengths.

far-fetch [1607] Outlandish; hard to believe.

a dear ship stays long in harbour [1628] Of girls, too particular.

foul as an Indiaman [a large vessel trading for the East India Company] Of a dirty ship.

ill vessels seldom miscarry [1611] Referring to the luck of the wicked.

a merchant of eel-skins Of refuse or nothing [1545].

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D.15e Tides, embarking

there’s another tide in the sea There will be another opportunity.

flood-tide/spring-tide High point of success, prosperity etc.

tide-mark [1907] Dirty mark left on bath, crockery, neck etc. showing how high the water came.
high-water Ample funds—for the time being!

high-water mark [1814] The recorded maximum in any fluctuation; the dirty mark (in the bath or on the neck) denoting the limit of a person’s ablutions; tip-top condition; highest point of excellence; the time when an organisation or civilisation was at its most powerful and prosperous.

come hell or high water! [1915] Whatever the outcome! In spite of whatever may happen!

between hell and high water [naut] In considerable difficulty.

tide you over [1821] Help you through a difficult time. (From the tide at flood helping sailors to surmount reefs, wrecks etc.)

turn with the tide/wind [1550] (—of fortune) Have a change (—of luck), of mind, heart, plan, purpose.

turn the tide Reverse the trend of events.

the tide turns [1849] In a war, when the loser starts to win.

shovel shit against the tide Exert much effort without success.

tidal flow That increase in traffic into and out of a city at the beginning and end of a working day.

the ebb and flow of…[1870] Those natural fluctuations, variations, alternations of decrease and increase observable in many human and social situations.

every tide/a flow will have an ebb [1545] A reduction—of grief, misfortune etc. is sure to follow the worst.

the highest flood has the lowest eb The reaction to powerful emotion, action etc. will be correspondingly great.

after low ebb, a flood [1545] (As/from the above.)

the ebb will fetch off what the tide brings in [1587] Adversity spends what prosperity has saved.

ebb away/down/out [c.1420] Decline, flow away, waste away.

at low ebb In bad health; low spirits.

ebb-water Lack of money.

ebb-tide Time of dearth, poverty, want.

is going out with the tide Will die soon.

go out with the ebb Die.

he that is at low tide at Newgate may soon be afloat at Tyburn [1555] i.e. hanged. (The gallows was set at low-water mark and sentence was not complete until three high tides later.)

the tide never goes out so far but it always comes in again [1864] Fortune always changes.

rip-tide/tide-rip [powerful and variable offshore currents, dangerous disturbance in coastal waters] Emotional or psychological conflict; opposing political or economic forces creating a dangerous situation; confused and turbulent literary style.

stem the tide [1855] Check or withstand an overwhelming movement. ‘He tried to stem the rising tide of nationalism.’

the sea does not wait for a man with a cargo [wCla] There are priorities in who waits for whom,

the ebb-tide won’t wait for the slow man [Ire] Seize your opportunities promptly.

lose not a tide Waste no time.
under sailing orders Dying.
are you all shipping on the yar [one—Cum] tide? To several guests who all decide
to leave at the same time.
take the Dublin packet Run round the corner.
jumping-off place Start of a journey, course of study, process etc.
jump ship Move from one organisation to another.
climb/welcome aboard! [later C20] Join the party! Glad to see you have joined us!
embark on [1649] Undertake, usually a task or venture of some magnitude.
miss the boat [1929] Be too late for something, lose an opportunity.
clean bill of health Unspoiled record. (From the certificate stating that a ship had no
infection on board at the time of sailing.)

D.16a Ships at sea

watch my smoke! See me go; watch what I am going to do.
get under way [1822] Start making real progress.
make headway [1775] Progress.
in the offing [that part of the visible sea beyond the anchorage—1914] Not far away,
likely soon to appear.
 aloof [<Du a-luff—to windward, and thus with head turned away] Deliberately apart,
stand-offish [1583].
leeway (n) [that distance which a ship has drifted from the position in which it should
have been] Permissible deviation from normal; margin of safety.
make up leeway Recover lost ground. (As/ from the above.)
get/have/keep the weather-gage of [naut IW] Gain the advantage over. (In sailing,
the weather-gage is the position of a ship relative to the wind and to another ship to
windward.)
by and large [1706] Generally, loosely, of an imprecise statement. (To sail by and
large is to sail slightly off the wind, an easier way.)
full and by [sailing close-hauled to the wind] Drunk.
in the wake of [1806] Following and consequent upon; in close attendance on.
be with bows under (As when the ship runs into heavy seas.) Be overworked; have
too much to do.
 keel over [Amer] Succumb to a blow, physical or otherwise.
on an even keel Progressing steadily, mentally balanced—often of those restored to a
normal life after a period of upset or lunacy.
(right) off the reel [Edb : 1866] At once, straight off, on the spur of the moment [Ire
Nhb]; without a hitch; in rapid succession (as when the log runs ‘ten knots, straight off
the reel’; also, possibly, from winding thread off a reel or from a fishing reel).
off the reel [Sc] At rest.
be off the reel Be married [ShI].
run off the reel [Lnk] Overstep the bounds; be beside yourself with pride.
slewed Drunk. (A drunken man resembles a slewed ship in the way they both swing loosely round.)

BAD TO SLEW [wYks] Hard to divert from a purpose.

BACK WATER Withdraw from a position previously reached; recant. (From reversing the forward movement of a ship.)

AT/ON/UNDER THE SLOW BELL Cutting back, reducing speed of input or output. A phrase used in declining drink etc. is ‘I’m taking it on the slow bell’ [Amer]. (From the slow ringing of a bell on North Atlantic ships when a slower rate of knots is required.)

SHEER OFF/AWAY FROM... Go off in a new direction, avoid or leave precipitately from feelings of fear, dislike etc. (When a ship sheers off, it swerves from its course.)

PUT CLEAR BLUE WATER BETWEEN... Establish an unambiguous distinction; an agreed difference; a proper distancing between... Hence:

CLEAR BLUE WATER [1990s] The distance between two political parties in their respective policies (from clear water=the distance between two ships at sea).

D.16b Steering

cybernetics [<Gk κυβερνήτης =steersman] The science and understanding of the lines of communication and control within a body or machine.

governor [<Lat gubernator=steersman < Gk κυβερνήτης] take the helm [c.888]/rudder Assume command, control—variously.

it is the way of the world to keep folly at the helm and wisdom under the hatches A realist’s appraisal.

don’t put a giddy man at the tiller [Ire] Everyone is not fit to take responsibilities.

answer the helm Be obedient, acquiescent.

the man at the wheel The one with the responsibility of control.

sit in the stern Be in control.

pilot (v) [1649] Sponsor, guide, support—bills through parliament etc.

pilot scheme/light/chute Small experimental scheme/small gas flame to start a larger one/ small leading parachute to pull open the main one.

pilot engine One that goes ahead to test a railway track for safety.

pilot fish Small fish reputed to guide sharks.

drop the pilot [1926] Dismiss or abandon a trusted adviser.

in a calm sea every man can steer [1670] Skill is tested by difficulties.

steer away from/clear of—the subject etc. [1723] Carefully avoid it.

shape/steer a course to... Fix your intentions on...; decide on a policy.

steer a narrow course Operate in a situation where there is only a small margin between two disastrous alternatives.

in desperate/dire straits [1565] In a very difficult and dangerous predicament.

steer a middle course Compromise.

what is he driving at? What is his meaning, intention, purpose?
maintain course  Continue without change of plan or intention.
set on a course to  Determined to; progressing towards.
blow/push off course  Deflect from purpose.
he who will not be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rock  [1666]
provide  [<Lat providere=look ahead]
on the look-out  Keenly observant, alert.
spy out the land  Investigate something furtively and usually with criminal intent.
see how the land lies  [1700]/the lay/lie of the land  [1950] Make a preliminary survey of the unknown.
arrive  [<Lat adripare=reach shore]
lean to the wrong shore  Follow a mistaken policy.
a good sailor may mistake in a dark night  Allowance should be made for circumstances.
jammed like Jackson  [John Jackson who, in 1787, refused to heed his pilot and nearly wrecked the ship] In a desperate situation that could lead to disaster.

D.16c Course bearings

box the compass  Try all possible opinions or alternatives—and then end up where you started; be able to cope with all situations; answer all questions.
speak by the card  [the circular card with thirty-two points of the compass marked on it] Be precise.
love is the loadstone  [a magnetic stone] of love  Love awakens love.
the loadstone of his life  The guiding principle.
true as the needle to the pole  [1742]
magnet  (n) Something that exerts a strong and continuing attraction.
magnetic  [1632] Compelling, attractive—personality etc.
binnacle word  A word so long or learned that it merits being chalked up on the ship’s binnacle—often in derision at an affected expression.
binnacle list  [Amer] Names of sailors too sick for duty, sick list generally.
has gone north about  [naut Dev] Has died by other than drowning; has departed and is unlikely to return—of someone who runs away from debts, family troubles etc.
the longer east the shorter west  [Cum: 1670] A deficiency in one part is compensated by abundance in another.
too far east is west  [1664] Over-emphasis or overreaching can produce an opposite effect.
disorientate  Thoroughly confuse.
the longest way round is the nearest way home  Approach your objective deviously or obliquely.
around the world  Erotic body kissing.
take your bearings  Pause to reappraise the situation—generally.
find your bearings  Regain purpose; become familiar with the layout or system.
lose your bearings  Miss your way, lose direction; become confused.
**bring him to his bearings** Set him on the right track; bring him to his senses.

**plain sailing** [a simple method of navigation—1827] Straightforward progress.

**smooth/straight sailing** Untroubled progress.

**hail from**… Come from… (An invariable part of the information asked for when ships hail each other at sea.)

**see the danger-light flashing** Be warned by the signs (as from a lightship or lighthouse).

**sound/strike a warning note** Give warning (as from a fog-horn, or from a bell moored over a rock, wreck or other danger to shipping).

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**D.16d Steering by stars**

**lodestar** [the Pole Star of mariners] ‘Guiding star’; object of hopes, affection [as G.Chaucer *T&C* V.392—1374].

**constant as the northern star**

**deep** [knowing, crafty] as the North [q.d. Polar Star—Shr]/**north star** [Shr Pem Dor] 

**Stella Maris** [<_Lat stella maris=star of the sea, often of the Virgin Mary—1876] Guiding light, protectress, guardian angel.

**guiding light** [1900] Example, inspiration, principle.

**cynosure** [<_Gk κυνόσωμα=the dog’s tail, the guide to the Pole Star and the centre of the heavens] Centre of attraction, admiration.

**dog-days** The hot season; evil times. (From the belief that dogs run mad in the hot season when Sirius, the Dog Star, rises.)

**nadir** [that point of the heavens opposite to the sun’s zenith] Point of lowest degradation, depression.

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**D.16e Places and destinations**

**meet the skerryman** [dweller on an outlying rock or island—Sc] Meet someone you did not expect to meet; also used as an evasive answer when you do not wish to reveal the name of the person you have met [Shl].

**island** (n) Area or refuge surrounded by something different or alien or inferior. Hence, a ‘speech island’ is a district where a dialect or speech prevails different from that which surrounds it.

**insular** Narrow-minded; with a restricted outlook; indifferent to others.

**insulate** Completely surround (as does the sea an island) to prevent heat, sound or electricity from escaping.

**Thousand Island dressing** [BC: 1916] A salad dressing with pieces of green garnishing reminiscent of the Thousand Islands in the St Lawrence River.
Ultima Thule [the farthest limit of the earth as reported by Pytheas [C4 BC] at a six-day sail north of Britain] The uttermost limit in height, depth, distance, even degradation etc.

come/get to the world’s end [sChs] Reach the end of your resources.
uncharted waters An undertaking or area of research, untried method or experimental venture about which there is no prior information.
Maelstrom [the name of a dangerous whirlpool off the coast of Norway. The word is Dutch because it first occurred on Dutch maps] Confused whirl—of society, affairs etc.
a swab [small amount spilt, small surplus—wYks] in a maelstrom [Der] Something small and futile.
half-seas over [originally, half-way over the ocean—1671] Mid-way between one state and another; half-drunk.
double the cape Recover from a shock—of any kind.
(a)round the Horn [Amer] A baseball throw from third to second or first base (from navigating round Cape Horn).
to the Pillars of Hercules To the ends of the earth (according to ancient belief).
Sargasso Sea A time or place of confusion and uncertainty, difficult to make your way out of.
clear out for Guam Depart for an unknown destination, anywhere. (Sea captains used to give the name of this long-forgotten shipping port to the Melbourne Custom House when required to by the regulations, if they were going to search around for a return cargo.)
bare as Boston Scalp [a sandbank near the entrance into the River Witham—Lin]

D.16f Soundings

sound (v)—a person’s opinions, feelings etc. Explore in depth, investigate, often by indirect and tentative questioning.
fathom Puzzle out, get to the bottom of—a problem etc.

My braines be to shalow to fadom that botome…
[Elizabeth I, Letter—October 1585]

unfathomable Beyond understanding; mysterious.
plumb (v) Get to the bottom of—a person’s meaning, mind etc.
swing the lead [heave the lead, the old way of taking frequent soundings in shallow water] Obtain an easy job to avoid worse ones; malinger; evade work. (In WW1 the Army adopted and adapted the expression to its present use, through a misconception of the nature of the task which is, in fact, an arduous one.)
take soundings Try to find out, quietly, how matters stand.
in soundings Near the bottom of the pile of sheets to be printed.
steady as a plummet [Cor]
every plummet is not for every sound Of incompatibles; also the answer to someone who tries to make a tool, or a person, perform too many tasks.
deeP as ever plummet sounded
a great ship asks deep waters [1640] People of stature need comparable friends, work etc.
where the water is shallow no vessel will ride [1597] There must be the opportunity before anything can be achieved.
shoal (n) Hidden danger, obstruction—variously.
in shoal-water off… Very dangerously close to…
over the shoal-water [Amer 1884] Past the worst.

D.17a Ships on fire

Chinese fire-drill [Amer] Something very confused and confusing.
burn your boats [1886] Take irrevocable steps. (Cortez burnt his boats in Mexico to convince his soldiers they must either conquer or perish.)
ships fear fire more than water [1640] The alien element is more formidable.
frigate on fire/fireship A woman with VD [frigate=woman—naut C17+].

D.17b Adrift

a ship without a rudder An unmotivated, unguided person.
drift Act or move aimlessly.
adrift Vague, aimless—of minds, persons.
Marie Celeste [American cargo ship found inexplicably abandoned in 1872 with all sails set] Hive, empty of bees, stores and brood, but with all cells clean and in good condition [1976].
turn adrift Give someone no further guidance or support. (As when turning someone adrift in an open boat.)
drift apart Lose regular contact, become estranged. (Of two people who were intimate becoming gradually less so.)
drift away Die quietly, almost imperceptibly.
wash up Arrive somewhere by random chance, unintentionally.
have/take in tow Have a person in close attendance; have under guidance; be in charge of.
in tow with… Courting.
D.17c Aground

**in low water** Hard-up, penniless; in poor health.

**touch-and-go** [1815] A near thing; almost a failure. (From a ship touching bottom with its keel and then sailing on. See also K.67b.)

**run/set him on ground** [aground] Puzzle, nonplus him.

**gravelled** [1579] At a loss, confounded, vexed, mortified, worried [War], stuck (like a ship aground on a gravel bank).

**stranded** [1851] Lost, helpless, abandoned.

**beached** Out of work.

**high and dry** [1857] Out of the current of events or progress; safe, out of trouble; out of context with its element; of extreme doctrine etc.—abstract.

**hard and fast** [safely on terra firma] Rigidly inflexible.

**set up shop on Goodwin Sands** [1549] Be shipwrecked.

**shifting sands** Uncertainty; state of flux.

**sinking sand** Shaky and unreliable moral basis for life.

**suck him in** [Amer] Dupe him with false promises.

**many drops of water/many sands will sink a ship** [1615] Many small efforts will, in combination, achieve great results.

D.17d On the rocks

**on a lee-shore** In severe danger (because of the wind driving you towards the land).

**reef** (n) Succession of dangers to be passed, dangerous area.

**breakers/rocks ahead!** Troubles, perils coming.

**escape the rocks and perish in the sands** The expected ruin from an unexpected quarter; the irony of failing in a small venture after succeeding in a formidable one.

**the rock you will split on/your hopes will wreck on** Insurmountable difficulty; the risk you run; the point at which your plans must fail.

> we shall be broken against that rock
> [A.Marvell, Letter to Major Richardson—15 June 1661]

**run upon the rocks** Meet final disaster, beruined.

**fire a distress flare** Express anxiety; give an indication of misgivings, possible trouble etc.

**make a bouge** [bulge, bilge (v); damage her bulge/bilge on a rock] Make a mistake, fall awkwardly [Lin EAn].

**something’s got to give** [Amer] The state of the crisis is such that something will happen soon.

**on the rocks** Stony broke; ruined.
schooner on the rocks [naut] A joint of meat roasted on potatoes.

D.17e Leaking

a little leak will sink a big ship Even a small fault or weakness is sufficient to wreck a large enterprise.
   take in water Have a weakness, flaw.
   welcome as water into a ship [1520]
   decks awash [Amer] Drunk.
   wet deck [naut Amer] Woman who has sex with several men in succession.
   bail/bale out Jump from an aircraft in order to descend by parachute.
   all hands to the pumps! Help is needed from everyone, an urgent concentration of effort.
   pump ship Urinate (a naval euphemism).
   down by the head [bow lower than stern] Drunk (being overloaded); overworked.
   beam-ends Buttocks [naut].
   on his beam-ends [1830] At the end of his resources; utterly at a loss. (From the position of a ship which, when on its beam-ends, is in imminent danger of capsizing or, if high and dry, is overturned.)
   broken ships have come to land [Sc 1816] Encouragement not to despair in adversity.

D.17f Shipwreck

on a collision course Where two policies, people or nations are heading towards a conflict.
   the (old) heave-ho [Amer]/one-two Snub, dismissal, expulsion.
   go by the board [1859] Be lost (like masts etc. fallen overboard).
   ditch (v) Abandon, discard, jilt (from jettisoning dangerous cargo in a storm, the ‘ditch’ being nautical slang for the ocean).
   jettison [throw overboard—to lighten a ship in distress] Abandon, generally; abandon ideas, plans, friends whom you can no longer accommodate.
   (ship)wreck (v) Ruin completely—a person’s life, hopes, happiness etc.
   shipwreck (n) [1526] Of hopes, plans etc.
   wreck (n) Building, vehicle or person reduced to shattered remains of former condition.
   save from the wreck Salvage from the ruin, disaster, whatever.
   flotsam and jetsam A scattering of what was together; odds and ends.
   let another’s shipwreck be your sea-mark [1640] Be warned to avoid the same fate.
a wreck ashore is a beacon at sea A warning is all the more urgent when you are in trouble.

founder (v) Come to grief—of hopes etc.
miserable as a rat in a tar-barrel Very depressed.
rats leave a sinking ship [1895] Of those who desert as soon as they find their own prosperity is threatened. In this connection, ‘rat’ describes the politician who resigns from their party when there is trouble, and the worker who refuses to join a strike or accepts lower wages than their fellows. Also:
rat on Desert a person; break a promise to someone; report someone to the authorities.
bluff the rats Spread panic (and trick them into abandoning ship).
hold on something by the mast-head [Sc] Keep on with it; endure to the end.
lash-up arrangement [1898] A makeshift in an emergency, an improvisation; an informal gathering.
lifeboat [Amer] Retrial or pardon for a prisoner.
sunk Ruined, undone generally.
sunk without trace [1925] Departed finally and completely, disappeared beyond recall.

D.18a Pirates

pirate (v) Reproduce without permission, usually in infringement of copyright; plunder a machine of parts needed to repair another.

when the pirate prays, hide your silver Trust the untrustworthy least when they seem least untrustworthy.

Algerine (n and v) [particularly daring pirate based in Algeria] That member of a company audacious enough to approach the stage manager for subs if wages are not paid on time [Can]; pilfer and plunder [Chs].

filibuster [Amer] Obstruct legislative progress. (The original meaning was freebooter [<Du vrijbuiter=plunderer, pirate].)
cache [1990s] List or directory being saved within a computer’s memory.
hidden treasure The landlady’s husband—who does much of the work but is kept out of sight.
black flag [the flag of a pirate ship] Sign of a dangerous character.
lower your flag Admit to being wrong.
sail under false colours [1756] Assume false identity; act hypocritically.
maroon (v) Reject someone from your company and leave them without support or companionship. Also used of vehicles and their occupants when unable to travel.
walk the plank [Amer] Be dismissed; get the sack.
make him swim for it Cheat him of his share.
D.18b Smugglers

smuggle Introduce surreptitiously—‘smuggled it into the house when his wife was out’.

the coast’s clear [1634] The authorities are away; there is no one to observe or hinder.
(As when smugglers could operate in the absence of coastguards.)

face like a coastguard station Grim, stony, weather-beaten and unfriendly.

dark as a smugglers’ cave [Cor]

bootlegger (n) [orig. Amer 1890] Purveyor of illicit liquor (from the way in which it was delivered to the Indians in flat bottles strapped to the leg). Recently extended to distributors of other illegal goods.

D.19a Naval ships

watch the fleet [Lan] Go out shooting on the sea-shore by moonlight.

fall into line Conform.

remember your next astern [naut] Treat others well—for your own sake.

astern of station Behind schedule; unaware of the latest developments, news etc.

battleship/battle cruiser Stout, jovial, formidable woman of action.

effective to draw too much water Is my superior, larger, more powerful. (The size of a ship is expressed as its draught—the amount of water it displaces or ‘draws’ when afloat.)

first-/second-rate (a C17 classification of naval ships according to the number of guns carried).

with 40lbs of steam behind him [naut c.1900] Impelled to drastic action, e.g. a sailor ordered to go on draft immediately. (At one time in the Royal Navy safety valves went off at a pressure of 401bs.)

between wind and water [1588] In the most vulnerable spot (that area of a ship’s hull that is below the waterline except when the ship heels over in the wind—a knock-out blow is said to catch you between wind and water).

hull [fire cannon shot into a ship’s hull]/shoot between wind and water [naut] Penetrate a woman sexually.

scupper (n) [hole level with the deck through which unwanted water, blood, refuse etc. could be swilled overboard] Prostitute, woman as sexual object.

scuppered Done for, ruined, beaten. (Probably from the C19 military slang meaning of caught and massacred, deriving from the verbal development of the noun ‘scupper’, meaning either to cause a ship to list down to the scuppers, or to reduce men to the state of rubbish fit only to be swilled off the decks.)

up the chute [Aus 1920] Worthless, stupid. Hence:

chute (v) [RAusN 1930] Throw away.
in watertight compartments Kept strictly apart—of subjects or ideas between which no interfluence is allowed. (From the principle in naval construction of building watertight bulkheads so that the ship does not sink at the first holing.)

at periscope depth Half-asleep.
leave the periscope up Of a batsman in cricket who, after avoiding a ball, continues to hold their bat high in the air.
resurface [1968] Return into public notice, reemerge after a period of obscurity.

D.19b Naval ranks and personalities

ever since Adam was an oakum boy (in Chatham dockyard) [naut] Indefinitely long ago.
York, you’re wanted [1816] A phrase used on naval ships when the right person is not in the right place. [Common in theatrical circles in the first half C19]
just the job—for my brother from Gozo [one of the Maltese islands] Get someone else for it—not me! (Many Maltese were employed by the Royal Navy.)
lazy as Joe the marine who laid down his musket to sneeze
tell it to the marines! [1805] (q.d. ‘they may believe it, I cannot’)
dressed up like a horse marine [Cor]
kiss the gunner’s daughter Be flogged at sea. (Offenders in the Royal Navy were tied to the breech of a cannon.)
like a midshipman’s chest, everything on top and nothing handy
like a midshipman with money in both pockets Describing a rarity; an unusual or eccentric person.
sharp as a midshipman’s hunger Of a keen wit.
part brass-rags [1906+] Dissolve intimacy. (Friends on a deck would pool their cleaning rags.)
ward-room joints as lower-deck hash/stew [the rumoured source of dubious meat dishes in the mess] Officers’ conversations retailed to the lower mess-room.
in everyone’s mess, but nobody’s watch [naut] Of a lazy cadger.
lose the number of your mess Die.
warm the bell Be ahead of time, advance a clock (from the practice of striking a ship’s bell a little early [‘warming the bell’] so that no one should be late).
on his watch [Amer] While he is/was responsible.
pass as a watch in the night Soon past and forgotten.
knock/scare seven bells out of [naut] Thrash, terrify. (At sea, seven bells marks the start of the last half-hour of a watch, sometimes 7.30 AM—critical times.)
like seven bells in a wig-box [nDev] Fine and comfortable—the answer to ‘How are you?’
cocked hat [the pointed, triangular hat worn by naval officers] An exact position at sea obtained from bearings on three landmarks (from the shape when the three lines crossed on the chart paper); also (erroneously) a navigational error—‘a cocked hat!’ [naut RAF C20].
different ships, different long-splices/captallies [cap ribbon bearing the ship’s name] Different customs in different places.

come ashore, Jack! Let’s have less of your sea stories.
go-ashore clothes [Sc] Better clothes, generally.
go-ashore [NZ: 1832] Iron cooking pot (which whalers used to take ashore to cook their food in).

fork in the beam! [naut] Go away, I want privacy. (A C19 naval custom where a fork was placed in the deck beam above a midshipman’s head as a sign that he wanted privacy. It was also used to clear the gunroom of midshipmen.)

see the chaplain [Amer] Don’t complain to me—I can’t help.

come the quarter-deck over… Behave arrogantly towards… (The quarter-deck was reserved for naval officers.)
as full of flannel [flattery; bribery; making small gifts or saying ingratiating things in the hope of obtaining favours in the future] as a purser’s [purser’s] blanket fits like a purser’s shirt on a handspike [1810] Very loosely.
cunning [clever, skilful] as Captain Drake [Sir Francis Drake, 1540–96, who was accounted the most skilful of his age in both navigation and artillery]
take over… Dominate…; assume command or control over…—‘that moustache, secretarysthip etc. is taking him over’. (From taking over command of a ship or taking control of a nation by coup or invasion.)

skipper’s daughters Tall white-crested waves.
captain of the heads [RN c. 1890] Stupid person, barely competent.
cock’s his chest [preens/prides himself] like a half-pay admiral
admiral’s watch A good night’s sleep.
admiral of the narrow seas One drunkard spewing into the lap of another.
admiralty weather Bad weather (and so cold you have to work hard to keep warm).
grog Naval ration of rum and water. (So called after Admiral Vernon who ordered the issue in August 1740, and was nicknamed Old Grog because he wore a cloak of grogram.)
groggy Unwell, shaky, unsteady (as if drunk with rum).
grog-blossom [1796] Pimple on the nose.

D.19c Naval discipline

press-ganged Forced, overborne. (From the old days of forced impressment into the navy.)
enlist/press into service Force persons or objects to a service beyond their normal work or use. (As above.)
brings himself close aboard of the gangway Risks punishment. (The gangway grating was where sailors were tied for a flogging.)
rub it in/rub salt in the wound [1944] Exacerbate, aggravate the injury. (Floggings were completed by pouring brine into the wounds.)
keel-hauling A long catalogue of complaints from those in authority. (From the old punishment of being hauled under a ship.)
pipe down Be quiet. (Dismissal to below decks.)
pipe up Make yourself heard, speak out.

D.19d Naval signals

flag-ship council, constituency, firm etc. [1977] A group or organisation from which others expect a lead and an example of future trends and policies; the most imposing constituent, prime showpiece [Amer].
hoist pennants [to fly all pennants means ‘I don’t understand your signal’—naut] Grumble, criticise.
who’s hoisting my pennants? Who’s talking about me?
Irish pennant [Amer] Rope left trailing in the water.
show/unfurl the flag [1918] Declare your loyalties; be obviously committed.
keep the flag flying [1914] Maintain a way of life, business, marriage, morals etc. in spite of difficulties; continue the fight or struggle.
nail our colours to the mast [1841] Declare our intentions openly and irrevocably; refuse to yield.
wash-out Failure; attempt that has to be cancelled. (From the practice of wiping signals off the slates when they had been superseded or passed on.)
scrub (v) [Amer] Cancel. (From the above.)
top-notch Top quality. (Probably from the custom of flying flags at different heights as a mark of honour, the height being regulated by pegs or notches. See also K.3, take him down a peg.)
mast-head Conspicuous position on a newspaper or journal where the title or motto is printed.
blue shirt at the mast-head A call for assistance.
red flag at the mast-head ['close action’/’no quarter’] In dead earnest, utter severity.
carry three red lights [the ‘not-under-control’ signal] Be drunk and incapable.

D.19e Naval warfare

clear/square my yard-arm Clear myself of possible trouble in advance; prove my innocence.
look after your own yard-arm First attend to your own affairs; look after your own interests first.
square (the) yards [naut] Settle accounts, be revenged; terminate a matter.
gun-boat diplomacy [1927] Negotiation by threats (as when the Royal Navy would be sent to a trouble spot to make a show of force).

shot across the bows [the customary warning to heave-to, given by naval ships] Drastic warning.

open lower-deckers [the heaviest naval guns were on the lower decks—C18] Use bad language.

broadside Powerful attack (because when a battleship was broadside-on, it could fire half its heavy armament).

blow out of the water Demolish completely—an argument, theory etc.—with one devastating attack.

raked fore and aft Infatuated, head over heels in love, as good as ‘sunk’.

stick to your guns Abide by your argument; maintain your position against all opposition.

another shot in my locker Something in reserve; a last resort; still solvent, potent.

not a shot left in my locker No money, not a chance left.

loose cannon (on a pitching deck) [Amer] A person who is uncontrolled and irresponsible, and therefore likely to do damage; member of a team likely to act unpredictably.

son of a gun Familiar and friendly term of address to a rough or disreputable fellow. (Originally used of babies born at sea to the women allowed on warships in C18 and C19 to discourage press-ganged sailors from jumping ship. Their quarters were often near the gun-ports.)

torpedo (v) Paralyse an institution or policy with one unexpected and devastating blow; halt progress, effectively prevent.

damn the torpedoes—full steam ahead [Amer] Carry on; never mind the consequences. (Spoken by D.G.Farragut at the battle of Mobile Bay, 5 August 1864.)

smoke-screen Deliberate distraction or diversion from the real business or from something better concealed. (Originally a screen of smoke emitted from the funnels of warships to hide their movements from enemy ships.)

board in the smoke Take by surprise. (It was regular naval tactics to board under cover of broadsider-smoke.)

sail in/into… Launch an attack on…

grapple with…[1830] Struggle to master, labour at—studies, a problem etc. (Originally it meant to use grapnel or grappling irons at close quarters; thence, to get to grips with, in wrestling; thence, to wrestle with a problem etc.)

at close quarters [wooden barriers erected for defence against boarders] (When, therefore, you were fighting at close quarters, you were in close proximity.)

scuttle (v) Terminate; ruin something you are yourself involved with, end it from within.

as mild a villain as ever scuttled a ship A gentle reproach.
D.19f Naval history

**anniversary of the siege of Gibraltar** [1704–1783] Event capable of being celebrated at any time.

**didn’t you sink the Emden?** [a German cruiser sunk by the Australian cruiser *Sydney* in 1914, which occasioned much ballyhoo in the Australian press at the time] An exclamation of scorn at someone’s conceit over an achievement.

**do a Dunkirk** Withdraw at the last minute and at a time of crisis (as did the trapped British soldiers from 29 May to 3 June 1940 with the help of many small boats from the ports and harbours of southern England).

**the Dunkirk spirit** The courage and sacrifice that informed the evacuation mentioned above.
E

RICHMAN

E.1a Money

well-endowed With larger than average sexual organs.
is made of money Is very wealthy.
has money to burn [1896] So much that they can afford to waste it. (Inflation is where you have money to burn, but cannot afford a match.)
thrown good money after bad [1706] Continue expenditure to no purpose; risk further loss in order to recoup previous losses.
tell [count] money after your own father [1604] In financial affairs trust no one.
held on like a miser to his bag [Nlre]
pay him in his own coin [1578] Treat him as he treats others, give tit for tat.
current coin Generally accepted custom, language etc.
pass as for Be accounted as, accepted as equivalent to something, although (it is implied) not as good as the real thing. (A doubtful coin, provided that it is accepted in trade, ‘passes for’ a shilling or whatever.) ‘Has written verses of a sort and passes for a poet.’
take at face value [1883] Accept without suspicion or enquiry. (The face value is that printed on banknotes or postage stamps.)
in old money Used when giving an equivalent in an outdated measurement—a sentimental concession to survivors from an earlier, happier age.
feel/look like a million dollars [Amer] Feel or look marvellous, excellent.
take a farthing from a thousand pounds, it will be a thousand pounds no longer However small the subtraction, it tells.
scarce as guineas
yellow as a guinea/a golden noble [1587]
bring a noble [Nhp wSom]/shilling to nine pence Dissipate money.
only eighteen bob/shillings/twelve and six in the pound [Aus NZ] Feeble-minded, not ‘all there’; slightly mad.
swallow a sovereign and shit it in silver Act obligingly (the acme of convenience).
look after the pence and the pounds will look after themselves [1724 UK: Ont Ohio Okl Texas] Attend to the details and the whole will prosper.
tearing up pound notes in a gale Indulging in an expensive, extravagant and pointless pastime.
there is more honesty in a penny than in five pounds Because scrupulous.
phoney/queer as a three-dollar bill [Amer] (There is no such denomination.)
queer as a nine-bob note [Because there is no such issue.] not worth a continental [a banknote issued by the Continental Congress during the American Civil War—virtually worthless through lack of backing]
bright as a dollar
so mean he would squeeze a quarter till the eagle screamed [Amer]
the same old two and sixpence! Said at a renewal of acquaintance to confirm that a person is essentially unaltered, though they may be in appearance etc.
one and ninepence in the florin Feebleminded (not ‘all there’).
thirteenpence halfpenny A hangman. (This was at one time the fee for a hanging.)
know the right side of a shilling Know the value of money.
the height of a bob of coppers [Ire] Describing a small child.
nimble as ninepence (because it circulated quickly).
nimble ninepence Anything quick (from ‘nimble ninepence is better than a slow/dead shilling’ [money lying idle]).
nice [Lei]/right [eSuf Cor] as ninepence (See also K.76.)
that will not pay the old woman her ninepence! [Lan Oxf Dor] The retort to a low offer; in criticism of an inadequate or evasive act.
bring ninepence to nothing Waste property.
the same old sixpence The same person as ever he was; unregenerate [Lnk].
lucky as a bent sixpence (A bent or crooked sixpence would be carried in the pocket for luck.)
thin as a Mapplewell sixpence [a groat hammered out to the size of a sixpence by the Mapplewell nailmakers—Yks]
spit white sixpences Be thirsty.
fine as fippence [Sc Nrf Nhp]/fivepence
not care/give/worth a (grey) [Per Rnf] groat
poor/thin as a groat [Yks Lan Chs]
light as the Queen’s groat [1621]
near as fourpence to a groat [1555]
get the wissel [change, small change—Sc Nh] of her groat Get retribution.
a cracked/slit groat Type of something worthless.
only fourpence [sChs]/ninepence [sNot nLin : 1889]/tenpence [nLn] in/to the shilling Simple, half-witted.
want some pence of the shilling [Gall] Lack intelligence.
elevenpence halfpenny short of the bob [Lan] (As above.)
a penny short [Cor] Slightly simple. (As above.)

E.1b Minting

a mint of... A large amount of...
rich as the mint
impression, impressive [<Lat *imprimere*= press upon, usually with much weight on a small area]

mint condition Brand-new, generally. Also abbreviated to mint.

new off the irons [Sc] Just fresh from their studies. (The dies used in striking coins were called irons [C15–C19].)

coin money Make money quickly.

coin a phrase etc. Create it new.

currency children [Aus 1830+] Those born in Australia, while *sterling children* had been born in Britain.

licence to print money [Amer] Thriving business, profitable enterprise.

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**E.1c Banks, pawnbrokers**

fast [safe—Lan]/safe as the bank [1857]/Bank of England

keep banker’s hours [Amer] Come late to work.

rich as Damer [Dub] (Joseph Damer [1630–1720] was a notoriously wealthy banker and miser who bought up property forfeited in the Williamite confiscations.)

clearing-house Place, institution or system for simplifying or reconciling many different members, cases or applications.

blank/open cheque [1884] Sanction to act or spend without limit.

Harlem credit card [Amer] Length of hose for siphoning petrol out of one car into your own.

bankrupt No longer able to supply what is expected—‘bankrupt of ideas’.

in the red In debt. (When a bank account is overdrawn, the debit amount is entered in red ink.)

in the black In credit. (The opposite of the above.)

best gold from under the flockbed [the farmer’s bank in old times] Good money.

pawnbroker economics Monetary policy that seeks to control inflation, growth rates etc. by varying bank interest rates.

cold as a pawnbroker’s smile [Calif]

brassy as a pawnbroker’s sign [of three brass balls] Brazen.

dowly [gloomy, melancholy—Cum] as a pawnshop

pawn (v)—life, happiness etc. Pledge; entrust to another’s keeping.

takes it all in, like a pawnshop Of a credulous person over-interested in other folk’s affairs.

up the spout Pregnant. (Pawnbrokers sent goods up a lift called ‘the spout’.)

up the spout with At a loss or standstill over. (As/from the above.)

always comin’ and goin’ like Mulligan’s blanket (to the pawnshop).

redeem [<Lat *redimo*=buy back] Regain—at a price. Also extended to the ransom of people, especially from errors or sin (as by Christ our Redeemer), and buying captives back out of slavery.
E.1d Investing, insurance

subscribe [<Lat subscribere=write (your name) under] Donate money to a cause or appeal (originally from adding your name to a list of applicants for company shares).

invest Purchase—jocularly. ‘I have invested in some new shoelaces.’

vested in Entrusted, involved in something.

below par Less healthy than usual. (A phrase from the Stock Exchange describing stocks and shares sold below face-value.)

at a premium/there is a premium on In great demand, valued highly. (From the Stock Exchange term for stock selling above par.)

stock (n) Reputation, public regard. (From the way in which, when the stock of a company is high and healthy, public confidence in it is also high.)

pay dividends Be well worthwhile; repay effort etc., especially when looking to the future.

return with interest! A compliment, kindness, blow, insult etc.

make capital out of…/capitalise on… Turn to account, profit, advantage; exploit a situation for your own advantage.

underwrite Support generally.

E.1e Industry and companies

take/be in the chair Assume or be in control (as does the chairman of a meeting).

guild [1903] Group of species having similar roles in the environment.

every Preston Guild Very seldom. (Only celebrated every twenty years.)

do a Glaxo Go in for the ultimate amalgamation (as Glaxo-Wellcome seemed to do when proposing a merger with SmithKline Beecham in 1998).

assets Attractive features, physical and sexual.

E.1f Hoarding

purse (v) the lips etc. Pucker, draw together (as a bag-purse by the purse-strings).

purse-net/purse-seine Rabbit or fishing net whose open end closes with a draw-string, as does a purse; duck net in a decoy pipe [Lin].

hold the purse-strings Control expenditure.

loosen the purse-strings Allow an increase in spending.

friends tie their purses with a cobweb thread [1659] Are glad to share with each other.
ower braw a purse to put a plack in [a plack = two bodles = a third of a Scots penny]
Too poor within to warrant the outside appearance—of a fine house built with small means.

spend his last shilling on a purse [wYks] Do something instantly futile.

has no money in his purse Is impotent.

pinch like a snudge [miser—common 1550–1610, now dialect]

as cheap as living at home and finding [fending for—sLan] yourself

growing, like Matty Murray’s money [Haverfordwest, Pem] Of a thriving baby.

E.2a Merchants, trade

as rich as a Jew
dressed up like a Bristol pin-merchant Unusually smart.
a toom [empty—Sc Ire nEng] purse makes a blate [timid, unenterprising—nEng]

merchant [1628] Someone who lacks resources will lack initiative.

has his eye his merchant [Sc] Buys on his own judgement.

travelling salesman problem/route [1954] One that requires a number of places to be visited once only with a final return to starting point.

appreciate [<Lat ad pretium=to the price] In acknowledging worth—variously.

make a bid for Try for (as at an auction).

bid fair to Make a reasonable offer to; seem likely to.

by inch of candle In a strictly precise, trivial and fastidious manner (as were conducted those auctions where bids were only accepted while the prescribed one inch of candle continued to burn).

bargain for Expect, reckon with. ‘He got more than he bargained for’ = worse than he expected.

into the bargain In addition.

if you sell your purse to your wife, give your breeks into the bargain [Sc: 1721]
When you give up control of your money, you give up all control.

out of whack [bargain, share, deal, agreement—Amer] Not working normally; out of order, out of health or out of harmony.

a tall order An excessive requirement or expectation.

trade (v) [journalalese] Exchange—insults, abuse etc.

trade on… Exploit, take undue advantage of—a reputation etc.

trade-mark A scratched face, usually inflicted by a woman—‘left her trade-mark on his face’; distinctive feature by which a person’s work may be recognised.

free trade or protection [two conflicting economic policies] Underwear loose or tight.

have no truck [barter] with [1899] Have no dealings with.

when my ship comes home/in [1851] At some more prosperous time in the future. A jocular answer to importunity.

when the Plate fleet comes in [the fleet that carried the production of the South American silver mines to Spain every year—C17–C19] (As above.)
drawback Disadvantage. (‘Drawback’ is the term given to a duty imposed on goods that is paid back only when they are exported.)

don’t hurry Hopkins! [Kent C19] A rebuke to those who are dilatory in business affairs. (One Hopkins had given a note to a creditor with the PS ‘It is expressly agreed that the said Hopkins is not to be hurried in paying the above note.’)

weel worth sorrow that buys it wi’ his ain siller [silver: Sc] He deserves all he gets.

pay on the nail [Sc Ire Eng Amer: 1600] Promptly. (A saying from Bristol, Limerick or Liverpool where there are bollards, locally called ‘nails’, beside the market, which were convenient for counting out money on when prompt settlement of a transaction took place.)

pay a bill at sight Be naturally over-ready to engage in sexual intercourse.

cut (quick) stick(s) Go off quickly. (From settling business by cutting the tally or nick-stick.)

stick up your stick [Wor] Die. (Probably from the above.)

corner—in the market Monopolistic purchase of all supplies. (A speculation whereby the whole supply of one commodity is bought up, thus forcing competition into a corner.)

corner (v) Appropriate to oneself; acquire sole rights to. (From the above.)

wholesale In large quantities, on a large scale—e.g. wholesale slaughter etc.

engrossed Occupied exclusively, absorbed. (From the name given to the purchase of the whole stock, or as much of it as will enable the buyer to resell at a monopoly price.)

storehouse (n) usually of information, referring to a book or person.

box up Confine into a narrow space—generally. (From packaging goods.)

sell the bear’s skin before the bear has been caught [1578] Arrange to sell something you have not yet bought. On the Stock Exchange this has given rise to the phrases ‘buy/sell the bear’ and ‘bearskin jobber’ [one who speculates on a fall]. The Scots say ‘sell the bear skin on his back’.

E.2b Shops, stores, shop-windows, selling

talk shop Confine the conversation to business affairs.

sure as Job Orton is in his shop (He was a Shrewsbury grocer in 1717.)

an empty brain is the devil’s shop—and he will soon stock it [1736]

mind the shop Take charge of—an operation, organisation etc.

mind the store [Amer] Carry on with routine necessary duties.

come to the wrong shop Seek information etc. in the wrong place.

has Mr Sharp come in yet? A warning from one trader to another that a dishonest customer is about.

ugly customer Unsavoury character or caller who shows himself capable of turning awkward and dangerous.

business as usual Things proceeding normally in spite of the disturbance.

smell of the shop Of actions or words strongly reminiscent of someone’s calling.

shop-soiled Slightly spoilt, with such minor detractions as come with time and with use or disuse.

the singing man keeps his shop in his throat [1640]

shut up shop [1650] Cease work or play—generally.

revolving door [Amer]/swing-door Soon superseded, replaced, of short duration; easily passing between the public and private financial sectors. ‘Revolving door patients’ are those who are discharged from hospital before being properly cured, and so are back for readmission all too soon.

couldn’t go two rounds with a revolving door [Aus 1974] Disparaging someone’s boxing ability.

in on the bottom/ground floor At the start. (As in a multiple store, before further storeys are built.) Hence:

ground floor opportunity A good start, unhindered by the later restrictions.

ground floor—statement etc. Basic, fundamental, unelaborated; one from which other, later versions are developed.

Sears-Roebuck/Sears and Roebuck [a merchandising and mail-order firm—Amer] Of people—inexperienced, inefficient; of goods—cheap and trashy.

catalogue—of faults, demands etc. An exhaustive and tedious enumeration, usually of items unwelcome to the recipient.

a lot out of a catalogue [Oxf] One of little consequence.

shop-window Advertisement—generally.

shop-window [orig. Amer] Place or function used principally for displaying products or services.

window-dressing [1898] The specious display of attractions to divert attention from weaknesses; of something done merely for display; false accounting to enhance the value of a business etc.; adroitly misleading presentation of statistics.

more in the window than in the shop No reserves.

have everything in the front/shop-window (, nothing in the shop) Be superficial; without anything substantial in reserve. Applied to women who strive to make a favourable impression, but achieve nothing more.

like a Corsehill shop, all in the window! [Ayr] Of someone superficial, all of whose qualities are immediately obvious. (Corsehill was a small, village near Irving.)

put up the shutters Abandon a venture; cease trading.

sell (v) Persuade someone of the desirability or advisability of something. ‘She sold him babies.’

sell his life dear Fight desperately, though doomed; kill others before being killed.

oversell (v and n) Make excessive claims for things, ideas, policies etc. which the reality cannot justify.

slap a label on… Pass a hasty or careless judgement on someone by allotting them to some arbitrary category.

have tickets [price-tags] on Have a liking for, be attracted by.

has got tickets on herself [Aus] Has a high opinion of herself, is vain.

like the cocky on the biscuit tin [Aus] Left out of things. (The picture of the cockatoo was on the outside of the tin, when presumably it would rather have been inside.)
slimline (an advertising coinage to describe elegantly slender products) Economically designed generally, with no superfluous elaborations.

watch this space Stay alert and you will find out something of interest in this connection; be patient—something will happen soon. (From an advertising caption designed to heighten people’s anticipation.)
dirt-cheap
money for jam/old rope Easy profit.
put your money on the barrel-head [used as makeshift counter in general stores—Amer] Give some proof of your intentions; make a definite commitment.

cracker-barrel philosophy, debate etc. [Amer 1933] Plain, homely, small-town, amateurish (as discussed by customers leaning on barrels in the local stores).
take your change out of.../that! Be revenged on someone, get even with them; when accompanied by a blow or a retort or act of defiance=make what you can out of that!

get no change out of Fail to score off, or to learn from.
ring true/false [1611] Sound true or false—of statements etc.—‘has the ring of truth’.
(From the method of testing a coin by the sound of its metal when dropped.)
like a bad penny, continually turning up Always there when least wanted.
welkent [well-known] as a bad halfpenny [nwDur]
nail up for a slip [counterfeit coin] Expose as a fraud.
nail to the counter [1573]/to the barn-door Expose as spurious; stop further circulation, often of slander. (From the practice of nailing down a false coin.)
don’t take any wooden nickels! [Can Amer, 1920+] Look after yourself, take care; don’t do anything stupid (a parting catchphrase). (See also F.1b, take a wooden nickel.)

E.2c Accounts

death keeps no calendar/squares all accounts
bring to book Bring to account (as when making account for the figures in your book).
up to date (i.e. entered up to the present time). Up to the knowledge, requirements of the time.
balance/settle/square an account/accounts Repay someone for a grievance or injury.
even the ledger Settle the score, make scores even (as in balancing the accounts).
keep tabs on... Keep under close watch, with the implication that they will thus be better controlled. (From keeping a tabulated list of profit and loss, books lent, articles in store etc.)

render an account Explain, justify with reasons.
Dutch reckoning A bill which, if disputed, is increased.
hand in his accounts [Amer] Die.
write off...[cancel from the accounts] Reconcile yourself to the loss of it.
put paid to him Finish him off; stop him from being any further trouble. (To put ‘paid’ to an account closes it.)
God never pays his debts with money Said when a wicked person falls ill or meets with misfortune.

doesn’t owe you anything Of an article, vehicle etc. which has given good service, has lasted well, but is now worn out.

a plus for us! A benefit or bonus.

take stock [1825] Withdraw from action in order to assess the position and plan future policy; make an estimate of—someone’s character etc.

stock-taking Reappraisal; fresh assessment.

stock-in-trade Asset to business, e.g. cheerfulness etc. (Originally referred only to the goods for sale.)

damaged goods! The comment on a woman who has lost her virginity.

E.3a Gold-mining

Pike’s Peak [a mountain named after Z.L.Pike during the 1859 gold strike in the Cripple Creek area of Colorado] or bust! [Amer] An ebullient expression of determination to reach an objective.

there’s gold in them thar hills Opportunities for making a fortune—variously.

stake a claim Claim officially; make application. (In the gold-rush days, to stake out an area made a provisional claim on it until officially registered.)

drive/stick your stakes [Amer] Settle down. (From the practice of the early American miners and campers.)

move/pull up your stakes [Amer] Move your habitation. Also:

up stakes/sticks Pack up and go (see also D.3c, up sticks).

peter out Dwindle away to nothing. (The phrase was first noted from American mining camps c.1849, where peter [<saltpetre] was the old black explosive powder. When the gold failed, no more explosive was used.) In St Helens [Lan] ‘the ball’s petered’ means that it has been lost over the wall.

gold-digger Someone ambitious and unscrupulous at making money; woman who wheedles money out of men by her coquetry.

hit/strike pay-dirt [Amer Aus] Get worthwhile results; reach an objective.

pan out [1868] Work out financially, especially when everything happens in the right order at the right time (from panning for gold).

a (veritable) gold mine An extremely profitable enterprise, business etc.

today gold, tomorrow dust A comment either on self-delusions and reactions to them, or on life’s transience.

hasn’t a Chinaman’s chance (Chinese, in the California rush of 1849, would optimistically work abandoned claims.)

mean as a goldfield Chinaman [Aus]

fossick about [search for gold sporadically with a knife or pick—Aus] Rummage about.

nugget Something of worth produced from among unpromising surroundings.
put the acid on… [Aus] Exert pressure on someone for a loan, favour etc. (A mine-assayer’s term.)

E.3b Other mines

mine (n)—of information etc. A large supply, waiting to be extracted.
   genius without education is like silver in the mine [NY Wis III]
   manipulation [Lat manipulus=handful] (From early methods of silver mining.)
   deep [cunning, wily] as Dolcoath [the mine near Redruth which was once the deepest in Cornwall]/a Mendip mine
   dark as a shaft [Cor]
   heavy as tin [Cor]
   know tin [Cor] Be knowing, cunning, crafty.
   up to tin [Cor] Worldly wise; not to be deceived.
   untapped vein Source not previously used; unexploited wealth.
   gossan [the yellow soil indicating metal] wig [Cor] One yellowed with age.
   bed-rock The end of your resources; lowest prices; ultimate facts or principles. (Either from gold-mining where bed-rock marked the end of the deposit, or from coal-mining where it was the rock under a coal seam.)
   hard-rock [Amer] Dour, severe.
   wash-out [place where the iron or coal has been washed away by a stream, leaving sandstone in its place] Failure.

E.3c Quarrying

quarry (n) Source of work, information etc.; large reserve.
   quarry (v) Extract laboriously, often from written sources.
   the line of least resistance [a formula used in calculating the charge needed for a blast in mining and quarrying: 1865] The easiest course of action open at the time (but not necessarily the best—or easiest—in the end).
   pale as clay [the China clay of Cornwall]
E.3d Oil-mining

strike oil [1875] Find the means of becoming rich; have a stroke of luck; succeed; find the solution [Amer].
strike it rich [Amer] Have a sudden financial success.
pipeline (n) [Amer] Direct communication channel.

E.4a Ivory

white as ivory [1565]
in an ivory tower Remote, insulated from the world like a writer in a retreat; devoted to abstract thought. (Perhaps after the Indian carvings of Buddha inside a tower, but unconnected with it, although originally one piece of ivory.)
black ivory Black slaves.

E.4b Diamonds

Golconda [Hyderabad in India, rich in diamonds] Valuable source—generally.
koh-i-noor Superb specimen of its kind (From the large Indian diamond of that name.)
of the first water Of the highest quality, excellent. (The colour or lustre of a diamond is known as its ‘water’.)
rare as a blue diamond
rough diamond [1624] Character of more worth than polish.
a diamond is valuable, though it lie on a midden Bad conditions cannot detract from a person’s true worth.
better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble [NJ Kan]
a pebble and a diamond are alike to a blind man Value resides only in appreciation.

E.4c Other jewels

gem (n) Object of beauty and value, choicest part of valued collection.
jewel (n) Highly prized person or possession.
silence is a fine jewel for a woman, but it’s little worn
the family jewels A man’s genitals.
honour without profit is a ring on the finger
beady eyes Dark, round and protruding.
round as a pearl
a pearl is often hidden in an ugly shell [Miss]
like a pearl in a hailstorm Of something impossible to find or detect.
clear as crystal/crystal-clear
black as jet
red as rubies
green as emerald
cameo [1851] Short portrait or description in literature; character part that stands out from the others.

E.4d Gold

all is not gold that glitters

Nis hit nower reh gold al þat ter schineþ

[Hali Meidenhad—1220]

paragon [<It paragone=touchstone< MedGk παρακονή=whetstone]
touchstone [1533] Criterion, test of genuineness.
good/sure/true as touch [touchstone; see E.Spenser, FQ I.iii.2–1590]
put to the touch Test in practice.
as the touchstone tries gold, so gold tries the hearts of men [1540]
he is a counterfett who is afraid of the touchstone [E.Brooke, Commonplace Book—c. 1645] Only the guilty need fear trial.

the acid test [1912] The final, crucial, indisputable test. (From a method of testing the genuineness of gold with aquafortis.)
I have myself passed through/smelt the fire Have been through trouble and emerged the better for it (like refined gold).
guinea-gold [a high-quality, bright yellow gold, mined in Guinea] Of persons—reliable, honest, true.
good as guinea-gold [Lan] (As/from the above.)
good/yellow as gold
heart of gold Kind-hearted.
worth its weight in gold Usefully valuable.
hall-mark Guarantee, true sign of quality (as stamped on to gold and silver by the Assay officers).
vild [worthless, dirty—ShI OrI Sc Yks] as a pair of Yorkshire sleeves in a
goldsmith’s shop
talks gold but pays copper [Sus] Performs less than he promises.
every knife of his has a golden haft [Chs] Of a boaster.
golden key Money as a means of gaining admittance or removing obstacles.
a golden key opens every door, except that of heaven [III: 1580]

E.4e Silver

bright/white as silver
siller-clean [clean as silver—Yks] Spotless.
stamp (n) Imprint, sign, hall-mark—of genius, quality etc. (Like the die-stamp used for making medals, seals etc.)
stamp (v) on your memory Fix indelibly.
stirling [<OE steorling=starling=a Norman silver penny bearing a star] Guaranteed of high quality—worth, character, virtues etc. (Sterling silver is warranted 92.5 per cent pure.)
born with a silver spoon in his mouth Into a wealthy home.
Joan’s silver pin [EAn] A single article of finery produced occasionally and ostentatiously among dirt and sluttery.

E.5a Travelling

Waterloo A halfpenny [the old toll for crossing Waterloo Bridge].
grasping [nYks]/mean as a toll-bar
most people can see through a turnpike gate when it is open; you can see through a barn-door! In answer to conceit.

enough to waken turnpike stones [Yks]
keep the crown/cantle of the causey [causeway] Maintain your proper position and authority; be well-regarded [Sc].
credit keeps the crown of the causeway Commands the respect and preference that a debtor does not get.
passenger Ineffective member of crew or team, whom the others have to ‘carry’.
Cook’s tour [Amer] An excessively protracted viewing of a property. (Cook’s travel agency organises foreign tours in detail.)
tour guide [Amer] Person who stays with someone having a psychedelic drug ‘trip’, to support them.
passport Means of attaining; way to reach. ‘Flattery is the passport to his favour.’
permit [<Lat permettere=let go through]
travel light Live a life free from cares and responsibilities.
portmanteau word One that contains several meanings.
all buckled with one hasp [buckle, clasp—Sc Cor] None better than another (like several articles of luggage strapped together).
in a long journey straw weighs In important matters even small considerations are critical.
she’s gotten so far ahead of herself, she’s going to meet herself coming back! [n&eEng]
meet half-way Grant concessions in order to reach agreement.
half-way house An intermediate stage; a pause in the progression.

E.5b Wheels and carts

invent/reinvent the wheel [Amer] Labour superfluously at something elementary; waste time on tedious fundamentals.
you cannot reinvent the wheel This is something that you cannot—and need not—seek to improve or reorganise.
dizzy/druffen [drunk—Yks]/drunk as a wheel/ wheel-head (Because of the head spinning.)
mazed [crazy, giddy—Cor]/silly [Aus] as a wheel
to make the cart go, you must grease the wheels [Ill] Improve working conditions for greater efficiency.
he who greases his wheels helps his oxen [Texas] (As above.)
go on (oiled) wheels [1547] Progress smoothly.
the world runs on wheels [1542] Everything goes smoothly.
her tongue runs on wheels She talks a lot.
linch-pin [the pin that keeps the wheel on the axle-tree] Small but essential part on which depends the working of the whole; indispensable member [1954].
could wheedle the tyre off a cart-wheel Is very persuasive, importunate.
shaly [flaky—Cor] as a rusty iron hoop Of a rich, flaky cake.
oily as the middle of a cart-wheel
up to the hub [Amer 1831] Fully, to the limit, as far as possible (like cart-wheels in the mud).
cart-wheel (v [1920] and n [1864]) (Do a) lateral somersault; large, wide-brimmed hat.
keep cart on wheels [wYks Nhp] Carry on an affair; keep a business going—‘keep our wheels a-going on present services’ [S.Pepys—27 December 1668].
push/putt [heave, thrust] at the cart that’s ay ganging [Sc: 1641] Give help where it is least needed; load the willing horse; a rebuke that our kindness has only made them more demanding.
the worst wheel of the cart creaks most The worst worker complains most.
take the cart off the wheels [wYks] Break a connection or engagement.
fond [silly] as a cart [wYks]
preposterous [\(<\text{Lat } praeposterus=\text{reversed, back-to-front and front-to-back}\)]

put the cart before the horse [1340] Do something the wrong way round, in the wrong order, with the wrong emphasis; confuse cause with effect.

it is time to yoke when the cart comes to the caples [horses—Chs: 1670] Time to start a journey or task when someone unexpected arrives or starts work; when the woman woos.

cart away/off Remove, transport generally.

a creaking cart goes long Spoken in reference to ailing individuals who outlast apparently healthier folk. Likewise, a creaking gate hangs long o’ t’ crooks [hinges—Sc nEng].

an empty cart/wagon rattles loudest [Amer] it’s no the rumbling cart that’s first o’er the brae [Sc] (As above.)

t’rattli’ cart’s not allus easy to throw over [Wm] The woman who seems worse is not necessarily as bad as she sounds.

decrepit [\(<\text{Lat } de-crepare=\text{creak, rattle downwards}\)]

strident [\(<\text{Lat } stridere=\text{creak}\)] Of colours, personalities etc. which grate on the nerves.

put a scotch on/to… Make difficulties for…; prevent, hinder [Lan Chs].

put a scotch on his wheel Check, hinder him.

put in his spoke Make his contribution; have his say.

put a spoke in his wheel [1580] Foil, hinder his plans. (Possibly a mistranslation of een spaak [=bar, stave] in ’t wiel steeken [Du], because carters used a pin to put on the brakes when going downhill.)

spoke his cart [Nhp] Interfere; check; thwart him.

at a deadlock [the locking brake on a cart which prevents both forward and backward movement: 1779] Unable to move in any direction. Often said of an impasse in negotiations or an apparently insoluble problem.

taking no more notice of him than if he’d been the left-hand spoke of a cart-wheel! [Lan]

it’s the loose spoke in a wheel that rattles most [Sc] The least worthy member says most; he who says most is least reliable.

the worst spoke/wheel in a cart creaks most [c. 1400] (As/from the above.)

the worst spoke in a cart breaks first [1678] The weakest member of a team is the first to fail.

the best spoke o’ your wheel Your best man etc.

my clockworks are getting like old Gimp’s cart shafts, rather temporary [sLan]

have thripples on [Der Chs w&midwEng-Som] Be neither drunk nor sober. (The ripples [War Hrf Shr] were a wooden frame to increase a cart’s capacity in harvest. The phrase implies that someone has had more than he can well carry.)

coup [tip over—Nhb]/upset the apple-cart [1790] Make a mess of things.

apple-cart (n) Person, body [Nhb Yks Der Lin Som]. ‘Upset his apple-cart’=knock him down.

common as a cart-way [1362]

exorbitant [\(<\text{Lat } exorbitare=\text{leave the wheel-tracks}\)] Hence, deviate towards the excessive, especially in costs, prices, demands etc.

come out of the cart [Cor] Grow up; develop assurance.
E.5c Wagons and coaches

get along like a wagon and wheels [Som] Live in harmony.

a little stone may overturn a large wain [c. 1375]/great wagon Capability for doing harm is not always proportionate to size or importance.

jolt [1884] Surprise, usually unwelcome, that shakes the victim out of lethargy or complacency.

fix his/her wagon (i.e. make it unfit for use) Undo them; ruin their chances of success; punish [Amer].

though the wagon creaks, it will bear its load Of a complainer.

big as Russel’s wagon [a large wagon with six to ten horses running between Cornwall and London]

sulky Carriage for one (to sulk in).


the first cab in/off the rank [Aus] The prime suspect; the first to seize an opportunity.

cab-rank rule [1945] The system where applicants and cases (often legal) are dealt with in strictly chronological order.

cab-horse knees The wrinkles at the knees of a dancer’s stockings or tights.

coach (v) Tutor, train. (From the idea of conveying someone to a desired point, as in a coach.)

like a coach Swiftly.

slow coach Dullard; unprogressive person; dawdler (often to a child).

a good coach/good company is the shortest cut

pull the check-string [a cord by which a passenger could signal the coachman to stop] Arrest; cut short generally.

a fifth wheel (to a coach) [1513] A hindering extra; superfluous person [Amer].

big enough to turn a coach and six in Of a spacious area.

as long as they don’t stampede the horses They may be tolerated, but only as long as the regular arrangements are not disturbed.

drive a coach and horses/six through—the act etc. [S.Rice—Ire 1688, now passim] Defeat the intention of it, especially by finding a loophole in the wording.

horn (n) The klaxon or audible warning signal on motor vehicles is still called a horn in succession to the original warning note sounded by a coachman or postilion blowing a post-horn.

out of the road of the coaches [s&wEng] In a safe place; in prison.

get out of the way of the wagon [Dor] Go your way, go upstairs etc.

where the wagon won’t go over me [Dor] Upstairs in bed.

take the Marrowbone stage Be reduced to walking. (With a play on Marylebone.)

the next stage The next section in a progressive series (from stage coaching).

by slow stages Slowly (from stage coaching).

Miles’s boy is spotted a Hampstead coach boy famous for his anecdotes—c. 1830] We know all about that!—usually addressed to anyone in a printing office who begins to spin a yarn.

come back with the blind carrier Only after a long time, if ever.
fond [simple] as the folks of Token [Cum] (When the first coach went through Token, a crowd of locals followed to see if the big wheels would catch the little ones.)

a fair crack of the whip [1929] A fair share in or chance of getting what is available (as when a reserve coachman has his fair share of driving the horses).

E.5d Modern travel; car and air travel

get in the buggy [car—Amer] Comply with orders.

in the driver’s seat In charge, in control.

back-seat driver One who attempts to control without responsibility.

red flag Imminent crisis, warning of danger, area of risk. (A red flag is universally accepted as a warning signal on firing ranges, bathing beaches and for road hazards.)

red light Warning of danger.

amber light Warning for caution.

green light Sign of the end of danger, to go ahead; permission to proceed—generally. (These last three signals are all from street traffic lights.)

red-light (v) [Amer] Dismiss from office or employment. (From the practice of forcing unwanted circus hands off a moving train.)

see the red light Heed the warning; realise there is a danger or trouble ahead.

stalled Temporarily halted—of plans, negotiations etc.

cut the corners Speed up work by omitting inessentials. (From reckless motoring.)

crash (n) [1980s] Serious computer failure or malfunction, variously caused.

swerve (as if to avoid a child on the road) Practise coitus interruptus.

road-kill [animal intentionally killed by vicious driver—Amer] Helpless victim—generally [1990s]; team defeated by powerful opponents; someone whose outdated equipment has left them hopelessly overtaken.

meet head-on [Amer] Come into direct conflict; oppose unswervingly.

dent (v)—someone’s image, pride etc. Inflict a blow on what was previously undamaged.

put the brake(s) on [Amer] Finish—whatever; arrest progress or slow it down, as a matter of policy.

come to a screeching halt [Amer] End abruptly.

skid-marks Brown stains on underwear.

do a U-turn Change to a completely opposite plan or policy (from changing direction by turning a car through a U-turn so as to go in the opposite direction).

go the route [Amer] Last the course; box all the rounds; pitch for a full game in baseball. (Highways are numbered routes in America.)

face like a mile of bad road [nwDur] Unwelcoming.

forty miles of bad road Unattractive person, sight, situation,

greasy spot on the road Small town or hamlet.

traffic jam Overcrowding or congestion generally.

gridlock [a traffic jam extending to the surrounding grid of streets] Situation of complete deadlock [Amer 1980s].
on his wheel In close pursuit, tracking him down; putting on the pressure. (As if closely following.)

one-way street Situation where communication and hardship only pass one way. One side is immune and unaffected, while the other is inevitably afflicted.

two-way street [Amer] Something that two people have to work at—like marriage.

in the slow lane Relaxing, taking things easy (from motorway travel where speeds in the different lanes make driving much more or less of a strain).

gather/run out of momentum Increase/decrease in force and effect—of a cause, movement or campaign.

speed [Amer] What suits me; what I am used to or capable of. ‘Hang-gliding is not my speed.’

in the slipstream of... Drawn along in someone’s company, taking advantage of their momentum, prestige and organisation.

life in the fast lane Living to the full, aiming high.

overtaken—by events As when a settled way of life or someone’s plans are upset by rapid changes that make them irrelevant.

taken for a ride Swindled, subjected to an extended deception.

go along for the ride Be present, but not to take part, merely to observe and enjoy the occasion.

thanks for the buggy-ride! [car-ride—Amer] Terse, informal thanks terminating the relationship; sometimes merely ironic.

mileage Continuing benefit, advantages, service, use, advance; expected returns; resources and the opportunity to use them to advantage, credit. ‘Still some mileage in him/her/it’ = still some usefulness, capabilities left, in spite of age.

empties coming back from Manchester [notorious for wet weather] Clouds that only threaten rain.

send up a pilot/trial balloon [a small balloon sent up first to show the wind conditions at various heights] Make a trial to obtain forewarning about what to expect and how the new policy will be received.

ballon d’essai [trial balloon—Fr] (As above.)

like the man who fell out of the balloon, he wasn’t in it Stood no chance.

excess baggage [Amer] Someone or something superfluous, unwanted.

E.6a Aristocracy

Albert Kind of watch-chain named after Prince Albert.

blue blood High birth. (A popular myth.)

like a lord To excess—as in live, drink, swear like a lord.

dine with Duke Humphrey [1590] Do without; dine alone. (Duke Humphrey [1390–1447] was the son of Henry IV, famous for his hospitality, and after his death it was rumoured that a monument to him was to be erected in St Paul’s. It became customary for those who had nowhere to dine, being questioned, to answer that they were first going to
look for the good duke’s monument.) The Scottish equivalent is **dine with St Giles and the Earl of Murray** (who was buried in St Giles’ church).

**fair as Lady Done** [wife of Sir John Done of Utkinson, died 1629] Cheshire nurses used to call their girls Lady Does and their boys Earls of Derby.

**fit to keep company with the Lambtoms** [Dur Nhb] Of a stylish fellow.

**Moresby Hall folk** [Cum] Court cards. (Obviously upper crust!)

**live like Pelham** [an ancestor of the Earl of Yarborough—Lin] In great style.

**white elephant** [1883] Burdensome possession. (The King of Siam presented one of these to any of his courtiers he wished to ruin. The cost of keeping the animal in the style expected soon reduced him to beggary.)

**it is not the gay coat that makes the gentleman**

**the west wind is a gentleman and goes to bed** Drops in the evening.

**better be the head of the yeomanry than the tail of the gentry**

**kiss the mistress** Shoot accurately; in bowls, make your wood graze the jack or ‘mistress’.

**if you can kiss the mistress, never kiss the maid** Do not lower either standards or ambition.

### E.6b High life

**nursed in cotton** Brought up very tenderly.

**keep/wrap in cotton-wool** [1889] Mollycoddle; nurse carefully.

**handle with (kid) gloves/wear (kid) gloves in dealing with...** Treat very considerately—often of industrial relations where the workers’ side is easily offended.

**handle without gloves** Treat roughly, severely.

**do on hill as you would in hall** [1509]

**house and hall** [Fif Gal] Entirely, completely; a clean sweep.

**gaudy/proud [c. 1290] as a peacock**

**gim/jim** [neat, spruce—Sc Lan EAn Ken] as peacocks

**pavan** [<Sp *pavo*=peacock] (From a similarity between the pompous movements of the dance and the strutting bird.)

**shake/wag the feather** Make a display of your honours.

**the peacock has fair feathers but foul feet** [1532] Don’t infer too much from appearances.

**fly pride says the peacock!** In criticism of one just as bad as the person they are blaming.

**peacock coal** Coal reflecting various colours.

**peacock engine** A railway engine with a separate tender (like an ornamental tail).

**peacock horse** One with a showy mane and tail.
E.6c Servants

**ring a bell** [1934] Touch a memory; awake associations. (In large houses there used to be a battery of bells for summoning different servants—hence the idea of making distant contact with something in the memory.)

**ring his/her bell** [Amer] Be sexually attractive to. (As from the above.)

**you’re ringing on a ribbon** [bell-pull—War] To a child, ‘be quiet, or else…!’ [Abd].

**fire and water are good servants but bad masters** [1562]

**counting the pothooks** Said of a new servant who sits quietly at first, not knowing what to do or say.

**left sucking the mop** Left unexpectedly without work, temporarily unemployed (like a housemaid, unprepared for leisure, who can only suck her mop!).

**eye-servant** [Chs] A type of cheese-press that will not work unless constantly watched and turned.

**step-and-fetch-it** Tall girl, quick and decisive in her actions [Lei]; one who, through lameness, walks unevenly, dragging one leg [War].

**ancillary** [Lat ancilla=handmaid] Subservient, ministering, contributory to—of industries etc.

**no man is a hero to his valet** Of situations where familiarity lessens admiration.

**critics are like brushers of noblemen’s clothes**


**usher in** Introduce; inaugurate; lead up to—generally.

**flunkey** [flanker, a footman or lackey] Contemptuous term for someone obsequiously attending on a person of higher rank.

I’ve something among them all, to carry a dish upright! A comment on unruly company.

**too slow to carry cold dinner** [Cor]

**carry my cup even between them** Favour neither, one whit more than the other; be cautious and diplomatic. ‘Nowe bere the cuppe evyn…’ [Paston Letters 1473 Nrf].

**sloppy** Careless, slovenly, generally untidy.

**drop a clanger** Make a glaring mistake.

**hand it on a plate/tray** Give to someone without any trouble on their part.

**send him packing** [1594] Dismiss from employment.

E.6d Good food

**glut** (v and n) (Overload with) a surfeit beyond what the recipient or the market can accommodate.

**glutton for** Insatiable, very keen on—variously.

**devour with the eyes** Behold avidly.

**feast your eyes on** (As above.)
**host** (n) Animal or person with body parasites or commensal with them; animal or person receiving transplanted organ.

**either a feast or a fast/famine** [1732] No happy medium, one extreme or the other.

**war is death’s feast** [1611]

**supersede** [＜Lat supersedere—take a higher seat] Hence, supplant, eliminate.

**above/below the salt** [1597] Socially superior/inferior (from the convention of seating the ‘quality’ above the salt).

**bellyful** Sufficiency, and more, of things other than food.

**have a kyteful** [bellyful—Sc nEng Nrf] Have more than you can manage.

**fed up—with someone/something/of doing something** Sated, bored, tired.

**a fat housekeeper makes a lean will** [1670] (Having indulged at her master’s expense.)

**paced like an alderman** [1553] Slowly, being likely to have gout.

**flesh-pots** Luxurious living. [See Exodus xvi.3]

**a covetous man is like a dog in a wheel—that roasts meat for others** [1670]

**dogsbodies** An undistinguished and unskilled person required for menial tasks; junior officer [naut] (probably from the use of dogs in spit-wheels).

**perdrix, toujours perdrix!** Too much of the same thing. (A king of France, reproved by his confessor for conjugal infidelity, ordered the priest to be served every day with partridge, his favourite dish. After a time the king revisited him and asked if he had been well served. He replied ‘Ah, oui, mais perdrix, toujours perdrix!’—which made the king’s point.)

**like trying to open an oyster with a bus ticket** A comment on someone’s incompetence; the complaint of someone who has been given tools inappropriate for the job.

**undone—like an oyster**

**drink to your oysters** Suffer for it—‘… I had drownk to myn oystyrs…’ [Paston Letter 1470 Nrf].

**a stopping/choking oyster** A retort that silences the recipient.

**mountain oysters** [Neb wAmer] Sheep or hog testicles used as food.

**the world’s mine oyster** [Shaks, MWW II.ii—1597] Everything is mine to enjoy.

**died for want of lobster-sauce** Spoken of anyone who suffers excessively through pique, disappointment or wounded vanity. (When the chef, Vatel, learned that the lobsters had not arrived for the feast to be given by Coudé to Louis XIV at Chantilly, he committed suicide.)

**fish-pond** The sea.

**full of beans** Full of energy.

**bean-fed** Living on the best.

**dear as cinnamon**

**cinnamon-head** [Tenn] Feeble-minded person.

**dear** [nLin wSom Cor]/yellow [wYks Oxf] **as saffron**

**not worth his salt** [commons, salary]
E.7a Land

tail Involve. (From the conditions of inheritance attached to an entailed estate.)
don’t make a bid till you walk the land [Ire] Become thoroughly acquainted before considering marriage.
farm/buy the farm/ranch [Amer] Be killed in war. (From airmen’s wishful thinking about what they would do after the war.)
eye-picking Picking out the best. (A phrase from the days of the settlement of America. Those who bought the best places were said to be picking the eyes out of the country and were called ‘eye-pickers/peacockers’. See also I.23a, eyes.)
my line of country Something with which I am familiar. Hence, ‘line of business’.
the dumb man gets no land [c. 1390] ‘Dumb folk heirs no land’ [Cum].
well-underfoot [Chs] In good circumstances.
underfoot locally [Amer] With a normal amount of social life, on good visiting terms with the neighbours.
go over the ground Survey the problem; reexamine the basic elements of a subject.
find common ground Discover a shared interest, a mutual link (like strangers who find they share common rights over the same ground).
every land has its laigh [low-lying hollows]; every corn has its caff [chaff—Sc] You are raising pointless objections.
ilka land has its ain lauch [laigh, low ground—Sc] Every country has its own customs. (As above.)
greening [Amer 1970] Renewal, rejuvenation. (After the reclamation of desert land.)
go (a)round land [Cor] Die.
acre [Lat ager=field]
God’s acre Churchyard.
graze the long acre Set animals feeding along the roadside verges.
long and narrow like a Welsh acre [=two English acres]

E.7b Boundaries, walls, hedges, fences

border on Closely approach.
within bounds Under control. ‘Keep your temper within bounds.’
overstep the bounds of ... Transgress the accepted limits of—propriety, decency etc.
unbounded Unlimited.
be determined Reach a final and resolute decision [<Lat determinare=set bounds to].
confine [<Fr confiner<It con-finare= make him with boundaries<Lat con-finis= bordering]
define [<Lat definire=set limits, bounds on]
affinity [<Lat ad-finis=up against a boundary or border, hence neighbouring]
limit [<Lat *limes*=boundary stone] The end, uttermost point—of endurance, patience, bad conduct etc.

circumscribe [<Lat *circumscribere*=draw a boundary line on map or plan] Limit, restrict, confine, restrain generally.

landmark Point from which other things derive their meaning, direction or place—‘This event proved a landmark in his life.’ (The landmark was a boundary stone, post, ditch etc.)

wall Unbroken length—of fire etc.

walls Containing tissues—of the heart, lung etc.

swear through a stone wall Swear vehemently; asseverate convincingly

as gude speak to the stone in the wall [Sc Ire] An equally useless activity; no notice is taken of what I say.

loup [jump—Sc nEng] the dike/dikie [wall—Sc nEng] from Pass out of; leave behind; die.

everyone leaps/loups the dike where it’s lowest [1610]/laighest [Sc] Takes the easiest, most practical way; also of lowly folk downtrodden.

loup a gutter/the stank/stank dikes [stagnant, standing ditches—Sc Ire n&midEng EAn Hrf Hrt Glo sEng Som: Sc] Overcome the difficulty; avoid a loss.

dike-louping [wandering, of cattle—Sc NCy] Loose, immoral. Also, dike-louper and loup-the-dike=a wild, runaway man [Sc], and loupy-dike [NCy]=irresponsible, unfaithful.

blind as a stone wall

stop-gap Temporary expedient.

gaumless as a brick wall [wYks]

see through a brick wall/a milestone Have preternatural acuteness (usually sarcastic).

talk to a brick wall Fail to elicit the desired response.

hedge about/in/round Confine, contain, hem in, inhibit—with rules, restrictive laws etc.

hedge (v) Place further bets as an insurance. (From the sense of hedging in a debt within a larger one carrying better security.)

common as the hedge (which is shared by and so is common to both neighbours) Of a woman indiscriminate with her favours.

fat as a durgey [short, thick-set person—Sc Shr War Wor Hrf Pem Cor; low turf hedge—Cor] Of a badger [Cor].

go like quick sticks (Thorn cuttings grow quickly.)

fine as a hedge in May

love your neighbour, yet pull not down your hedge [1640] Do not abandon your defences or legal restraints merely because there is no immediate need.

the only stick left in my hedge My only, last resource.

hedge-priest [1550] Dismissive term for an ill-educated, low-class priest.

hedge-bottom attorney [1641] One who is not entitled to practise in his own name but who shelters under another’s.

the ill/low stake stands long The worst often endure longest.

break/leap the pale Go beyond bounds, indulge in licence. (See below.)
**beyond the pale** Socially outcast; outside the bounds of civilised behaviour. (Either from pale= a stake in a boundary, or from the pale in Ireland where English law prevailed from the time of Henry II.)

**lean/skinny/thin as a rail** [Eng Amer]/**fence rail** [Aus]

**fly like stoops and rails** [nLin] Be smashed to pieces.

**the bottom rail gets on top every fifty years** [NY SC] In time, luck changes. (This was quoted by a black Federal soldier when he saw his former master being brought in as a prisoner from one of the Civil War battles.)

**straddle/sit on the fence/rail** [Amer] Refuse or delay to take sides, remain uncommitted.

**fence-straddle** [Amer] (As/from the above.)

**go close to the wire** Take an extreme risk (like an animal grazing as close as it dare to the electric fence).

**creep/slip under the wire** Enter by dubious means; obtain something to which you are not entitled.

**tough as fencing wire** [Aus] Hardy.

**teeth like a dog-leg fence** [Aus] Very irregular.

**beyond the rabbit-proof fence** [Aus 1976] Very far away.

**mend fences with** [Amer 1888] Settle grievances; effect a reconciliation with; come to terms with; renew contact with your electors.

**make a Virginia fence** Walk like a drunken man. (A Virginia fence was made of rails nailed on in zigzag fashion.)

**homely as a mud fence** [Calif]

**ring-fence** (v and n) Contain(ment), exercise (of) tight control by means of restraints and restrictions. Applied generally to industrial and financial arrangements.

**E.7c Housing properties**

**architect of**... Creator, planner of—social system, health service etc.

**built like a castle** Strong and sturdy—of horses.

**pinnacle** [pointed turret on high point of building] Climax, culmination—of ambition, career etc.

**build castles/towers in the air** [1575]/Spain [c. 1400] Have day-dreams, pipe-dreams, visionary plans. (The French say châteaux d’Espagne because there are no castles in Spain.)

**castle-building** Personal entertainment with fictions of the imagination.

**build in the air** Form visionary projects.

**lawyers’ houses are built on the heads of fools** [1622]

**his house stands on my lady’s ground** (Probably sexual.)

**all Lombard street to a China orange/Brummagem sixpence/egg-shell** [1672] An example of heavy odds, a virtual certainty (Lombard Street being a banking centre).

**shine like Holmby** [Holdenby House, a shining mansion in Northants]
have Lathom and Knowsley [Lan] Have two houses, even if only temporarily. (From two Lancashire houses belonging to the Earls of Derby until 1702.)

people who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones If you are vulnerable or open to criticism yourself, don’t offend others. This saying, when it originated in the C17, referred to houses with glass windows, but the idea was current in Chaucer’s time in the form:

And for-thy, who that hath an heed of verre, Fro cast of stones war him in the werre!

[G.Chaucer, T&C II.867–1374]

live in a glass house Lay yourself open to criticism. (As/from the above.)

all keys hang not at one man’s/wife’s girdle [1400] Try elsewhere.

a woman that paints puts up a bill that she is to let [1658]

he has apartments to let Is feeble-minded (having vacancies upstairs).

not worth an hour’s purchase [rent, income from a property, usually expressed as an annual amount—J.Wesley—1745] Of some person, business or institution whose existence is not expected to continue longer than the next hour.

E.7d Landlords and tenants

farm out Contract for the care of those in your charge, such as students sent to a tutor of another college.

who hath aching teeth hath ill tenants [1670]

better a toom [empty] house than an ill tenant [Sc] A comment on farting.

a new lease of life [1586] The chance of living longer than seemed possible; renewed vigour; for an object, a further period of usefulness after repair.

the gentleman that pays the rent The pig (from the idea that the profits from keeping a pig should help to pay the cottager’s rent).

live in my heart and you live rent-free [Ire]

break a straw with… Quarrel with. (From the custom of feudal landlords of ceremoniously breaking a straw at the threshold in token of dispossession of the tenant; also by waggish reference to break a lance with…—see C.6c.)

boycott Have no dealings with. (Captain Boycott, an Irish landlord, was thus ostracized by members of the Irish Land League during the agrarian disorders of 1881.)

his religion is copyhold and he has not taken it up Has none. (Copyhold was an ancient tenure of manor lands held by virtue of copy from the manorial court-roll.)
E.7e Neighbours

circumstance [\textless \text{Lat} \text{circumstare}=\text{stand around, be in the vicinity}]
meet him on his own ground On his terms; in his chosen field.
good lawyer, bad neighbour Legality is not a sound basis for neighbourly relations.
a great man and a great river are often bad neighbours [1657]
rival [\textless \text{Lat} \text{rivalis}=\text{one living on the opposite bank of a river, using the same water and hence in competition for the same fish}]

E.8a Hunting

hunting ground Regular or favourite haunt.
open season [\text{time when hunting and fishing are allowed}] A period of relaxation when regulations are not enforced and criticism is allowed.
vestige [\textless \text{Lat} \text{vestigium}=\text{footprint, track}]
investigate [\textless \text{Lat} \text{investigare}=\text{follow the vestigia=footprints, tracks}]
dig a pit for… Try to entrap, often verbally.
if you dig a ditch/pit for someone else, you will fall into it yourself [Ont Minn 111]
fall into the pit Commit the error [Henry VIII, Letter to the Duke of Norfolk—22 February 1537].
great boast, small roast Where the boasting is loudest, the results are poorest.
a houndless hunter and a gunless gunner ay see routh o’ game [\text{abundance of game—Sc Ire nEng}]
fair game! [1801] Traditional victim—of any deceived person, cynically; also spoken in justification of making a victim of someone because of their weakness of character or some unpleasant trait which (it is implied) merits the persecution.
cast about for… Try to elicit information, clues etc.; search widely for.
the game’s afoot The enterprise has begun.

I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips, Strayning upon the Start. The Game’s afoot…

[Shaks, \textit{Hy V} III.i—1599]

through thick and thin [1681] Recklessly; indiscriminately (as in the heat of the chase).
keep to your own line [ride a straight course through the hunting field] Mind your own business; continue as you have begun.
strike out a new line [change your hunting direction] Change policy.
loud as a horn
sleep as sound as a horn [Cai]
make a blow-horn of it [Cai] Proclaim it loudly.
blow a good horn [Wm] Look healthy.
toot on another horn/another tune [Sc] Change the subject or tone.
toot on his ain horn [Sc] Praise himself.
new toot on an old horn [Sc: 1628] Stale news.
an auld toot on a new horn is little minded [Sc] Little heed is paid to an old story, however modernised.
all are not hunters that blow the horn [1586]
wear a horn and blow it not [C15] Possess authority without using it; keep your counsel.

fleshed in… Used to; initiated in. (A hunter allows his hound or his hawk to have the first game it catches so as to give it a craving for that flesh, probably the first it has had.)
dependable The branch or pole from which an animal’s carcass could safely be ‘hung down’ for keeping or carrying proved to be a regular symbol of dependability [mid C16].
howl [hollow, empty, hungry—nEng sDur]/ hungry as a hunter [1581]
red as a hunter’s face
hunter’s pudding Fruit pudding, so-called because it does not deteriorate with waiting for the hunter’s return.

E.8b Hunting deer

make someone a stalking horse [a horse used as concealment when stalking game] Use someone for your own (dubious) purposes; make them a pretext so as to disguise your own intentions; get them to do a mean or painful task for you [nwLin].
head off [1841] Distract, divert. (A tactic in deer-stalking.)
brake sewell [line of feathers on twine to keep the forest deer in bounds—Nhp] Break a long-followed habit or practice.
stag (n) Informer (from the reputed behaviour of the herd in turning its horns against a hunted animal).
stag (v) Be severe on; refuse someone a loan, reduce to bankruptcy (from the above).
run like a deer [1620]
run down Disparage, defame (as if running down deer in the chase).
pull down Cause to deteriorate; bring nearer to death—‘That cough is pulling her down.’
at random [<OF randon=at full speed, at a gallop—1581] (The present meaning has evolved from those occasions when a falcon flying at full tilt into a flock or a hunter galloping at a herd of deer would kill the first he chanced to catch, without selection.)
relay [originally a fresh lot of horses and hounds to continue chasing the deer when their predecessors became tired] The relief either in work or racing.
we have seen neither hide nor hair of him since Nothing of him.
buck (n) Dollar (from the time when American and Canadian trappers reckoned their wealth in buck-skins).
E.8c Hunting foxes

cunning/wily as a fox
he that will deceive the fox must rise betimes [1670] Match your effort to your opponent.
an old fox is shy of a trap [C16] Experience brings caution.
box the fox [Dublin 1770+] Rob an orchard.
play the fox Act cunningly; sham.
stop up the bolt-holes Anticipate a person’s likely evasions.
smell a fox Become suspicious.
hunt the fox down the red lane [Suf] Make drunk. (The red lane=throat [Penn 1930].)
has caught a fox Is very drunk. (From the above.)
show his brush Run away, depart in haste.
there’s mony a fox hunted that’s no killed [Sc] Don’t expect to succeed every time.
ay runs the tod as long as he has feet [Sc] A person will persist in his ways unless prevented.
stretch the fox Exaggerate; tell a tall story.
what harm if your man strays? he might not be wanting to make a hack of his best hunter [Ire]
ready to leap nine hedges [1678] All prepared, eager and ready for anything.
don’t rush your fences [1922] Don’t risk failure by being too hasty (like a huntsman who takes a fall by recklessly riding his horse at the jumps).
crash your fences Make mistakes.
if you don’t own a mount, don’t hunt with the gentry [Ire] Don’t aspire beyond your means.
when the tod wins to the wood, he caresna how many keek [Sc] The successful man does not then need to bother about his dignity or appearance.
run to earth/ground Trace to the source, hiding place, home.
go underground/to ground Go into hiding; lie low; withdraw from public life.
underground Secret, hidden, subversive.
gone to earth In hiding.
it’s a poor dog that does not know ‘come out’ [1830] He is a fool who does not know when to stop.
smoke out Discover the hiding place; trace; force into the open. (It is possible to flush foxes and other burrowing animals by smoking down their holes.)
in at the death/kill At the right place at the right time to see the conclusion of something.
smell blood [Amer] Become exultant at the imminence of success or victory.
blood (v) Initiate. (From smearing the face of a new hunter with the blood of his first kill.)
flay the fox Vomit [after Fr écorcher le renard].
give him a flap with a fox-tail [Tyndale—1530] Inadequate reward.

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it’s ill making a blowing-horn out o’ a tod’s tail [Sc nEng] You cannot make anything with unsuitable materials; also said of human abilities.

E.8d Hunting other animals

loaded for bear [Amer 1888] Prepared for a tough debate, conflict etc.

bear A stock-exchange speculator hoping or trying for a fall in prices so as to buy cheap and make a profit on the rise. (Probably from the idea of selling the skin before the bear has been caught. See E.2a, sell the bear’s skin…)

time to catch bears is when they’re out [Kan Vmt] Do it when you can.

he that goes to law holds a wolf by the ears [1528] ‘…whom they could neither well hold nor might safely let goe’ [W.Lambarde—1576].

a gone coon Someone on the verge of ruin or some other terrible predicament. (From hunting the racoon in America, where it is a ‘gone coon’ when it is treed.)

you can’t get all your coons/possums up one tree [Flor Okl Texas] Do not expect all your plans to succeed at once.

stir the possum [Aus] Create a disturbance, diversion; liven things up; raise awkward issues.

tree (v) Force into an extreme difficulty.

ap a stump [tree—Amer]/ap a tree [1825]/ap a gum-tree [Aus] At a loss; with no easy way out of a difficulty; penniless. (From hunting possum etc. up into trees.)

climb like a possum [Aus] Very rapidly.

happy as/like a possum up a gum-tree [Aus] Smug, contented, well-pleased with the world; quick, clever at doing something.

he will only chase you up his own tree Of a specialist who arrogates to his own sphere cases properly belonging to another.

out on a limb Foolishly separated from your fellows; obstinately independent; deserted; taking an eccentric stand, having departed from the accepted norm.

bark up the wrong tree [1855] Waste energy in the wrong direction; accuse or enquire mistakenly. (In racoon hunting the dogs are supposed to mark the tree in the dark where the racoon has taken refuge.)

out of his tree In a confused state, out of control—often of someone helplessly drunk.

play possum Pretend to be dead (a survival trick of the opossum).

possum (v) [Amer] Feign, pretend. ‘He’s only possuming.’

if you want your finger bit, stick it in a possum’s mouth [Flor] If you ask for trouble you will surely get it.

grey as a possum [NC Calif sAmer]

possum-belly [Amer] Extra storage space under a railcar.

you must hunt squirrels and make no noise [Suf] Enquire discreetly.

shoot the squirrel [Amer 1976] Photograph or catch a glimpse of a girl’s panties or pubic hair.
E.9a Hawks, points

**has some good points** Traits, characteristics. (From judging hounds and fighting cocks, as well as hawks.)

- **the first point of hawking is hold fast** [Paston Letter 1469 Nrf] Persevere.
- **she has one point of a good hawk—she is hardy** [1546] Said disparagingly of a woman.
- **broken feather in your wing** A scandal connected with you. (Replacements for broken or missing feathers were imped into a hawk’s wing to improve its flight.)
- **imped with false feathers** [J.Howell, Letter—10 July 1623] Engendering false hopes; parading honours or qualifications not rightly yours.
- **doesn’t know a hawk from a hand-saw** [probably a corruption of hernshaw=heron] Is of unsound, unreliable judgement. [See Shaks, *Hamlet II* ii.374–1600]
- **mew (v) (up)** [shut hawk into mew=hawks’ cage] Confine, generally.
- **peak over the perch** [topple off] Die. (See also G.45a, *tip over the perch*.)

E.9b Hawks, training

**to the lure of…** Attracted by…, generally.

- **an empty hand is no lure for a hawk** Offer some reward or incentive. ‘With empty hand men may none haukes lure’ [G.Chaucer, *Pro-loge of the Wyves Tale of Bathe* ln. 415–1386].
- **nae hawk flies so high but he will fall to some lure** [Sc] No one, however lofty his ambitions or position, is beyond temptation.
- **unnanmed hawks forsake the lure** Of women, unsatisfied in marriage. [Man (v)=to accustom a hawk to the presence of men, to tame it.]
- **the gentle hawk half mans herself** [1611] Well-born is half-trained.
- **he has brought up a bird to peck out his own eyes** Of a man with an ungrateful child.
- **jess** [thong fettering a hawk to the wrist] Bond of affection.
- **crab** [claw, scratch, fight with each other] Criticise adversely; prejudice the success of something.
- **pare the claws of** Render less harmful or dangerous.

E.9c Hawks, flying at game

**fly at** Attack with a rush.
fly short of Fail to mount to the level of.  
**hang by/in the wind** [Sc Cum Nrf C15—Paston Letters] Be uncertain, wait on events, remain in suspense.  
**turn tail** Flee.  
**it is easy to reclaim a hawk that has lost its prey** Spoken of someone who has been jilted and who then returns more readily to his former love.  
**fly at higher game** Have nobler ambitions.  
**fly high/a high pitch** Aim at or reach a high level of action or feeling.  
**high-flier** One with drive and ability, with the ambition as well as the talents to succeed, and to reach the top of his/her profession.  
**high-flown** Extravagant, bombastic language, ideas etc. (from a hawk flying unnecessarily high).  
**tower above** [fly at the top of a pitch, ready to swoop] Be pre-eminent.  
**in the tower/towering** At the top of her/his power, at full stretch (from the above).  
**at one fell swoop** With a single deadly blow or action.

Oh Hell-Kite! All? What, All my pretty chickens and their Damme At one fell swoope?  

[Shaks, *Macbeth* IV.iii—1606]

**pounce on...** Seize. [Pounces=a hawk’s talons]  
**throw to the winds** Let go carelessly, at random.  
**go** [1600]/**let go/whistle down the wind** [1603] Go/dismiss lightly; lose interest or control of something; worsen, decline in health [C17] (From the act of casting off a falcon—with a whistle—down the wind instead of against it, as when in pursuit of prey)  
**give her the bells and let her fly** [1603] Dismiss someone who is no longer desired, or of use; do not throw good money after bad, but reconcile yourself to losing some, as it were the bells in falconry.  
**absolute** [<MedFr absolut<Lat absolvere =free, release, make independent and beyond anything else]

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**E.9d Hawks, feeding**

**hungry as a hawk** [Ant]  
**taken up for hawks** Ruined, done for (like an old horse slaughtered for hawk-meat) [N. Udall, *Roister Doister*—1553].  
**hawks don’t pike** [pick=poke—Sc Ire n&midEng] **out hawks’ eyes** [1573] Referring to family loyalties.  
**like Towy’s hawks, eat ane anither** [Sc] Harm each other, generally.  
**make the gorge rise** Cause disgust or violent resentment. (From the way in which hawks spew undigested pellets of food with loathing from the gorge.)  
**cast the gorge at...** Reject with disgust.
disgorge Discharge, eject food generally; pay up; give up what was wrongly held. (From the action of hawks in ejecting pellets or surplus food.)
hawk up Expectorate, bring up phlegm with much effort. (As/from the above.)

E.9e Hawks, different species

gentle [noble, of excellent breed or spirit] as a falcon
a goshawk beats not at a bunting [1616] Referring to something far beneath someone’s dignity.
a good hawk does not come from a kite’s egg [c. 1300] Explaining poor quality in offspring.
has the gled [kite (occasionally buzzard)—Sc Ire nEng Shr Suf Nhp] in his eye Has sharp sight.
fall frae the gled [Sc] Be in disorder (as prey dropped by a hawk).
looks as if fallen from the gleds [Sc] In disarray, in disorder.
in the gled’s claws/claws/grups/hands [Sc] In ill-keeping, danger; with no chance of escape.
in…’s claws In their possession, power.
flayt [frightened—Cum] buzzard Timid person.
between hawk and buzzard [1611: Der Nhp] Of doubtful social standing; nondescript; neither one thing nor the other; perplexed; in a quandary.
too low for a hawk, too high for a buzzard (As above.)
buzzard called hawk by courtesy Complimentary title.
you cannot make a sparrow-hawk of a buzzard Education has its limitations.
prest [prompt, quick] as a sperhauke [W. Langland, Piers the Plowman—1377]
kestrel [Lan Der] Worthless fellow. (A hawk of baser breed.)

Ne thought of honour ever did assay His baser breast, but in his kestrell kind A pleasing vaine of glory he did find,

[E.Spenser, FQ II.iii.4–1590]

stomachs like kestrel-kites [nYks] Of hearty feeders.
riffle/rifle (v) [of a male hawk=tread the hen] Give sexual caresses to [C17+].

E.10a Hounds

hound (v) Persecute someone, wherever they may go.
dog (v) [1519] Trail, follow; harass, worry, importune.
hound-bred With long ears.

a hound is worth whistling for [Ire NJ] You should not fear to ask a favour.
like looking for a hound without knowing its colour [Ire] Of a job with difficult conditions.

hangs his head like/mad as a pown [beaten; shaven, close-clipt—Lan] hound
what is a pound of butter among a kennel of hounds? [1670] A complaint about a shortage of food.
clean [UK, passim NC Tenn Calif]/sharp/white as a hound’s tooth
hungry as a foxhound/grew [greyhound—n Ire]/hound-dog [Amer]
ratch about [forage, ferret around—Lakel] like a hungry hound
gaunt/thirl [gaunt, thin, hungry—Som Dev Cor] as a greyhound
run like a long dog [greyhound—w Yks Cor]
sprinted up the broo [brow, hill] like two greyhounds [e Lan]
back to the kennel/kennel up [the order to hounds to return to kennels] Keep quiet!
who kicked your kennel? Don’t interrupt, this is no business of yours.

E.10b Hounds, hunting

strain at the leash Be impatient and eager to start.
give the slip to… Elude. (As when a greyhound slips his leash and ‘gives’ it to his handler. See also D.15c.)

unleash—forces or powers which, when once released, are beyond control
Restrain no longer; abandon to their own, usually destructive, energies.

whip (n) Powerful urge to action.
whip up Arouse enthusiasm, support etc.
whip in Gather together, assemble.
the great whipper-in Death.

whip on Incite.

whip-lash (n) Type of injury usually caused to the victim of a car accident when the head is thrown to and fro causing damage to the neck and/or spine.

whip-lash (v) Move suddenly and violently, like the cracking of a whip; cause an injury as above; react violently.

smart as a whip Quick-witted (because of the quickness of the crack).

hunt (v) Of engines, especially diesel, and governors when they run alternately fast and slow, oscillate about the desired speed; also of a magnetic compass that oscillates about its reading without settling.
in/out of the hunt Having/lacking a fair chance of success.
hunt out Discover, bring to light, search for until found—usually with some trouble.
hunt the glaiks [delusions, deceptions—Sc n Eng] Go on a fool’s errand.
run riot [1523] Act, grow without restraint or control—originally of hounds diverted by false scents.

the race of the hound through the bog is the harvest-night falling [Ire] Comes all too quickly.
autumn days come like the running of a hound on the moor [Ire] (As above.)
go/hunt/run counter to...[1643] Work towards an opposite end; contradict; work against. (From hounds following the scent in the opposite direction to the quarry [contra Lat contra=against].)
hark back to...[1829] Return, in narrative etc., to a previous position. (Like a pack of hounds which ‘hark back’ to the last place where they had strong scent.)
run with the pack Conform.
lead the pack Be pre-eminent among peers.
sleuth Detective. (A sleuth hound was a blood-or trail-hound.)
like a hound on the blood-trail! Of an assiduous searcher.
persecute [<Lat per-sequi=follow through—i.e. any terrain]
keep in front of the hound Only just manage to avoid an ever-threatening trouble or disaster.
cry (n) [a pack of hounds] Crowd of people.
at bay On the defensive (like a hunted animal when the hounds are ‘at bay’).
get/sink your teeth into... Tackle seriously, with determination.
something to bite on [1904]/get your teeth into [1935] Something substantial or satisfying to occupy you for a considerable time.
worry [<OE wyrgan=throttle, kill by strangling] The modern meaning of perplex, harass derives from the OE via the worrying or killing of their prey by hounds.
worry out Reach a solution to a problem by dogged persistence and effort. (As/from the above.)
call off the dogs Desist from a futile pursuit, disagreeable conversation etc. (As a huntsman will call hounds off the wrong track.)

E.10c Hounds on the scent

nose (v) Discover.
have a good nose/scent for... Detect, discover efficiently.
smell about for... Follow up a suspicion; search about.
smell...a mile off Easily identify...; recognise from previous experience a type of person or some practice not readily detected.
in the wind Vaguely in the future; in the vicinity; hinted at (like a scent on the breeze).
get wind of...[1606] Hear about, learn deviously; begin to suspect.
have in the wind Find out, ‘get wind of...’.
on the windy side of...[i.e. downwind of; Shaks, Much Ado II.i—1598] Just out of danger, careful not to be involved with or detected by.
hit it off [strike, come on the scent] Succeed together.
follow the scent/trail Pursue an enquiry, objective.
with nose well down In a hurry.
passionate men, like fleet/Yorkshire hounds, are apt to overrun the scent Are apt to lose what they desire through being over-eager.
be on the (right) scent/track Get closer to what you seek.
lose/keep track of… Fail to follow/follow the course, development, sequence.
red herring [1890] Interesting but irrelevant diversion or distraction. (From the use of smoked herrings in exercising hounds or in diverting them from a scent.)
red as a herring [one cured by smoking to a red colour]
hounds on an island [Amer] Frankfurters on a heap of baked beans.
put/throw off the scent Deflect enquiries; mislead.
foil (v) [<OF fouler=to trample] Frustrate, baffle (as when a scent is lost by others trampling over the ground).
lose the scent Be nonplussed.
false scent Wrong line of enquiry, misdirection.

E.10d Hounds hunting hares

if a man wants a hare for breakfast, he must hunt overnight [1670] You need to start in good time on a doubtful project.
God send you readier meat than running hares! [1721: Tyr] A pious wish for someone’s welfare; to those with wild hopes [Sc].
seek a hare in a hen’s nest Attempt the impossible, the futile.
a lean dog to get through a hedge [Lan: 1902] Spare folk come through illness better.
he knows both hare and hare-gate [its regular run, especially through a hedge—Lan] Is well-acquainted with the person and their ways.
as hard to find a woman without an excuse as a hare without a muse [regular gap in hedge: 1592]
the hare maun come to the hard gate [Sc] Matters must take their course; the wilful and obstinate must learn the hard way.
go/run the old foil [run the same course again—Lakel Yks Lan] Take up again with a former sweetheart [Cum].
hunt the hare with a tabor [drum] Indulge in a futile pursuit; attempt the impossible. (There is a carving on a misericord from 1399 depicting this.)
you might as well try to catch a hare with thumping on a drum [sLan] To a man courting a skittish woman.
let that hare sit a while [Wm] Wait for a better opportunity; also to one speaking unkindly or too critically.
break cover Suddenly emerge from obscurity; leave a life of private retirement for one of public activity.
the hare starts when a man least expects it Of any of life’s uncertainties.
a name to start a hare [Paston Letter 1473 Nrf] A truly noteworthy and/or reputable one.
start a new hare Divert, distract from the present business with something fresh; raise a further topic for discussion.
he that hunts two hares loses both Of those who undertake more than they are capable of completing.
run after two hares [1573] Undertake too much. (As above.)
the greyhound that starts many hares kills none [III]
take hares with foxes [1577] Attempt the impossible.
little dogs start the hare but big ones catch it [1640] Anyone can initiate action, but it requires capability to carry it through.
nature will come through the claws and the hound will follow the hare [Ire] On the inescapable force of inherited instincts.
many hounds soon worry one hare [Sc] Someone with many enemies is soon ruined.
nimble as the hare is, she is caught at last [Ire] Of someone for whom, however fit, there is no ultimate escape.
if the hare is to be caught, it must not stay too far ahead of the hound [Kan] Success must not seem to be unattainable.
the last dog often gets the hare [1586] A late starter is not necessarily last at the finish.
doesn’t care whether the dog catch the hare or the hare catch the dog [wYks] Of one utterly reckless of consequences.
we hounds slew the hare—quoth the messan [lap-dog: Sc Ire NhB Cum: Sc: 1628] When someone claims an unmerited share of the credit.
the mawkin [hare—Sc] is gaun up the hill The business in hand is prospering [Rxb].
fond as Fadge, who laid down his poke to fart [nYks] (There was a live hare in the bag, but nothing to fasten it with, so he was told to hold it closed. But when he felt the need to fart, he put the bag down and the hare escaped.)
double and twist Prevaricate. (From hare-coursing.)
one jump ahead One step or move in front of a rival or opponent.
run with the hare/fox, and hunt with the hounds [c. 1440] Get the best of both worlds by keeping in with both sides; try to combine incompatible activities.
neither hunt nor hare [Lnk] Nothing at all; neither alternative.
there the hare went away [1528+] There the matter ended.

E.11a Shooting, gamekeepers

like the man’s gun that wanted a new lock, stock and barrel, some repairs and a ramrod [nIre] Virtually useless, beyond remedy.
shotgun mixture [1891] A pharmacist’s prescription containing several—or even many—ingredients, one of which, the pharmacist hopes, will prove effective.
shotgun—decision, measures, marriage/wedding [1929] When the parties are forced into it in haste and disgrace, as if by the bride’s father threatening to use a gun.
shoot like a gentleman Fair and far-off.
shoot over my head [Nhp] Speak or write beyond my comprehension.
he that is always shooting must sometimes hit [1624] A limited success may be expected from frequent attempts.
go with a bang Effectively.
not worth powder and shot Not worth striving for.
better a loaded gun than a missed shot [NY Calif] Don’t attempt without a good chance of success.
double-barrelled name A hyphenated surname, like ‘Tufton-Beamish’.
uneasy as a keeper wi' varmint [vermin]

E.11b Shooting at pigeons

stool-pigeon (v) Deceive, con, fool.
stool-pigeon (n) Gambler’s accomplice acting as a decoy; police informer. (A decoy pigeon was sometimes fastened to a stool.)
aim/shoot at a pigeon and kill a crow [1639+, used by W.Churchill—17 November 1949] Get less or worse than you try for; make a mistake. Occurs in a C19 nursery rhyme used as a chant in follow-my-leader:

All of a row,
Bend the bow,
Shot at a pigeon
And killed a crow.

shoot among the dows [doves: Ags] Invent stories; exaggerate.
a shot among the dows [eLth] Anything done at random.
draw the crow [Aus] Get the worst of it (from sharing out the day’s bag).

E.11c Shooting at game

plump/pubble [plump—Nhb Cum Yks] as a partridge [1678] Often of grain or fruit filling out.
brown as a partridge [Som]
sscatter like pettericks [patricks, partridges—nlre]
if you had not aimed at the partridge you would not have missed the snipe By trying for too much to miss even the smaller and easier alternative.
shoot over the stubble (q.v. E.33c, stubble) Ejaculate prematurely.
brown Fire indiscriminately into the crowd. (From shooting into the denser colour of a covey of game birds instead of singling out a target.)
fire/shoot into the brown [Nrf] (As above.)
**shoot him flying** [Cor] Finish him off; stop him before he started.

**the wounded bird flutters** [Kan Ariz] Expect a reaction from someone in distress.

**shoot a sitting pheasant** (the height of bad sportsmanship) Victimise one who cannot either escape or retaliate.

**wise as a wisp** [small flock of snipe, hard to approach—EAn Sur: 1530]

**shoot with a silver gun** [1823] Purchase the game.

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**E.11d Beating**

**beat about the bush** [1520] Prevaricate; avoid coming to the point. (Like a lazy beater who, to avoid the undergrowth, beats about the bush instead of through it.)

**start the game while others beat the bush** [Sc] Speak, act more to the purpose.

**one beats the bush, another takes/grips** [gets—Sc] **the bird** The man does the work, the master gets the money. ‘We bette the busschysse, and othere men have the byrds’ [Paston Letter 1472 Nrf].

**beat the bush** Allow another to profit by your efforts.

**beat over the old ground** Discuss topics already disposed of.

**flush out** Force those who have hitherto remained secret to declare themselves.

**scare up** [Amer] Raise or procure with effort and difficulty (as in flushing game from its hiding place).

**spring a partridge** Lure a victim preparatory to robbing or swindling them.

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**E.11e Wild-fowling**

**go on a wild goose chase** [1594] Run a fruitless, hopeless errand. (First used in this sense not, as is commonly thought, of the attempt to catch a wild goose, but of competing in a special kind of horse race, called a wild goose chase, where the field had to follow the leader at a set distance and in proper order as accurately as possible—like a flight of wild geese in formation.)

**send gander-hunting** [Lan] Send away, get rid of.

**wise** [1528]/**witless** [1529] **as a wild goose**

**flush a wild duck** Find someone unattached and make love to her.

**(de)coy duck** (n) Enticer, pretty girl [wSom].

**coy duck** (v) Entice.

**decoy** (v) Lure, entice someone into a dangerous situation by hope of social advantage.

**toll-bird** [decoy bird—Wil eSom] An enticer. (Tradesmen sell articles cheap as ‘toll-birds’ to attract custom.)
stick my neck out Invite trouble, criticism. (From the American trick of calling to make the wild turkeys raise their heads above the undergrowth and then shooting them, even making a Thanksgiving Day sport of it [see J. Best, *Turkey Shoot*—1975]) Hence:
turkey-shoot [Amer 1944] Something very easy (especially when the birds are tethered behind a log with only their heads visible).
no more brain/wit than a burbolt [bird-bolt—1553] snap-shot A photograph taken at an opportunity, without hesitation and with a short exposure.
scottershot—method, style, system [orig. Amer UK] One that works in an apparently random way, comprehending much extraneous matter in with the main concern.

E.11f Retrievers

wet as a water-dog [sLan]
spaniel Cringing, fawning, servile person.
fawning [1633]/flattering [1585] as a spaniel
look like a kicked spaniel Woefully downcast, chastised, dispirited.
bring to heel [1870] Bring back to a subordinate position; make them realise their inferiority (like a dog, trained to walk at its master’s heel).
the dog that fetches will carry [EAn Can Amer] The same skill can be applied dishonestly as honestly; could gossip about as well as to you.
a dog for/to the bow A subservient, well-trained and obedient person.
make a dead set at… Make a pointed attack on; adopt a hostile position against; make a determined effort to gain a man’s affections.
like a bird-dog on the trail Describing a relentless pursuit; an unwearying search. Hence:
bird-dog (v) Follow persistently.
busy as a bird-dog [NC Calif sAmer]

E.12 Fishing

angle with a silver hook Buy fish at the fishmonger’s when you have caught nothing yourself.
rise to the fly Be taken in by a trick. ‘Won’t rise to that fly!’=cannot believe or agree to it.
over the witter [the barb on a fishing hook, arrow-head etc.—Sc NhB Cum Yks Lan] Firmly secured, caught [Gall].
hook someone into… Involve them, give them a role to play in [Martha Wilmot, Letter—3 July 1821].
hooked [Addicted; compulsively attached—to a drug, idea etc.; engaged to be married (waggish).

on the hook for… [Amer] In trouble over; liable for.
give line Allow freedom, play, scope.
a hook well lost to catch a salmon [1616] Small loss for a large gain.
you must lose a fly to catch a trout [1640] Don’t begrudge a small expense for a good return.

hold/keep thy tail in water! [Yks Cum] Persevere! Prosper! A term of encouragement. (A fish still has a chance while its tail is in water.) ‘Let what will happen, he’s sure to keep tail i’ t’ water’ [wYks]=come out of it all right.

get/let someone off the hook [1864] Release them from their obligations, or from a difficult or embarrassing situation; help them to evade punishment.
crooked as a gaff
clean as a smelt [smolt, first-year salmon : Nhp]
‘tis not for everyone to catch a salmon Different folk, different luck.
a trout in the pot is better than a salmon in the sea [Ire]=‘a bird in the hand’.
a pretty kettle of fish [1742] What a muddle, mess! (A kettle of fish was the name of a fish picnic, once in vogue in the Border country of England and Scotland, where the salmon caught were cooked on the spot.)

for all waters An all-rounder, adaptable (as are those fish that are at home in both fresh and salt water).

list to the flow of the river and you will get a trout [Ire] Satirical, implying that nothing will be achieved by passivity.
wary as a burn trout [nwDur]
fish(ing) story Exaggerated account; improbable excuse [Amer].

E.13a Farmers, farming

fat as a farmer
feed like a farmer
hungry/independent/mean/rich as Tyson [a millionaire pastoralist, 1823–98—Aus]
fit to make a farmer’s heart ache Of one with a large appetite.
geld/emasculate Deprive of strength or vigour generally; remove what might offend, and thereby weaken, a work or composition; enfeeble, mutilate variously.
submit [<Lat submittere=send underneath, as in mating farm animals]
familiarity breeds contempt
not worth calling out of the kailyard [cabbage yard—Sc] Of a meagre animal.
farmyard (adj) [1911] Crude, uncouth, disgusting.
E.13b Farmland

no land without its laugh [low-lying, boggy ground], no corn without its chaff [1628]
There is always some disadvantage.

kick at the benweed [ragwort—Sc Ire] Be headstrong, unreasonable.

no land without stones, or meat without bones Disadvantages in everything.

it is a rare farm that has no bad ground [Shr] (As above.)

steelbowed [Sc] Guaranteed, assured. (An incoming tenant was assured of certain produce reserved [steelbowed] from one tenancy to the next.)

unstinted/without stint Unrestricted. (The stint is the upper limit in the number of animals a farmer is allowed to graze on common ground.)

long paddock [Aus NZ] The open road (thought of as free grazing along the verges).

E.13c Barns

big as a barn/barn side

barn [1947] $10^{-24}$ cm$^2$ (scientists’ perverse joke on the size of a barn).

barn-door Large target, something you cannot miss.

broad as barn-doors

big/thick/wide as a barn-door [Cor et al.]

stands as near to the barn-door Is as near akin.

your barn-door’s open! Your trouser flies are undone.


put a brass knocker on a barn-z-door [wSom] Be inconsistent, ill-assorted.

shine like a shitten barn-door

throttle as rusty as a barn-house door-lock [sLan] Parched.

you can put a pea in a barn Said when the container is unnecessarily larger than the contents.

better barn filled (with corn) than bed (with chaff for mattresses) [Sc Minn] The difference between conserved and consumed.

empty barns need no thatch Of bald men, implying vacancy of mind.

has a good sheaf-hole [the hole in a barn wall through which sheaves are pitched to be threshed—Yks] Is a hearty eater.

lay to the balks [beams of a barn—Sc nEng] Set aside when not in use.
E.13d Muck and middens

has a good muckhill at his door [1678] Is rich.

cheap [Nhbb wYks]/common/drunke/laal set-be [little set-by, valued—Cum]/rich/sick/soft/wet as muck (‘Cheap as muck and twice as nasty!’—Cum). The simile as muck used in the sense of exceedingly, excessively, strongly (from its strength) can be used with almost any adjective [sSc Nhbb Cum Wm War Som].

wet as dung [Oxf]

soft as shit and twice as nasty [sEng] Applied by country folk to visitors from the cities, especially those with loose morals.

thick as (pig-)shit Stupid (and nasty with it).

stronger than pig-shit [Amer]

ignorant as pig’s muck

mean as pig-shit and twice as nasty

turd (n) Vile and despicable person.

not care/give/worth a turd [1390]

rotten as a turd

dry as a casson [cow-turd—Nhbb Yks Der Lin Lei]

flat as a cow-turd

fine as a cow-turd stuck with primroses! An ironic response to someone’s turn-out, implying that, however fine the embellishments, they cannot disguise what is underneath. (See also G.30b, like a primrose in a casson.)

wasn’t born in a cow-pat Is sensitive. (This has the double force that the one in question is not like the slow, thick-skinned grubs found under turds, and also has the benefit of more refined origins.)

cow-sherny [=cow-dungy—eCor] Describing the sea when coloured olive-green.

muck-worm Miser. (Squalid lodgings the cheapest?)

stir the shit [late C19]/a shit-stirrer Cause(r of) trouble between two parties; also more generally.

look as if it has been stirred with a stick Untidy, in disarray, in a mess.

the more you stir a turd, the worse it stinks [1546]/mair ye stir an auld turd an mair it stinks [nWm] Advice against interfering in dubious or unsavoury matters.

the more you trample dung, the more it spreads [Ire] (As above.)

stink to high heaven Be widely noticed, resented and condemned.

the mair ye tramp on a turd, it grows the broader [Sc: 1641] Over-attention to foul matters makes them worse.

the mair in merdis [merds, dung, turds] ye tramp into, the fouler will come out your schone [=shoes—Sc: 1628]

dies in the muck [Chs] When a top comes to rest within the ring.

where there’s muck there’s money [Lan: 1678] Dirty conditions bring higher incomes. (Originally of the quality of land.)

arrogance [Mich Ill]/detraction [Ill] is a weed that only grows on dunghills

the proudest nettle grows on a midden [Sc] Of vigour in rough or lowly conditions.

muck or nettle [Cor] Nothing good on the place.

it’s either muck or nettles with him Of a reckless person.
now it’s muck and nettles Everything regardless; no solution; either a complete success or utter failure, nothing in between. (As when, in staking all on a gamble, you either won and had a good night out, or returned home early, broke—that was ‘muck or nettles’.)

the sun is never the worse for shining on the midden/a dunghill [1303] Rejoinder to criticism of dubious company. Muslims have a similar saying to illustrate that Allah is above contamination—‘the sun is unaffected by what it shines upon’.

holy writ may nat be defouled, na-more than the sonne that shyneth on the mixen

[G.Chaucer, Persones Tale ln. 911–1386]

it’s muck to the midden every time The luck always goes to those who already have enough.

be heard upon the midden-head [Abd] Quarrel openly.

she lookit at the mune and lichtit i’ the midden [Sc] After high aspirations, married beneath her in the end. (See G.18b, she’ll look at the moon…) she is throwing herself away on him [1680] Of a woman marrying a man unworthy of her. As also ‘she cast herself away’ [Katherine of Aragon—1513].

out of the mucksey [midden] into the puxy [bog-hole—Wil Som Hmp Dor Dev] From bad to worse [Wil].

better wed over the midden/mixen [midden—Gall Ire Eng, passim (but not eEng)] better wed over the midden/mixen [midden—Gall Ire Eng, passim (but not eEng)]
than over the moor Better to marry locally because you will be better acquainted. There is also the implication that a farm with a midden will be more prosperous than one with only moorland [Chs].

marry the midden/mixen for the sake of the muck [Shr: 1737] Marry an undesirable person for their money.

if you marry the midden for the sake of the muck, you will be troubled all your life with the stink [wYks] You will never be allowed to forget that you married for money.

I would not fother [fodder, feed] you for your muck [Sc] For what use you are you are not worth keeping.

he could fall into shit and come up smelling of violets Of one habitually lucky.

he could fall into a cart of shit and come out with a gold watch/new suit on [Cockney] (As above.)
as if I were a thing no fit to be lifted off the midden wi’ a pair of tongs [Ayr] Of a scornful rejection.

who loves the midden sees no motes in it Love is blind to all faults.

top-dressing Facing, façade, superficial adjunct.
he could fall into shit and come up smelling of violets Of one habitually lucky.
he could fall into a cart of shit and come out with a gold watch/new suit on
[Cockney] (As above.)
as if I were a thing no fit to be lifted off the midden wi’ a pair of tongs [Ayr] Of a
scornful rejection.
who loves the midden sees no motes in it Love is blind to all faults.
top-dressing Facing, façade, superficial adjunct.

E.14a Foals and colts

spaldar [stagger in an ungainly manner—Sc Nhb Cum Yks Nhp War] like a new-dropt
foal [Cum]
colt (n) Young, inexperienced, lively, spirited person.
idle as a foal [Lin]
kipper [lively, frisky, nimble—Cum Wm Yks Lan] as a colt
ragged as a colt/filly foal [1537] ‘Black as the dule [devil] and as ragged as filly
foals’ [Fylde, midLan].
shaggy and rough as a feltered foal [one with a matted, tangled coat—nEng]
a ragged/raggety [Ant] colt may make a good horse [1520] Always hope that a bad
child will improve. ‘Aft a ragged cowte’s made a noble aiver’ [R.Burns, Dream—1786].
mony a pelled rool [young horse with coat in elf-locks—ShI OrI] has come to be a
good horse
by...out of... A formula for giving general antecedents, as ‘by Greece out of
Palestine’, i.e. a mixture of both.
a wood’s/woods colt [a horse without a known sire—Maine Penn WVir Vir NC Ind
Kenty SC Tenn Ala Msri Ark] Illegitimate child; work of unknown authorship.
brush colt [Aus] Illegitimate child (as above).
the best colts are always the hardest to catch Of marriage.
wildest colts make the best horses The plea of one who has not yet despaired of a
profligate youth.
a young cowte [colt] will canter be it uphill or down [Sc] Youth will have its fling
at any cost.
feel like a colt in spring Full of life, exhilarated.
the summer-colt rides [nSc n&eYks] When a heat haze makes the near horizon
shimmer [eYks]; the dancing of a cloud of gnats [Lnk]; the actions of a lively young man
[Lnk].
fifty sa’ one, like Roden’s/Obitch’s cowte [Shr] Of persons of a certain age who
affect youthful manners. (Fifty sa’ one=thirty-nine, the stated age of anyone turned forty
who did not wish it known. An unlikely legend about a ghost-horse is the most probable
origin.)
ignorant as Thompson’s colt
filly Lively, attractive girl.
the kick of the dam hurts not the colt [1599] Children do not resent parental discipline.

he looks as though he had sucked his dam through a hurdle [1670] Ill-nourished.
give a look that would [Ant]/ugly enough to spean [wean—Sc nEng] a foal! (The idea was that if a baby could be put off sucking by giving it a wet-nurse of sufficiently repellent aspect, it would be quickly weaned; but to do the same for a foal would require a very ugly substitute...)

But wither’d beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal

[R.Burns, Tam o’Shanter—1790]
a horse foaled of an acorn [1547] The gallows.

E.14b Horses

a horse-eel/-emmet/-kiss/-laugh/-limpet/-louse/-pot/-thrush that is unusually large, loud or rough.
eat/work [1710] like a horse

fine/foreright [blundering—Cor]/holy [1530] hungry/proud//strong as a horse (In many religious traditions from Hindu to Celtic, the horse has been a holy symbol, actually sacrificed in Vedic, Roman and Aryan rites.)
fart like a cart-horse
hot as horse/mare’s piss
has more money than a horse can shit [Cor]
fine/proud as a horse in bells
as good a scholar as my horse Ball! [1639]
tough as an old horse
grand as a steany [uncut stallion—Cum]
a fey [doomed, dying, possessed of supernatural powers—Sc] man and a cooser [cur-sour, stallion—Sc Penn] fearna the deil
horse godmother [Ire nEng Nhp War Som] Tall, ungainly, masculine woman.
horsefeathers! An exclamation of contemptuous dismissal.
a horse-kiss A rough one; a pretended kiss, really a bite [wYks].
horse-sense [1870] Plain, practical, robust common sense.
nicker [whinny, neigh continuously—passim] Snigger.
little may an old nag do that mauna nicker [Sc] Let me speak my mind at least.
big enough to pull a gig [nLin] Very large of its kind.
daft as a wagon-hoss [Cor]
big/ugly as a horse’s head [nLin wSom]
dark as the inside of a horse [Calif]
has hair about the heels Of an underbred person. (A sign of underbreeding in horses.)

infuse/introduce new blood into [1879] Bring in change, try fresh staff, ideas etc.

hearty as a horse, but not quite as swift! Referring to a person’s physique or appetite, with a snide reservation about their ungainliness.

hungry as a lyle [little—Cum] horse

wild as a Wildmore tit [Lin] (A tit was a small horse, many of which were reared on Wild-more Fen.)

holds up her head like a new-bought tit [sLan]

white horses [1833] The white froth and spray on the crests of waves when rough seas are running in stormy weather (the manes of Poseidon’s horses galloping across the plains of ocean).

E.14c Mares

mare (n) Bad-tempered and ill-favoured woman.

strong as a Flanders mare

mare’s tails Long streaks of cirrus cloud, a sign of impending storm.

give him the wind o’ the mare’s tail [Lnk] Leave him unceremoniously (and let him feel the breeze as she breaks into a gallop).

through reaching for the green blade of grass the mare was drowned The downfall that is brought about by greed or overreaching.

two-/three-/wooden-legged mare The gallows.

red mare [Aus] A bush-fire.

grey mare [Ire] The bench on which a cooper or chairmaker sits while working with spoke-shaves etc.

grey yoads [yads=jades, work-horses/work-mares—Sc nEng] A circle of stones near Cumwhinton [Cum].

they got nothing of the mare except the halter (i.e. were hanged for stealing) It proved a bad business for them.

tell a tale to a mare (and she’ll let a fart [Sc: 1670]) Waste breath on an unreceptive audience.

cry the mare [Ire Chs Shr Hrt] Declare a farm to be the first in the parish to finish harvest.

the man shall have his mare again [1548] Order restored.

‘there’s sma’ sorrow at our pairting’, as the auld mear said to the broken cart [Sc] Said by the survivor of a marriage.

it is a careless parting between the old mare and the broken cart Of a loveless marriage ended.

it is hard to make an old mare leave flinging [1721] The habitually wicked are incorrigible.

the grey mare is the better horse [1546] Wife dominant; old woman in control.
money makes the mare go [1573] Affects many people, often indirectly (by supplying the original stimulus).

coy as a croker’s mare [1546]. A croker—< Lat crocus—was a grower or seller of saffron, which has exhilarative properties, whereas the early meaning of coy=quiet. Possibly, therefore, ironic.] Indifferent.

corrat [pert, impudent, spirited] as Croker’s mare [eCor] (Probably from the above.)

limping along like old Crowson’s mare [Shr]
grey as old Grissle [wYks]

there are more mares in the wood than Gri-sell [1678] There are other women in the world.

‘but when?’ quoth Kettle to his mare [Chs] (Any possible explanation is lost in antiquity.)

slow and sure like Pedley’s mare [1732]

E.14d Horse activity

trot sire, trot dam [1549] (q.d. then how can the foal amble?) If both parents have a tendency, you can expect their offspring to have it too.

For seldome seene, a trotting Stalion get An ambling Colt, that is his proper owne:

[E.Spenser, FQ VI.iii.1–1596]

jog-trot [1766] Easy-going, humdrum—routine, ways, working-methods etc.
double-gaited [Amer] Bisexual (from the various gaits of horses).
hoofeer [Can c. 1925] Dancer.
interfere [OF s’entreférir<Lat inter-ferire =strike between, originally of horses’ legs or hooves striking against the inside of the one opposite when in motion]

prick up your ears [1626] Become expectantly attentive.
as shortly [in as short a time] as a horse will lick his eare [1546]

boggle at…[1638] Demur; equivocate; be startled or baffled at; shy away in alarm at the sight of something (as horses are reputed to do when they see ‘bogles’ [horse-spectres]). From 1950s often as mind-boggling and the mind boggles at…

reest (v) [throw head back and refuse to go further—Sc nEng Hnt EAn] Refuse to go on with a venture etc.; give offence.

jib (v) [stop suddenly and step sideways rather than proceed; balk] Refuse to continue something started.
balk/jib at… Draw the line at; show repugnance to. (As above.)
it’s the wanton steed that scaurs [scares, is apt to be scared] at the windlestrae [wisp of straw blown by wind, crested dog’s tail grass: Sc] Irresponsible folk are the most easily frightened or put off.

hitch/put/set horses together [Yks Nhp Hnt wSom Ken Dor] Agree (after a difference), get on well together.

get hitched (together) [orig. Amer C19] Get married.

hitched (in/up) Arm in arm; married.

tie up with... Associate with; associate one thing with another. a tie-up is a connection or association.

they cannot set their horses together [1608] Cannot agree.

play horse with ... Treat roughly, unceremoniously.

horse-play [1589] Rough, boisterous play.

stamping ground [Amer 1821] Home ground; favourite resort; centre of operations generally. (From the stamping of a stallion preliminary to covering the mare.)

where the horse lies down, there some hairs will be found [1530] There is usually some evidence, however slight.

E.14e Differences, deficiencies in horses

a horse of another/a different colour [1601: EAn] Something quite different.


weedy Scraggy, weak. (A weed=an ill-bred, poor horse, a meaning which arose fortuitously from a textual error [Shaks, M for M l.iii(iv).20–1604] and which Theobald convincingly emended to ‘steed’.)

like the man’s mare, ill to grip [catch] and wasna muckle worth when she was grippit [Sc] Of an unsatisfactory marriage ensuing on a difficult courtship.

crock [broken down horse] Physical wreck.

show the garron-bone [Ire] Show a want of courage. (A garron is a small, rough horse.)

squib (n) [a poor horse with neither spirit nor stamina—Aus] A fearful person, coward.

squib (v) Behave in a fearful, feeble manner; let someone down, betray them. (As/from the above.)

hairy about the heels [a sign of poor breeding] Deficient in breeding or manners.

broken-haired [having rough wiry hair, half-bred] Of anything or anyone devious, spurious, underbred—recognizably not what they purport to be [Lan Chs].

wheezle [breathe with difficulty or asthmatically—Sc Ire nEng] like a pursy horse [Cum Sus]

sweevle-tail [a horse’s tail that is crooked and has little hair—Cum] Untrustworthy person, slippery character.
E.14f Blind horses

wary as a blind horse

mettle is dangerous in a blind horse [1636] An impetuous person without foresight is a danger to all.

a nod’s as good as a wink to a blind horse It does not matter what you say to one who will not or cannot take your meaning; it matters little how you express it—they will please themselves in the end; too stupid to profit from it [1794].

bold as blind Bayard [bay horse—Lin Som] From before 1350 the epitome of blind recklessness—‘They blustered as blynde as bayard watz ever’ [Early English Alliterative Poem B886—c. 1325], ‘Ye been as bo lde as is Bayard the blinde’ [G.Chaucer, The Chanouns Yemannes Tale ln. 1413—1386].

like Nan o’ Roger’s blind horse, it’s a ripper [sLan]

E.14g Old horses

fadges (jogs along with difficulty, at hardly more than a walk—nEng Hrf Cor] like an old horse

she hauds up her head like a hundred pound aiver [old worn-out horse—1721: Sc] Behaves with affectation through, it is implied, an exaggerated self-esteem.

have a colt’s tooth Retain something of youth; love youthful pleasures; be wantonly inclined. [See G.Chaucer, Prologe of the Wyves Tale of Bathe ln.602–1386]

straight from the horse’s mouth [1928] Direct from the best authority. (Examine a horse’s teeth to determine its age.)

don’t look a gift-horse in the mouth Don’t try to disparage a gift. A gyven hors may not be loked in the tethe’ [J.Stanbridge, Vulgaria sig.C4—c. 1520].

getting long in the tooth Ageing.

keffel [old, poor horse—Sc nEng War Wor Shr Hrf Som] Clumsy man, good-for-nothing.

blood shows on a grey horse An old man shows his breeding.

ride/run rusty [resty, dull, lazy, jaded] Become touchy, irritable and obstinate—of people.

pech [peggh, pant, breathe with difficulty—Sc Ire nEng] like a broken-winded horse [Edb]

an old horse for a hard road [Ont] Because of experience and stamina.

an old horse slips quicker than a young one [Ont] The old are more prone to crime.
E.15a Horses being stabled

a hungry horse makes a clean manger Of work done of necessity, and perhaps incidentally.

lie/live at hack [rack, manger—passim]/rack and manger [Sc Nhb Cum wYks Lin Nh p Suf Hmp: c. 1378] In plenty and without expense; with heedless extravagance; eating and not working; from hand to mouth without thought for the future; utter mismanagement, everything out of place and going to ruin [Hmp].

likes the boose [stall—Ire nEng] but not the ring-stake/range-stake [Chs] Of one who, when married, frets at the loss of freedom; one who likes the prospect of being married, but not of being attached.

hitching-post Point of reference, mnemonic, device for recalling something difficult to remember.

it was ne’er a good aiver [worn-out old carthorse—Sc] that flung at the boose/broose [Sc] She is not going to make a good wife, complaining on her wedding day. (Incidentally, ‘to run the bruise/broose’ was to ride a wedding race on horseback for the prize of a bowl of broth or a silk handkerchief.)

it was ne’er a good aiver that flung at the brod [goad: Sc eYks Not] It is a poor character who cannot take criticism.

he has put Browney into Cherry’s boose [Der Chs Lei: 1791] Of a man who weds a second wife, older and more comfortable than the first.

get into Cherry’s boose [Chs] Obtain a comfortable situation.

get into the wrong boose Intrude; go into the wrong place.

get back into your box [stable—orig. Amer] Be off; keep quiet.

better the horse that is on its way than the one in its stall [Wal] More hope of work from the man that is going towards it than the one who isn’t.

it’s no use locking/shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted/fled/been stolen [c. 1350] Don’t take action to prevent what has already happened.

it’s no use putting hurdles up round a jumping horse That is not only an inadequate restraint, but constitutes a temptation to overbound it.

E.15b Horses being fed

have your nose in the manger Eat heartily.

his head is swollen so big that he cannot come out of the stable [1515] He owes the ostler too much to leave.

as patient as Willy Wood’s horse ‘ut died one day in a fit of patience, waitin’ for fodder [Lan]

the master’s eye fats the horse [1530] Of the advantages of proper supervision.

eat out of her hand Be under control; well-trained, submissive. (A stage in the taming of a horse.)
nicker [whinny, neigh continuously—Sc Ire n&Eng NY Penn Mrld WVir Vir Ind Kenty Ala Msri wAmer] like a cooser [cursour, stallion—Sc Penn] at a caup [coup=cart-load—Sc] o’ corn [Sc] Laugh shrilly.

he’s an old horse that winna nicker when he sees corn [Sc] On the response of age to the attractions of youth.

when the horse is starved you bring him oats You bring help too late.
nosebag (n) Hotel visitor who brings his own food.
nosebags! Time to eat.

hold the bag/nosebag Be swindled, robbed—and left in the position of fetching a bag of oats for a horse that’s been stolen.
oater [one who feeds oats to a horse—UK C18] Cowboy film, western.

get/have your oats Obtain sexual gratification.

feel your oats/corn [Kenty] Feel lively, self-important.

welcome as stones in oats to a horse Most unwelcome.

off his oats Out of condition, out of health; without appetite.

hang the flep [lower lip—Wm Yks] like an old mare i’ barley-seed time Pout; look cross.

a horse will see the corn but not the fence A person will often overlook disadvantages when thinking of the benefits.

over-cornered [too richly fed—nYks] Elated with prosperity; over-ebullient.
carry corn Behave appropriately on going up in the world.
cannot carry corn When a man turns from success to dissolution [Sheffield, Yks], as with an overfed, restive horse; when someone cannot keep a secret or talks too much [Wakefield, wYks].

high as two/three horse-loaves [long loaves made out of horse-bread, a rough mixture—1546]

big enough to choke a horse

chopped hay Uncoordinated learning; disconnected information; piecemeal scraps of knowledge.

hask [dried-out, parched—Sc nEng] as chopped hay

goes down like chopped hay [1678] Of food chewed and swallowed with difficulty.

let the muckle horse have the muckle windlin [truss of hay—Sc] Give most to those who need or deserve most.
cannon fodder Soldiers regarded merely as expendable battle casualties.
live horse and thou’st have grass [1738] Plenty is coming, but not yet and perhaps not soon enough.

while the grass grows the steed starves [1440] Some benefits come too late; promises are worthless if too late or impracticable.

graze Flit frequently between TV channels.

send to graze Dismiss.

put/turn out to grass [1589] Give a holiday; free from duties; retire.

at grass/go to grass/out to grass Be retired, too old or infirm to work (like an old horse); on holiday; serving as a prostitute.

out to pasture [Amer] (As/from the above.)
gerass [grass—Sc Yks Lan]/turn to gerss/grass (v) [Sc Lan] Vote out of borough council; suspend from work.
E.15c Horses being broken

wild as an unbacked/unbroken/mountain [Ire] colt
  you won’t break a wild horse with a silk thread [Ire] Stronger discipline is needed for refractory children.
  foot-loose/a lowse foot [Sc] At liberty; unwed.
  put the leg-rope on him [Aus] Bring him to order, however reluctant. (From breaking in horses by leg-roping them.)
  helter [halter—Wm] a colt Introduce someone to a new job.
  garrak [awkward—Cum] as an unbroken colt
  more frangy [spirited, unmanageably restive—n&midEng] than a blood-colt the first time in a helter [nLin]
  the best colt needs the most breaking in [Ire] More promising children should have more education.
  as many tricks as a hare in a thicket or a colt the first day’s breaking
  time is the rider that breaks youth [1640]
  (pretty) horsebreaker Society prostitute, demi-mondaine.
  thorough-paced [well-trained] Perfectly accomplished, complete, well-versed.

E.15d Horses being hobbled

string along (with…) Accompany; agree (with…). (As a ‘string’ of horses does. See also I.5m, string of failures/successes)
  langel [a tether tying the fore and hind feet of a cow or horse to prevent kicking—Sc Ire nEng EAn] A hindrance.
  langelled [nLan] Stuck fast, prevented from carrying on, frustrated.
  go out of the langel [Ant Dwn] Go on the spree.
  ye hae ay a fit [foot] out o’ the langel [Sc: 1721] You are always perversely opposing everything; are always on the spree.
  fankle [entangle in a rope—Sc] Confuse, trip up, throw into disorder; lose the thread of a story.
  clear my heels [Cor] Clear the debts, expenses, so as to start making a profit.
  cast off the trammels Get free of restrictions. (See below.)
  untrammelled [1795] Unimpeded, free to move unhampered. (The trammel was a hobble that tied the near fore leg to the near back leg; before that, the word was used for a
sophisticated type of fishing net where the fish carried a fine-meshed net through a larger mesh and so ‘trammelled’ itself in a bag of net.)

**hobble** (v) [Cai sDon Uls Nhbp Lan Nhbp Ken]/ **hopple** (v) [nEng] Hamper, impede; embarrass, put in a predicament.

**has got into a hobble** [wooden leg-confiners for horses being operated on—Dor] Is in difficulties.

**in a hobble** [wYks] In a difficulty, perplexity.

**cross-hopple** [cross-hobble—Lin] Annoy; thwart; frustrate by restriction; interrupt; contradict; ask awkward questions; cross-question [Cum], (Two of the horse’s or sheep’s legs were tied diagonally on a rope long enough to let it walk but not jump.) Hence:

**cross-hoppled** [Lin nNhbp] Ill-tempered, frustrated.

**it’s idle to spur a hamshackled** [with head fastened to one of its forelegs—Sc nEng Nhbp War] **horse** [Sc: 1828] It is useless to urge someone who is otherwise prevented.

**logger** [block of wood to prevent an animal from straying] A wedding ring [Upton Bishop, Hrf].

**where nowt is to wed with, wise men flee the clog** [block, encumbrance; originally a block of wood tied to the neck or leg of an animal to prevent straying; then a block of wood on shoe-clogs; sometimes a piece of wood attached to a key etc. to prevent it being lost: 1546]

> Here comes my clog.  
> [Shaks, *AWTEW* II.v—1601]

clog (v) Marry (sense connection with the above). ‘Marriages at Bradford and by clog and shoe in Lancs.’ [Haworth parish register—1733].

tied by the leg Prevented by some occurrence from doing what was intended.

**E.15e Horses being shod**

**she’ll wear like a horseshoe, ay the langer the cleaner** [Sc: 1721] Of girls with poor complexions which improve in time.

**mouldy/rusty as an old horseshoe**

**when a fool finds a horseshoe, he thinks ay the like to do** [Sc]

**horse-nails** Tadpoles [Ken]; money.

**make a horse-nail of…** [Fif] Perform clumsily.

**feed on horse-nails** Play cribbage with the intention of keeping down your opponent’s score more than improving your own.

**knock into horse-nails** Defeat conclusively.

**in a frost a nail is worth a horse** In certain circumstances a slight thing can be of vital importance.

**worn down to the nail** [Lnk] Worn out, nearly finished.
shoe the (wild) colt [NCY nLin Not War EAn Glo] Demand a contribution from a person on their introduction to a new office or employment; exact a fine on a person’s first visit to a fair or parish meeting [IW]. (Originally a blacksmith’s perquisite claimed at the first shoeing of a horse, it was known as colt-ale [NCY Som Sus Hmp Dev].)

cowt [colt—Chs] (n and v) A new starter who has to pay his footing; to make him pay this. (The footing was the fee payable on entry to a trade, society etc. [C18–C19].)

shoe the horse Embezzle money. (See E.17c, shoe his mule, for a related idea.)

kings are kittle cattle to shoe behint [Sc: 1818] They are not to be trusted.

addle his shoon [earn his shoes—Yks Lan Nhp War] Roll on his back from side to side.

shod all round Having received all he can expect, as a man who has been—or is—married to four wives, or a priest who receives the full gratuity of a hat-band, scarf and gloves for taking a burial service.

E.15f Horses being groomed

a short horse is soon wispit [wisped=rubbed down with a wisp of hay or straw, rough-curried—Sc Lakel wYks midEng: c. 1350] (See also B.6d, a bonny bride is soon buskit…) No need to spend long on a small task.

can make neither mane nor tail of… [Fif] Cannot understand, make sense out of.

E.15g Horses, sore and sick

young cowts [colts] bin apt to gall i’ the sluther [Shr] The young are intolerant of the disciplines of work. [sluther=shudder, shake, chafing—Nhb Yks Shr Lin Lei].

touch him on the raw [1840] Mention a thing about which he is very sensitive.

a sore point with him [1863] A subject that causes pain, embarrassment etc.

touch a galled horse and he’ll wince [1384]/ touch a gaw’d horse on the back and he will fling [kick out—Sc] On eliciting a response from someone who has a ‘sore point’; cast a slur on a sensitive man’s reputation.

if ye be na galled, ye needna fling [Sc] You need not protest if it is not true, ‘if the cap fits…’.

rub along Continue in spite of difficulties.

claw/hit/rub on the gall Remind of a grievance; touch a sore place.

a scabbed horse abides no comb Criticism hurts when it is warranted.

a scabbed horse is good enough for a scald squire [1540] A rejoinder to complaints about poor quality.

wring the withers [1596] Cause acute distress. (Those muscles between the back and shoulders can be made painful by a badly fitting saddle etc.)
it’s the pebble in the hoof that hurts [Ire] Immediate problems are the more urgent. sick as a horse [Nhp] Feeling sick without actually vomiting. (A horse cannot vomit.) suitable as a shoulder of mutton for a sick horse [1541] Most unsuitable! when all freits [charms, superstitious practices] fail, fire’s good for the fiery [glanders—Sc: 1628] In the end you may have to resort to a drastic solution. vet (v) [1904] Test carefully; revise a MS; examine (as when a vet examines or ‘vets’ an animal).

E.15h Horses for sale or hire

filly-fair Meeting or gathering of young girls. horse-trading [1846] Negotiations of a haggling nature (as traditionally practised by horse-dealers). jockey out of... Cheat out of. (From the older meaning of jockey=a swindling horse-coper.) swear like a horse-swapper helter for helter [halter—Nhb] An even, fair exchange. turn tail to tail [wSom] Exchange things of equal value. has gotten the boot and the better beast [Sc] The better horse in exchange, and the makeweight as well. cut and long-tail [Sc sLan: 1575] All included; at random, without conscious selection. (As in describing a breed of dog or horse, some docked, some with their natural tails.) ginger (v) Urge to greater effort. (From the practice of horse-dealers who apply ginger to give a horse the appearance of having spirit.) souped-up Of motor engines that have been adjusted to improve performance. This derives from the practice of those horse-copers who would alter the speed and performance of a horse by injecting it with what they call ‘soup’. trot out Produce for inspection and approval, generally. (Originally only of horses.) buy a white horse [naut] Squander money on fleeting pleasures (like the ‘white horses’ of the ocean which come and are gone in minutes). an arse like a fifty shilling galloway [nwDur] Galloways are small, strong riding horses, known since C16. he has good skill in horseflesh to buy a goose to ride on [1670] Ironically.

E.16a Riding horses—saddling them

saddle (n) The dipping ridge connecting two hills of similar height.
saddleback

saddleback Ridge as above; roof between two higher gables; breed of black pig with a white mark on its back.

saddle with—responsibility etc. [1693] Impose on; burden with; permanently encumber with.

saddle blame upon… Place onus of blame on.

who eats his cock alone must saddle his horse alone [1599] Share good fortune and others will share your work.

a saddle to fit every horse A cure for all.

put/set the saddle on the right horse [Sc Hnt Nhp War Ont 111 Texas: 1607] Set things right; lay the blame on the guilty person; ascribe correct meaning to.

say it to your saddle-bow [a proverb of King Alfred: c. 1225] Keep it to yourself, do not let others know—your state of mind etc.

better a tight girth than a loose saddle Too much restraint is better than too little.

a fidging [moving restlessly, eagerly, uneasily] mare must be well-girded [have the saddle-girth well fastened: 1721] A tricky person should be under close control.

when you ride a colt, see that your saddle is well-girt [1736] To a man marrying a younger woman.

plain as a pack-saddle

pack-saddle steeple [Nhp: 1845] Church tower with gable-ends rising above the ridge.

skips like hail on a pack-saddle

impatience is the horse folk saddle and gallop on to meet troubles [nYks]

he that rides behind another doesn’t saddle when he pleases [1706] A dependent man must do as he’s told.

you saddle today and go tomorrow You make your preparations unnecessarily soon.

he does not always ride when he saddles his horse [1706] His actions do not follow the expected; when a delay follows a show of haste.

I have taken the sheaf from the mare [Sc] I have changed my mind irrevocably. (Before a journey the rider fed his mare with a sheaf of oats, but on altering his mind, took it off her.)

### E.16b Riding horses—mounting

produce [<Lat producere=lead forth]

nothing to do but draw out and loup on! [Sc] There’s more to it than you think!

booted and spurred All prepared, ready for action in general.

the difficult thing is to get your foot in the stirrup Skill comes more easily than the opportunity to practise it.

as good holds the stirrup as he that loups on [Sc] The servant or squire is as good a man as his master.

up in the stirrups [Not] Well off; in good humour.

give a leg-up Give a helping hand, temporary help.
like John-a-Duck’s mare that will let no man mount her but John-a-Duck [Sc 1819]

come off at the louping-on stone [stone from which to mount a horse—Sc] End
where you tarted; fail to resolve a dispute.

E.16c Riding horses—in the saddle

in the saddle In control; in the position of a manager [1660].
set in the saddle [Cromwell—1653] Unpersuadable, bigoted.
lean forward in the saddle [Amer] Be ready and eager.
when pride is in the saddle, shame is in the crupper [the strap that passes under the horse’s tail to prevent the saddle from slipping forwards] (Referring to the rear or shameful part.)
mariage leapeth up upon the saddle, and repentance upon the crupper [1669] Regret follows closely.
ride below the crupper Have sex with a woman.
put him to all the seats of the saddle [Sc] Nonplus him.
beside the saddle Beside the point.
put/set him beside the saddle [1542] Spoil his plans, career etc.
sit beside the saddle Give yourself over to despair.
where saddles lack, better ride on a pad than on the horse bareback [1549] Better make do than do without.
rider bareback Have intercourse without a condom.
sickness comes on horseback, but goes away on foot
thou’rt off thi horse this time [sLan] Mistaken.

E. 16e Riding horses—ways of riding

ride for a fall [1898] Act recklessly, in a manner likely to result in disaster; ride a race to lose it on purpose.

who never rode never fell [1628] If you take no risk, you’ll not come to grief.
take a toss Have an unfortunate love affair.
run into the ground Carry to excess; overdo.
ride to death Overdo.
ride a free [willing] horse to death Abuse someone’s patience or kindness.
ride the dun horse Collect accounts due for payment. (A pun.)
ride the pony [Chs Nhp] Get money in advance for work not yet completed.
riding a pony [Amer] Using a crib in an examination.
pony-tail [1872] Hair-style tied and falling behind like a pony’s tail.
he will go mad on a horse who’s proud on a pony Of someone with extravagant ideas, though with little reason.

ride on Shank’s pony/mare [wYks: 1628] Walk.
ride the wild mare [a wooden frame that soldiers were made to ride for punishment] (See also K.67b, shoe/ride the mockish/wild mare.)

lets his imagination run away with him Surrenders control to a force that is out of control.
as well stop a runaway horse with a bridle of silk thread [Sc 1819]
zeal without knowledge is a runaway horse
be on/ride a/the high horse [1721] Adopt a position of superiority; be haughty, arrogant.

ride high Have a spell of success.
easy rider [Amer] A man whose movements are easy and pleasing to his woman; a guitar (when carried suspended by its cord); a sexually satisfying woman; lover who lives off a woman’s earnings.
give him/let him have his head [ride a horse without a bridle] Allow him freedom; let him proceed as he likes.

put a kick in his gallop [Ire] Stop his doings; pull him up short. (See E.16f.)
ride and tie [Sc n, mid&swEng Amer Can: 1826] Do a thing alternately, take turns. (The system was to ride a certain way beyond the walker, dismount and leave the horse for him to do the same when he came up to it. Also practised by two cyclists with only one cycle between them.)
you ride so near the rumple [rump], you let none get on behind you [Sc: 1721] You go so early to work, no one else can get a start.

if two ride together, one must ride behind [Glo Ont NC Wis Okl: 1598] Of marriage.
he that hires the horse may ride in front
ride Peggy behind Margit [Chs] One behind the other.
ride rough-shod over...[1813] Treat peremptorily, without consideration. (Rough-shod horseshoes have the nails left projecting to reduce slipping.)

have a whip-round Make a collection of money for a cause or donation (originally collecting by going for a quick ride round the parish).

have the whip-hand [1680] Have the advantage; control. (If you have the whip-hand you can coerce. Another, less probable account is that it derives from whip-end, and if you hold that you cannot be whipped.)

swap/change horses in mid-stream [1864] Change your team or leader before the end; change your plans half-way through or during a crisis.

not to ride a/the water on/with... [Per Lnk Nhb eDur Cum Wm : 1857] Not dependable. (Some horses habitually lie down in mid-ford in order to get rid of their riders.)

it is good walking—with a horse in your hand [Sc: 1591] A reserve in case of need.
run before your horse/mare to market [1597] Take pains and trouble for nothing; count gains prematurely; behave ridiculously.

E.16f Riding horses—being ridden

ridden Continuously oppressed—by fears, nightmares, prejudices, vermin etc.
priest-ridden Dominated, overruled by the church.

get into his stride [1890] Start working at full speed, go into full production.
take it in his stride [1902] Cope with it effortlessly (like a horse clearing an obstacle without checking its gallop).

put/throw someone off/out of his stride [1941] Disconcert, unnerve him; check his progress.

run straight Behave correctly; be faithful in marriage.

fast as a horse can trot Often of someone telling lies.

high-stepper Very smart, fashionable person.

galloping consumption etc. [1674] Going faster and faster.

has a kick in his gallop [1809] Is crooked in his dealings; has a whim (see E.16e).
the best-shod horse doth slip sometimes Anyone can make a mistake.
it is a good horse that never stumbles—and a good wife that never grumbles! (As above.)

shy off/away from [1792] Avoid violently.
recalcitrant [<Lat recalcitrare=kick back against]
wed not a widow, she hath cast her rider
E.16g Riding horses—halters

go and catch a horse [Aus] Leave company to urinate.

coup [bend, incline, submit—Sc] himself to the toom [empty] halter [Sc] Come to the end of his resources. (Either from the idea of the horse that has no trick left for avoiding the catcher with the halter, or from the idea of having to do the work yourself if all else fails.)

the horse that draws his halter is not quite escaped [1592] Someone who retains any attachments to a place or partner can never think he is independent.

slip the (neck out of the) halter [Wm wYks] Get out of a scrape; escape from danger; evade work or duty.

fit like a mungern [straw horse collar—Cor]

E.16h Riding horses—reins

reins—of government etc. [1560] Position of power or control.

give (free) rein to... Permit unrestrained freedom or scope. ‘She gives full rein to her imagination.’

on a loose/slack rein With little control, indulgently.

reined back/in Controlled, restrained—of poetic style etc.

keep a tight rein on... Control closely.

bear a rein upon... Keep in check; correct a fault of character (as when you make a horse hold up its head by use of a bearing rein).

no one’ll rein up his horse for it It is not obvious, or even of much importance if it were noticed.

draw rein Reduce expenditure; proceed more carefully.

draw up [stop a horse by pulling on the reins] Halt any vehicle.

pull in/up Check yourself.

drop the reins Relax discipline or control.

E.16i Riding horses—bridles and bits

bridle (n and v) Gag. ‘Bridle your tongue’= control what you are saying.

bridle (v)/bridle up Throw up the head and draw in the chin in pride or resentment (as a horse does when it is reined in).

refrain [<Lat refrenare=bridle] Restrain yourself.

unbridled [1374]/uncurbed Uncontrolled, unrestrained—tongue, insolence etc.
a man without a religion is a horse without a bridle [Wis Ill Miss]
a boisterous horse must have a rough bridle A justification for repressing young ruffians etc.
draw the bridle [Cum] Pull up, put on the brakes.
prosperity lets go the bridle [1640] Relaxes controls.
quit bridle, quit tit [small horse—Sc] If you relinquish control of anyone you will lose them altogether; if you lose control of someone you may as well get rid of them altogether.
bite on the bit/bridle Suffer hardships (as when horses try to get their own way); be impatient of restraint; be reduced in circumstances [C14+].
reason lies between the spur and the bridle [1640] Between encouragement and restraint.
curb (v and n) Restrain, restraint—variously.
ride him on the snaffle [a simple bridle bit without curbs] Control gently.
barnacles [strong instrument of restraint on the nose of a horse or bull—War] Spectacles of an early pattern that pinched the nose.
champ at/on the bit Show impatience.
take the bit between your teeth [1546] Assume control and get on with the job.

E.16j Riding horses—spurs

spur (n) A supporting strut, used in building [1529]; back-claw on game-birds and fighting cocks, capable of inflicting a wound [1548]; defensive outwork in a fortified wall [1575]; an armed projection from the prow of a warship [1604]; a lateral tree-root [1610] or branch on a tree [1700], fruit buds growing out of a main branch; ridge or succession of hills to the side of a mountain range [1652]; the slender projecting part of certain flowers, a calcar [1731]; projection on whaling boots, to prevent slipping [1820]; branch road or railway line [1833].
he that is not in the habit of riding forgets the spurs Those unused to authority overlook the sanctions; more regular, more efficient.
sindle [seldom] ride, tine [lose] the spurs [Sc] (As/from the above.)
on the spur of the moment [1806] On impulse, impromptu.
spur on...[1575]/set spurs to...[1818] Incite, encourage, stimulate.
don’t kick till you’re spurred Do not react before you have cause.
a spur in the head is worth two on the heel [1668] Of the desire to travel; often as a parting invitation to a rider to take a final drink [Sc Nhp Cor].
he that has love in his breast has spurs in his side (As below.)

But he rides well, And his great Love, (sharpe as his Spurre) hath holp him
To his home before us.
a resty [restive] horse must have a sharp spur
a good horse oft needs a good spur/should be seldom spurred [1592]
Encouragement is needed/not needed for a good worker.

it shall never neede to prykk nor threte a free [willing] horse [Paston Letter 1477 Nrf]
spur the willing horse Exhort unnecessarily.
spur-leathers/whangs [the thongs of a spur] People, things of small importance [Sc nYks].

E.16k Riding horses—other harness

keep in blinkers Conceal the facts from… (Blinkers are the side shields to stop a horse shying from things seen at its side.)

blinkered [1867] Kept ignorant of the facts. Of those who are confined or who confine themselves to a narrower outlook than is healthy or wholesome. Those who blinker either a person or a horse must assume the responsibility of being doubly vigilant themselves.

don’t hang all your bells on one horse [1659] Don’t give all to one child.
with bells on [Amer] In happy, celebratory mood.
kick over the traces [1844] Throw off the usual restraints—often of a man going away from home. (As when a horse gets a leg over the traces so as to kick more freely.)

get a leg over the traces [eYks] Act without authority; commit a crime.
keep him straight in his gears [harness—wYks] Keep him in order; within due bounds.
hell-for-leather [1889] In desperate haste. (As if going there for harness.)
you can’t judge a horse by its harness [NY Vmt Kenty SC]

E.17a Asses

ass (n) Obstinate fool.

stunt [ill-tempered, stubborn—Yks Lin Not Rut Cmb Ken] as an ass [eYks]
sell your ass Get rid of your foolish ways.
you can’t make a runnin’ horse outer a jackass [Miss]
better be the head of an ass than the tail of a horse
better an ass that carries you than a horse that throws you [Ire NY NJ Ind]
Friendship of the lowly is preferable to hostility from their ‘betters’.

a jackass makes no progress when he’s kicking [NY]
he’s a ganger, like Willie Pigg’s dick [dick-ass = jackass—Nhb] Game, willing.
seek wool on an ass Expect too much.
an ass was never cut out for lap-dog It is no good pampering someone who cannot appreciate it.
they earn it like horses and spend it like asses [1751] Talking of their wages.
a man that keeps riches and enjoys them not is like an ass that carries gold and eats thistles
an ass loaded with gold climbs to the top of a castle Wealth gains worldly success more readily than does ability.
an ass covered with gold is more respected than one carrying a pack-saddle [NY III] Wealth prejudices true estimate of character.
even if the ass is laden with gold he will still seek his food among the thorns [NY Oreg] A taste for culture cannot be bought. [See also Shaks, JC IV.i—1599]
a king without learning is but a crowned ass [quoted by Henry I]
angry as an ass with a squib in his breech [1611]
proud as an ass of a new pack-saddle Ironic.
fill her pannier Make her pregnant.
an ass with two panniers A man with a woman on each arm.
an ass/cuddy [Edbj] donkey two bottles/bundles of hay [1763] Someone incapable of coming to a decision, a waverer. (See also J.2d, Buridan’s ass.)
the ass waggeth his ears Of one who makes pretence of culture or learning (as an ass will wag its ears on hearing music).
if all men say thou art an ass, then bray You may as well live up to your reputation.
make yourself an ass and men will ride/lay sacks on you [NY Ill Geo Ala Miss]
not just long enough in the lug Not so foolish.
wash an ass’s ears/head Waste labour and materials (soap!).
he’d steal the cross off an ass’s back [the dark, cross-shaped marking across the shoulders of a donkey—nIre wYks] Of someone capable of sinking to extreme depths of depravity [Ire].

E.17b Donkeys

donkey (n) Stupid, stubborn fellow.
dumb [Calif]/lazy [Ire]/tired [Cor] as a donkey [Ire]
cuddy (n) [donkey—Sc Ire nEng] Stupid person.
fussock (n) [ass, donkey—nEng Nrf Shr Nhp War Wor Glo] Coarse, fat woman; stupid person.
drunk as a fuzzock [Yks]
donkey-work Labour, too hard for a man.
donkey’s years A very long time. (From the belief that donkeys are long-lived.)
ride the black donkey Be obstinate; sulk; cheat in weighing out goods.
fast as a donkey’s gallop Not very fast.
short and sweet, like a donkey’s gallop [1894]
better than a kick from a donkey! [Calif] But only just!

**one-legged donkey** A stool with one leg, supplied to coastguardsmen to ensure that if they dozed off they fell off.

**thrawn** [twisted, distorted—Sc Ire Dur] *as the hind leg o’ a cuddy* [eLth]/dog’s hind leg [Ant] Perverse, cross-grained.

**cuddy’s legs** [Nhb Dur] Very large herrings.

**they don’t put horse’s feet on donkeys** There are limits to inheritance; don’t expect him to go very fast!

**in the shaking of an ass’s/cuddy’s lug** [Sc Don] Very soon, quickly.

**wad wile the lugs frae a cuddy** Over-persuasive [Lnk].

**we don’t put stones into donkeys’ ears** [Chs] They are deaf anyway, so we don’t need to bother what we say to them—implying that certain members of the company need not be considered as they will not understand.

**aback o’ behind, like a donkey’s tail**

**rawter** [router, brayer, a donkey—wYks] Noisy, unruly fellow.

**the donkey means one thing and the driver another** There is disagreement; different people have different points of view.

**whacks his own donkey** Is too occupied with his own affairs to do anything else.

**as much idea of it as a donkey has of Sunday**

**strawberries to a donkey** Something too good for the recipient.

**donkey’s breakfast** A straw hat; mattress.

### E.17c Mules

**mule** (n) A person of inflexible obstinacy and stupidity; drug-carrying courier.

**stubborn/stunt** [ill-tempered, stubborn—Yks Lin Not Rut Cmb Ken]/wicked as a mule/ moyle [mule—Cor]/Missouri mule [Amer]

**stiff** [obstinate—Sc NCy] as a mule

**thirtover** [obstinate, perverse, unruly—Dor Hmp] as a mule [IW]

**dummel** [slow to move, torpid—passim]/obstinate [1820] as a mule

**stubborn as a pown** [pounded, beaten, kicked] mule [Ln]

**mule-rawt** [mule-reach, the distance across which a mule’s bray is audible—wYks]

**one mule scratches/scrubs another** [1540] Mutual help; one fool flattering another.

**shoe his mule** Misappropriate money from funds in his keeping (as if a man were to have his own mule shod along with his master’s horse).

**he that rides the mule shoes her** [NY SC] Those who benefit should pay the expenses.

**like a mule at a nettle early in spring** (when nettles are scarce but virulent) Both attracted and repelled—of love-hate relationships, infatuations etc.

**a mule in the garden** [wYks] Something unpleasant, worrying.
E.18 Farm dogs

tired as a dog/dog-tired
  better the head of a dog than the tail of a lion
yap like a sheep-dog [Dor]
nip at the heels of... Be near to success, failure etc.
all prick and ribs like a drover’s/shearer’s/ swaggie’s [tramp’s, itinerant shearer’s] dog [Aus 1971]
as easy as to set dogs on sheep [Shaks, Coriol II.i—1609]
mad enough to run sheep about his own business, like Garbett’s dog when he was killing Mr Crump’s sheep [Shr]
a good dog for a lazy shepherd A good worker makes his master lazy; a lazy man needs a good servant.
clever as the Vicar of Warcop’s dog—which could not only drive animals through any gap you wanted, but would return afterwards and stop up the gap [Lakel]. (From a boast, jocularly capped.)
don’t run a young dog with an old one Do not expect young workers to co-operate well with older ones; also, a comment on disparate marriages.
send thy dog, don’t run with it Don’t do the servant’s work yourself.
cow-trodden [Lei: c. 1570] Awkward to manage or to make anything of (like a cow-dog who was trampled as a puppy); treated ignominiously.
whistle up... Summon help promptly; produce what is wanted without delay.
dog afore/ahint his master [Cai Bnff neSc] The swell of the sea before/after a storm.
an old dog for a gate When experience is needed; craftiness.
be old dog at... Be adept, experienced in.
a bad dog never sees the wolf A bad workman avoids difficulties.
a stick is easily/quickly found to beat a dog with [1563] It is easy to find fault when you want to. Hence:
a stick to beat...with A reason or excuse for hostile action, casus belli.
get/give stick [1942] Receive/inflict punishment; severe criticism; rough handling.
undercreepen [Dor] Sly, surreptitious.
look like a dog under a door [1530] In acute misery and discomfort; grinning expectantly.
look at...like a dog at a prong [wMid] Suspiciously.
don’t look for musk in a dog’s kennel [1655–62] Don’t expect good things from poor sources.
thou’rt putting thi head in a dog kennel [sLan] Asking for trouble.
the chained dog maun snatch at the nearest bone [Sc] A man under restraint (perhaps of marriage) must get what he can when he can.
a dog tied up [Aus] An account outstanding.
E.19a Horns

crooked [wSom] dry [Cai Lth nYks] fond [foolish—nYks] as a horn
doaf [dough] in the horn Stupid.
have a soft horn [wIre] Be a simpleton.
have too much horn [Lakel] Be impudent.
a nick in/on the horn [Dmb Edb Rnf] Another year of life.
there’s ower mony nicks in your horn [Sc: 1721] You know too much.
avoid the woman that has too many nicks in her horn [Ire] Is too old or too clever.
nicked in the horn [Cai] Getting old.
graining in the horn [Shr] Of a woman showing signs of age. (Another ring shows on a cow’s horn after each calving.)
takes the grains out of her horns [Shr] Of a woman who is trying to appear younger than she is. (Unscrupulous cattle dealers file the grains [rings] out of a cow’s horns to disguise her true age.)
in a horn! [Suf Dev Amer] [cf. It un corno = not] An expression of refusal or disbelief, or contradicting what has just been said. (See J.63h.)
neither tail nor horn Not a trace.
neither horn nor hoof (As above.)
show the bull-horn [1838] Make a show of resistance.
buck [butt—Amer] the system, trend etc. Oppose, defy.
auld stots [bullocks, oxen—Sc] hae stiff horns [1832] Old folk can be very awkward.
at Dulcarnon [<Arab dū ’lqarnayn=two-horned, via MedLat dulcarnon] At his wit’s end; in a dilemma. (Dulcarnon was the name given to a difficult theorem in Euclid that constituted a pons asinorum, possibly from a similarity to two horns in the figure.)

I am, til god me bettre minde sende,
At dulcarnon, right at my wittes ende.

[G.Chaucer, T&C III.930—1374]

(caught) on the horns of a dilemma [1647] Facing a choice between two painful evils, faced with difficult alternatives.
horn-mad/horn-wood [Nhb: 1557] Infuriated beyond control; intolerably vexed; very eager [Oxf].

Horne mad, thou villaine? I meane not Cuckold mad, but sure he is starke mad…

[Shaks, Com Err II.i—1592]

mosshorn [old cattle—wAmer] An old cowboy.
he has hay on his horns [1563] Is bad-tempered. (A precaution dating from classical times, as faenum habet in cornu [Horace, Satires I.iv.34].)
has straws in his hair Is crazy, mad or at best eccentric. (As/from the above.)
get/give/wear the bull’s feather [1533] Become/make/be a cuckold.

enough to blow the horns off the kye [cattle—Ant] Of a cold, stormy day.
cold enough to pierce a nowt-horn [Sc] (Nowt are black, horned cattle.)

E.19b Bulls

fat/fell [angry, savage—Sc nEng]/strong/sulky as a bull

fit as a mallee bull [Aus] Strong and impatient. (Mallee bush is an area of broken scrub where only the fittest survive.)
bull of the woods [Amer] Foreman, boss of the lumbermen.
surly as a cow’s husband

foul [coarse-featured—Lan] as a cow’s father

bull-face [Scchs: 1897] An area in a wheatfield where the wind has laid and twisted the corn like the curly forehead of a bull. This is possibly an early observation of the phenomenon of corn circles, recently the subject of much investigation and speculation.
mad as a cappel-faced bull [one with a white muzzle/white-faced with red speckles—Dor] (Perhaps with froth on the muzzle, indicating madness.) [See W.Barnes, A grammar and glossary of the Dorset dialect—1863; T.Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree II.viii—1872]
bull’s head Signal of condemnation and execution.
bull-headed Headstrong, impetuous.
head and horns [Suf] In confusion, pell-mell.
lock horns [1888] Join in close combat.

have a ring through your nose Be so infatuated that you are under someone’s complete control.
bull-neck (adv) Headlong, precipitately [Lakel].
tipple [fall, tip over—nEng War Hrf EAn Hmp Dev] a bull-neck Turn head over heels.
bear (someone) a bull’s neck [Dev] Bear a grudge.
bull’s-eye Large sucking sweet the size and shape of a bull’s eye [1825]; centre of a target [1833], and thence=a successful guess [1857].
tough as a bull’s lug [wYks]
thick as a bull’s ear [Lan]
bullshit [1928] Pointless spit and polish in the army; rubbish, idle boasting.
bull-scutter [bull-skitter, very liquid bullshit] Something worthless and nasty [Lan]; unbelievable nonsense [wYks 1885]; much fuss about little [seWor], all behind, like Barney’s bull [Eng Aus] Late; exhausted, a physical wreck; with large buttocks.


has a voice like a Norway bull [Rnf] Loud and roaring.
bellock [bellow, roar—Sc Wm Yks Der Chs Stf Lei Shr Nhp War Wor Hrf Bdf Glo Brks Wil Sus Hmp]/bellow/belve [bellow—Dev Cor]/roar [1545] like a bull Noisily, angrily and powerfully.
sweat like a bull [1551] Copiously.
bull-hided [Sheffield, Yks] To describe one who does not sweat. (Yet see above…! Ironic?)
like a bull at an anty-tump [ant-hill—War Wor Shr Hrf] In a protracted, pointless bout of ill-tempered violence.
bowing and scraping like a bull at a bank In affectation of extreme politeness.
thrash around like a short-tailed bull in fly-time In a maddened frenzy.
tight as a bull’s/cow’s arse in fly-time [Can Amer]
sticklebutt (v) [run headlong and fiercely at—Yks] Persist whether right or wrong.
munges [grumbles in low tone—Cum] and creunns [makes a subdued roaring—Cum] like a bull in a pet
like/mad as a bull at a gate/five-barred gate Impetuously, recklessly, directly attacking.
like a bull in a china shop [1841] Of the havoc caused in a delicate situation by someone’s clumsiness.
a mad bull is not to be tied up with a packthread [1732] Said when a suggested restraint is not considered adequate.
like a strawyard bull (—full of fuck and half-starved!) [Aus] A retort to ‘How are you?’
grin like a hungry bull at a haystack
bulimia [<Gk βουλιµία=ox-hunger]
leer like an old bull Scowl and stare [Ess].
store the kin [continue the breed—Sc] Preserve life, keep alive.
put to Pregnant. ‘Hasta not getten her put till yet, Jack?’ [Cum nwLan, 1979]=‘Have you not made her pregnant yet?’ (from putting a cow to the bull).

As ranke as any Flaxe-Wenche, that puts to Before her troth-plight…
[Shaks, Winter’s Tale I.ii—1611]

it’s not the bull they’re afraid of, it’s the calf [Aus] They fear pregnancy rather than the loss of virginity.
he that bulls the cow must keep the calf [1565]

E.19c Men and bulls

look as fell [fierce, terrible] as a bull at a Scawby man [nLin]
hipe at…[butt, push with the horns—Yks] Find fault with; make insinuations against someone.
no more ear for music than Farmer Ball’s bull as dossed [tossed, butted—EAn]
the fiddler over the bridge [Nrf]
...you may play with a bull—till you get his horn in your eye [1917] There is sport in taking risks—until you come to grief.

you’ll play wi’ th’ bull while you get a horn in your ee/arse [nwLin Iowa Colo] A caution to the reckless. ‘If tha laiks wi’ t’ bull, tha’ll soon feel his horns’ [wYks].

play with a bull Run needless risks.

take the bull by the horns [1659] Tackle the work, problem etc. where it is most formidable; start resolutely.

the black bull’s trodden on him [nLin] He is in a bad temper.

get the bull down/ by the tail [Sheffield, Yks] Finish extra work before Christmas; complete the work. (A late C19 master-cutter promised his workmen a bull for Christmas if they had finished their work by then.)

throw [throw, twist] a pin in his nose [Abd] Do what she likes with him; lead him at will.

bulldozer [1930] A large tractor with mechanical shovel for moving and levelling earth. (Originally a bull-dose was a dose of flogging fit for a bull, then the verb took over with the meaning of to coerce by violence or bullying, and now only the residual meaning of irresistible power applies to the tractor.)

I would trust him no further than I could swing a bull by the tail couldn’t hit a bull in the arse with a scoop-shovel! [Can] with a handful of wheat! [Aus]

tie that bull outside/to another ash-can! [Amer] Don’t tell me that lie; we cannot believe that!

E.19d Cattle feeding and ruminating

feed across Move steadily from one side to the other—of weather moving across the country;—of film or tape from one spool to another. (From the progress of a grazing herd across its pasture.)

head (v)—towards, ‘heading our way’. (From judging the direction of a grazing herd by the set of their heads.

get your tongue round it Manage to enunciate—a difficult word, tongue-twister.

in/on [Aus] clover In comfort and plenty. (The more clover in their pasture, the better cattle thrive. Farmers appreciated this improvement from about 1660 and the saying became general from the early C18.)

thrive as a cow does on wet clover Not at all.

no more to him than a crab [-apple] in a cow’s mouth [1732]

as much love as there is between the cow and the haystack [1738] Cupboard love only!

cow’s breakfast [Can] Farmer’s straw-hat.

turn your nose up at…[1818] Disdain; show disapproval or distaste of it (as cattle and sheep, given poor fodder).

wedding and ill-wintering tame both man and beast [Sc]

change of pasture makes fat calves [Ill Colo] The change will do you good.
salt as lick [the block of salt that cattle lick to repair a mineral deficiency—Sc]
stand up to your lick-logs [salt-lick for cattle, so-called because originally set out in hollow logs—Aus] Make a firm stand.
cow-slaver Nonsense [Lan].
every beast his bottle [of fodder, hay etc.] A share for everyone.
chew the cud [1547] Meditate, ruminate; nurse a grievance.
chew it over [1939] Ponder on, debate thoroughly.
chew at… [Lan] Think hard about.
ruminate [1533] Ponder on, revolve in the mind (as a ruminant revolves its cud).

E.19e Oxen

bovine [1855] Dull, slow, lumbering.
ox (n) Fool.
ox-eye The speck of cloud that sailors say presages a storm.
ox-eyed With large, full eyes.

E.19f Cattle, generally

peculiar/peculation [<-Lat peculium=privately owned cattle]
kick up your heels Enjoy a wild revel (like cattle released into the fields after a winter inside). Another possible derivation is from dancing. But the older meaning of the phrase was to die, and this was the same as kick the bucket (q.v. E.29e).
under the hoof [1840+] Down-trodden.
herd (n) Crowd or group of people noteworthy only for their numbers. Also, herded together
stamped (n) Thoughtless action of a panic-stricken majority.
stamped someone into…[1868] Rush someone into reckless action without giving them any time for thought.
dry gulch [Amer] Ruin someone by foul means (as by rounding up a man’s cattle and stampeding them over cliffs into a dried-up river bed).
helter-skelter [1593:<Sc-Gael ealta sgealbta =a herd of cattle dashed to pieces] In a confused rush, pell-mell.
beef (about) [Amer 1888] Grumble, protest in a vigorous and persistent manner. (From the forceful actions of heavy beef cattle.)
put more beef into it! Use more energy, muscle.
beefed-up Made more powerful, vigorous, effective.
bullock (v) [Lan: 1716] Bully, apply rough compulsion.
bullock your way [Aus] Proceed with heavy violence.
breachy [liable to break out of enclosures—Maine NH Penn Msri Texas] Immoral.
cowboy [late 1970s] Unofficial, casual or contract worker with low standards and a
careless attitude to his work.
Maverick (v) Appropriate dishonestly, claim what is not yours. (From Samuel
Maverick [1803–70], a Texas ranger who, having neglected to brand his cattle, sold them,
marked and unmarked. The buyer then held an extensive round-up, claiming all
unbranded animals as ‘Mavericks’.) Hence:
maverick action Action taken by a split-away group going beyond what is agreed
policy. Also:
a maverick Someone who is independent and unattached to any group or political
party.
all hands and the cook! The call when everyone without exception was required to
help (as when there was such a crisis on the ranch that even the cook—usually excused—
was needed). The expression was similarly used on New England whalers in C19.
corral (v) Catch, lock up; consign to a category. (From the corral or pen where
cowboys held their steers.)
round-up A gathering of scattered objects or people (as in a round-up of cattle on a
ranch). Hence, the last round-up is death, or the Day of Judgement.

ride herd on… [control cattle by riding round the edge of the herd—Can Amer]
Exercise restraint over; discipline; manage or be in charge of; court a woman [Mont];
drive a truck.
hornswoggle Prevaricate, deceive (like an American longhorn steer dodging the lasso
by waggling its horns).
rope someone in [1848] Arrest; coerce; persuade to join under pressure (from the way
cowboys rope in steers at a round-up).
the cow must graze where she is tied [RI] (See also E.24b.)
dead heads [of cattle which do not pay a fare on the railway, as do live cattle] Non-
fare-paying passengers; scroungers of free rides or free meals; those who obtain free seats
at the theatre; a railway engine being hauled by another; railway employees travelling
free.
dateless [stupid, insensible, lacking in energy—sLan]/stiff as a rubbing-stoop
like the rubbin’-stoop i’ t’ middle o’ t’ ten acre field [Lan] In useless, conspicuous
isolation.
be a scratching-post for… Act as a vent or outlet for another’s irritability.

God bless the Duke of Argyll! Said by one whose back is itching (because the
rubbing-posts for the Duke’s sheep and cattle were often also used by his verminous
shepherds, with these words).
dry-haired [of cattle whose hair has been dried out rough by the weather—Lth] Cold,
withdrawn in manner.
popple about [the action of sphincter muscles, especially of cattle, when passing
dung—Cum] Stagger backwards and forwards aimlessly.
like a pimple on a bull’s/cow’s arse Of a small hat on a large head; to emphasise
insignificance.
ought to be bored for the hollerhorn [= hollow-horn, a disease of cattle causing
dizziness and apparent stupidity—Vir Kenty]
E.20a Cows

graceful [Calif]/solemn as a cow
cow-tongued [Nrf Nhp EAn] Deceitful (one side is smooth, the other rough).
rough as a cow’s tongue [Lan]
cow-footed [wYks] Of someone who wears out shoes one-sidedly.
cow-hocked Thick-ankled; clumsy-footed.
slender in the middle as a cow in the waist [1583]
dark as the inside of a cow [UK, passim Calif] A bog as wet as sorra [=sorrow] and
dark as the inside of a cow’ [Don].
worth a cow-price Valuable.
as long as I can buy milk, I need not keep a cow Why marry when there are so
many willing girls?
you cannot sell the cow and drink the milk [1628] If you want the product, you
must keep the producer.
a good cow will sell in the boose [Lan] To a woman over-anxious to be seen at her
best.
I ken it as well as Fill Bayer [a cow’s name] kens her stake [Sc] Cows can usually
be trusted to go to their own place in the byre.
all together, like Brown’s cows [Glo Ant Dwn] (He only had one cow!)
troubled in mind like Collins’ cow [Cor]
I’ve got her yet, like Billy Joy’s cow [Lin] (He had tied the cow-rope round his waist
returning from Caistor Fair and was dragged through Cabourne horse-dike by the cow,
while reassuring himself and others on the road that he ‘had her yet’.)
I’ll do as Mackissock’s cow did, Pll think more than I’ll say! [1721]
like the Welshman’s cow, little and deedy [good, industrious—Sc Yks mid&sEng:
Nhp: 1850]
Malley’s cow! [Aus] Descriptive of one who has gone without indicating whither; a
complete loss. (Malley was told to hold a cow. When the boss returned and asked for it,
‘She’s a goner’ said Malley.)
drape (n) [barren or ‘farrow’ cow—n&midEng] Old woman; woman who has borne
no children.

E.20b Cows’ horns

lucky as the cow that stuck herself with her own horn [1678]
curst cows have curt horns [curst=bad-tempered; curt=short]/God sendeth a shrewd
cow a short horn [1546] Angry men cannot do all the mischief they would wish.
faraway cows have long horns [Ire NY] Remote anxieties are often the worst.
the strange cow’s welcome [Arg] All enquiry and no information.
horn in on… [NY Flor: 1912] Intrude into (= butt in on).
moil gun [Con] One without a hammer. (A moil cow has no horns [Ire Shr Hrf Pem].)

E.20c Cows’ tails

grow down, like a cow’s tail Implying that someone is shrinking.
grow downwards Diminish in importance, stature etc.; go into decline.
always behind, like a cow’s tail [Lan Dor] (In time—and space.)
like the old cow’s tail, all behindhand [eSuf] (As/from the above.)
show the cow-tail Show signs of cowardice.
(high) tail-on-end [Hmp IW Dor Cor] Excited, expectant; headlong, precipitate, eager and hasty.

high-tail (v) Depart in a temper; depart quickly [Cum: Amer from early C20].
a cow needs her tail more than once in fly-time [Vmt Ohio Kenty Ill] Leave everything in place, you will probably need to do this again.
a cow knows not the worth of her tail till she loses it [1611] Of the loss of something that has been taken for granted.
the cow may want her own tail yet You may need my services one day.
if you buy the cow, take the tail into the bargain Accept the disadvantages as well as the advantages.

he that’s aught [who owns—Sc] the cow gangs nearest the tail Folk are willing to take personal risks when they own property.
cow-tail dyer [wYks] Man who dyes small warps in sections of one or two yards long, each section in a different colour.
proud as a cow with two tails [Wil nDor]
the cow with the iron tail The pump (when used for diluting milk).
tail-end busted [Amer] Finished, dead. (A steer is ruined if the cowboy breaks the tail by twisting during rodeo.)

E.20d Cows—the grotesque

becomes him as well as a saddle does a cow’s back
comely/nimble as a cow in a cage [wYks: 1399]
to a cow’s thumb Perfectly, exactly.
like a cow handling a musket Awkward, very clumsy.
as much use for it as a cow has for side-pockets No use at all.
drive a cow to the hall, she’ll run to the byre [Sc] What we think is better, is really worse if unsuitable for the recipient.
we don’t go by size, or a cow would catch a hare
everyone to his taste—as they said when the old woman kissed the cow [1546]
a man may love his cow though he kiss her not Said in defence by one accused of a lack of enthusiasm.

E.20e Cows—driven

till the cows come home [1610] Indefinitely; only after a long time.
if one gives thee a cow, run with a cord Take an opportunity without delay.
sic another coo will never low at your door again [Abd] You will never have such another chance again.
   loud in the loan was ne’er a good milk cow [Sc] A reproof to noisy girls.
   like a cow in an unco [=uncouth, unfamiliar] loan/fremit loanin [the uncultivated area near a farm left for milking cows in—Sc Nhb: 1721] Awkward and bewildered; watched by many.
   a skittering [shitting liquid] cow in the loan would ay have many marrows [companions: Sc] Sharing a misfortune!
   head-to-tail showers When the next shower starts as soon as the previous one has past (like cattle driven down a narrow lane).
   in droves In large crowds, variously.
   more than you can shake a stick at! Very numerous, generally. (As if there are so many beasts they cannot all see your stick.)
   come afore the gawd [goad, whip—Sc] Come to the fore.
   fling at the gawd [goad—Sc] Be impatient, restive.
   fling-at-the-gawd/-brod [goad] was ne’er a good ox [1721] It is a poor fellow that cannot take criticism.
   lash out [kick out (of cows and horses)—Cum Yks Lin Not Der Chs Lei War wSom Sus Hmp: 1884] Make a sudden verbal or physical attack.
   have a lash at… [Aus NZ] Have a ‘go’ at, attempt.

E.20f Cows—milked

the water that a cow drinks turns to milk; the water that a viper drinks turns to poison [orig. Japan] Different people respond differently to the same influence etc.
bail up [secure the head of a cow for milking—Aus] ‘Hold up’, detain for robbery; corner.
awe-band [rope for fastening cattle to the stake—Sc] Check, restraint generally.
   snibbet (n) [a peg of wood on one end of a cow-tie which goes through the loop at the other end to fasten it—Sc Nhb] Sexual intercourse.
milch-cow [1601] Continuing source of gain or profit; someone who can be persuaded to give or lend money.
**milk** (v) [1526] Exploit; extract maximum profit from; siphon petrol from a vehicle’s fuel tank; filch accessories from second-hand cars for sale and sell them separately; tap telephone wires; draw or extract sap from trees, venom from snakes etc.

**milking** [Amer 1936] Manipulation of funds for illicit gain; financial exploitation.

**give down milk** Yield an expected profit; render help.

**geevin** [=giving—Cor] Of ground from which moisture seems to be oozing up.

**exuberant** [<Lat *exuberare*=give freely—from the udder] Abounding, overflowing; effusive.

**express** [<Lat *exprimere*=press, squeeze out] Hence, **expression**=what has been squeezed out.

**the cow gives much milk, but kicks over the bucket** [1546] Said when someone finds fault immediately after giving praise. ‘Be not like the Cow that gives a good sope of milke and casts it downe with her heeles’ [Hy Porter, *The Two Angry Women of Abingdon*—1599].

**like our miel** [=moil, hornless—Ire Shr Hrf Pem] *cow that gives a pailful of milk, and then spills it all with a spang* [smart blow—Cld Wxf Lin] of her foot [Wxf] while one milks the other holds under the sieve One turns his partner’s gain into loss; the efforts of one are frustrated by the wastefulness of the other; an ill-assorted pair, one frugal, the other extravagant.

**who’s milking this cow?** (q.d. ‘I am, mind your own business’)

**a cow and a cloot** [=clout, patch] **soon runs out** [Ant] Once you break in to savings, they are soon spent.

**run dry** End, especially of a source or supply (as when milk cows go dry).

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**E.21a Calves—unborn**

eat the calf in the cow’s belly [1642: wSom] Be too ready to anticipate; spend the rent before it is due.

**the cow won’t have her calf till she’s ready** [Ire] Leave nature to her own time-keeping; some things cannot be rushed.

**slip/cast the calf** Of women, miscarry; have an abortion [S.Pepys, 19 September 1664].

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**E.21b Calves—new-born**

**not care if the cow calves or breaks her neck** [Aus] Indifferent to which way it turns out.

**calve** (v) [1837] Of an iceberg, cast off a lump to float away as a second, smaller iceberg [naut].
calf (n) Brainless but harmless person; smaller floating iceberg detached from large one [naut] (see above).

the coo has calved! [Sc] Success!
have a cow calve Be left a legacy [Wor Glo].
lick your calf Improve or repair bad work.
lick her calf over again [Chs] Repeat work unnecessarily.
lick him clean Whitewash, vindicate his character.
give him a lick with the rough side of my tongue Reprimand harshly. (Said by Judge Jeffries in 1685.)
calf’s-tongue [Nrf] Person mild or harsh of speech according to circumstances. (From the tongue of a calf being smooth on one side and rough on the other.)
calf-licked [e&wYks Lan] With hair parted on the wrong side.
calf-lick [Nhb Lakel wYks nwLin Chs Nhp War] Tuft of hair just above the forehead.
cow-lick [Nhp] The tuft of hair on the crown of the head that lies differently from the rest of the hair (like those ridged hairs on a cow’s hide that were supposed to be caused by the cow licking itself).

want the calf with the white face [1550] Have extravagant tastes; always desire something more or better.

blush like a red bull-calf [Lei]
bevish [stagger, walk unevenly—Wm Yks Lan] about like a calf wi’ yalla pattens [yellow over-shoes] (New-born appearance.)
scrag-calf [lean and bony animal—nYks] Woman with thin legs.

E.21c Calves—sucking

suck up to…[1860] Toady to; curry favour with.

have a suck at the brown cow [sLan] Drink heavily.
natural to him as milk to a calf
wise as Waltham’s/Walton’s [Nhp] calf that walked nine miles to suck a bull! [J.Skelton. Colin Clout ln. 811—late C15] i.e. very foolish.
like if the calves been suckin’ ‘em [Cor] Of crumpled clothes
buss-calf [young, unweaned calf—Wil Som Dor Dev Cor] Spoilt child, fat young person.
sucker [Amer] Stupid, gullible person.
mutty [one that mutts=sucks ineffectually—wYks] calf Silly fellow.
fat as a poddy [calf—Aus]
only a suckin’ calf don’t have to worry about grass [NMex] You will have to earn a living—unless you are completely provided for.
E.21d Cows and calves

cows and calves The alternate short and long teeth of a saw; the little rolls of moisture-charged dirt made by children rubbing their sweaty hands after play.

to every cow her calf, to every book its copy [Ire] Ownership rests with the producer. (This was King Diarmaid’s judgement on the ownership of a MS copy of a MS of St Finnian copied in c. 560 by St Columcille.)
lake like cow like calf! [1564] Said when a child takes after a parent.
many a good cow has a bad calf [1520] In reply to the above.
look like a cow at a bastard calf [Som: 1678] Coldly; suspiciously.
milker’s calf [Aus] Mother’s boy, spoilt child.
a bawling [Cum Pem]/bealing [Wm nYks n&nwLin]/bellowing/belving [Dev Cor]/blaring [Nhb Nrf]/blarting [wYks]/blothering [wYks Not] cow soon(est) forgets her calf Of a widower who remarries soon after his wife’s death; to one who is lamenting or protesting excessively.
a blattin’ calf is soon weaned [Alaska NY] The more protest, the sooner reconciled.
wanton as a calf with two dams [1880]/calves [1576]
they think a calf a muckle beast that never saw a cow [Sc: 1832] You can only estimate from your own experience.

E.21e Calves’ activity

calf-hearted [eYks Nhp]
calf-croft [Chs]/yard [NCy] Place of birth, childhood home.
litter [bedding of poor straw—Lin Nhp War EAn Oxf Glo Brks Som Sur Hmp IW Dev] Rubbish, nonsense [Som].
calf-love [1823] Love between young and immature persons, unlikely to last.
marrried in the veal-bones, always a calf [wYks] One who marries young never becomes physically mature.
call thi own calves together, and let mine come home of themselves [sLan] Mind your own family, and let mine alone.
bealing [Wm nYks]/belving [bellowing—Dev Cor] like a calf/goat
like a bull-calf in a peat-moor diking [stuck in ditch—nLin] Trapped in a hopeless situation.
lke the Kilbarchan calves, you like to drink wi’ the wisp in your mou’ [Sc] To one who starts drinking before swallowing the food in his mouth.
worry [choke] in the band, like McEwan’s calf [Sc] Be hanged.
lucky as the lousy calf that lived all winter and died in the summer [1678]
the flannel has walked [shrunk—Ant Dwn] as hard as a calf’s lug
E.21f Stirks, bullocks, heifers

sucking stirk One who depends on others longer than necessary.
be put in the stirk’s stall [Sc] Be given to father when mother has a younger baby to look after.
show the fattened calf, not the thing that fattened him [Ire] The final product, not the means of production (often better kept secret).
looks as if he had eaten/lives on his bedstraw [1678] Of one with a thin, hungry appearance. (An animal receiving insufficient fodder would be reduced to eating its bedding.) Sometimes also applied to a bulky person or animal, suggesting that both fodder and bedding have been eaten.
greenhorn Raw, inexperienced, unknowing person; new apprentice. (From the name given to young oxen with new or ‘green’ horns.)
red steer [Aus] A bush-fire.
do what the steer [castrated bull, bullock] did [Can] Have a try, even though there is no hope of success.
fart like a steer [Cor]
he may tine a stot [bullock—Sc] that canna count his kine He can afford to lose one if he has more than he can count/ if he does not know what he owns.
roar like a bull seg [bull castrated when full-grown—Sc]
lish [active, nimble—Cum] as a bullock
bullock (v) [wYks] Behave in a bullying, overbearing manner. (See also E.19f.)
talk bullock [NZ] Swear profusely—and imaginatively (from the trying nature of a bullock-driver’s job).
woode [mad] as a wild bullock [Paston Letter C15 Nrf]
more hair than tit, like a mountain heifer [Ire]
rough as a downser [bullock living up on the moor—Cor]
mad as a gled-stung [gadfly-stung] quey [cow-heifer—Sc]
routing [continuously bellowing—Cum] like a quey in a fremd lonnin [strange lane—Cum] Of a boisterous, loud-mouthed man [Sc 1816].
heifer-dust [Aus] Inane, meaningless talk.
heifer-paddock [Aus] School for older girls.
out of the bull’s pen, back in the heifer-yard The comment of a woman who has been relegated from a masculine province or career to a more customary feminine rôle.
bull-pen [Amer] Secure cell or area where prisoners are detained temporarily; in reserve (the bull-pen being the warm-up area for relief pitchers in a baseball stadium).
ay some water where the stirk drowns [Sc: 1721] Convincing evidence; some reason for it.
E.22a Beef

beefy Muscular, robust. Of men with thick hands, ankles etc.
big as bull-beef [Stf] Very intimate.
big/bold/proud as bull-beef [FrwYks Not Stf Lei Nhp War Ken] Conceited.
big/ugly as bull-beef [wYks] Of a large, lusty man.
tough as barn-beef
Cheshire-bred/like a Durham heifer, beef down to the heels Of a stout person.
beef to the heels like a Mullingar [wMea] heifer Used also of a thin-ankled girl [Uls c.1860].
honour will buy no beef

E.22b Milk

smooth as new milk [Cor]
mends—like milk in summer [wYks Suf] Only gets worse.
go/turn sour [1928] Lose enthusiasm; go to the bad; disappoint.
ugly enough to turn the milk [War 1859]
nothing turns sourer than milk [1830] Said of a good-tempered man when thoroughly provoked; also of disillusioned love.
bitter as thick milk [milk curdled and sour—Ire]
the black cow’s milk Pump-water.
milk from the brown cow Rum in tea [wYks].
slatter [a careless splash or spill—sLan early C20] Free extra tot of milk given when serving. (=jockey, see K.50a, and tilly [Dub]).
as calm as a milk-bowl
I’m very wheamow [nimble—Yks Chs Der], said the old woman when she stepped into the bitlin [milk-bowl—Der Chs]/milk-bowl [1670]
look like a spider in a pan of milk [NH] Insignificant.

E.22c Cream

skim off the cream [1778] Select the best; divert winnings or takings where they will not be liable for tax: ‘skimming’ is the process of doing this, ‘skimmer’ the tax-dodger who practises it.
lick of cream Sop; a promise to keep someone quiet for the time being.
lick the crame-mundle/cream-mundle [stick that stirs the cream—nEng] Live well.
lick the mundle [Chs] Humiliate yourself for the sake of gain; curry favour.

have a little, give a little, let a neighbour lick the mundle [Chs] Charity begins at home; look after yourself first.

in the skimming o’ a bowie [small wooden milk/porridge pail—Sc NhB] With no delay!

skimmy-dish [1825]—occupation Feeble, shallow, inconsequential.

E.22d Churns

hollow as a churn

kern (v) [churn—Sc nEng] Make a confused mess of something.

churn (v) Be in a state of mental, abdominal turmoil.

churn out [1912] Produce—anything—quickly and continuously.

churn (up) [1697] Disturb—a liquid, especially the sea, lakes, rivers.

nae man can seek his marrow [mate, equal] in the kirk as well as he that has been in it himself [Sc] A man’s suspicions can betray his own misdeeds.

put the cat in the churn Do mischief.

in a churn-milk study [wYks] Day-dreaming; in a state of regret or remorse.

E.22e Butter

long churning makes bad butter [Ire] A criticism of overwrought or fussy workmanship.

coming to come, like the old woman’s butter [Cor] Not coming very quickly.

come (v) [1714] Reach the climax of sexual intercourse—for which butter-churning was a regular metaphor. See also butter to butter (I.53c) and butter-whore (I.71c).

as day brake, butter brake! [Sc] Most opportune!

all lumps and dozzles [shapeless lumps—Cum], like Deevil Danny’s butter

like Orkney butter, neither good to eat, nor to creich [=creesh, grease] wool [Sc] No good, either at one end of the range or the other.

worse than dirty butter [Oxf]

mad as May-butter [a butter formerly made in May without salt and kept for medicinal use] (Mad because very soft and runny.) ‘Not any other but May-butter it selve could possiblie melt in their mouthes’ [J.Deacon and J.Walker, Answer to Darel 224–1601]

as thick as mould butter [specially thick butter suitable for lining cake or cooking moulds]

make butter and cheese of... Confound.
a quarrel is like buttermilk, once out of the churn, the more you shake it the sourer it grows [Ire]

there are more knobs in the buttermilk than you see floating [Ire] The problem is more complicated than you think; don’t imagine that you know everything (about it).

sour-dook [buttermilk—ShI Sc] Poor stuff by comparison.

a buttermilk wedding [Chs] A very poor affair; one where the groom fails to distribute ‘ball-money’.

slow work, like supping buttermilk out of a sieve [sLan] to sup buttermilk with a pitch-fork [Cum]

I think little of buttermilk when I’m full of it [Ire] Contempt through familiarity.

skim-milk conversation Bland, undemanding talk [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—30 December 1840].

fat as butter [1584] a butterball [NC Tenn Calif sAmer]

butterprint (see below) [1616] Child—especially illegitimate—whose parentage can be inferred from facial resemblance.

clean/neat as print [butterprint—midEng]

dunno poo thi butterprint! [=don’t pull your butterprint] To a crying child, don’t spoil your appearance. (The butterprint was the impression made on pats of butter by a carved wooden stamp, and this impression was easily spoiled by pulling or flattening the butter.)

a fine face will not fill a buttery Good appearances do not necessarily produce results.

cuddling in the buttery [Shr] Cupboard love (q.v. I.43b).

E.22f Cheese

it can’t be both curds and whey with you [Ire] Of one who will not accept both sides; if one is taken, the other will be left.

pale as curd cheese [Som]

make cheeses Spread skirt and petticoat round you on the floor by swirling them before sinking down.

he’s gane out o’ the cheswell/cheesewell [cheese-vat] he was made in/too big for the cheswell he was staned in [Sc] Has forgotten his origins. (Cheese was pressed with large stone weights.)

make the cheese more binding [Can] Improve things; do just what we need; make things more involved, complicated [Amer].
E.22g Delivering milk

**face like a milkman’s round** Long and cheerless.

**milk-round** Tour of colleges by prospective employers; the ensuing round of interviews.

**milk-run** [1945] Routine journey; easy flight [the RAF term for a regular sortie or straightforward mission for inexperienced pilots]; journey with frequent stops (from those trains that picked up milk at many rural stops) [Amer].

**do the milk-route** Go round bus stations etc. during the night or early morning looking for customers for sex.

**dry run** [Amer 1941+] Preliminary trial or training for the real attempt so as to remove snags; dress rehearsal. The same meaning as ‘dummy run’ from which it could have derived, by analogy.

E.23a Sheep

**sheep** [1542] People without initiative, without minds of their own (because each sheep acts with the flock).

**like sheep** (As above.)

**if one sheep leap ower the dike, the rest will follow** [1721] A bad example is all too readily followed.

**follow like sheep** Unquestioningly.

**follow (v)—an argument, meaning, train of thought**

**sheepish** [1693] Bashful; embarrassed; self-conscious of being in the wrong.

**ragged/mazed** [confused, dazed—s&wEng] as a sheep

**mouton enragé** [infuriated sheep—Fr] Normally mild person, exceptionally angry.

**hasty as a sheep—as soon as the tail is up the turd is out**

**bleat (v)** [1916] Complain sheepishly; speak querulously, plaintively.

**blatant** [blate=bleat—NCy]

**gregarious** [<Lat gregarius=flocking] Associating sociably, preferring company.

**aggregate** [<Lat ad gregem=into a flock]

**congregate** [<Lat congregare=flock together] (Originally it was the uniting of two or more flocks that made a congregation.)

**segregate** [<Lat segregare=separate from the flock]

**egregious** [<Lat egregius=chosen from the herd, hence=eminent, outstanding]

**hirsel** (n) [flock—Sc Ire Nhb Cum] Crowd, gathering; quantity variously.

**flock** (n) [1340] Congregation in the pastoral care of a priest.

**white as a flock of sheep**

**he that has one sheep in the flock will like the rest the better for it** [Sc: 1721] Of partiality towards a child’s school, regiment etc.

**one by one, like Jacky Lingo’s sheep** [wYks]
a lazy sheep thinks its wool heavy [1732] Finds fault even with an advantage.
mutton-head Someone as stupid as a sheep.
there are two heads on all his sheep [Ire] Is partial, loyal to the point of deluding himself.
black sheep—of the family etc. [1792] The disgrace (originating from the fact that black wool was cheaper than white); a bad lot; a non-striker=black-leg.
black-sheep (v) [WVir: 1925] Take another man’s job. (From the above.)
it is a fair flock that has no black sheep [Shr] A happy society without bad members.
pure merino [breed of sheep with very fine wool and originating in Spain; Aus] Early Australian settler by voluntary immigration, not transportation.
cast a sheep’s eye at…[1586]/make sheep’s eyes at… Look amorously at; cast a leering oblique glance at [Nhp].
the sheep could eat the grass through it [Ire] Of a flimsy or ragged garment.

E.23b Rams, tups

ram (n) [1935] Over-sexed man; lecher.
fierce/ragged/rank as a ram
stink enough to smoor [=smother, suffocate] a tup [wYks 1885]
battering ram (Because of the butting action.)
ram-race [the run taken by tups before head-butting—Sc Nhb Cum] Headlong rush [Sc].
mazy [dizzy—sLan] as a tup
awkward [War Glo]/mad [angry—NCy] as a tup/tup in a halter [sChs Shr] In an impotent rage.
ankled [Cum] Frustrated, mixed up.
wood [mad—Sc Ire nEng] as a March tip [Kcb]
fause [cunning—Lan] as an old tup
breaks bands like a Herdwick tip [=tup—Cum] Of a wild unmanageable youth.
stray tup on the loose An unattached man looking for a woman.
runs like a tup i’ the wind [Sc] (i.e. as if there is the smell of a tup in the air) Of a young woman indiscreetly associating with men.
tup-shinned Kicking the heels towards each other while walking [Lan]; having lumps on the front of the shin-bone [wYks].
crooked/right [c. 1320]/straight [ironic]/stiff/ twisted as a ram’s horn
kaint [crooked—Cum] as a tup-horn
kaint [Cum] Contrary, awkward, ill-disposed.
croot [crooked—sLan] as a tup-horn Ill-tempered.
the bell-wether of the flock Leader of a party or a riot; pioneer, noisy demagogue.
bear the bell [Nhp Arm] Take first place; excel. (See also K.50c.)
let aye the belled wether break the snow [Sc] Let the experienced one do the difficult tasks.
grey wethers [Brks Wil Dev] Boulders of sandstone lying on the downs.
moss-wether [tup that lives on the moss or moor—wYks] Slovenly, unkempt man.
looks as bauld/bald [bold] as a black-faced wedder/wether
best by yourself, like Lowd’s/Lowndes’ tup [Chs] To a quarrelsome person.
chained together like a couple of tups! The comment of a country lad when he found himself handcuffed to another prisoner. (The practice of certain shepherds, especially in the West Riding, is to chain the horns of two rams together to stop them jumping or wandering.)
coupled sheep drown each other On the risks of marriage or other associations.
but a tethered sheep will not get fat [Chs] The retort to ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss.’
it’s no use praying for fine weather if the ram’s back is in the ditch [Ire] Of a request that comes too late.
while one milks the ram the other holds under the sieve Two fools uselessly cooperating.
tip [put the ewes to the ram] when you like, you shall lamb wi’ the lave [remainder—Sc Ire nEng] All in a company must pay equal shares, irrespective of their time of arrival.

E.23c Ewes

the (white) ewe A beautiful woman in a gang of thieves.
ewe-necked [Cum] Having the arch of the neck bending downwards.
he loves mutton well that licks where the ewe lay [1628] Of excessive partiality. (See also G.3e.)
as ill as the ewes in the yaird and nae dogs to hunt them [Sc] (Yaird=kail-yard or garden, and with no dogs to chase out the sheep, the crop will soon be ruined.)
lamb down [help a ewe in lambing] Detain someone until their money is spent [Aus]; spend recklessly.
she stamps like a ewe upon yeaning [lambing—Som: 1678]
past lambing time [Lan] Past child-bearing age.
wink on the ewe and worry the lamb Distract the mother so as to enjoy the daughter.
lay like a weltered ewe [wYks Lin] (One on its back and unable to rise.)
tits up [Dor] Defunct, ruined—variously.
when the ewe is drowned she’s dead [Sc] The comment on a loss beyond recovery.
E.23d Lambs

gentle/innocent/lou, mild/mim [prim and proper, prudish, precise—Lth]/quiet as a lamb

ewe-lamb Most treasured possession [see II Samuel xii].
cosset (v) (From cosset (n)=a pet lamb [passim] or pig [eSuf], often much indulged by the family [1579].)
daft/stupid [Wm] as a cuddy [sucking lamb or kid—Sc Ire nEng]
dead as a deaf cuddy [Cum]
dumb as a dead cuddy
clever as the north end of a south-bound cuddy [nEng] Facetiously.
like a lamb’s tail sucking Going quickly, usually of a wagging tongue.
you have nothing to do but suck and wag your tail [Sc] Are in luck and plenty.
women’s tongues wag like lambs’ tails [1597]
in two claps of a lamb’s tail In a moment, very soon.
consequent [<Lat cum-sequi=follow along with]
girn [snarl, whimper, complain—Sc] like a spained [=speaned=weaned—Sc Ire nEng] puggy [six-month-old lamb: Sc]
gimmer [young ewe that has not lambed—nEng] Gossipy woman.
on the gimmer hillock [Abd Kcd] Unmarried, without children.
thave [young ewe that has not lambed—wYks Not Der Chs mid&sEng] A young woman.
tup and lamb together as long as it lasts Newly-weds. (It does not last long in nature!)
(fromumped up like [Shr]) an old ewe dressed lamb-fashion [eYks sStf War seWor Oxf Som Dev: 1777] An older woman who dresses like a girl. (See also I.66d, mutton dressed as lamb.)
it is a lamb in the one taking, but it will be an old sheep ere you get it off [Sc] Debt is sooner contracted than cleared.

E.23e Gathering and handling sheep

fasten out [turn the fell-sheep on to the fell—nYks] Terminate someone’s visits or activities.
some good, some bad, as sheep come to the fold [1678]
one out of the box [a mixing up of different flocks of sheep—Aus NZ] An excellent or unusual person or thing.
encroach [<OF en-croc=en-crook=seize in a crook] Usurp another’s rights (as if by catching their lamb with your crook).
sort the sheep from the goats [1644] Segregate the good people from the bad.
pull the wool over his eyes [1838] Deceive; keep the truth from him. (This is a way of keeping sheep quiet when handling them.)

stroke him the right way of the wool [Shr] Humour him.

I know him by favver [=favour=appearance, similarity—Lan] as Marsden men know their sheep

ɡɪr n [snarl, whimper, complain—Sc] like a sheep’s head in the/а pair of tongs [Sc] as soon goes the young sheep as the old sheep to pot/market [1599] No preference given to youth.

like sending sheep to the shambles [1914] Of untrained soldiers ordered into battle.

E.23f Marking and dosing sheep; ailments

earmark for...[1868] Designate; reserve for; specify (money) for a purpose. (One way of marking sheep is to clip the ears with a distinctive cut, or to affix an identity tag.)

that caps cut lugs! [Cum] [Cap=surpass, cause more reaction.]

smit [the coloured mark on sheep] A stain on a character [Sc] (The OE meaning of smittian was mark, stain; by 1100, in the form of smit, it had branched, taking its original sense through to taint, tarnish, ruddle sheep, and also a second related sense of contaminate, infect, leave evidence of an influence. Smittle is connected with this; q.v. I.35d.)

smitch [spot, speck, stain—Sc Cum Yks Hrf Cmb Bdf WCy Som Dev] Blemish, generally. (From the above.)

keel (v) Notice someone with disgust or despising (as lambs are keeled [marked with ruddle—Sc]).

red as rud [ruddle, raddle—wYks]/raddle [Lan]

raddled [1922] Painted up; the worse for wear—of women. The term carries the imputation that she has had frequent intercourse, like the ewe that receives much raddle from the rams at tupping time.

skin and birn [Sc] The complete evidence (from the tar mark on the skin of a sheep and the brand on its nose).

has left his mark on...[1857] Has left enduring evidence of his work, influence etc.

tarred with the same brush/stick [1623] Equally bad. (Tar was used by shepherds from the C17 to protect their sheep from infection of sores and wounds. This probably refers to the marking of a flock with an identifying ‘smit-mark’, originally of tar.)

grimed [blackened with soot or dirt] with the same stick [nYks] Equally bad; subject to the same bad influence.

don’t lose/spoil the ship [=sheep—passim]/ hog [1600]/sheep [1651]/ship [1823] for a ha’p’orth of tar Don’t sacrifice something valuable merely to save a small expense. (See above.)

sheep-dip! Disparaging comment on the quality of (lumber-jacks’) tea or rough liquor [Amer Can].

no more chance than a tick in a sheep-dip [NCy]

rank as flesh-flies on a sheep-plook [spot, sore place—Dur]
catching as the scab [sheep-scab—nYks]

one scabbed sheep infects all the flock [c. 1350]/ae scabbed sheep will smit [contaminate—Sc n Ire n Eng] the hale hirdsel [= hirsel, flock—Sc Ire Nhbc Cum] A bad influence spreads.

thrang [numerous, crowded—NCy] as flukes in a sheep’s liver [Cum]

gan away and get bored for the sturdy! [Nhbc] In dismissing someone for making a stupid suggestion, sturdy being a disease affecting sheep’s brains.

take the sturdy/sturdies Turn giddy, obstinate, refuse to work [Sc n&wYks].

around and around like a sturdy sheep [Shl Sc Nhbc Lakel Yks n & e Lan]
silly as a (giddy) sheep [Wor Glo]

take the sturdy out of him [wYks] Cure him of his obstinacy. (Certain shepherds in Craven treated the sturdy by inserting a quill into the skull and sucking out the hydatids.)
kimit [dizzy from hydatids on the brain—Shr Mtg Wor Hrf] as an old sheep, turning round and staring about for things when they bin under your nose [Shr Mtg Hrf]

ought to be bored for the woobles [= wobbles—Mrri Ark] Is simple-minded.

E.23g Pounds and pinders

extravagant [<Lat extravagari=wander out of bounds] The sense development has been through ‘straying beyond the bounds of reason’, and so to ‘fantastically absurd’, then to the usual meaning of ‘outrageously excessive’.

lost sheep Ne’er-do-weel; breakaway; failure.

wander from the fold [1709] Leave home; drift away from former associations.

return to the fold Come back to a loyalty or society that was formerly forsworn.

stand as thick as sheep in fold

pent-up [=penned/pinned: 1555] Suppressed, but ready to burst out—of emotions etc.

get into a pound [nWil] Get involved in (money) troubles hard to escape from.

pounded Caught and corrected for improper behaviour.

impound (v) Remove into safe custody—a vehicle (perhaps for being wrongly parked), contraband or illegal goods.

in Hob’s/Lob’s pound [Nhbc Yks Lin Chs Shr EA n Dev] In difficulties; acute embarrassment; in prison; suffering servitude in wedlock; caught between a grown-up’s knees. (Hob was a fool, Lob a yokel or bumpkin.)

pinder-green [wYks] A bright, deep green (because the grass would be greener than in other fields).

wrong’s no man’s right, nobbut the pinder’s [keeper of the pinfold—Lan]

glorious/good as George-a-green [1590] Resolute; ready to do his duty, come what may. (He was reputed to have been that Pinder of Wakefield who withstood Robin Hood and his men.)

he’s taking them out of our pen now [Yks] Said when a contemporary dies.
E.23h Shearing

fleece (v) [1537] Swindle someone of nearly all they possess.

hog-reek [Nhb] That light hill-mist which evaporates soon after dawn. (From the resemblance to a young sheep’s wool.)

clip-joint [Amer Can] High-priced establishment where the customers are ‘fleeced’.

fleecy Thin, wispy—of clouds etc.

good-woolled With plenty of dash and pluck.

shorn of...[1740] Deprived, robbed of.

naked as a shorn sheep

rich as a new-shorn sheep [c.1520] Ironical.

like a flock of sheep ebben- [Dur Cum]/ebm-[Wm]/aiven- [Dev:=even-]clipt/shorn

Of teeth—numerous, smooth and white.

clippit sheep will grow again [Sc] Don’t lament over your loss, repair it!

God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb [1640] Compensations in misfortune.

come/go for wool and go home shorn [1599] Become the victim of your own evil intents; have the tables turned on you.

come in clipping time At the best time (for good cheer).

fleece your wool off another sheep! [Lth] Try another victim—I have seen through your deceit!

shake a fleece [Yks] Lose flesh, lose weight through illness.

lose/keep your wool Lose/keep your temper (cf. ‘Keep your hair on!’).

where they clip there needs no comb Too drastic in ‘fleecing’.

have both fleece and fell [skin—Sc NCy War Pem Ken Sur Som] Take too much.

better to give the fleece/wool than the sheep [1670] Cut your losses.

the woo’s no worth the skirling [shrieking, screaming, commotion—Sc Ire nEng Dev] Said when the advantage is more than offset by the attendant rebukes, complaints etc.

all one wool [Sc] Same race, kind etc.

wool-pack(s) High clouds [Nhp]; ‘rack’, ominous of rain [Not sChs Nrf nDev]; masses of Wenlock limestone [Glo].

London Bridge was built on wool-packs (being paid for by a tax on wool)

wool-sellers ken wool-buyers [Sc: 1628] Those with compatible interests will foregather—and be familiar with each other’s ways.

E.23i Wolves and sheep

the lone sheep is in danger of the wolf A man needs friends and allies.

if men become sheep the wolf will devour them [1611]

it is hard to have wolf full and wether whole Of two irreconcilables.

the life of the wolf is the death of the lamb [1616]
the lamb who bites a wolf never bites again [111]
ill heads make fat wolves [Sc] Carelessness encourages robbery.
the dust raised by the sheep does not choke the wolf Protests are wasted on the ruthless.
the wolf cares not how many sheep there are [1625] Mere numbers are of no consequence to the powerful or ruthless.
in the wolf’s mouth In deadly peril.
the wolf eats counted sheep [1611] A loss of which you are ignorant is no loss.
little by little the wolf eats up the sheep [1611] Because an evil comes on gradually, it does not make it any less absolute in the end.
you have given the wolf the wedder [= wether, ram—usually castrated] to keep [Sc] Have given your treasure to one who will use the trust for their own advantage.
set the wolf to keep the sheep [1513] Of one who, through personal experience, knows the ways of those guarded against. (As when poachers make the best gamekeepers.)

E.24a Goats

goat (n) [1675] Licentious, foolishly obstinate man, perpetrator of dangerous pranks.
fond [daft] as a billy-goat [eYks]
stink like a goat [1386]
ram [rank, strong-smelling—Cum] as an old billy-goat
lecherous as a he-goat
goat-fuck [Amer] Confused situation.
look like a billy-goat in stays [naut] Ridiculous.
look goats and monkeys at… Regard lasciviously.
capricious [=It capriccio=the skip of a goat]
exult [=Lat ex-salire=leap out, skip out] (Released in the morning from their overnight fold or cabin, the kids of a flock are joyously exultant.)
result [=Lat re-saltare=leap back]
resilient [=Lat re-salire=leap back, recoil]
if the goat would not jump around, she would not break her leg [Ont] We are ourselves responsible for what we suffer.
cab [=cabriolet=a two-wheeled chaise drawn by one horse, so-called from the light, bouncy motion like the cabriole=leap of a goat—Fr: C16]
run like a hairy goat [Aus] Do badly in a horse race.
get my goat [1910] Annoy me (from bringing out the goat in a person).
play the goat Act the fool.
cut capers Spring up in dancing; try to attract attention by unusual movements. (From the erratic jumping of a goat.)
has a lip on him would trip a goat [Ire] Of a pouting child.
hard/rough as a goat’s knees [Aus]
hairy as a puck-goat’s head [Ire] (A puck is a blow or butt from the horns of a goat [Ire Lan Nfld NS NB eCan].)
  butt [1900]/horn in [1912] Intrude forcibly.
  goatee Beard on the point of the chin (like a goat’s beard).
  an old goat is never the more reverend for his beard The externals of age do not command respect without increase of wisdom.
  do not mistake a goat’s beard for a stallion’s tail [Ire] Advice to a girl about her suitors.
  you come to the goat/goats’ house to thig [ask for, get, take] wool [Sc Cor: 1548]
Seek where there is none.
  goat’s wool A non-existent commodity; figment of the imagination.
  goat’s hair [Nhb] Streaky clouds (from the appearance).
  Stamshaw nanny-goat [naut] (These goats, in the Portsmouth area, had a reputation for butting on sight.) An irascible mess-mate.
  old as Atty Hayes’ goat [Cork] (Atwell Hayes was father to Sir Henry Hayes, sheriff of Cork in 1790; the goat was old when Sir Henry was young, and did not die until Sir Henry’s son-in-law became mayor in 1800, when its meat was served at the mayoral banquet.)
  the goat gies a good milking, but she ca’s [ =calls=overturns—Sc Nhb Yks] ower the cog [pail] wi’ her feet [Sc: 1721] Of one who nullifies a good deed with a bad one.
  where one doth milke a goat, another holds under a sive [Hieron, Works In.586—1616] There is always someone in a position to waste another’s effort.
  milk a he-goat into a sieve Attempt a hopeless impossibility.
  if you put a silk dress on a goat he is a goat still [Ire] Fine clothes cannot alter a person’s character.
  kid (n) [1719] Child. Now in widespread use, unfortunately, for even though their parents behave like goats, that is no reason to abuse the children. The implication is that the adults have recognised themselves.
  kid (v) [1811] Deceive, fool (as if treating someone like a gullible kid and making them act or appear like one).
  has not the gumption of a kid [Lan]
  cangle [quarrel, wrangle—Sc Nhb]/strive about uncoft [un-bought—Sc NCy] gait [goat]/kids [Sc] You quarrel over nothing and will shortly be the loser by it. (Like the man who, before he had even bought the goat, fell out with a friend about the best way to drive it home, fought, lost his money and so couldn’t buy it after all.)

E.24b Tethers

religion [<Lat religio=a tying down or back, binding] A way of life involving commitment, restrictions and disciplines like those imposed by an animal’s tether.
  the goat must browse where she is tied [1611] Of any restrictions to action.
  where the buck [he-goat] is bound, there must he bleat [Sc] Men must endure the disadvantages of their circumstances.
**in one tether** [Lnk] Married.

**length of tether** [Edb] Full scope.

**live within the tether** [Ken] Live within bounds, within your means.

**bred at a short tether** [Sc 1814] Raised in poverty.

**tighten his tether** [Shr] Restrict, restrain.

**the shorter the bineen** [tether-rope—Ir-Gael], the less chance of a broken leg

Someone under strict control is not likely to get into trouble.

**go to the length of his tether** [Sc Shr] Exhaust his means.

**run your tether** [Sc] Reach the end of your resources.

**run your tether-length** [Cai Rnf] Pursue a reckless course that leads to calamity.

**come/run to the end of his rope** Be finally checked in wrongdoing. As also, **his rope** is out and at the end of his rope/band [wYks] = at the end of his resources.

**run to the tether’s end** [Edb] Go to the limit, as far as possible.

**at the end of his tether** [1523] At the limit of his endurance; resources; capabilities.

**ye’ll ne’er rowte** [bellow] in my tether **[Sc]** Will never be welcome.

**trip over the tether** [Sc] Prove recalcitrant; refuse to fulfil an obligation; fail to keep an appointment [Gall].

**get the wrong end of the tether** [Lnk] Misunderstand; make a mistake.

**rax** [stretch violently—Sc Ire nEng] over the tether **Go further than is allowed.**

**graze beyond the tether** [nYks] Live beyond your means.

**slip the tether** [Sc] Break loose, throw off restraint.

**loup** [leap over] the tether **(n and v)** [Sc] Break(er) from restraint, tearaway.

**take tether** [Ayr] Take licence.

**tether by the teeth** [Lakel neLan] Attract, detain by good food.

**put a tether to his tongue** [Sc] Reduce to silence.

**make a tether of one hair** [Sc] Make much ado about nothing. (See D.15c.)

**better hold by a hair as draw by a tedder** [Sc] Better to be in actual possession than to hold a title, however good.

**get to your string’s end** [Nhp] Reach the end of your story, money etc.

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**E.25a Pigs**

**pig** (n) [1546] Greedy person. ‘Don’t make a pig of yourself!’=don’t be too greedy. What happens when a metaphor becomes accepted as literal is illustrated by the reaction of the townsman who, on first being introduced to feeding time in the sty, exclaimed ‘Rightly is they called pigs!’

**pig** (n) [Sc 1869] Hot-water bottle, often stone or earthenware.

**hog** (v) [Amer 1884] Take all or an unfair share of something; appropriate selfishly.

**hog** (n) [Sc] Curling stone that does not attain the distance line (from laziness!).

**road-hog** Traveller who takes up more than their share of the road.

**fat/greedy/lazy/lovous/rude** [Cor]/**sick/wilful as a pig/hog/porker**

**high as a hog, all but the bristles** [1670] Of a short person.

**talk hog-high** [S.Pepys, Diary—3 March 1660] Talk confidently.
sick as a gissy [pig—Sc nEng]
go/run hog-wild [Amer late 1800s] Act boldly and without restraint; become wildly excited.
hog-age [Amer] Between boyhood and manhood. (This derives from the original meaning of hog or hoggaster as an animal in its second year, usually a yearling sheep, sometimes a second-year swine.)
lie like a pig [Aus] Tell clever lies.
gruff and grunt like a boar pig [Cor] Of a pompous old man.
routing [snoring] like a hog [1546]
sleep like a pig/pigs/swine Soundly and noisily.
live with a hog and you’ll grunt like one [Kenty Tenn] On the assimilating effect of bad company.
by fits and starts—as the hog pisseth

Dr Kettel was wont to say that Seneca writes as a Boore does pisse, scilicet by jirkes

[J.Aubrey, *Brief Lives*—c. 1690]
pig-jump [Aus] One taken off all four legs, often of a horse jumping playfully.

pig-jump drunk as a pig/swine Disgustingly so.
cloggy [fat and heavy—Cum] as a fat sow
lobberheaded [=lopperheaded<lopper, to curdle, coagulate—Sc] as a sow [Geo] Stupid.
long pig Human flesh as food for cannibals (their name for it!).

E.25b Pigs—parts and attributes

pig-chafted [Lakel]/swine-greuned [pigchafted—Lakel] Having the upper jaw projecting beyond the lower.
within a hog’s gape Very near.
in a pig’s whistle/whisper [Amer] In a moment.
pig’s whisper A loud stage whisper [nlre]; a very low whisper [Nhp]; a short space of time [Nhp].
you must expect a grunt from a pig [1731]/ what can ye expect frae a soo but a grumph [Lnk]/grunt [Nhbr eYks] Of foul-mouthed persons.
you can’t take the grunt out of a pig [NJ Mrld Ohio] Of an incorrigible curser.
don’t rain every time de pig squeal [NY SC] Calamity does not follow every alarm.
sow-luggit [Sc Ire] With ears hanging down.
hog-back/hog’s back A hill ridge (so-shaped).
hog-backed [Bnff Ken] Of a ship whose fore and aft have sagged lower than the amidships.
sow-backed mutch [woman’s or infant’s cap—Sc Nhb Cum IMa] Cap with a fore and aft ridge, giving it the shape of a sow’s back.

hog-leg/hog’s leg [Msri Ark wAmer] Large pistol.

pig-footed [Lan] Of a warp—having the half-beers [beers are the numbers of ends, part of the warp] drawn through one another.

pig-sweat [wYks] Great haste; a ruffled temper.

as much use as tits on a boar [Amer]

pig-tail (v) [Amer: 1753] Follow.

pig-tail (n) Plait of hair falling behind the head.

pig-tail candle The smallest candle, put in to make weight [Yks].

you can’t make a cigar [Vmt]/whistle [ Colo] out of a pig’s tail Of one who would never respond to reform.

like a pig’s tail—going all day and nothing done at night [Lan: 1865]

esquire at the end of a man’s name is like the quirk [twist, turn, curl—passim] of a pig’s tail, more for ornament than use [wYks Som]

not care/give/worth the bristle of a swine

dark as black hogs [eSuf] Of a dark night.

### E.25c Pigs feeding

nose out [1767] Search for and find.

nose around [1879] Search.

poke your nose into [1611] Interfere in.

nosey/nebby [wYks Penn WVir] Interferingly inquisitive. (As/from the above.)

unearth [1820] Discover in the course of rummaging.

root (v) Rummage, search; create confusion and a mess [Sc wIre nEng Ken Amer].

root for … [Amer 1942] Support a person or (football) team with active help or encouragement.

got it from nature, as the pig got the rooting in the ground [Ire]

rooting like an unrung swine [Cum wYks]

rootle (v) [dig for roots with snout] Explore; rummage around; do research; search variously.

root hog or die Work or starve.

you can’t root with the hogs and have a clean nose [Ark Kan] On the contamination of bad company.

swine through Do work in a slovenly and wasteful manner [Cum]; use wastefully or extravagantly [Lakel].

run the cruntle [pig’s forehead—Nhb] Run foul of anything.

pig’s breakfast Anything or anyone unsavoury or unattractive.

rough as a pig’s breakfast [Aus NZ]

trough (n) Source of food or income; dining place.

hog’s trough [eSuf] Hollow between two furrow slices in the plowing.
batten on [1641] Abuse someone’s hospitality or generosity by indulging your own
greed at their expense; behave like a gluttonous parasite. (The basic meaning=thrive,
improve by feeding, and was applied [Nhb] to bringing up small children.)
living at the best end of the pig-trough In (rude) luxury.
has his feet in the trough Is concerned in the matter.
rattle the bucket and run [Cor] Do something, then avoid the consequences.
pigs won’t follow an empty bucket [Lan] To get co-operation, have something on
offer.
sprawls and spraughles [scrambles—Sc Ire nEng] like a swine at the piggin [feed-
pail: Sc]
has a foot in the dish Gains a footing; gets a share.
hog-wash Worthless, inferior stuff—especially poor writing.
I’ll make a rope of draf to hold you [Sc] Recognising that someone really wants to
stay and it will not take much to detain them.
the civil sow eats of the draf [brewers’ grains, husks, refuse, hog’s wash—Sc nEng]
Beware of quiet folk; a quiet one often comes off best [Lan]; do not advertise your plans.
Also of those whose innocent looks belie them.
the still [quiet/wheem pleasant, gentle, calm—Sc nEng] sow eats up all the draf
[Abd nYks Lan: c. 1225]the still sow eats the loud sow’s meat/the quietest sow sups
the most wash [Glo Amer]/the quiet pig eats the cabbage [Ire] (As/from the above.)
still sow One who is crafty and sly in keeping quiet and seizing opportunities.
as the sow fills the draf sours [Sc wYks] The better satisfied, the harder to please;
disillusion comes with satiety.
draf is good enough for swine [Sc wYks] We do not need to provide good food or
conditions for ‘the likes of them’.
if you get mixed up in swill, you’ll be eaten up by the swine [NDak]
a turd is as good for a sow as a pancake
if a man has one pig he makes it fat, and if he has one child he spoils it
go at it like a pig at a tatur [=potato—Ire NCy] With gusto and relish.
pleased as a pig with a pea [Dor]
as a pig loves marjoram Not at all.
nor give cherries to pigs nor advice to a fool [Ire]
every hog his own apple [1748] Fair shares.
he goes munching and slobbering on at his meat liker a swine routing apples in a
pail of wash ner owt else Of a noisy eater [Cum].
the worst hog often gets the best pear [1666] We do not all get our deserts.

E.25d Pigsties

build pig-pens Cheat a customer (with a deceptively large pile of timber for sale—
stacked hollow in the middle).
do not build the sty until the litter comes [Ire Miss] Early work might be wasted.
the sty before the litter [Ire] An act of prudence.
sty (n) Dirty, ill-kept house; place of debauchery.
mucky as a pigsty
don’t expect perfumes in a pigsty Don’t expect more than is natural.
who kicked your pigsty? Be quiet; don’t interrupt; mind your own business.
pigsty doors Trousers buttoned with flap-fronts [War].
pig in with.../pig it/pig together [1675] Crowd together; share lodgings or bed. (Deprecatingly.)

feed like a boar in a frank [fattening sty]

Where sups he? doth the old boare feede in the old Franke?
[Shaks, Hy IVii II.ii—1598]

a sneck [latch, fastener] before his snout [Cum Yks Der: 1583] An obstacle in his way.
lish [Lan Yks] as a cast-iron pig-trough Ironical.

E.25e Pigs in muck

happy as a pig/sow [n&wLin]/pigs in muck/ shit [passim] Contented with sensual pleasure only.

all of a hog stog [muddy wallow—Dev Cor] In a muddle.
snore like a pig in a muck-midden [wYks]

wallow in [1380] Take a coarse and extreme pleasure in; enjoy to the full; indulge feelings excessively as in sentimental or sensational fiction, where self-pity, ‘situations’, past memories etc. are immoderately represented.

wash a hog and it will return to its wallow [Ill] The reformed usually revert to type.
a pig in mud tries to make others dirty Foul habits are contagious.
run with the hogs and they will rub dirt on you [Ind]
dirty as a hog [UK NC Calif]/pig [NC Tenn Neb Calif sAmer]
a pig used to dirt turns up its nose at rice boiled in milk [NY SC]

E.25f Pigs in other places

pigs in the blanket Oysters baked in bacon slices. (See also J.65, angels/devils on horse-back.)

like a pig in a straw-heap [Cum] Lurking in the background.
snug as a pig in pea-straw [1607]
pigs in clover Moneyed folk who don’t know how to behave in society.
pricks up her ears like an old sow in beans
hear as hogs in harvest (that just lift up their heads, then straight down to their feed again)
on and on like a pig in a harvest field [Nrf]
gruffled [fattened—Cor] up like an arrish [stubble after harvesting—s&wEng] pig [Cor]
call the hogs to the hill [Abd] Snore.
hardy as a forest pig [Glo]
common as pig tracks [Tenn Calif]
like a pig in a well [Lin] Without visible means of support; often of orphans.
like a hog on ice [Amer] Obstinate—although awkward and insecure, yet reluctant to come off it.
a pig in the parlour is still a pig [NY SC]
put a pig in a palace, it’s still a pig [nStf]

E.25g Pigs variously treated

wilful as a pig that will neither lead nor drive [1678] (See also E.25j, higgledy-piggledy.)
    it is hard driving a black pig in the dark Of any task where the nature of things makes it difficult.
necessary—as an old sow among young children! Decidedly unnecessary, indeed to be avoided.
    swine, women and bees cannot be turned [1678]
    mad as a pulled swine [Cum]
    a pig to be shaved! [NCy]/is there a mule to shave? [wYks] Facetious comment on the gathering of a curious crowd.
    it melts/works like butter/soap in a sow’s arse Applied to a business when it grows ever more involved and troublesome.
    work like wax in a sow’s ear Probably an ‘improved’ version of the above.
    enough physic to puzzzen [=poison] a swine [Cum]
    it is good to place a ring in the nose of a pig that turns up the ground Give a man some self-interest in that field where there is a fear he may do harm; discourage the exploiters, the destructive ones.
    never ring a pig that has to root for a living [NY SC]
    no hog ever grunted the ring out of its nose [Ont] Disadvantages cannot be grumbled away.
    ring (v) [ScnEng Oxf Brks wSom Cor] Restrain, variously.
    safe as a pig-ring
    a fair woman, unchaste, is like a gold ring in a sow’s nose [See G. Chaucer, The Prologue of the Wyves Tale of Bathe ln. 784–1386]
    miserable as a pig in pattens [Hrf]
    suitable as a saddle on a sow! [1546] ‘Her clothes sit on her like a saddle on a sow’s back’—i.e. grotesquely.
    like the grices [pigs—Sc nEng], if you kittle [tickle] their wame [belly], they’ll fall on their back [Sc] Of loose women.
on the pig’s back [Ire 1900] Prospering, on top of the world, in luck.
home on the pig’s back [Aus NZ] Successful and easy. Said when a task is satisfactorily finished. (As above.)
have the pig on your back [Ire] Be unfortunate.
sour [bad-tempered] as a rig [a half-castrated or half-developed male animal—Sc nEng Not Lin Glo EAn Wil Dor Som Cor]

E.25h Flying pigs

pigs might fly—but they aren’t very likely birds [1865] The retort to what is thought very improbable.
if a pig had wings he might fly [Sc Ont] Even if you get what you want you’ll never do what you say.
fine as flying pigs
flying pig Trench mortar bomb [WW1]; freight train carrying pork [1920s].

E.25i Piglets

happy as little pigs in new straw Well-contented [sLan].
little pigs have big ears Careful what you say! I don’t want the children to overhear what we are discussing, they understand more than you think.
all of a litter like kitter [delicate—sLan] pigs All very similar.
like a sow and nine pigs in a rut [eSuf] Very dirty.
a yell [=geld, barren] sow was never good to grices [young pigs—Sc: 1628 Geo Ala] Of folk who, childless themselves, are harsh to others’ children.
pig (n) [1589] A smelted ingot of iron or lead. (The larger ingots were originally called sows and came from the main channel into which the ore was run, the smaller side channels producing pigs, so-called from the similarity of arrangement to that of a sow suckling piglets. Note that at first ‘pig’ was confined to the young of the swine and only from the later C16 was extended to swine of all ages. This distinction still obtains locally in Hampshire.)
greek [runt in a litter—Yks] The weakling in a family; puny child generally.
squealing like a nestle-tripe [last piglet in a litter: Wil nDor]
suck the hind teat/tit Be last in the order of priority; underprivileged.
more pigs than dills [paps on a sow—Suf] Of a large family with an inadequate income.
a pig of your own sow [c. 1535] The result of your own actions; something by rights your own.
if I like the sow I like her litter [Ire] Family loyalty.
the young pig grunts like the old sow [1678] When children repeat what they have heard from their parents.

child’s pig, father’s bacon [c.1350] Of nominal ownership, and of a situation where the younger partner has the larger share of the work, and the older of the benefits.

E.25j Selling pigs

weighing a pig does not make it fatter Overpreoccupation with a problem does not solve it; it is pointless to dwell on unwelcome truths; research does not alter the facts.

silence in the pigmarket! (and let the old sow have a grunt!) [1894]/the fat pig wants to speak A playground ploy to obtain silence.

you’ve been down the pigmarket [War] You are getting as shrewd as the dealers there.

he has brought/taken his pigs to a bonny/ fine market [1659: Nhp et al.] He has failed through his own fault. (Ironical—unsuitable and so unprofitable.)

drive pigs to market Snore.
carry pigs to market Try hard to get results or do business.

bring your hogs to a bad/the wrong market Miscalculate; be disappointed; fail in an attempt.

higgledy-piggledy In random order or arrangement, especially without reference to seniority. (Unlike cattle or poultry, pigs do not observe a ‘pecking order’ when on the move.)

as narrow in the nose as a pig at ninepence [Ant] Of a very stingy person.

so bandy-legged he couldn’t stop a pig in a ginnel [narrow passage between buildings etc.—Lan Yks]/snick [narrow passage between houses—Sus]/passage [Cor]

hog-tied [i.e. by all four feet] Prevented, frustrated.

a pig of the worse pannier [1533] The worse alternative.

in a creel Confused, stupefied (like pigs taken to market in a basket or pannier on horseback).

buy a pig in a poke [1562] Buy something that you cannot examine; buy a thing of doubtful quality because untested.

bag-mouth open! [Chs] All secrets are out, the facts have come to light, all is now clear.

last shake of the bag The youngest child.

when the pig is proffered, hold up the poke Seize the opportunity.

E.25k Killing pigs

fat as a bacon-hog [Suf]
a swine over-fat is cause of his own bane [1549] Of rich men who are a temptation to thieves etc.
then comes a pig to be killed An expression of disbelief.
hog-killing time [Msri Ark] A time of special enjoyment, celebration.
there are more ways of killing a pig than cutting its throat/choking it with butter [Lan Shr]/hanging him [Glo] There are more ways than one of doing a job.
bleed like a stuck pig Copiously.
dead pig [Nhb] An affair concluded satisfactorily.
cunning/subtle as a dead pig Ignorant and stupid.
like a pig, he’ll do no good alive
like a pig, no good to anyone till he’s cut up and you’ve got the flitch Of a stingy old man.
dead sow’s eye A badly stitched buttonhole.
grease the fat sow (in the arse) [Sc Nrf Ont: 1549] Act superfluously; give to the rich, try to bribe them.
every man flamms [bastes] the fat sow’s arse [Sc] (As/from the above.)
cold pig [wYks] Goods returned and left on your hands, like surplus newspapers etc.

E.25l Particular pigs

St Anthony’s pig [1425]/Tantony pig [c. 1460] A sponger; the type of person who follows unthinkingly; the tantony=the small bell near the church porch, or small hand-bell. St Anthony has such a bell on his tau staff or round the neck of his attendant pig. (From the name given to the pet pig or smallest pig in a litter, St Anthony being the patron saint of swineherds.)
follow about like an Anthony pig/Tantony pig Very closely. (As/from the above— would follow anyone who would feed them.)
you would be a good Borrowstown sow, you sense [smell out] so well [Sc] Find out secrets.
he thought a lie—like Cox’s pig
deck [conceited, over-confident—Hmp Wil Dor Dev] as Cox’s pig
fierce as Cox’s pig [Glo] Probably a corruption of the above.
drunk as David’s sow [Nhp 1652] (David Lloyd, an innkeeper of Hereford, had a sow with six legs and took some customers to see her, not realising that his wife had repaired to the sty to sleep off the effects of drink. ‘Did you ever see the like?’ said David, and one of the visitors confirmed that she was the drunkenest sow that ever he had seen.)
ignorant as the pigs of Dublin [Nhb]
drunk as Essex hogs
like Goodyer’s pig, never well but when he’s doing mischief [Chs: 1670]
they’ll come again—as Goodyer’s pigs did Never.
like Giles Heathertrap’s old boar, ye need but shake a clout at him to make him turn and gore Of an irascible and dangerous man.
you thought wrong, like Hob’s hog who fancied that the butcher who came to kill him had brought him his breakfast [Lei Nhp]
like the Irishman’s pig, he’ll neither lead nor drive
it’s gone over Borough hill [a Roman camp near Daventry] after Jackson’s pig [Nhp] Of something lost.
like Kilpike’s/Saughton [Sc] swine, your neb’s ne’er out an ill turn [Sc] To mad pranksters.
lying in lavender, like Paddy’s pig [Ire] In comfort.
come back again like the pigs o’ Pelton [Dur] Never.
bow-legged as Potter’s pig [Kidderminster, Wor]
sandy as a Tamworth pig Of a red-haired woman, and implying that she is likely to be lusty and prolific.
mad as Shay swine (There are several farms in Lancashire and west Yorkshire with this name and at one of them, presumably, a breed of mad pigs was kept.)
like old Simpson’s sow—cannot do much talking, but’s a divel to think [sLan]

E.26a Ducks

has as much sense/is as wise as a sucking duck [wYks War]
happy as a duck
fierce as a dig [duck—Ire Yks Lan Chs]
wise as a drake Ironical.
tight as a duck’s arse—and that’s watertight
mouth screwed up like a duck’s fert [arsehole—Cor]
dother [=dodder, wobble about] like a duck [Nhb] Stagger, wobble about, dither, shake.
waddle like a duck with egg [Cum]/pregnant duck
prate is prate, but it is the duck that lays the eggs [1659]
duckfoot (v) Measure a distance by placing the feet side by side, one after the other.
duck-footed Walking with toes turned inwards.
always sitting down, like a duck [Cor] Of one who cannot stand for long.
lame duck [1761] Disabled person; someone in need of help; virtual failure; official who cannot be re-elected [Amer]; a ship so damaged that it cannot keep up with the convoy; industry or firm needing government subsidy to keep in business; defaulting stockbroker.
blue duck [Aus NZ] A dud; rumour that proves unfounded; anything which does not come up to expectation.
be all over him like a duck over a June bug [Calif] Beat him soundly.
a toad is a diamond in a duck’s eye Anything is valued by someone somewhere.
fits like the feathers on a duck
duck’s bill  Chairmaker’s tool for boring holes [wSom]; stout paper tongue stuck under a printer’s tympan sheet.

**E.26b Ducks and water**

he kens the loan frae the crown o’ the causey as weel as the duck does the midden-hole frae the addle-dub [hole full of foul water] Is rather obtuse; is no connois-seur of finer distinctions [Sc].

- mucky as a duck-pond [nYks]/dub [Cum]
- rather be a big duck in a little pond than a little duck in a big one [Amer]
- web-footed [1945] Of units in the forces whose duties are often in water.
- will a duck swim? Expressing ready acceptance of an offer [Ire sLan].
- swadder [dabble in water—Cum] like a duck in a puddle
- swatter [flutter and splash in water—Sc Ire nEng] Squander, waste money.
- she has an eye in her head that would fetch a duck off the water A very persuasive look. ‘It would charm the ducks off the water’ [wYks].
- cocks up his eye like a duck at thunder [Lan nIre] In astonishment. ‘Look like a duck athen thunder’ [Cor].
- wet enough to bog a duck [Aus]
- no more use than a duck quacking against thunder [wYks]
- like a dying duck in a thunderstorm In agonies of regret; with upturned eyes; with a mixture of astonishment and distress.
- not say quack [sChs] Be silent; keep a confidence.

**E.26c Ducks and man**


- teach your grandmother to grope ducks [1611]/a goose! The retort to one who presumes to offer advice to someone with ample experience. (Older village women had the knack of telling by feel whether their ducks or geese were likely to be laying away.)
- duck-squeezer [Amer] Environmentalist, conservationist.
- chance the ducks [Aus 1858 orig. sChs] Do a thing regardless of risk, come what may. (Leave them to take a chance with the fox? Another possible derivation is from dook [fortune—Romany].)
- you might as well be nibbled to death by ducks as pecked to death by a hen [1678] The disadvantages of the single and married life are different but equally bad. (In Lincolnshire the phrase ‘nibbled to death by ducks’ usually refers to the fussy, fidgety ways of particular persons.)
feel like/happy as a duck in a stocking [Wor Hrf] Uncomfortably out of place.
as much use for it as a duck has for an umbrella
left me like Hockin’s duck, without mate or fellow [Cor]
like Farmer Hockin’s ducks, more gab than guts [Cor]
it would have been Cooper’s ducks with me [Ess Ken] The end of me.
like Morley’s ducks, born without a notion [Not] Said when anyone does something
foolish or thoughtless.
weak in parts, like Martin Harvey’s duck [Cor]
one behind the other like Scazza [=Portscatho] men’s ducks [Cor]
two abreast, like Jan Pasca’s ducks [Cor]
if he gives a duck, he expects a goose Has an ulterior motive; does everything for his
own advantage.

E.27a Geese and ganders

anserine [<Lat anserinus=like a goose] Silly.
gander (v) [1887] Peer, gape, look inquisitively over someone’s shoulder (like a
gander stretching its neck for a better look).
gander (n) A curious and surreptitious inspection. (As/from the above.)
like a gander geokin’ [peering] at a bussa [coarse, earthenware vessel—Dev Cor] Of
someone torn between curiosity and suspicion, nervously inquisitive.
gander (n) [Amer] A man living apart from his wife. (See E.27b, on the gander-hill.)
goose (n) Prostitute [C18]; foolish person [1547].
goose (v) Poke or tickle in genital regions; have sex with someone [sl. C20] (probably
connected with the above).
gooshy [Amer] Touchy, sensitive, jumpy. (As/ from the above.)
daft/dizzy/fierce/fond/gaumless [Lat]/giddy/ noisy [Cor] as a goose
goose-headed [nYks] Brainless.
wild as a cock goose [wSom] Angry.
wise as a gander/goose [1509] Ironical.
gaumless [slow, stupid, lacking in gumption—sLan] as a gander
gonner-head/gonner-noped/gonner-pate [n&wEng]/goose-brained [Sc]
Thoughtless, foolish.
gander/gander-head (v) [Wxf Chs Shr EAn Brks] Wander aimlessly; also in speech.
no dew will rest upon a gander [Wal] Nothing will take a wary person by surprise.
goose-neck [Nhp] Two-pointed stick to secure thatch; the two ends of a pilchard seine
when lashed together after enclosing a catch not large enough to fill the seine [Looe,
Cor].
goose-necked [wMid]/steg-necked [eYks] Of corn with heads bending towards the
ground.
steg-necked [gander-necked—Cum] ligger A layer in a hedge the end of which is
split.
fat as a tailor’s goose [his iron] (So-called from the shape of the handle like a goose’s neck; it also hisses when spat upon.)

hot and heavy like a tailor’s goose Applied to a passionate woman.

open as a goose’s eye

the beak of the goose is no longer than that of the gander [Ire] Men are gossips no less than women.

gander-flank/gander-leg (v) [Lin] Frolic, lark about—especially at night.


good as goose-skins that never man had enough of [Chs C17–C20] like shit through a goose [Can] Very quickly.

loose as a goose [Amer] Relaxed, with easy motion. (Goose-droppings suggest loose bowels.)


goose-turd green

such a reason my goose pissed! [1616] In dismissal of a feeble excuse.

by fits and girds [starts], as an ague takes a goose [War Som]

the summer goose/summer’s geese A heat haze [wYks eLan]; gossamer [NCy wYks].

E.27b Geese breeding

the winning goose generally loses a feather or two [swDur neYks] Success in law is often costly.

it is a good goose that’s ay dropping [Sc: 1628] Do not be too demanding of your friends.


goose egg [Amer] Score of zero. (As in ‘out for a duck’.)

great as a goose’s egg

steg [gander—Sc Ire nEng Nrf Suf Wil] with egg One filled with baseless pride; stiff and stately—‘going like a steg with egg’.

gone is the goose that the great egg laid [Sc] Sorry! the supply has finished.

a setting goose gets no feathers [Kenty Ill Miss Kan] You won’t gain anything by hanging around here.

lonely as a steg in sitting time [Wm]

on the gander-hill [wYks] Of a husband whose wife is confined.


gander-moon/gander-month [Chs Der Nrf Suf IW] The month of a woman’s confinement (because the man is then as much at a loss as the gander when the goose is sitting). A gander-mooner is the husband during his wife’s confinement. Some marital infidelity was expected and even condoned during this time [C17–C19].

steg-month [nEng Wil] The month from childbirth to full recovery.

no more sense than a sucking gander [Chs]

innocent as a goose-chick

wise as a sucking gully [goslin—Shr] Ironical.

weak as a midsummer gosling [Hrf]

geslins [NCy]/goslings [War] Pussy willow blossom (from the colour).
in th’ goslins [Msri Ark] In adolescence, often of a boy when his voice is breaking.
green gaislin [Sc] Foolish youngster.
a good goose may have an ill gaislin [Sc] Children do not always take after their parents.
daft as a gorse-going goslin [Cum]

E.27c Geese feeding

a goose could not graze after him [1611] Of one who leaves little behind him,
    he hopes to see a goose graze on your head [1509] (Geese were often pastured in graveyards.)
    a goose walking over your grave! Commenting on a long or unusual silence.
    hears with his heels as geese do in hairst [= harvest—Sc] Heard, but pretended not to.
    a young wife and a harvest goose Much gaggle with both.
    the goose will drink as deep as the gander Girls benefit from education no less than boys.
    gander-/gonner-bitten [Freckleton, Lan 1980s] Jagged, ragged; also of fine cracks in pottery.
    to as much purpose as to give a goose hay Uselessly (because the goose will not take it).

E.27d Geese and water

goslins lead the geese to water [1642] When the young show more initiative than their elders.
    shall the goslins teach the geese to swim? (As above.)
    gay as a goose in a gutter
    to as much purpose as the geese slurr [slide—Sc Ire n&wEng] on the ice [1670]
E.27e Geese and other animals

all his geese are swans [1621] He exaggerates, over-estimates the merits of his own friends, ideas etc.; of one over-loyal or too partial. Hence,

keep a swannery (As/from the above.)

goose-quill is more dangerous than a lion’s claw The written word is more potent than force.

it is a blind goose that knows not a fox from a fern-bush [1580] Everyone needs to recognise their natural enemy.

little by little the wolf eats up the goose Beware of gradual encroachment.

E.27f Geese and man

if I cannot kep [catch—Sc Ire nEng] goose, I’ll kep gaislin [Sc 1641]/goslin/if I canna keep geese, I’ll keep geslins [Cum] Take it out on his children or friends.

if you have a goose you’ll get a goose You must expect that like will come of like.

kaik about [wander listlessly—Cum] like a pet goose

clip his wings [1578] Restrict his freedom; reduce his conceit; limit the scope of his ambition; limit his spending. (The flight-feathers of geese, ducks etc. are clipped to prevent straying.)

pinion (v) [cut off the pinion to prevent flight: 1558] Tie or otherwise confine a person’s arms, usually to his side.

has a nose that would stab geese [Hex-ham,Nhb] i.e. long and pointed.

fond [stupid] as a goose nicked in the head [Cum Yks] (The effect of this practice, widespread at one time, was to make the birds lethargic, and so more easily fattened.)

go about like a goose cut/nicked in the head [Nhb eDur] Confused and bewildered.

have a nick on the head [Lin]/nicked at/in the head [Lakel wYks] Be lacking in wit.

dazed as a goose with a nail in its head [sLan]

Ile yeeld him thee asleepe, Where thou maist knocke a nail into his head.

[Shaks, Tempest III.i—1611]

sizel [saunter, walk in rocking manner—Lakel neLan] about like geese nicked i’ th’ heid [Cum]

a mazed goose [wYks] Someone astonished.

dance/hop like a steg on a hot griddle [Wm Cum] Act uneasily.

beat goose Flap hands under the armpits to warm them. (Also beat the booby, see D.7d.)

give the bird Hiss like a goose to show disapproval of a performance.

get goose [Nhp] Get a good scolding.
like geese on a common Describing a party liable to behave aggressively; also of an untidy column of march.

teethy [peevish, crabby, pugnacious—Sc wYks Lan Lin] as a steg at a gate [wYks]
good goose, bite not! A phrase used in mock propitiation of someone using empty threats [Shaks, R&J II.iv—1596; Hy Porter, Two Angry Women… In. 2394–1599].
couldn’t say boo to a goose [1572] Of someone very timid.
head and chief, like Tom Aylis among the geese [Cor] Spoken disparagingly of someone who is eminent only because his companions are on an even lower level.
you’re a man among the geese—when the gander’s away! [Chs: 1670] You only excel in female society when you have no rivals; only of consequence when no one of the slightest importance is present.
many women, many words, many geese, many turds [c. 1350]
full of fun and fooister [bustle, fuss—Ire Cor], like Mooney’s goose
like Jan Tresize’s geese, never happy unless they be where they baint [Cor]
the Winchester goose [1543] Syphilis. (So-called because the brothels of Southwark were, in the C16, under the Bishop of Winchester’s jurisdiction. There is also a connection with the slang, goose=prostitute.)

gossamer [=goose-summer=St Martin’s summer, from 11 November, when many geese were eaten] Spiders’ threads (everywhere plentiful in fine weather at this season).
gone goose/gosling Abandoned ship; person left in the lurch; someone/something past hoping or praying for.
pluck his goose for him Lower his pride (as if he were a goose deprived of his plumage).
they must be plucking geese in Scotland When it snows!
Widecombe folk are picking/plucking their geese [1850] (As above.)
the old woman is picking her geese [seWor Oxf]/shaking her feather-poke [nwLin] (As above.)
light as a sack of feathers
two feathers out of a goose A very small part of anything.
give a goose and charge for the garlic Undercharge for the main item and recoup on incidentals or after-sales service.
everything is lovely and the goose hangs high (i.e. out of the fox’s reach) Everything is in order and taken care of.
you find fault with a fat goose Criticise unnecessarily.
as full of shit as a Christmas goose [Amer] Of one who talks much nonsense, is much mistaken.
like the laird of Macfarlane’s geese, that liked their play better than their meat [1628] (King James VI had watched a flock of geese playing on Loch Lomond, and when confronted by a tough bird at dinner, made this remark.) Often to children who come in late to supper from their play.

E.27g Geese for the table
E.28a Cocks

cock (v)—the eye, nose, ears etc. [Sc Nhb Cum nwYks] Turn up in a jaunty, impudent, defiant and assertive manner, like a cock in its own yard.

killick [<Cor culyek=cock] (from having spur-like flukes) Cornish anchor made of wood and stones, and still used across the Atlantic [Nfld NewEng Vir Bermuda].

proud as a cock

as kneef/knief [lively—Sc] as any cock

cock-head Upper part of spindle carrying millstone in flour-mill [Shr]; large flakes of curd in cheese-making [sChs].

cock-headed [Sc] Conceited, whimsical.


cock’s eye [wLan] Halo round the moon.

not care/give/worth a cock’s/hen’s feather ['a cockes fether or an hennes’—W.Langland, *Piers the Plowman*—1377]

cock-ma-dandy [Nhb nYks] Self-important man; bully.

cock-mantle (v) [Cum] Domineer over, bully.

cock-footed With feet turned in.


at (old) Christmas the days are longer by a cock’s stride [Shl Cum]

flew at him like a cock at a bilberry

jump/loup [Lnk] (at it) like a cock at a grosset [gooseberry—Sc]/grozet [nNhbl]/grozet [nNhbl] Accept, seize eagerly; indiscriminately. (See also I.7b.)

leap like a cock at a blackberry [1670] Of one who tries hard but achieves little.

a barleycorn is better than a diamond to a cock [C16] Values are relative and individual.

cock’s-comb Cutting blade sticking up from the plowshare and acting as a coulter [nwDev].

comb (n) [wSom] The hedge on top of the bank; the ridge on the house roof [wSom Dev].

raddle the comb [Shr] Become flushed or excited, from drink etc.

set up your comb Be proud, vainglorious.

cut his comb Reduce his conceit; humiliate [War wSom]. (The combs of capons were cut to make them paler, and to fatten the birds more quickly.)

I’ll have a young cock if I have to buy him a comb! Said by a woman on refusing an older suitor.

crouse [pleased, short-tempered, pugnacious—Sc Ire nEng] as a cock wi’ a double kame on

mean as a rooster in a thunder shower

keep it in, it’ll get pecking if you let it out! (sc. cock) To a man with his flies open.

crouse as a cock in his ain cavie [coop, fowl-house—Sc]

ye’ll ne’er craw in my cavie [Sc] Will never be welcome.

young cocks love no coops Young men are intolerant of restrictions.

fly the coop [Amer] Leave (home) suddenly; elope.
cooped up [1563] Closely confined, suffering from cramped quarters.


cock-crow ’n-kail [Rxb] Reheated broth (at least a day old, the cock having crowed over it).

cock-shut [the time for shutting up the fowls] Evening.

Thomas the Earle of Surrey and himselfe, Much about cockshut time,
from troupe to troupe
Went through the army cheering up the soldiors

[Shaks, Rich III V.v—1593]

the old cocks don’t like it when the young cocks begin to crow [Oxf] Of young persons joining in an argument or conversation.

the young cock crows as he heard the old one [nLin Can Amer: c. 1350]/as the auld cock craws, the young cock lears [Sc] Of children’s talk, when it recalls a parent’s words.

he has heard the old cock crow! (As/from the above.)
don’t crow so loud, rooster, you might lay an egg [Amer] Do not boast.
a good rooster will crow in any hen-yard [NMex] Of one who thrives wherever he is.

the red cock will crow on his house [Sc: 1815] His house will be burnt.
greedy as ten cocks scraping the dunghill for ae barley pickle [grain: Sc]
every cock crows on his own dunghill/it is a poor cock that canna craw on his own midden [Wm wYks Lan] Brave in the security of home; claiming the right to make decisions about your own household.
crow on other folk’s middens [sLan] Assert yourself away from home.
the jump of a cock on the dungheap [Ire] An expression of pride—in what!
cock on his own dunghill Local bully.
a cock’s ay crouse [bold, ‘cocky’] on his own midden [Sc Nhb] Anyone can be bold when safe at home.

That coc is kene on his owune mixenne

[Ancrene Riwle—c. 1200]

cock of the midden/midden-cock [Sc nEng] Chief man in a place; the top person in a group; boss; petty tyrant of his neighbourhood.
as uplifted as a midden cock upon pattens [wooden under-shoes, to raise the wearer out of the mud and wet: wYks] C.Brontë has ‘elate as any midden cock on pattens’ [Shirley xxvii].

cock of the roost [Sc Brks]/walk [Wm nwLin: 1688] The dominant spirit; one in control.
cock-walk The toll paid by a man who courts outside his own parish [wYks nDer].
rule the roost Be in command.

shake his/her crap [crop—Sc]/crop Give vent to a grudge; speak loudly and vehemently.

set up your crop [nYks] ‘Crow over’; be impertinent.
have sand in your craw [Mont Msri: 1867] Be determined, plucky, have ‘grit’.
sand [Amer 1883] ‘Grit’, courage (as above).
craw [=crow—Sc] in his crap [=crop—Sc] Be remembered to his discredit [nSc Edb Rnf].

cock-throppled [Lakel: 1617] With a large Adam’s apple; with a curved windpipe; often of horses with poor wind; also of a hedge in which the ligger has been cut untidily (the liggers being branches laid horizontally when a hedge is laid).

cock-and-hen Including both sexes.

faizart [hermaphrodite bird—Rxb] Puny effeminate man; shameless person.
a rooster one day and a feather duster the next! [Aus] On the insecurity of political life.

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E.28b Hens

not care/give/worth a hen

feckless [scatterbrained, ineffectual, impractical—Wm] as a hen
grey hen Large stone liquor bottle.

chittyprat [black hen with white speckles—Yks Lin] Pet term for child.
tappit [crested, tufted—Sc] hen A drinking vessel having a lid with a knob and containing one Scottish quart.

(how-)towdie [young hen that has never laid—Sc nEng] Young unmarried woman.
stiff as a mabyer [young hen that has never laid—wCor] Strong, sturdy.

Jenkin’s hen [one that never knew the cock] An old maid [Sc].
disconsolate as Dame Hockaday’s hen [Cor]

high/long in the legs, like Nanny Panter’s hens [Cor] Of thin, hungry-looking folk.
Shirelavat’s hen [Sc Ire] Hen past laying; woman past child-bearing [Gall Ire].

hen-toed [Nhp Oxf] With toes turning in.

hen’s toes [Abd Ags] Bad writing, ‘pot-hooks’.

hen-brained/hen-headed [wYks] Scatty, witless.

hen-hearted [Sc ShI Ire Cum] Feeble, timid, easily panicked.

fat as a hen in the forehead [1611] Very thin, wasted.

put a hat on a hen Do the impossible.

hen’s noseful [EAn eSuf] Very small amount.

rare [Eng]/scarce [Amer Aus] as hens’ teeth

smile like a hen’s tooth Not at all.

in the mou(l)t [Lan] Despondent. ‘Mopin’ as an ood hen i’ th’ mout’

pen-feathered/pin-feathered [with feathers only half-grown—Cum Lin Chs Not] Immature, callow; with goose-pimples; of a man, dirty and unshaven; of a woman, with frowsy and untidy hair; of a horse, with a rough coat.

like a hen afore day [Cor] Of one half-witted through being flustered.

mad [very angry—UK Can NC Tenn Neb Calif]/ mopey [NZ]/silly [Aus]/wanton as a wet hen

like a hen on a hot girdle/griddle [Sc Nhb: 1814] Fidgety, impatient, very restless.
women and hens by too much gadding are lost [1591]
be in a flap/get a flap on Panic (from the action of frightened poultry).
hen’s race A short distance.
henpecked [1688] Under wife’s orders.
pecking order [1928] Order of priority (such as hens exercise among themselves); a person’s place in society or an organisation.
my dame fed her hens on thanks, but they laid no eggs Verbal thanks are sometimes not enough.
they’ll flit in the Merse [where every hind could keep a few hens—Bwk] for a hen’s gerse [=grass]
all of one hen’s dab [snack, small quantity-Sc] All of the same kind [Dmb].
cock-melder [Lnk] The last grinding of a year’s grain (as, containing refuse, much is fed to the birds).
like hens that rin ay to the heap [Sc] Of those who help themselves to what there is most of on the table.
grain by grain the hen fills her belly [1653] Of gradual achievement.
walking and talking, like hens in harvest [Ant]
eating and complaining like a greedy hen [Ire]
fast as a hen picking bigg [four-rowed barley—Cum]
dip your beak [Cor] Have a drink; wet your whistle; get drunk.
 thou’s been dipping thi beak/bill in a good seed-box somewhere [Lan] Have fared well.
hens are free of horse-corn [1721] Of those who are extravagant with what is not theirs.
a crap [=crop] for all corn [Sc] Of someone who never refuses what is offered.
holds up her head like a hen drinking [Sc] Affects superiority.
scrat Work hard; earn a meagre living laboriously.
a good scratter [Wor] A thrifty, industrious person.
scrat before you peck Earn your food before you eat [sChs Shr].
she knows what it is to scrat before she pecks [Shr] Works hard for a living.
(As/from the above.)
have to scrat afore he picks, or else fly up wi’ an empty crop [wYks] Have to earn his keep or else go to bed hungry.
he that comes of a hen must scrape [1591] Must work if not born rich.
peck for yourself [wYks] Earn your own living.
give me the pip [a moping disease of poultry and hawks, affecting the tongue and so reducing the ability to feed : 1886] Disgust, nauseate, depress me.
in/on the pouk [disease of fowl causing them to moult] In declining health [Cld].
with one wing down [nLan] Ailing.
dock [fowl-pen, fowl-run, rabbit-hutch—Du] The prisoners’ pen in court; originally all the prisoners who were to appear that day were held there.
chicken-run [1995] To describe when MPs abandon a risky seat for a safer constituency before an election.
hen-house A predominantly female ménage; a household ruled by a woman.
hen-roost A rich source of plunder (from a speech by Lloyd George some time before 1909).
thrung [crowded—sLan] as a hencote door

battery girl One of many prostitutes in a large establishment where they are fed and drugged solely to increase their sexual appetite and capacity, just as the treatment of hens in battery houses conduces solely to increased egg-production and increased profits.

fierce as hen-muck [a very strong caustic manure]

God keep the cat out o’ our gate, for the hens canna flee [=fly: Sc] We cannot survive any ill-luck.

when the fox dies no hen weeps No sympathy from victims.

as much use for it as a hen has for a watch-fob

when the hen goes to the cock, the birds may get a knock [Sc: 1721] Said when widows, on remarrying, prove harsh to their children.

E.28c Eggs

nest-egg [1822] Nucleus of savings (to induce someone to save more, just as a pot egg encourages a hen to lay).

you need not lay without for want of a nest-egg [Sc] A warning against infidelity.

a hen that lays away should have a white nest-egg Make home more attractive to the wanderer.

a black hen can lay a white egg [Sc Ire NY Kenty Tenn] There is always hope of a bad person doing a good deed.

wants both the egg and the hen [1573] Wants two mutually exclusive things.

better an egg today than a hen tomorrow A small certainty rather than a remote quantity.

a laying hen is better than a standing mill Small production is better than none, whatever the source.

I’m nane o’ the birds that traik [wander, lost, and lay away—Abd Dmf] I can take care of myself.

she’s the white hen that never laid away Reputed faultless. Of one who thinks she is always in the right [nEng].

acts the white hen [wYks] Gives herself airs.

cackle (v) [late C17] Blab; reveal secrets in thoughtless or indiscreet conversation.

hen-cackle [NZ] A trifle.

if you would have a hen lay you must bear with her cackling [1659] Of a nagging wife.

it is a bad hen that cackles in your house and lays in another’s [1584] Of an unfaithful wife.

it is not the hen that cackles most that lays most eggs/it is no the hen that cackles the loudest that lays the biggest egg [Sc] A reminder that claims and results do not always agree.

her eggs are not worth the cackling Her bad points outweigh the good.

wadna be deaved with your keckling for a’ your eggs [Sc] (As/from the above.)
if the hen does not prate she will not lay [Suf : 1580] Scolding women make the best wives.

lay an egg [Amer] Make a fuss; drop a bomb from an aircraft. Similarly:
lay eggs [naut] Lay mines.

fresh as an egg from the farm
show him an egg and the air is full of feathers Of a sanguine man; one who jumps to conclusions.

the hen’s egg goes to the ha’ to bring the goose’s egg awa’ [Sc: 1721] When the giver of a small gift hopes for more in return.

it’s the hen egg for the duck egg [Nhb] An unfair exchange.

won with the egg and lost with the shell [1575] Soon influenced; ‘easy come, easy go’.

you shouldn’t hold two eggs in one hand ‘Two-timing’ etc.
put all your eggs in one basket [1666] Rely exclusively on one; risk everything on one attempt.

you can’t carry an egg in two baskets [Wash] Cannot have two lovers.

he’s no good to creel [pack in a basket] eggs with [Sc Mon et al.: 1825] Of one whom it is not safe or wise to interfere with (being so clumsy, quick-tempered and impetuous as not to be one with whom you could confidently tackle a delicate task).

put adders in the creel with the eggs Make mischief.

hand in/have the creel Be drunk [Sc].

egg-wife’s trot [wYks nLin]/butter-and-eggs trot A cautious, jog-trot pace, as of a farmer’s wife riding to market with eggs in her panniers.
bring eggs to a bad/the wrong market Miscalculate; be disappointed; fail in an attempt.

come with five eggs (a penny and four of them addle) [colloqu.—1540–1880] Break in fussily with an idle story.

ye’re like the Lady o’ Luss’s cain eggs [nest eggs which had to be of a certain size to be accepted], every one of which fell through the ring into the tub and didn’t count Not good enough in any respect.

her eggs have two yolks [Sc] She overrates what she is giving away.
dear as two eggs a penny
you cannot have the egg and the halfpenny Of two mutually exclusive things.

E.28d Sitting, hatching, chicks, roosting

tetchy [peevish—Sc NCy] as a broody hen

cluck down [Cor] Crouch down on hunkers (like a broody hen).
clock (v) Remain a long time seated; crouch by the fire [Gall Ire Uls NCy].

the ae-legged [one-legged] chuckie wull be clocking [Gall] Folks’ actions are predictable from their limitations.

would not pull a clocker off her nest [Cum] Of a work-shy horse.
**clocking hen** [Sc] Woman ready and willing to have a family.

**clucky** [Aus] Thinking of starting a family.

**worse than a clocking hen** [clucking, broody hen—Lan] Of a talkative woman.

**ye’re sae keen o’ clockin’, ye’ll dee on the eggs** [Sc] To those who are over-keen on their new job, condition etc.

**past clocking time** [Ayr] Of a woman past child-bearing age.

**laughter** [a laying, the number of eggs a hen can hatch—passim] The full number of children, a completed family; a large number [Cum].

**safe as eggs** Ironic.

**many a hen can sit that cannot fly** [Cum] It is better to put up with bad conditions than risk changing to worse.

**sit longer than a hen** (A broody hen sits twenty days with hardly a break.)

**a hen-sit** [nYks] A long time sitting—often of a guest who overstays her welcome.

**sit eggs** [Yks] Outstay your welcome.

**brood over** [1751] Ponder resentfully. Hence:

**broody** Thoughtful; taciturn; sullen; maternal.

**quiet as a sitting hen**

**a sitting hen gets no feathers** Those who stay at home acquire neither possessions nor honour.

**the hen with the egg is the least patient** [Ire] Hope, too, can bring suspense.

**the hen reveals her nest by cackling** The talkative woman gives away her dearest secret.

**nest of hens** [wYks] Considerable number of young girls.

**let that hen sit a bit** [Wm] Wait for a better opportunity; don’t speak uncharitably.

**(clean) off your eggs (and on to laal taties** [Cum midEng Dor]/cauld chuckie-stanes [Sc ShI]) Sadly mistaken; wasting your efforts.

**don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched** [c. 1570] Don’t anticipate uncertain gains.

**crush it in the egg** Ruin a thing before it is properly started.

**cleck** (v) [hatch—Sc nEng] Invent, fabricate—a story.

**cleckin’** [hatching—Fylde, nLan] A considerable number, more than expected. ‘Some cleckin’ o’ folk.’

**ilka chuckie thinks its ain cleckin’ the bonniest** [eLth] On the partiality of parents.

**two cletches** [=clutches, broods] **in one house** [Der] Of two persons marrying, each with children of a previous marriage.

**cleckit a great muckle bird out o’ a wee egg** [Sc] Exceeded expectations; made a lot out of a little; produced a substantial result from slender means or small beginnings.

**ill-cleckit** [Sc] Misbegotten, base-born.

**soon enough to cry ‘chuck’** [a chicken call] **when it is out of the shell** [Sc: 1721] Do not anticipate events, especially uncertain ones.

**day-old chick** Newcomer to the docks [Liver-pool, wLan],

**as muckle sense as the chuckies** [chickens—Per] Virtually none.

**choose your bird out of a clean nest** Choose your wife from a good home.

**snug as a chick in wool**

**blowed up** [filled] like a spring chick in a wheaten arrish [stubble after harvesting—s&wEng Cor]
like a three-halfpenny chick in a wheat-stubble In difficulties; forlorn.
busy/fussy/proud as a hen with one chick A comment on much fuss for a little work.
like a hen with one chick [Cor] With only one thing on her mind.
it is a poor hen that can’t scrat for one chick [1721] A woman should be able to look after one child. The Scottish version is it is a sarry hen that cannot scrape to one burd [chick].
scart/scrat (n) [Cum] A thrifty, industrious, non-wasting person.
scrat (n) [Nhb] A mean and despicable person.
hen-scart/s-cartins [Nhb]/-scratchings/scrats/-scrattins Fleecy, streaky clouds portending rain [Sc nEng Shr].
the hen with the chicks never yet burst her craw [crop—Uls: Miss] A family prevents you having too much yourself.
the hen with many chickens will never have a full craw [Ire] The reply of a woman accused of extravagance.
ruffled as a hen with chicks [Calif]
a son of the white hen [1540] A lucky one.
white hen’s chick [Oxf] Spoilt, petted child.
choke up chicken, there’s more hatching! [Lan Shr et al.] You’re expendable.
you can’t expect the chicks to scrat for the old hen A comment on children who don’t help their ageing parents.
have January chickens [1813] Children in old age.
keep your chickens in your own back-yard [NY] Keep your affairs to yourself.
a pullet in the pen is worth a hundred in the fen The little you do have outweighs the lot that you don’t.
out of cat-gate [Cum] Clear of imminent danger and starting to be able to look after yourself, as a man just getting out of money troubles or a child no longer needing the constant attention of a nurse.
ever put the kit to watch your chickens Of untrustworthy guardians etc.
is no (spring) chicken! [1910] Is no longer young.
ye’re nae chicken, for all your cheepin’ [Sc] You’re no youngster, though you chatter like one.
bird-mou’d/-mouthed [chicken-mouthed—Sc Lin] Too shy to speak; not say what they should.
chicken (n [1936] and v [1943]) Coward/back down through cowardice.
chicken-button/-switch [Amer] A destruct switch to stop a malfunctioning rocket in flight; ejection mechanism.
chicken-hearted/-livered Timid, cowardly.
chicken-dancing Style of dancing that involves moving the elbows like flapping wings.
weak as a chicken
happy as a biddy [chicken, hen—Dev]
mere chicken-feed! [1865] Said in disparagement of a sum or income far below what was expected.
ay hool [friendly, helpful] to the house, drites [shites—Sc Nhb] in his loof [palm] and meals [crumbles] it to the birds [chickens] A sarcastic comment on pretended generosity [Sc].
has gotten butter in a bird [when a chicken] Of someone exceptionally loud in singing or calling [Sc]. (Scottish hen-wives give butter to those chickens they are rearing for house cocks, so that they crow the louder.)
curses, like chickens, come home to roost [1810] Return to plague the originator.
Torpoint chicken [naut] Quick-tempered messmate. (Torpoint [across the River Tamar from Plymouth—Cor] was notorious for producing bad-tempered birds.)
fly up with Jackson’s hens [sChs: c. 1560] Become bankrupt.
fly round by Jackson’s end Make haste.
chicken-shit Information passed down from above [Can]; the vexatious minutiae of bureaucracy [Amer].

E.28e Bantams and other domestic fowl

bantam [1937] Small but spirited person.
  conceited [Cum]/crouse [cross, sharp-tempered, bold—nIre Som] as a banty-cock
  brant [proud, pompous, erect, vain—nEng Lin]/ cheeky as a (young) bantam
  cock/gamecock
  dandy-cock [bantam cock—Yks Lan Der Chs] Strutting, conceited fellow.
  cocky [1768] Conceited, pert, arrogant.
  scream like a gleany [guinea-fowl—Wor Glo Ken Dev Cor: Wor 1878]

E.28f Turkeys
  turkey-cock (n) Blustering, self-opinionated, pompous person.
  red as a turkey-cock [c. 1630]
  hasna the gumption of a turkey-cock [Sc]
  has nae mair sense than a sooking [sucking] turkey [Sc Cum]
  innocent as a sookin’-turkey [Abd]
  sookin’-turkey [Nhb] Peevish, childish person.
  blather [chatter foolishly, talk nonsense, babble Sc Ire NCy] like a bubbly-jock
  [turkey—Sc Nhbb Cum Penn]
  gobbledygook [imitation of turkey’s gobble noise—Amer 1944] Bureaucratic jargon, pretentious verbiage.
  turkey (n) [Amer] A foolish, slow, stupid person; theatrical failure; surprise, unexpected interest.
  bubbly-jock (n) Stupid, conceited, boastful prig.
  nose like a bubblycock’s neb [Lnk]
  drop [nLan]/hang [Wm]/let down [Lakel] your wattles Be put out of countenance.
  turkey-tail [NC Tenn] Fan out.
  strut like a bubbly-jock [Nhbb Dur]/turkey-cock [1689]
  strouty [=strut—wSom] same ‘s a stag-turkey
  strutted about so brave and rumbustious as a lubber-cock [turkey-cock—Cor]
  swell like a turkey-cock [1599] Bluster.
it’s nae the bonniest bubbly-jock that makk[s] the maist feathers to fly in the
kailyard [Sc: 1900] It’s not only handsome men who flutter women’s hearts.
like Jimmy Broadstock’s turkey-cock, stand and sit Spoken when someone
hesitates to sit down. (A farmer near Cheltenham had a fool of a bird that stood over the
eggs instead of brooding them while the hen was away.)
poor as Job’s turkey that had but one feather in his tail [Amer]/that had to lean
against the fence to gobble [Sc]
a turkey never voted for an early Christmas [Ire] Folk don’t choose what is to their
disadvantage.
he is driving turkeys to market Cannot walk straight.
talk turkey [passim: orig. Amer] Talk agreeably; use high-flown language. Later the
meaning altered to: talk purposefully; be straightforward; get down to business. (An
anecdote that just may have given rise to the expression runs: An Indian and a paleface
after their day’s hunting were sharing out the bag, three crows and two turkeys. ‘A crow
for you, a turkey for me, a crow for you, a turkey for me…’, but the Indian objected ‘You
talk turkey for you, crow for me.’)

E.29a Butchering

bones bring meat to town Hard or worthless things are often associated with what is
valuable.
knackered [1886] Ruined; exhausted (like a horse sent to the knacker’s yard or
slaughterhouse).
shambles [slaughter-house: 1926] Scene of destruction and chaos.
…and not a bone in the truck! [Aus] A comment on the lack of work done.
when the ox is down, many are the butchers [Colo Calif: 1670]
butcher (n) [1529] Cruel and harsh tyrant; clumsy workman [Amer]; incompetent
surgeon.
fat/fit [Lan]/surly as a butcher’s dog (being well-fed with scraps of meat)
all rib and prick, like a butcher’s dog
like a butcher’s dog—that lies by the beef without touching it Of married men
under constraint.
if skill could be acquired by watching, dogs would be butchers [Ariz]
bent [deviant, perverted; homosexual; criminal] as a butcher’s hook
gleg [keen, clever—Sc Nhb Cum Yks Lin]/sharp as a Kilmours
[Kilmarnock]/Sheffield whittle [butcher’s carving knife—Ayr] Quick-witted, acute.
Kilmarnock whittle [Rxb] A betrothed man or woman.
on the whittle In a state of fidgety uneasiness.
has a good whittle at his belt Always ready with an answer.
like the butcher, you seek the knife and it is in your teeth [Sc] To someone who is
looking for something near to hand.
thinks his whittle is in the shaft [Abd] Is sure of success.
dress down [make the initial cuts into a carcase] Rebuke severely. Usually as ‘give him a good dressing down’.

guide the gully [large butcher’s knife—Sc Ire nEng] Have the management, control; be well organised.

mad/savage as a meat-axe [Amer Aus NZ] Dangerous and crazy.

a bleeding chunk of... Substantial extract from large work of literature, or music taken out of context.

marrow-bones and cleavers! Of a discordant noise.

I’m speaking to the butcher, not the block! Don’t interrupt us!

case [skin an animal, especially by a heel-to-heel slit]—a bank/the joint [Amer 1915] Survey, examine the building in planning a crime.

flesh and fell [Sc 1819] All together, without discrimination.

eviscerate [disembowel] Draw out what is vital or essential; elicit secrets; deprive an institution etc. of its main function.

offal well [Cum nYks] Leave property (from the profitable extras from the offal parts of a slaughtered animal).

pluck (n) [the heart of a beast for food, presumably so-called because the heart and other edible offal could be pulled out of the carcass at one pluck] Courage. (The phrase ‘pluck up courage’ is probably connected with this.)

flee [=flay—Yks] the tail Get near the end of a piece of work.

let the tail go with the hide [Ire Can Amer: 1721] Let those that have been together stay together; don’t spoil a gift or sale by withholding a part.

let the horns go with the hide [1862] (As/from the above.)

each must carry his own hide to the tanner [Ont] There are some jobs you have to do for yourself.

skelp [drive with blows—Sc Ire n&midEng; work off vigorously—Sc Nhb Cum] the hide and tallow Carouse until the value of the hide and tallow are consumed.

tough as fig-fag [Cum]/pax-wax [wYks War] The neck tendon.

sausage machine [1889] A college, institution or society that produces people who in their ideas, attitudes and manners are as near identical as a string of sausages.

sausage (n) A draught-excluder for doors and windows, made of material and shaped like a sausage containing sand or other filling.

tight as a sausage [Cor]

he’s like a sausage—a mystery to me! (because only the butcher knows what is in it)

you can’t tell a sausage by its skin Judge not from appearances.

a few snags [sausages—Aus]/a chop short of a barbie [barbecue] Of feeble intelligence.

there’s more meat on a butcher’s pencil! Of a very lean person.

dressed up like beef at Christmas Very smart (as are butchers’ shops on Christmas Eve).

E.29b Venison

all flesh is not venison [1592] We cannot all be the best quality.
E.29c Beef

on the hoof Fresh, alive; in the course of one’s duties, incidental to the normal, everyday work; taking things as one finds them; forced by circumstances; extempore, impromptu.

cheap as bull-beef/neck-beef

sold like a bullock in Smithfield [C19] Badly swindled.

bullock’s blood The deep red colour.

bullock’s heart A printing of 250 copies only.

quey calves are dear veal [Sc: 1737] A criticism of misuse (because female calves are more profitably kept and reared as cows).

bleed white [1935] Extort the last penny from someone (as a butcher bleeds veal).

E.29d Mutton

liker lambs being led to the slaughter-house [Lan Der] Without protest or resistance.

stare like a stuck sheep/pig [1720] In a stupefied manner.

dead as mutton

skin the lamb Bookmakers are said to ‘skin the lamb’ when a non-favourite wins; take the pool in a game of cards [Wm],

as soon gangs the lamb’s skin to market as the auld sheep’s/tup’s [Sc: 1520] The young are as much at risk as the old.

you cannot tell whether the old sheep’s skin or the young lamb’s will hang from the rafters first [Ire] We do not know when we shall die.

a shoulder of mutton for a sheep’s head A more valuable substitute.

every sheep hing by his own shank [Sc: 1706] Stand by his own endeavours; be accountable for himself.

sheepshank Person of little worth; type of knot (from the shape).

she hawks her mutton [1518] Solicits.

E.29e Pork

not kill, but whoave [=whauve, cover with upturned vessel—wYks Chs: 1674] Postpone taking the final, irrevocable step; reduce, but not end a threat (as a pig or fowl might be confined under a bin before being slaughtered later).

pig-sticker [Amer] Bayonet.

sticking goes not by strength but by guiding of the gooly [=gully, large butcher’s knife—Sc Ire nEng] Some work needs skill rather than strength [Sc: 1641].
**squealing round like a stuck pig** [Amer]

**kill his pig (for him)** [nLin] Deal the finishing stroke; settle his hash; cause serious disappointment or injury.

**kick the bucket** [1785] Die. (Slaughtered pigs are hung by the heels from the ‘bucket’ or beam.)

**hang up by one leg** [Wil] A phrase describing winter wheat seedlings after spring winds have eroded the soil from their roots.

**ploting-hot** [NCy 1829] As hot as the water used for scalding a pig’s carcase prior to scraping.

**chetlens/chetterlens** [Dor] The frill on the bosom of a shirt (from the resemblance to chitterlings, especially the mesentery, or ‘frill’ as butchers call it). Also called chitterlin-frill [Wil].

**long as pigs’ chitterlings** Often of time. (See above.)

**draw pig on/upon bacon/pork** Perform an accounting fiddle by an accommodation bill or cheque passed internally between friends or two branches of the same firm.

**pork-barrel** [Amer] Personal resources; federal funds made available for regional expenditure through a system of political claims. (Slaves used to receive a allowance of salted pork.)

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**E.29f Poultry**

**neck and crop/heels/scrag** [neck—wSom] Completely; bodily; headlong; violently [passim].

**come a cropper** Fall; come to grief generally. (Probably from the above.)

**flying about like a necked cock** [Lan] Of someone in a flurry of futile activity.

**run around like a chicken with its head cut off** [NC Tenn Neb Calif]

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**E.30a Growing trees**

**great oaks from little acorns grow** [1635] A small start may develop into a great work.

**grow out of…** Develop from, result from, be consummated in.

**best to bend while ‘t is a twig** Teach them young.

**as the twig is bent, so grows the tree** [Can Amer]

**it is a good tree that has neither knob** [= knob—Sc Ire n, w&sEng] nor gaw [=gall, blemish: 1721] No one is quite faultless.

**he that loves the tree loves the branch** Loves all the members of the family.

**at the top of the tree** [1774] Culmination of career; success achieved.

**dead wood** [1887] Unproductive or useless parts of a society, industry etc.; unsold theatre seats [Amer].
wise men in the world are like timber-trees in a hedge, here and there one
two great trees have a great fall Of a great man’s downfall.
cut down an oak and set up a strawberry Change for the worse.
transplant [1555] Remove elsewhere—a person, family, colony etc. from their home
surroundings.
uproot [1868] As above, but without resettlement.
remove an old tree and it will die [1670] Leave old folk where they are.

E.30b Fruit trees

plant the crab-tree where you will, it will never bear pippins [Vmt NY]

no root, no fruit [1640] No one succeeds without a sound background, nor an
enterprise without good preparation.
vainglory blossoms but never bears [1611]
if you would enjoy the fruit, pluck not the flower Do not exploit the young, or the
beginnings of anything.
it is better to knit [set fruit] than blossom [1678] Performance is better than promise.
wt [intelligence] without learning is like a tree without fruit
better the fruit lost than the tree [Ill]
cherry-clack [a noisy contrivance hung in a cherry-tree to scare birds—Chs Lei War] 
Noisy chattering.

no tree bears fruit in autumn that does not blossom in the spring Of youthful
promise.
deads are fruits, words but leaves [NJ Mich Lou]
bear fruit Yield results, generally.
fruits [1440] Results, rewards—of labour, industry, victory etc.
fruit of the loins Children.
precocious [<Lat praecox=early ripe]
mischief is a fruit that nobbut needs a short summer to ripen it [nYks]
first-fruits The first positive results of work, planning or such earlier efforts.
fruitful [1535] Prolific, fertile—of animals and people. Productive and useful
generally.
fruitless [1340] With no (useful) result; ineffectual.
the tree is known by its fruit [c. 1300] A person’s worth is seen in deeds. [See also
Matt vii.20]
such tree, such fruit (As above.)
he that would have the fruit must climb the tree [Sc Wis]
shake the money tree [Amer] Produce large profits.
rocks are thrown only at fruit-bearing trees [Ohio] Only the achievers come under
attack.
the boughs that bear most hang lowest The rich are the easiest to rob or tax.
the redder the fruit the higher it hangs [Ont] What is most attractive is hardest to get.
left to hing-as-they-grow [Longtown, Cum 1900s] Allowed to please themselves what they do.
hang on the bough [Sc] Remain unmarried.
excerpt [<Lat excarpere=crop, gather off]

E.30c Grafting

graft in/into/on/upon/together Join in a living and permanent union.
insert [<Lat insero=plant/graft in]
inoculate [<Lat in-oculus=into the eye (= bud)] Introduce into the body of an animal or person a dose of germs to immunise against a particular disease.
implant [1541]/engraft [1585]—ideas etc. Introduce them to a place where they will grow and bear fruit. (engrafted=inserted and accepted irremovably.)
he has a fair forehead to graft on The allusion is to the cuckold’s horn.

E.30d Pruning

prune [1426] Reduce expenses etc. Also, prune out=remove, excise, clear out anything superfluous.
amputate [<Lat amb-putare=prune all round]
cut short End abruptly—a story etc.; abbreviate drastically.
nip in the bud [1605] Stop the trouble right at the start; destroy something at an early stage in its development.

E.30e Diseases

blight [1661] A malign and spreading injury or malaise—on society, a nation’s conscience or a person’s life.
canker [1564] Like a blight, but eating into rather than spreading over a person’s character; corrupting influence.
cankerred Corrupted—‘cankerred traitor against our crown royal’ [Henry VIII, Letter to Sir Thomas Wyatt—13 February 1539].
rot (v) Languish, deteriorate, waste your life. Often in the context of banishment or prison.

the rot has set in [1868] The usual, expected, inevitable deterioration has begun; a mysterious succession of failures has occurred.

stop the rot [1912] Prevent a deterioration, demoralisation etc. from becoming any worse.

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E.30f Apples


apple-headed [Nhp] Of a tree (usually an oak)—of low, rounded growth.

alley/road apples Horse-droppings [Amer].

see how we apples swim—quoth the horse turd The comment on social climbers who stress their one point of congruity.

had a bite of the apple before he bought the tree Had intercourse before marriage.

go round the apple trees until you find a crab [Dor] A marriage proverb referring to a bad choice after good chances have been missed.

tied to the sour apple [1670] Married to a bad husband (crabby!).

follow through for sour apples [Amer] Continue, but without success.

the fairest apple hangs on the highest bough [Amer]

reach for the high apples first [Miss] Do as much as you can as soon as you can.

apple off another tree An entirely different matter.

the apple won’t fall till it’s ripe [Ire] Wait for the natural time of maturity.


when the apple gets ripe it’s likely to fall [Amer] Of young persons reaching marriageable age; of older people whose maturity is followed by old age and death.

windfall [1542] Unexpected win, gift or legacy.

the apple will not fall far from the apple tree [Wal Can Amer] An occurrence can usually be traced to a nearby origin; children do not much differ from their parents.

the apple will fall on the head that’s under it [Ire] You need to put yourself in the way of good fortune.

apples on the other side of the wall/in someone else’s yard are sweetest [Ill Calif]

in…’s appleyard [Aus] In their home area.

give apples to orchards [Nhp eSuf Oxf] Offer something where there is already an abundance.

apples will grow again [nCrk] The plea of an offender that what he has done is not irreparable.

pale as a deusan [<Fr deux ans=a keeping apple]

winter apple Snowball [Wm nYks].

apple-john face An old wrinkled countenance. (The apple-john was an apple that ripened at about St John’s Day—probably 27 December, since St John the Baptist’s Day on 24 June would be too early for an apple to be ripe—kept for two years and was at its best when withered and shrivelled [see Shaks, Hy IVii II.iv—1597].)
**scrump** [withered or half-grown apple—Nhp War Wil Ken Sus Hmp Dev] Undersized child, withered person.

an apple may be fair without and bad within [1225] Appearance is no guarantee of real worth.

many a rosy apple is rotten to the core [Can Amer]
the reddest apple may have a worm in it [NY Colo]
the rotten apple injures its neighbours [1340] One evil individual corrupts his society.

one bad apple spoils the lot [Can Amer]
soft/rotten/wet as pash [the soft, pulpy mush of a rotten apple when it has burst open—Nhb Yks neLan Lin]
not care/give/worth a rotten apple [c. 1370]
there's a bad apple in every box [Wash Miss]
pick a bad apple Make a bad choice.
the bad apple in the barrel Corrupting minority.

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**E.30g Grapes**

**grape-vine** Chain of communication along which news travels quickly. (This was originally a hoax of the American Civil War when certain despatches were designated as for or from the ‘grape-vine telegraph’.)

leaves enough, but few grapes Many words, little achieved.

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**E.30j Bees**

die/wither on the bough/vine Continue in use through obsolescence; run down while in use, deteriorate.

ooze [1889] Give off in abundance, exude a superfluity (as juice out of ripe fruit)—‘oozes confidence, money etc.’

ooze out [Amer] Depart inconspicuously.

trickledown [Amer: 1931] Assumed benefit to the poor resulting from economic stimulation of the rich.
E.30h Gooseberries

green as a gooseberry 
beet the devil round the gooseberry bush [Sus] Talk too much. 
there’s more than one way to beat the devil round the bush [WVir Kan] If we can’t manage it this way let’s try another. 
play old gooseberry [the devil] with . . . Throw into confusion; give tit for tat [Nhp].
play gooseberry [1837] Be a third to a pair of lovers to lend propriety to their meeting.
gooseberry-picker Chaperone. (As/from the above.)

E.30i Other fruit

as busy as a cranberry merchant [Amer] 
mulberry-nosed/mulberry-red (From the deep red colour of the fruit.)
call me not an olive till you see me gathered [1640] Do not judge prematurely, do not place hopes on me till I have proved myself.
if you don’t like our peaches, quit shaking our tree [Amer] We expect some loyalty and co-operation in return for the benefits you have received from us.
the ripest peach hangs highest on the tree [NY SC Wyo Colo] The best is unattainable.
a pear of another tree An entirely different matter.
have other pears to pull [Edb] Have other things to do.
plum [1825] The pick of . . ., especially a prize job or reward.
women grow on the sunny side of the wall They need prosperity to flourish. (See G.12b.)

E.30j Bees

sweet as a honey bee 
busy/thick as bees/bees in a basin 
thrang [crowded—Sc nEng] as bees in a sugar cask [nYks]
as thick as bees at a tee-hole [hive entrance—Hmp]
stand askew on your steddle [=staddle= stand, support for a hive, cask, rick etc.—Lin] Be unbalanced in mind, body or estate.
beehive A place swarming with busy people; close formation of bombers escorted by fighters (buzzing round!).
busy as a beehive  

hive of activity/industry [1634] Place or scene of purpose and action.

make things hum [1898] Liven things up; start a busy activity.

reel (n)/reeling [the flying about of drones around the hive in fine weather—Sc] Mental confusion. (See also B.1d.)

buzz [Amer 1941] Of aircraft swooping low like an attacking bee or wasp.

has set the bee-skep in a buzz [Lin] Caused a stir; aroused passions, variously.

head buzzing like a bees’ skep/scap [Sc]

skep (v) Go to rest for the night (like bees in their skep).

skep in with… [eSc Rnf] Make better acquaintance with, as do different swarms or colonies of bees hived into one skep.

she’d talk a butt [hive] of bees to death [wSom]

honeycomb (bag) (n) [Dor] Second stomach of ruminant (from the appearance of inner membranes); hollow in gun-metal.

honeycomb work [Dor] Ornamental stitching on smock.

honeycombed [1627] Perforated; mined through and through; hollowed out.

beeswax [Amer] Business, concern. ‘None of your beeswax!’

thrang as a skep at the castin’ [swarming—Ayr]

cluthered [=cluddered, clustered—nLan nLin] together like a swarm of bees

like a swarm of bees in a churm [=charm, noisy disturbance—Hmp99:1863]

swarming [1386] Very crowded; overcrowded.

swine, women and bees cannot be turned [1678]

knit (v) [cluster together, usually of bees—nEng Shr War] Of a crowd gathering round to watch something.

hive off (v)/hiving-off—membership, a subsidiary etc. [1931] Transfer to another department, rival union etc. (as when a beekeeper settles a swarm of his bees into another hive).

honey-fall [Lakel n&wYks Chs] Happy surprise; piece of unexpected good fortune.

in full honey-flow [Shr] At the height of an activity, working, talking etc. (like bees at the height of a nectar-flow).

one frame short of a super [Luddington Bee Unit, War] Mentally lacking.

the still bee gathers no honey [Glo] Nothing is achieved without action.

old bees yield no honey [1670] Don’t expect old folk to be very agreeable.

better feed five drones than starve one bee

drone [1529] Idler who lives on another’s work; remotely controlled aircraft or missile (from its similarity to the drone on a mating flight who compulsively and automatically hunts the queen).

idle as a drone [Cor]

like a drone in a bussa [coarse, earthenware vessel—Dev Cor] Of a tedious talker or preacher.

a bee has honey in its mouth, but a sting in its tail Beware! there may be a disadvantage behind the attraction.

honey is sweet but the bee stings [1535] (As/ from the above.)
E.30k Honey

heart full a-drip with kindness as a honeycomb [Som]
  the best honey isn’t got by squeezing What is given spontaneously is preferable to what is extracted under pressure.
  he that handles honey shall feel it cling to his fingers The influence of association.
  honey is not for the ass’s mouth Persuasion will not persuade fools; gentle words will not calm the unreasonable.
  sweet as botcher [a drink made by pouring water on honeycombs after extraction—Cum]
  sell honey to buy something sweet Part with the best in the vain hope of getting something better; exchange certainties for probabilities [W.Barnes, Zellen Woone’s Honey to Buy Zome’hat Sweet—1844].

E.31a Soil, plowing

fat/rich as mud
  sick as mud Depressed, exasperated.
  his name is mud His reputation is shattered; he is entirely discredited. (A connection has been suggested with mudd=fool [IW], but evidence is lacking for its earliest provenance.)
  get your feet muddy [1977] Get into trouble with the law.
  clod [1579]/clot (n) [1632: Nhb] Ponderous, stupid man.
  senseless as a clod
  cold as clots [=clods—Nhp] clat-cold [Sc NCy mid&sEng Som Dev]
  cast a clod between… [Sc] Widen the breach.
  a noble plant suits not with stubborn soil [1640] Of uncongenial surroundings.
  dustbowl—farming, mentality etc. The type that considers only present gain and so fails to conserve resources for the future; improvident.
  leach away Go to waste uncontrollably (like minerals leached out of soil by percolating rain).
  cultivate (v)—a person’s company, mind etc. [1699] Improve and bring into production by assiduous effort.
  don’t neglect your own field and plow your neighbour’s [Utah] Look after your own interests.
  break fresh/new ground Start on something previously untried; enter a fresh field—of knowledge, research etc.
  they who put plow into new land must look to have it hauk [catch—Sc nEng] on a stone now and then [Sc] A new partner or venture will pose new problems.
he that lippens to [depends on—Sc Ire nEng] lent plows, his land will lie ley [fallow, untilled: 1628] To be dependent is to be restricted; don’t depend on mere promises.

E.31b Sowing

sow the seeds of...[c. 1000] Give the initial impetus to what will thereafter increase by itself. Of strife, dispute etc.
seed(ing) (v) Introduce(ing) a small element as catalyst or germinal influence on a larger group.
sow with the hand and not with the whole sack [1591] Be generous, not wastefully extravagant.
if the brain sows not corn, it plants thistles Thinking becomes destructive if it is not kept constructive.
il seed, ill weed! Of inherited faults.
il weeds grow apace [1470]/wax fast! [wYks] Of tall people; thriving children.
il weed will up [Lan] (As/from the above.)
gar [compulsion—Sc Ire nEng] is an ill weed/ wood to grow It is difficult to compel anyone.

Gar gerse is ill to grow,
And chuckie stanes is ill to chow

[gerse=grass; chow=chew—Sc] Try and make me!

E.31c Crops and fallow

a crop of... Many.
crop up [1844] Occur at random (like plants that grow unsown, or tares among the wheat).
we must take the crop as it grows Must accept what we are given; our destiny.
lie fallow [1642] Stagnate; be unproductive; wait to be worked upon; remain inactive for the present, though potentially useful.
seek for stubble in a fallow field Search for something where you cannot expect to find it.
plow (profits etc.) back into...[1595] Recycle the product of growth towards future increase; reinvest.
E.31d Beans and peas

bean-pole Tall, thin person.

beans are in flower! A waggish excuse for someone’s silliness. (There was an old belief that the perfume of flowering beans made one light-headed.)

keep all the beans in the sack [wYks] Be careful with money.

not care/give/worth a hill/row of beans [Amer] ‘Don’t amount to a hill of beans’ [Amer]=amounts to very little.

coarse as beanstraw [Lin]/hemp [sSc]

silly as a pea-cloise [field of peas—Yks] (Similar to the belief about flowering beans—see above.)

he goes into the pease-field [1678] He is falling asleep. (Possibly a pun on peace.)

every pea helps to fill the sack [Miss]

E.31e Other crops

vegetate (v) [1740] Relapse into a mere existence without any social, intellectual or spiritual life.

vegetable [1921]/cabbage (n) Someone who, through illness, injury or degeneration, cannot live as a normal person, and cannot be thought to have a life or future any better than that of a vegetable; one without either interests or ambition.

cabbage-head [nwLin] Simpleton.

face like a fladpole [=flat-poll, type of flat-topped cabbage—Cor]

heart no worth a custock [=castock, cabbage-stalk—Rnf] Feeble-hearted.

not worth a castlock [J.Skelton, before 1508]

froff [=frough, brittle, easily broken—Sc NhB Cum Wm Yks Nhp Mid Brks Wil Hmp] as kail castocks [Bch]

dry as a hambuck [the dry fibrous stalk of peeled hemp—Suf]

legs like hambucks (See above.)

carl-hemp [coarse, strong hemp stalk—Sc Cum Lin EAn SCy] Mental vigour, stubborn streak, resolution.

give groats [hulled and/or crushed grain, usually oats—Sc] for pease Pay someone back in their own coin; give retribution.

give him kail [cabbage—Sc] of his own groats (As/from the above.)
a bastard [bastard kail do not heart] may be as good as a bowstock [a hearting cabbage] by a time Of an illegitimate child.

get groats in kail [Sc C18] Be paid back in your own coin.

I ken my groats in other folks’ kail [Sc: 1628] I recognise my own words and ideas, even when reproduced by another.

fast as hops [nYks] Very quickly (especially of growth).

thick as hops [Nhb: 1590]
tall as a hop-pole
in rough leaf [the second and true leaf of a turnip] Having made a good start [Wm nLin Chs WCy Dor].
yellow as a pumpkin [NC Tenn Calif sAmer]
the pumpkins [Amer] Someone or something important. ‘Some pumpkins!’—in amazed approval.

E.32a Grass

she would roll on wet grass! [naut] An exasperated sailor’s comment on an unstable ship.
thrive like hainet [=hained, saved, held back, kept in reserve, left ungrazed—Sc]
grass in May [Sc]
get down to (the) grass-roots Return to first principles, basic facts; the voters themselves.
let the grass grow at your heels [Ags] Delay.
don’t let the grass grow under your feet! [1607] Waste no time; seize your opportunity.
cut the grass from under his feet [1588] Foil, thwart him.

E.32b Pasture

the grass is always greener on the other side of the hedge/distant fields look greener [Can Amer] The attraction of what is forbidden or inaccessible.
he doesn’t shame his pasture Appears to be well-fed.
it must be a close pasture where he cannot nibble Of a frugal man.
it’s a bare common he winna nep at [= will not nibble: Lan] (As above.)
he is going to grass with his teeth upwards To be buried.

E.32c Mowing grass

fresh as a meadow in a morn of May
in Dicky’s meadow [e&wLan] In a fix, in trouble (with Dicky, a bad-tempered farmer?)

look for a needle in a meadow [1532] Search with little hope or chance of success.

he that fears every grass must never piss in a meadow [1566] Suit your activities to your limitations.

grass and hay we are all mortal [1631] Young and old, good and bad alike.

between grass and hay [C18] Intermediate, neither one thing nor the other.

between hay and grass [Amer] Not yet a man, but no longer a boy.

cut your own grass Earn your own living.

a thin meadow is soon mown [1670] A poor man is soon ruined; light work is quick work.

mow down [1513] Slaughter in great numbers; kill at random.

aftermath [1851] An unpleasant subsequence inevitably resulting from an action. (Originally the second or later mowing of grass.)

E.32d Making hay

Johnny/Jimmy up the meadow [St Helens, Lan] Everything in confusion.

make hay of... Throw into confusion.


makes sweet hay [Dev Cor] Said when a man in the hayfield makes a noose to cast round a girl’s neck in order to kiss her.

sweet as new hay [Cor]

in the making of a hay-band [Sc 1816] In a very short time.

make hay while the sun shines [1546] Make the best use of your opportunity; do something while you are still able.

laal [little] wanted as rain in hay time [Cum]

if there were no rain there’d be no hay to make when the sun shines [Kenty Tenn] On sorrow as the essential complement of joy, bad of good etc.

dry sun, dry wind, fast bind, fast find [1546]/ safe bind, safe find Maintain, care for, make doubly sure of what you value.

Drie sunne, drie winde

[Shaks, Merchant II.v—1596]

keep the rake near the scythe and the cart near the rake [NY Colo] Be ready for the next job.

the new hand always gets the short-handled rake [NY] Strangers and newcomers are at a natural disadvantage.
rake and scrape [Nhp War] Be over-grasping, greedy.
rake yourself together [Nhb] Collect yourself.
what the rake gathers the fork scatters Of a prodigal heir.
after the gathering comes the scattering [Ire] Save first and spend afterwards; after thrift, extravagance.
it is harder to gather than to scatter [Ire] (As/from the above.)
no matter for that, you shall carry the rake The reply of a girl accused by her swain of infidelity, her gist being ‘do not fret, for you will be gathering what another has scattered’.
might have saved himself a rake [Cum] Of one who has attempted and failed.
give the kest [the space that a man can reach with his rake when drawing hay into wind-rows—Cum] Arrive at a place before another [Not].
broom-field (v) [Nrf] Inherit the entire property; make a clean sweep of.
weak as a roller [row of hay—Dor]
always in the lowest swath(e) [Lei] Always behindhand (because a slow haymaker is usually on the lowest row).
always in the wrong swath(e) [Nhp] Always grumbling; dissatisfied.
get into the wrong swath(e) [Nhp] Go about your work in the wrong way.
fit to rive swath(e) In a rage.
he would cover a rock with hay and sell it for a haycock [Ire] Is wilfully deceitful.
you can’t make hay where the grass won’t grow [Vmt] No progress can be made with an unreceptive pupil.

E.32e Storing hay

got into dry cock Well on the way to safety, of a project nearly achieved.
pitchfork into…[1844] Thrust forcibly and peremptorily into.
some fork low, but ye fork ower the mune [Sc] Some don’t do enough, but you overdo it.
gone all haywire [1934] Degenerated into confusion; state of disuse, disorganised. (Baling wire easily went into useless tangles.)
haywire—outfit, job etc. [Amer] Roughly contrived. (From the use of haywire for makeshift repairs.)
not care/give/worth a bottle of hay

Al-though it be nat worth a botel hey
[G. Chaucer, Prologe of the Maunciples Tale ln. 14–1386]

a thousand pounds and a bottle of hay are all one at Doomsday [1659] It is matterless in the long term; no property after death.
good at the crawk [centre of hay-/clover-stack - nLin] Sound at heart, constitutionally.
mowed up [Yks Lan Not nwDer Chs Lei Nhp War Wor] Over-filled, over-crowded.
sail like a haystack [naut] Usually of a large battleship, difficult to manoeuvre.
look for a needle in a haystack Conduct an impossible and hopeless search.
look for a pin’s head in a cartload of hay (As/from the above.)
load of hay [Amer] Head of long hair; nonpaying customers, being guests of the management.
hay-crook [crooked stick used for drawing a sample of hay out of a stack] Lanky, hungrylooking man.
turn every straw Search very thoroughly.
leave no straw unturned (As/from the above.)
ahas dropped/lost his watch in the rick! A jocular assumption to excuse a farmer for having to re-make a hay-rick that has overheated [Wor Wil].
roll/tumble in the hay [1945] Carefree sexual romp, joyously consummated.
more mistakes than hay-stacks! [wYks] Very many.
you need not fear the wind if your haystacks are tied down [Ire] Be prepared and fear nothing.
hayseed [Amer Can Aus NZ] Yokel, rustic—usually a gullible one.
hasn’t got the hayseeds out of his hair yet [eYks IMa] Is still youthful, green.

E.32f Feeding hay

make orts [scraps left after meal; cattle fodder remnants—passim] of good hay [Sc: 1639] Spoil good materials on worthless projects.

he is well-served; he has oft made orts of better hay [Glo] Of one who, after refusing better chances, marries for the worse.

lick it up like Lim/Lymm hay [Chs: 1670] Eat as though especially good. (Lynn, on Mersey, is noted for good hay.)

I am talking of hay and you of horse-beans/ horse-corn [Sc] At cross-purposes.

E.33a Grain crops—sowing

seed-corn [1962] Financial help for concerns still in the throes of becoming established; a necessary basis, reserves of skill and talent essential for generating any resurgence in industry, the arts etc.

kindesses, like grain, increase with sowing

of evil grain no good seed can come Good children do not come of bad parents.
as you sow, so will you reap [c. 900] What you get will correspond with what you give—‘for what soever a man soweth, that shall he reepe’ [Galatians vi.7].

he that speaks, sows; he that hears, reaps
neither seeds nor meal [Nhb] Neither one thing nor the other.

E.33b Grain crops—growing

there is no braird [newly sprouted corn] like midden-braird [Sc] Describing the vigorous prosperity in families of lowly origins.

hain [save, spare, refrain from—Sc] at the braird Don’t be extravagant with the very first takings of a business etc.

out of old fields comes new corn Begetting children in old age.

flat-footed in the corn-field [1990s] Ignorant, unsophisticated.

praise the ripe field, not the green corn [Ire] Do not be too confident too soon.

he that sows thistles shall reap prickles [1611] You only get out of a job what you put into it.

he that hath good corn may be content with some thistles [1639] Minor irritations need not worry the prosperous.

cockle and corn grow in the same field [1659] Persons can live together, even though different in character.

the weeds outgrow the corn [c.1450] Where the worse prevails; the bad outnumber the good.

every wind bloweth not down the corn [1546] Don’t fear the worst every time.

all this wind shakes no corn [1546] The talking achieves nothing; affects me not at all. Of/to pretentious folk [Sc].

mickle corn, mickle care [Sc]
water the corn Wash down food with drink.
corn-stalk A tall, slight person.

a full ear of corn will bend its head, an empty ear will stand upright [Wal Ohio] A comparison with people when full of sorrows, experience etc. making them bow the head.

the heaviest ear of corn is the one with its head bent lowest [Ire] Wealth is a burden; wisdom brings humility.

clean as wheat Said when a point in discussion is cleared up. (Possibly from the time when whit=white was pronounced ‘wheat’.)

barley-bairn/barley-child One born within six months of marriage (from the time elapsed between barley sowing and barley harvest).

barley-crop [nYks] Child born prematurely. (As/from the above.)
buckwheat crop [Amer] Marriage when the bride is already pregnant. (See above.)
buckwheat [Amer] Light-skinned black person.
as long in coming as Cotswold barley [1662] (The Cotswold hills yield good crops of barley, but being bleak, these are rather late.)
it is ill praising/prizing of green barley [Sc: 1721] Premature rejoicing.
good rye thrives high [Sus] Of growing children; the retort to ‘Ill weeds grow apace’.
has been on the hained [=saved, held back, kept in reserve, left ungrazed—Sc Glo]
rig [ Fif] Is plump, well-fed.
more corn grows in crooked rows [Kan]/ crooked furrows grow straight grain

E.33c Grain crops—mowing, firing the stubble

like the folk o’ Kennetside-heads, hae it all before them [Bwk] A reproof to those who
are slow to start work. (From the reply of reapers at Kennetside-heads who didn’t think
they need start yet, and in the event were reaping by moonlight.)
reap (v) [1300] Obtain, usually as a result of your own or another’s actions; gain
generally, as in ‘reap the benefit, reward etc.”
put your sickle in another man’s corn [1387] Commit adultery.
one man reaps what another has sown [1577] Gets the benefit of another’s work.
harvest ears, thick of hearing! [1546] (See also E.25f and E.27c for related ideas.)
not corn to the band An unreliable character.
fall broad-band Submit to caresses without resistance [Sc].
lie in broad-band [Sc nEng] Be ready; finally worked off (like corn spread out to dry
on the bands).
be in broad-band [wYks] Of a house in disorder.
take as it falls in the sheaf However it comes.
ae shook [=shock, pile of sheaves—Sc Eng]/ sheaf o’ that stook’s enough [Sc: 1721]
[A stook=double row of sheaves set leaning together, six- or seven-a-side with a pair of
hood sheaves laid on top—passim] Enough, sc. to know the rest by.
clean-sheaf [Dor] Altogether, in toto.
head-shave [=sheaf, the top of the stack—Sc] Crowning event, finishing touch.
in thraves [a measure of corn in the field=two stooks of twelve sheaves each—Sc Ire
Eng,except for s&swEng] In large numbers, in crowds.
he starts at straws and lets windlins [bottles of straw—Sc Ire] go [Sc] Worries about
the wrong things; is severe on small faults, but overlooks larger ones.
make a long harvest of a little corn [1549] Wax tedious about a trifle; much ado
about nothing.
cold/seasonable/welcome as snow/frost in harvest [1568] ‘Looks like snow in
harvest’= has a mean, unkind appearance.
long/slow as a wet week (in harvest)
look like a wet week Miserable.
go down the water [Sc] Go to wrack and ruin (like corn carried away in a flood).
sling/take your hook! [wYks sLan Chs Lin War Wor 1870+] Be gone! (As a farmer
might say to a harvester whose labour he no longer wanted, or as the man might act who
was on his way. The nautical version of this is always ‘sling your hook’, since ‘hook’ will be identified with the anchor.)

*it’s the barley-pickle* [topmost grain in an ear of barley] *breaks the naig’s back* [Sc] ‘It’s the last straw…’ (q.v. J.2d).

*look like a bewitched barley-stack* Of dishevelled appearance.

*in thack and rape* [=thatch and rope—Sc] In good order, comfort, safety (like a stack safely thatched and roped).

*stubble* (n) [1596] The bristles on an unshaven chin (by comparison with the stubble on a mown field); pubic hair, especially women’s.

*there is stubble only where the harvest has been* [Ill] Commenting on what is left at the end of a person’s life.

*by the stubble you may guess the grain* [Ill] Infer the past from its relics.

*light a shuck* [dry husk of corn etc.] *for…* [Can WVir NC Ind Minn Tenn Geo Flor Msri Miss Ark Kan Okla Lou Texas: 1905] Depart hurriedly (from the speed with which fire travels through dry corn-stalks).

*light a rag for…* [NY WVir NC Kenty SC Tenn Flor Msri: 1903] (As above.)

**E.33d Grain crops—threshing**

*fight like a threshing machine* Fearlessly, furiously, tirelessly.

*thresh in another man’s barn* Commit adultery.

*thresh in other folk’s corn* [Der] Meddle in others’ affairs.

*he’s like grain that takes sair wind to shake* [Sc] Is hardy, determined.

*much of the grain gets blown out with the chaff* Good often goes away with the bad in a process of selection.

*much corn lies in the chaff unseen* Undiscovered talent.

*no corn/wheat without its chaff* [1628] A worthless element to everything; merit is often obscured by the worthless.

*don’t shuck your corn till the hogs come home* [Tenn] Don’t do work before you need.

*rough as a cob* [Amer] (From the use of stripped corncobs as toilet paper in poor rural areas.)

*a pad* [=paddock, toad] *in the straw* [1530] Something wrong; a lurking, hidden danger; fraud; that element that spoils something apparently good. (To ‘breede a pad in the straw’ [Heywood, *Proverbs*—1546] is to introduce something that should not be there.)

*heap (v—reproaches etc.) on…* Load so severely as to overwhelm; smother.
E.33e Grain crops—bagging

a hundred/many words fill not a bucket/ bushel [1670]/farlet [=fardel, one twelfth of a peck—Dmb: 1627]/firlot All to no avail [eSuf].

he that does na mind corn pickles [single grains—Sc nEng] never comes to forpits [a quarter of a peck: Sc] You won’t save a lot if you can’t save a little. Similarly, ‘Mony a pickle maks a mickle’ [Sc].

measure a peck out of your own bushel/ sack/stroke [Yks] Treat others as you treat yourself; judge others by your own standards.

measure another’s corn by your own bushel [1623] Judge another by your standards.

big as a bushel
knows how many grains to a bushel of wheat [Ire] Is too astute, well-informed.

up met and down throssen [heaped up and thrust down—Yks] Resembling in all details; complete, unmitigated.

rough as a bag [NZ]/bags [UK, passim Aus]/ sacks [NZ]/a sandbag [Aus NZ] (Especially when worn as clothing!)

like a frayed out Millaquin port [a bag belonging to the Millaquin sugar refinery— Aus] Of ragged hair, beards, fur etc.

paper-bag [Amer] Person with ugly face (from the insults bag your face [Amer] and bag your head [Aus], implying ‘and keep it out of sight’).

black as a bag
wankle [unsteady, weak, wobbly, wavering, fickle—Cum] as a sack/wet poke
long as a wet sack
the poke’s as good as the sack [nYks] One as good as the other.

good words fill not a sack

turn inside out Examine thoroughly.

know…inside out Know it in detail, in all aspects.

give the sack a turn Reverse the order of things; turn the tables.

you can’t get meal from an empty sack [NJ] Do not ask the poor for charity; do not expect an intelligent response from a brainless person.

one grain does not fill a sack, but helps his fellows Even small contributions have their effect.

the clean wheat The best of its kind.

you may know by the handful the whole sack Of any representative sample.

mixed bag [1936] Assorted sample, mixture of good and bad (as in a bag of grain of mixed quality).

nothing comes out of the sack but what was there [1581] Of a person’s potentiality being realised—or not.

pull at both ends of the band [wYks 1885] Be able to dictate their own terms.

many a sack is tied up before it is full Referring to the inadequacy of a person, a meal etc.

girn [=grin, grit teeth with effort] when ye bind and laugh when ye lowse [=loose, undo the sacks: Sc] Be efficient in the early stages and you will be rewarded later.

a bund [=bound, tied up] sack and set by [Sc] Engaged to be married.
a full sack can bear a clout in the side A prosperous man can stand a slight misfortune.

it is a bad sack that will abide no clouting [1546] There is always the possibility of improvement.

an old sack is ay skailing [=scaling= scattering its contents—Sc mid&nEng: Sc] Of old men who need to piss frequently.

have no bottom Be inexhaustible, unfathomable.

let every sack stand upon its own bottom Independence.

let everyone swale [deal in corn—Lan Der Chs Stf Lei] his own wuts [=oats—Chs] Conduct his own affairs.

E.33f Grain crops—stored in granaries

garner (v) [1845] Carefully collect up and store away for safe keeping; lay up.

none says his garner’s full No one is ever completely satisfied; people do not admit to being prosperous.

don’t lock the granary after the grain has been stolen [Ont]

E.34a The miller, his horse and dog

bold as a miller’s shirt (which every day takes a rogue by the throat)

stout as a miller’s waistcoat—that takes a thief by the neck every day

the miller’s boy said so [1830] Of a matter of common report.

you breed o’ [resemble] the miller’s daughter that speered [asked] what tree groats grew on Said when people, for reasons of pride, pretend not to know what they know very well.

better a kick from a nag’s foot than a kick from John Marshall [the miller on the River Teith near Doune in the time of James V; he was a powerful man—Per]

bold/impudent [NCy] as a badger’s [miller’s—nYks; corn-buyer’s—War 1839]

horse

so hungry he’d eat a badger off his horse [midYks]

has nae mair mense [decency, sense—Sc Ire nEng] than a miller’s horse [Sc]

still as a miller’s horse when he’s loading

awkward/clumsy/sober as a miller’s mare

pegg [breathe heavily—Sc] like a miller’s aiver [cart-horse—Sc Nhb Yks]

sweet as a miller’s donkey Amenable, agreeable.

mill-bitch [sSc] Small bag set secretly by for the miller to filch meal into.

ye’re like the miller’s dog, ye lick your lips ere the pock be opened [Sc: 1819] To greedy people who are ready for something before it is offered.
the miller’s pigs are fat, but God knows whose meal they ate [Ire] On the prosperity of the wicked.
plump as a miller’s sparrow

E.34b Watermills

calm/smooth as a mill-pond [1697]/mill-pool

the same pebble never ripples the millpond twice Impact is lessened by repetition.

cause a ripple on the surface Produce a small, though noticeable reaction.

ripple (n) [1882] Gentle rise and fall of laughter, distant voices, anticipation in a crowd etc.

rippled up [wYks] Of the flesh puckered up round a wound during healing.

the bigger the rock, the bigger the splash [Ohio] When the person involved is someone of consequence, the impact is all the greater.

make waves [Amer UK: 1962] Create an effect, impact; exert a fascination; cause trouble; upset matters, especially established routines. Hence:

wave-maker [Amer] One who raises difficulties and objections.

still waters turn no mills Action is necessary.

every man wishes water to his own mill Self-interest.

in the mill-race Caught up in the general trend; involved in a common activity; in competition.

draws water to his own mill [1573] Seizes every advantage.

grudges every drop of water that goes past his own mill [Sc 1821] Selfishly demanding.

get all your water on [wYks] (sc. down the leat) Have as much as you can manage.

has all the water on his wheel [NCy Cum wYks] All he could wish for; a monopoly, and almost more than he can manage.

have your ain way like the miller of Billy-mill, although the Merse should sink [Billy-mill is a remote mill in the parish of Bancel; the Merse is an area of low marshy land between the Lammermoors and the Tweed: Bwk]

drown the miller [Sc nIre Cum Yks Der Lin wSom WVir Ind Tenn: 1889] Add too much water to a dough or cake mixture; have too much of a good thing.

wet the miller’s eye [Hmp] (As/from the above.)

ming [mix—Sc Shr Lin EAn Som]/put the miller’s eye out [Nrf Hnt Nhp War eSuf Ess Ken: 1678] (As/from the above.)

ower/too much water drowned the miller [1816] Too much, even of what you most need, can prove disastrous.

big/wet as a mill-wheel

make whim-whams for water-wheels [wYks] Do an absurd thing.

a little stream will drive a light mill [1579] Suitable employment for all; you need no more than is sufficient.

When asked about his wife’s health,
‘she comes and gangs like the Coll-mill burn
a spate the day and toom the morn’

[Bwk]

mills will not grind if you deny them water Provide the means and the power if you want the job done.

the mill stands that wants water [1642] Of those who won’t work before being paid.

the mill cannot grind with water that’s passed [1616] The past cannot serve the present; don’t miss chances, or lament them when missed.

much water goeth by the myll that the miller knowyth not of [1546] Many things happen in a house unknown to master or mistress; much happens near us that we do not notice; we cannot hope to know about everything that happens.

mickle water goes by that the miller wots not of [Sc] (As above.)

the miller sees not all the water that goes by his mill (As above.)

keep the old man’s mill going [Ags] Keep sliding, on an ice or frost slide, one after the other without a break.

till his eyes stand backwater in his head Till he is made powerless by his own efforts (like a mill-wheel retarded by the build-up of backwater [overflow water that backs up to the wheel or over the riverside fields—Sc nwLin]). ‘I’ll hold him till’s een stan back-wattir in ‘s head [Bnff]=he cannot get the better of me for all his efforts.

if you had the rent of Dee Mills you would spend it all! [1670] (A large income.)

E.34c Windmills


slender as a mill-post [the stout, strong post on which formerly a windmill was often supported] Ironical.

round as a windmill

waffly [unstable—Yks] as a mill-sail

you can’t drive a windmill with a pair of bellows [1640] Of inadequate means.

blow enough to turn a mill [EAn] Puff heavily.

his mill will go with all winds [1689] He frequently changes his loyalty. (In the C17 smock windmills were built with a revolving cap which turned into the wind by the operation of a wind-controlled fantail behind the sails. Before that, some millers could turn the whole body of their mill by pushing a long tail-pole, usually supported by a cart-wheel on the end.)

Sutton windmill Versatile man; turncoat. (It grinds whichever way the wind blows, as described above.)

has windmills in his head Empty projects; fanciful visions. (Possibly after Don Quixote, as the first use occurred c. 1612.)
fling/throw your cap over the windmill [1885] Fly in the face of convention; act defiantly.

she has thrown her bonnet over the windmills Has broken away from her old ways; has compromised her chastity. (As/from the above.)

what have I to do with Bradshaw’s windmill? [Lei] What concern is it of mine?

windmill (v) [1927] Flail the arms over and over (like a turning windmill). Hence the ‘windmill’ style of bowling in cricket.

mill-house story [Cor] Dubious item of gossip.

E.34d In the mill

no mill, no meal [1639] No production without the means of production.

was born in a mill Shouts loudly (as would be necessary to overcome the noisy clacking etc.); is deaf (rendered so by the noise).

you were bred in a mill, you have moup[ed] [mumped, nibbled—like a mouse or child in a mill] all your manners Are rude in company.

she has a (clapper) tongue would deafen [= deafen] a miller [wYks Nhp]


if you don’t want flour on your happrn [= happin<hap, wrap—Sc Ire nEng EAn], you should keep out of the mill [Ire] Accept an associated disadvantage for the sake of something worthwhile.

like a horse in a mill Of drudgery, the same weary round.

round and round like a (blindfold) horse in a mill [1607] Of a repetitious life or work.

the blind horse is fittest for the mill [NY SC] (because ignorant of the hard and hopeless conditions) In bad times, the less critical the better.

gin-horse [horse that turns a machine by plodding round and round—Yks Lan] Of a wearisome life; a preacher who never gets anywhere.

the slow horse reaches the mill [Ire] The slow-witted or handicapped reach their goal/ eternity just the same.

the horse next the mill carries all the grist [1623] Those most easily apprehended get the work, blame etc.

bring grist to the mill Be profitable.

all is grist that comes to the mill [1583] Of indiscriminacy; everything can be turned to account; sort the quality out early, later may be too late.

all is not grist that goes to his mill [Ont Amer] He is wasteful; some of what he receives is ill-gotten.

banal Trite, commonplace (as was the bannal mill, or bannal-oven, to which there was a feudal obligation to take grain to be ground or bread to be baked, so that a toll could be levied).

more sacks to the mill! [Oxf: 1590] More weight to the argument; the schoolboys’ game, also called ‘Piling on’, where many boys throw themselves in a heap on top of their victim.
safe/fast [safe—Lan] as a mouse in a malt-heap/in a mill [1584]
safe [wYks]/fast [secure, safely caught—there being only one entrance] as a thief in a mill [eYks neLan nwDer: 1606]
I shamed [=felt ashamed—Lan] like a thief in a mill
sleep like a dog in a mill With one eye open.
good is the mill that has been worn out Has proved its worth by use.

E.34e Millstones and querns

a quern stone is the better of being pitted with many blows—so be that you do not break it [Gael] Criminals should be reformed, not ruined, by severe punishment.
he may be trusted—with a house full of unbored millstones [Sc: 1641] Not at all.
trust him no further than you can fling a millstone [1618]
hard as the nether millstone Hard-hearted.
between the upper and the nether mill-stones Caught—and crushed—between two opposing and irreconcilable personalities, forces etc.
like corn under a millstone [Shr] Grievously oppressed.
the lower millstone grinds as well as the upper [1519] (Sexual.)
one stone cannot grind corn [NY] Of those situations (like marriage) where a partnership is essential.
see as far into a millstone as another/most men [1540] Of impossible acuity; be able to understand what is going on; a sarcastic comment on someone’s pretended perspicacity.
see as far through a millstone as he that picked it [tapped into its small pits and pocks—Sc] (As above.)
see through a millstone Have amazing perspicacity, penetrating discernment.
talk a mill-wheel into a grindstone [Ayr] Minimise a matter.
weep millstones [c. 1400] Be hard-hearted.

E.34f Grinding

mill around [1888] Go round like a mill—of cattle etc. A mill of cattle is a circling movement where the animals keep following each other round and round.
God’s mill grinds slow but sure Of future judgement.
the mill that is always going grinds coarse and fine [Ire: 1910] If you accept much you will get all sorts; a person who is always speaking mixes good matter with bad.
go through the mill [1818] Be tried; become useful through hard experience; go through bankruptcy. (There is a playground punishment, akin to running the gauntlet, called variously House of Whacks, Under the Arches, Under the Mill and Through the
Mill, where the offender passes four times through a tunnel of boys who strike him harder each time with ‘rain’, ‘lightning’, ‘thunder’ and ‘hailstones’. It is probable that naming this game was the original metaphor and that the modern saying derives from it.)

always behindhand, like a miller’s filler [Nhp]

contrite [<Lat conterto=grind, bruise, pound] Crushed under the weight of guilt and penitence, and so refined to a wholesome conformity.

either grind or find [1639] Leave no alternative; get it one way or another (as if you were to go through the grist so thoroughly that if the missing article is not found, it must have been ground).

have other grist to grind Have other business to attend to.

another grist to his mill [Gall] Another source of income.

he that will have a cake out of the wheat must tarry the grinding [see Shaks, T&C I.i—1602] You have to wait for what you want.

the miller grinds more men’s corn than one [1596] You are not the only one to be considered.

he who comes first to the mill grinds first There is an advantage in being the first to start; first come, first served.

Who-so that first to mille comth, first grint

[G.Chaucer, Prologue of the Wyves Tale of Bathe ln. 389—1386]

in vain does the mill clack if the miller is deaf [1631] Of an unresponsive husband.

have a tongue like a mill-clap [1616] Talk incessantly—or at least as long as you have wind.

mill-clapper A woman’s tongue.

hot from the mill-eye [the hole through which newly ground meal falls into the bin—Sc] New-made.

a grain often comes whole from the grinding An optimistic reassurance to someone worried about a person’s safety or chastity.

burn the mill Cause trouble or damage by a lack or shortage (as millstones, red-hot through lack of grist).

grind the wind [Lon] Work the treadmill.

E.34g The miller’s toll

an honest miller has a golden thumb [1386] (Millers used their thumbs in taking their toll of flour.)

no bigger than a miller’s thumb

smart as a miller taking tolls [Cor]

the toll is heavier/more than the grist [wSom] Of heavy taxation; disproportionate punishment.
take toll of...[1870] Reduce drastically; affect adversely; injure—‘Took toll of my patience’, ‘We took heavy toll of the enemy soldiers’.

death toll Final total of deaths in a disaster, battle, war etc.; when expressing a year’s casualties in road accidents, the metaphor receives added force from association with the old road tolls. (See E.5a.)

the miller never got better moulder [toll] than he took with his own hands [Sc: 1641] Said to those who can help themselves.
the meal came home short from the miller [Kcb] Expectations were disappointed.
let the multure [toll of meal retained by the miller] be taken by your own mill [Sc] Allow yourself to be deprived of your rights.

E.34h Meal

flour-head [wYks] Stupid person.
mealy-mouthed [1546] Soft-spoken; afraid to speak plainly.
you won’t get white meal out of a coal-sack Do not expect more from anyone than they are capable of.
rides like a sack of flour [Can] Of a poor horseman.
a little barrel can give but little meal Of someone’s limitations.
in meal or in malt Directly or indirectly; in one way or another. (The miller will gain profit on one or the other.)
the malt is above the meal [1546] Is drunk.
I have got my malt-siller [=malt-money, a tax paid on the making of malt—Sc] Have been unsuccessful in a much-vaunted scheme (as if the return on the venture was only enough to pay the tax due).
ill-paid maut-siller! [Sc] Said when a favour done has been poorly recompensed.
lie like a mill-shillin(g) [=shelling, the separated husks of oats (usually) or corn, virtually chaff. The job was often done by water-mills in the C18. Mixed with flour dust it seemed to pretend to be what it was not] With great fluency.
lippie [quarter-peck—Sc] in the bonnet Something extra.
I gave it him as it came from the mill (i.e. undressed, unbolted, unrefined) Spoke my mind.
he will never set the temse [fine sieve for bolting meal—Sc nEng Lin Nrf Will]/sieve on fire (This was a real risk with a hard worker whose strenuous sifting into the barrel would generate enough friction between the rims of sieve and barrel for combustion to occur, giving him an immediate reputation, unattainable by any lesser man to whom this saying would apply in the sense of: He will never become famous for any exceptional achievement.) It is tempting to see ‘He will never set the Thames on fire’ (see D.15a) as a corruption of this, but there are similar river sayings in other languages and it is likely that both had their own independent origins.
fancy may bolt bran and think it flour [1546] Treat the bad as if it were good in the vain hope of improving it; refinement does not essentially improve anyone, and you will
need a strong imagination to fancy him any better than a dusty version of what was worth little in the first place.

**farrago** A confused mixture. (Farrago was originally a farinaceous cattle-food.)

**make mashelton** [mixed corn—nEng] of Bungle, make a muddle of it.

**the dusty melder/meiller** [quantity of corn, especially oats, ground at one time—Sc Ire nEng] The last child born in a family [Abd]; the last days of a life.
POORMAN

F.1a Poverty of money

old as poverty
an empty purse fills the face with wrinkles
I would not trust him with a child’s moneybox Of one who must not be exposed to the least temptation.
if stands stiff in a poor man’s pocket In answer to ‘I would buy/do it if…’ [Oxf].
poor as a Connaught man [Ire]
hope is as cheap as despair
he looks as if he had sold all and taken nothing for it Grumpy and miserable.
nowt is never in danger [Lan Mrld] When a worthless person or thing prospers or escapes destruction.
give him his wage [wYks] Beat him.
he may make a will upon his nail for anything he has to give

F.1b Small change

not care/give/worth an atchison [=eight Scots pence=two thirds of an English penny—Yks]/a bawbee [Scottish halfpenny—Geo Ala Ark]/bodle [Scottish coin worth about a sixth of a penny—C17]/boddle [=bodle—Sc nEng Lin Der Stf]/brass farthing (James II issued brass pence, halfpence and farthings when he debased the coinage)/dodkin [small Dutch coin=a doit: 1594]/doit [=one eighth of a stiver—Sc Yks Lan Lin]/dump [worthless coin—Sc Eng]/farthing/Harrington [farthing—he had the patent to coin them in 1613]/maravedi [Spanish copper coin worth about a sixth of a penny—Sc 1816]/plack [small coin=four Scots pence=a third of an English penny—Sc Nhblakel: 1550]/plugged nickel [=counterfeit, containing an insertion of inferior metal—Amer]/rap [copper coin made for Ireland in 1721 by W.Wood, an English ironmaster, which coins were lampooned by Dean Swift, boycotted by the Irish and were known as Wood’s halfpence or raps]/rigmaree [base coin struck in the reign of Queen Mary and
so-called from its legend REG MARIA—Sc Vir]/ scerrick [Wm Yks Stf Not Lin Nhp Hmp Cor]/ scuddick [Nhbj Cum Hmp IW Dev]/scuddock [Nhbj/seurrick [wYks Som Dor]/scuttick [a very small coin or amount—Hmp]/three halfpence/twopenny ticket [tradesman’s token worth 2d.—Ire]/red cent [Amer]

wouldn’t give him the hole in a washer for it! Of an article considered worthless.

shand [base coin—Sc] Unreliable, a failure, not up to expectations.

apperd [halfpennyworth—Cor] Simpleton.

thinks his farthing/halfpenny/penny good silver [1546] Holds a high opinion of himself, thinks himself superior.

ye’re like a Lauderdale bawbee,
as bad as bad can be

[Bwk: 1856]

halfpenny head and farthing tail [Cum] Of anything whose parts do not match, one part being better than another; often of incongruous clothing, or clothes not finished off [Cor].

would split a halfpenny in two [wYks] Is miserly.

have your hand/heart/mind on your halfpenny [1541] Keep your eye on the main chance; have a particular end in view.

have your hand on another halfpenny [1577] Intend something else.

knows how to keep her hand on her halfpennies Of a chaste woman.

take a wooden nickel [Amer] Be swindled.

clean as a penny Of someone neatly dressed and clean.

not a penny the better/worse By no appreciable or noticeable amount.

feel like a penny waiting for change [Calif] Feel humiliated.

a penny soul never comes to twopence Of natural limitations.

penny wise, pound foolish [1607] Of one who is extravagant with large amounts, though frugal with small.

glum as a man who has found a penny and lost a sixpence

penny-farthing [1927] A bicycle with one large and one small wheel.

three halfpence and twopence A slow, ambling canter (from the rhythm) [wSom].

tuppence three ha’pence [Nhp] The jog-trot of a horse.

put two pennies in a purse and they will creep together [1601] Like associates with like; money breeds money; also of two rich persons marrying each other.

tight as twopence in a rag [Ire]

smart as threepence [a small, trim, bright silver coin] Neat and smartly dressed.

get in his twopence/fourpence worth Make his contribution to the discussion; interject a remark.

as high as three/six penn’orth of coppers Of a very short person.

a coin is the best friend

put in his motty [small contribution to a club or holiday fund—Lan] Interfere, interrupt the discussion.
F.2 Poverty of land

poor as Crowborough (Common) [Sus] (Because of the poverty of soil there.)

hungry as Harrop edge [Lan] Of poor ground.

the higher the hill, the lower the grass Those in a lofty station in life are the least generous.

poor as moorland

four-barrow moor [Cor] Desolate area.

hold together—as the men of Marsham when they lost their common [Lin: 1662]

Being divided they lost their cause.

clean heels, light meals (This refers to the superiority of clay land over sand or chalk land for milk etc.)

gang back to pasture [Sc Cum] Deteriorate.

hard lines! [1824] Bad luck! (The exact size of an allotment of land—with no extra—was marked out by lines. It is also possible that the phrase is nautical in origin.)

it would take an acre to keep a peewit Of poor ground.

tuiffit-land [NCy 1829] (As above.)

no man’s land [1719] An area of knowledge or organisation where a limbo exists for which no one accepts responsibility; in wartime the ground between two armies which is still being or still remains to be fought over.

F.3 Poverty of housing

go up Johnson’s end [Wor] Become very poor.

shine like Holmby mudwalls Ironical, compared with the mansion. (See E.7c, shines like Holmby.)

one-armed landlord The pump [wSom].

landlord at the door [Cum] A saying at whist when a high trumping card suggests it was the last trump card held.

tied house One so associated with a particular job that if the tenant ceases to work in that job, he loses the tenancy.

you are as well on your purchase as some are on their set rent [an amount allowed to a servant or cottager while working for their landlord—Sc] To those who have as many bastards as others have lawful children.

love lives in cottages as well as in courts [1670]

content lodges oftener in cottages than palaces

worse ner ‘git out’ [Cum nYks] i.e. eviction.
if a louse miss its footing on his coat, it will be sure to break its neck Of bare, well-worn garments.

a threadbare coat is armour proof against highwaymen
you couldn’t throw your hat over the workhouse wall [Cockney] (Because you have too many illegitimate children in there to risk recognition in retrieving it.)
takes his coat off to pass the workhouse door Pays his way with difficulty. (Possibly, like the above, originating from the idea that he cannot afford to maintain his responsibilities within.)

but for the belly the back might wear gold Food is a costly necessity.
shabby—trick, deed etc. [1679] Unworthy, mean.
in tatters [1576] In disarray, reduced to useless remnants—of an argument, army etc.
he sits full still that has riven breeks [1628] A man conscious of his shortcomings will not invite attention.

had his breeks torn off Was severely reprimanded.
it is hard to take britches off bare hips [Ire Colo] You cannot have what isn’t there.
take the breeks off a bare arse [Sc: 1546] Ruin a pauper.
slacken your yorks [the pieces of string tied round the trouser leg below the knee—n&wEng] Take things easy.
(frozen as) stiff as a strad [leather gaiter—WCy: wSom]
buckle down to work [1574] Apply yourself (as when buckling on a belt, or armour, or harness).
someone forgot to pay the washerwoman It is a very wet day.
they live by taking in each other’s washing Of a community with no apparent source of income.

F.4b Poverty of boots

clever clogs will not make fine ladies [Lan] Social origins will betray you, however clever you are.
clogged again Recovered from illness. (See also B.10b.)
like old boots Vigorously, thoroughly.
tough as old boots
boot-lace (n) Thin pipe tobacco; the shrunken liver of a codfish in spring [naut] (from the similarity); narrow cut made on a sheep’s neck by a careless shearer [Aus NZ].
boot-lace/shoe-string—allowance, budget, economy etc. [1959] One barely sufficient to buy laces, let alone boots.
on a shoe-string [1904] With the irreducible minimum of expense; on a hardly adequate income or allowance.
he that goes barefoot must not plant thorns Remember your peculiar vulnerability.
barefoot(ed) [Penn WVir: 1866] Without sugar, cream or milk in tea or coffee.

F.4c Poverty of bedding

he who stretches his foot beyond the blanket must stretch it in the straw Hard times after living beyond your means.

Wo þat stretchet forperre þan his wytel [blanket] wyle reshe in þe straue his fet he mot streche

[Walter of Henley, Husbandry—C13]

you are all out of it and into the straw [Sc] Are quite mistaken.

stretch the blanket [WVir] Exaggerate.

stretch your legs according to the coverlet [1670] Adapt your way of life to your circumstances. (As the above.)

condemn to straw Declare worthy of a madhouse.

feel the draught [1925] Suffer from poverty, worsened circumstances.

feel a draught [Amer] Recognise the presence of racial prejudice.

freeze out [1890] Exclude from business by competition etc.

F.5 Relations with the Richman

pay the cain [a rent paid in kind, often with cocks, hens or eggs—Sc Nhb] Pay the penalty, generally.

coop ed up in a convent, like a cain-hen in a cave y [=cavie, hen-coop—Sc: W.Scott, Fair Maid of Perth III.ii—1828]

heart-thirled Bound by the affections. (To be ‘thirled’ is to be legally obliged to grind at a particular mill [Sc Ire nEng].) ‘I shall take it ill if they grind not at my mill’ [Cor: Bevill Grenvile, Letter—8 March 1641].

deaf as a bumbaily [bailiff]

bothersome as debt

take it out of his ribs Exact a debt with punishment in lieu of payment.

plenty never wrings its master by the ear (as does poverty)

I’ll trust him no further than I can fling/kick/ see him

bend/lean over backwards to…[1925] Exert efforts beyond what could reasonably be expected; go to the opposite extreme.

a poor man may sing before thieves

the devil wipes his arse with the poor man’s pride [1670]

arse-wiper One who ingratiates himself with the boss.
feel cheap Feel inferior.

kill-cow [Sc nEng wSom NH Mass] The ultimate worst, serious blow, grave matter, momentous outcome [Nhb]; bad, but not too serious mishap [nwLin]. (From the magnitude of the blow that will kill a cow, or else the seriousness of losing one.)


a poor man’s cow dies, a rich man’s child [1640] The irony of loss.

ehall binks [=benches—nEng] are sliddery [slippery—Sc nEng et al.: 1450] Great men’s favours are precarious.

there’s a sliddery stane afore the ha’ door [Sc: 1721] (As above.)

enthall [reduce to the condition of a serf or slave: 1838] Enchant, render someone the servant of delight, captivate generally.

give him his arles [an earnest of a worker’s future wage, given on hiring day—Sc Ire nEng] Give him his deserts, a beating.

arles-penny arles-shilling Something given to add persuasion, a sweetener.

Lawrence bids high wages [Sheffield, Yks Der Nhp: J.Clare, The Woodman—1819] Said when someone cannot work for the heat. (St Lawrence’s feast is on 7 August, and he has a reputation for laziness—see J.40a.)

cut his stick [UK, passim Conn Penn Msri Ark] Depart. (From the custom of hired farm hands of cutting a stick from the hedge and standing it in the ingle-nook to intimate that they would not be extending their service to another year.)

F.6a Hunger

long as a day without bread [food]

hope is a good breakfast but a bad supper

Scotch/Welsh bait [1603] A rest without other refreshment, especially when allowing a horse to stand still a few minutes at the top of a hill.

he whose belly is full believes not him that is fasting It is hard to envisage another’s plight.

an empty belly hears nobody You cannot listen if you are preoccupied with your next meal.

starved [1581] Deprived generally—of affection, company, reading matter etc.

they must hunger in frost that will not work in heat When times are good, prepare for bad times.

live on air Without eating.


he favours [looks like—sLan] someone brought up on yeth-bobs [tufts of heather] and scaplins [stone chippings] Very emaciated.

scrabble [scrape, scratch together—passim] on Struggle on.

live from hand to mouth [1509] Consume food as soon as obtained.

a hand-to-mouth existence Living improvidently.

an envious man grows lean with the fatness of his neighbour
**bag of bones** [1838] An emaciated person.

**like Smithwick, either clemmed** [starved—Lan] or **borstin** [burst—Chs: 1678]

Either too little or too much; no happy medium.

**rare as venison in a poor man’s kitchen**

**so hungry could eat a horse/a horse behind the saddle**

**he’ll eat a man off his horse** A hungry lad.

**earth-hunger** [Sc] Urgent desire for food occasionally felt just before death.

**he’ll have enough one day—when his mouth is full of mould(s)** i.e. only when he is dead.

**we can drink of the burn when we cannot bite of the brae** [Sc] A consolation when there is shortage of food, not drink.

**it is a dear collop** [slice of meat—Sc Ire nEng Cmb Brks] that is cut out of your own flesh [1546] You can pay too dearly.

**you cannot have two bites at a cherry** [C17] It is impossible to get more out of something than it contains; to make much of little. Also ‘two bites at a cherry’ apostrophises someone’s timidity, lack of enterprise or finicky, affected behaviour. A **second bite at the cherry** is a second chance, a further opportunity, often neither deserved nor expected.

**it is dear-bought/dear-coft** [bought, bartered—Sc] honey that’s licked off a thorn [1175] You can pay too dearly; the ill effect of unlawful pleasures. ‘Like licking honey off a thorn’ [wYks]—of unprofitable work.

**butter’s dear-bought when it’s licked off a briar** [Ire] (As above.)

**when all fruit fails, welcome haws** [1721] Faute de mieux.

**gather the haws before the snaws** [Sc] Don’t be dilatory.

**frugal** [1597] Parsimonious, sparing (like one who ekes out their diet with wild fruits).

**as the year** [harvest] is, **your pot must seethe** Your meals depend on your income.

**one too many at the porridge pan** [Lan]/ **pasty** [Cor] Too many in a family for the food available.

**hand/pass/turn in your dinner-pail** [American workman’s lunch container] Die.

**put out of the workhouse for eating the number off his plate** Lost his privileges by being too demanding; dare not return to the scene of his misconduct.

**half a loaf is better than no bread** [1546] Be content with something, even if it is not enough; the creed of compromisers.

**bannocks is better than na kin bread** [Sc: 1678] (As/from the above.)

**hope is the poor man’s bread**

**thick** [stupid—Lan] as a **Greenbank buttie** [sandwich made out of thick slices of bread, Greenbank being a poor quarter of St Helens]

**he won’t give a bean for a pea** Is very ungenerous.

**give a pea for a bean** [Hrf: c. 1390] Give a present with an eye to a future return.

**hunger makes hard beans sweet** [1350]

**turnip watch** Large round one.

**give him/her (cold) turnips** [Suf, C19 Dev] Jilt, refuse, abandon heartlessly.

**earn your kail** [Nhb]/corn Earn your livelihood.

**it’s gude to hae your cog** [wooden pail or dish—Sc Ire Penn] out when it rains kail [Sc: 1721] Be ready for your opportunities.
I had better kail in my cog and never gave it a catch [Sc] When rejecting something as not being up to standard. (Scottish reapers, when their broth was too hot, tossed it in the air and caught it again.)

F.6b Thirst

thirst (n) [c. 1200] Ardent desire—for knowledge etc. Hence:
  thirsty (adj) [c. 888] Eager for—variously.
  poor as pauper soup

F.7a Coarse fishing

can of worms [Can, 1955 Amer] Very involved, complex problem, hitherto unsolved, no one having come forward to investigate it.
  open a can of worms [1962] Start looking into something so involved and hitherto covered up that much unsavoury detail is likely to emerge; bring up an unpleasant subject for discussion.
  has a smile like a can of worms [Can] Is repulsive.
  fishing expedition Organised search for evidence to bring (a) criminal(s) to justice.
  gone fishing! [Amer] Unaccountably absent from work.
  giving is fishing You might get something back and you might not.
  jaup [splash—Sc Ire nEng] the water Spend time on a business without the least prospect of success [Rxb].
  jouk/juck [dodge, duck—Sc Ire nEng] and let the jaw [splash—Sc Ire nEng] go by/o’er you [Sc: 1721] Keep clear of trouble; yield to present troubles.
  jouk and let the jaw of Sir Simon’s wrath gae owre [Abd Kcd eLth nIre] (As above.)
  it’s gude fishing in drumly [muddy—Sc Nhb] waters [Sc Ont Ill Okl Texas: 1568] Dubious company is the likeliest to yield information or profit.
  in deepest water is the best fishing [1670] Learn from the wise, experienced.
  in the swim [where an angler might catch most : 1885] Where all the activity is; involved in current affairs. (See also D.13a.)
  it’s no use fishing in front of the net [1410] No use looking for opportunities where someone else has already taken them.
  set the net after the fish have gone by [NY] Keep trying after the opportunity has gone.
  limber [pliant—Som] as a fishing-rod Of a construction not rigid enough.
  he is fishing with a long line He is looking far into the future; what he is hoping for is remote.
throw the long tome [=taum, horsehair fishing line—Sc nEng Dor] ‘Fish’ for information.

troll (v) [Amer] Look continually for sexual encounters. (Trolling’ is a way of fishing where a spinning lure is always on the move through fresh waters.)
troller [1990s] Someone who sends out electronic messages in the hope of provoking a response.

angle for…[1589] Manoeuvre cunningly so as to obtain what you want surreptitiously.
angler Thief who uses a hooked stick for pilfering through doors and windows.
take a rise out of…[1834] Make someone the butt of a joke or trick them into making a fool of themselves.
rise to…/swallow the bait Fall for a trick.
a fish wouldn’t be caught if it kept its mouth shut [Can Amer] We betray ourselves by what we say.
all fish are not caught with flies Different people need different incentives.
without bait you can’t catch fish [III]
bait the hook Provide an enticement or inducement to persuade someone to do what you want.
the bait hides the hook [UK Can Amer: 1539] There is a hidden disadvantage.
big fish are caught with little hooks [Ont] You can achieve much with small means.
there is often a barb behind a kiss [Ire] Pain after pleasure.
bite (v) Fall for a trick, accept a gambit, respond in a way intended by others for your discomfiture.
nibble (n) A non-committal enquiry about a house (etc.) for sale. ‘Have you had any nibbles?’
nibble (v) Consider an offer eagerly but carefully; court a girl regularly; dally with temptation.
that fish will soon be caught that nibbles at every bait [1633] The more risks you take, the sooner you will be caught; also sexual.
a little bait catches a large fish [III]
better shun the bait than struggle on the hook [III]
the greedy pike gets caught the quickest [Ire] The acquisitive are likeliest to be ruined.
on my hook [Aus] In my way.
hold hook and line! [1609] Provided nothing goes wrong.
it is a silly fish that is caught twice with the same bait [1732] Of those who make the same mistake twice.
it is not a fish until it is on the bank Only the final achievement counts.
fish and catch a frog Meet failure.
lay hairs in the water to… [Ayr] Inaugurate proceedings; take steps, commit yourself to some course of action. (From the guddling of boys for small fish using slip-knotted horsehairs to catch them.)
minnows are better than nae fish [Sc] The reply of one defending his children or possessions criticised for small size.

gudgeon [1584] Credulous person.
swallow a gudgeon/gape for gudgeons [1577] Be tricked; submit to an affront.
**fish is cast away that is cast into dry pools** [1670] People are wasted in unsuitable work or company.
**fish** (n) Object accidentally dropped down the bore-hole of an oil-well.
**fish** (v) Try to recover the above.

## F.7b Eels

eel (n) [Amer] Variously applied to: equivocating politician; criminal who eludes arrest; clever prisoner.

- **fat** [wYks Lan]/fresh/limber/lish [supple, active—Lan]/nimble/slape [slippery—Cum Yks]/slick [slippery—NC Tenn Calif sAmer]/slippery [1412]/swack [supple, lithe, nimble, active, treacherous, slippery—Sc Cum]/wick [quick, lively—Lan Chs]/yauld [alert—Sc Nhb] as an eel/snig [eel—Lan Chs]

- **has no more backbone than an eel** (which, being so sinuous, appears to have no spine to stiffen it) Is feeble, ‘spineless’.

- **eel-backed** Of horses that ‘have black lists [stripes or streaks of colour] along their backs’ [Dictionarium Rusticum—1726].

- **limp as eels** [Dev]

- **Manhattan eels** [Amer] Condoms (seen floating in New York harbour).

- **wambles like an eel in the water** [Sc] Wriggles and writhes.

- **wammel** [rock from side to side while walking—Cum Wm nYks Lan] like an eel

- **clish** [wriggle—IMa] like an eel

- **wriggle like eels**

- **wriggle (about) like a snig in a bottle** [Lan Chs Lei Shr War] Often of a restless child.

- **wriggle into...** [1598] Insinuate yourself into, intrude furtively.

- **wriggle out of...** [1646] Avoid, evade an obligation, engagement etc.; extricate yourself from a difficult position, often in a devious way.

- **slippery** [1555] Of evasive people.

- **slippery subject** One full of snags, pitfalls, frustrations.

- **slape** [Lakel nYks]/slippery as an eel’s tail (greased)

- **have a (wet) eel by the tail** [1565+] Grasp something elusive; attempt a virtual impossibility.

- **he has a slid grip/sliddery gripe that has an eel by the tail** [Sc Cum] A comment on dealing with shifty characters.

- **hold the eel of...by the tail** Have a mere smattering of a subject, such as will slip from the memory as easily as an eel from the hand.

- **he that hath a woman hath an eel by the tail** [1576] He has someone elusive, inapprehensible.

- **money is an eel in the hand**

- **you cannot hunt eels and hares at the same time** [Ohio] Of incompatible objectives.

- **he that will catch eels must disturb the flood** [1594] You cannot achieve results without upsets.
muddy the waters Confuse the issue.
muddle (v) [1687] Confuse, disturb (as is water when the mud at the bottom is
‘muddled’ or disturbed).
drumble (v) [make muddy—Sc nEng] Confuse—the wits, senses.
nimble/as much in his element as an eel in a sand-bag [1595] Not at all.
you cannot hide an eel in a sack [1640] Crude concealment will not keep a lively
secret.
put your hand in the creel for an adder or an eel [marriage proverb—Sc: 1575]
Either a partner you do not want but cannot get rid of, or one you want who will not stay;
of a situation where no cunning, art or sense can secure a good spouse, but one must be
taken for better or for worse.

F.8 Public transport

omnibus—bill, book, box, resolution [1857] All-comprising, comprehensive,
accommodating (just as the omnibus has room for many travellers together).

the man on the Clapham omnibus The ordinary, average man; randomly selected
juror (a phrase used by legal men since 1903 when Lord Bowen coined it).

get on the streetcar before it stops [Ont] Anticipate pointlessly.

the boys on the bus [Amer] Ordinary citizens, ‘the man in the street’.

Greyhound policy [Amer] Giving the homeless a one-way ticket to somewhere else
(after the name of the long-distance bus company).

a face like the back of a bus/tram Far from handsome.

miss the bus [1886] Lose an opportunity.

as much as the traffic will bear/stand As much as the market will tolerate; as far as
is financially viable (originally from fixing fares).

busman’s holiday [1893] Leisure time spent at your usual work. (When the buses
were horse-drawn, the regular drivers often rode as passengers on their holidays to ensure
that the replacement drivers treated their horses properly.)

drive the big bus [Amer] Vomit into the toilet (from gripping the rim like a steering
wheel).

shoot through like a Bondi tram [Sydney, Aus] Go through without stopping or
slowing down.


didn’t fall off the last tram! Have more experience, sense, gumption than that!

tram-lines [1937] The outside lines (about the width apart of tram-tracks) on a tennis
court giving the extra strip of area available when playing doubles; those traditional and
inflexible principles and courses of action that are safe and predictable.

sabotage [1910] Organised destruction of plant by discontented workmen. (From the
French railway strike of 1910 when strikers broke the sabots [shoes] holding the railway
lines.)
get off at Gateshead [the railway station before Newcastle-upon-Tyne]/Hillgate [the stop before home!]/Redfern [the railway station before Sydney Central—Aus] Practise coitus interruptus.

put it on a train and see if it gets off at Westport [Amer] Try it out and see how the public react to it.

bug-letter Polite but insincere apology, explanation etc. (From the letter sent by an American railroad company to a passenger who had written to complain of fleas in the upholstery. The effect of the reply, expressing bewildered consternation and abject concern over an incident such as had never before occurred on their trains, was marred by a note inadvertently enclosed: ‘Send this guy the bug-letter.’)

get a free ride Enjoy something without paying.

trainspotter [someone whose sole interest is in collecting the names and numbers of railway engines—UK] Person of limited outlook, but with one obsessive hobby [1990s]. The term has also been extended to those bird-watchers, botanists and musicologists who are engaged primarily on identifying and listing.

F.9a Peasant’s life

christened in pump-water [1678] Red-faced.

pull hair and hair and you’ll make the carle bald [1621] Many small deprivations amount to a drastic result.

he that will not go over the stile must be thrust through the gate The same result, but less pleasantly.

piss on nettles/a nettle [wYks: 1546] Be bad-tempered. Also, surly as if he had pissed on a nettle and nettlesome [Link Glo] would not take hold of him with a pair of loukin’ tongs [long-handled gripping tool for pulling up thistles and other weeds—Lakel]

callous [<Lat callosus—hard-skinned]

F.9b Muck-spreading

the witch is in the keelack [=kellach, a basket in which manure was carried on the back to outlying or inaccessible fields—Sc] Said when good produce can be attributed to good tillth.

all in a hott [heap of lime or manure in a field—Sc nEng EAn] Huddled together [Cum].

the master’s foot is the best fulyie [manure—Sc] (When he walks out to supervise the work.)

money, like muck, does no good till it’s spread
riches are like muck which stink in a heap, but spread abroad make the earth fruitful [1670]

scale [scatter about—Sc Lakel Yks Lan] Divulge, publish [wYks].

prepare the ground for... Do preliminary work necessary to ensure success.

cover the ground [1887] Deal adequately with the task in hand.

go like shit off a shovel/stick Not as quickly as might be hoped.

stick like shit to a shovel All too well.

fork out [1831] Pay out, pay up. (In reference to forking muck out of a cart or barrow.)

all about [in a state of high efficiency—naut]—like shit in a field! Not as efficient as they think.

you cast/cut a dash at a distance like sharn [dung—Sc Ire Eng passim] on a ley rigg [Abd] To someone flaunting smart clothing. (A ‘ley rig’ is a pasture ridge or hill, where a spreading of muck would show up clearly.)

soil our hands with... Demean, defile, pollute ourselves with.

shuffle muck [wYks] A person who does bad, slovenly work.

moonrakers [1787] Wiltshire yokels. (From the time when some Wiltshire peasants were fishing up contraband by full moonlight and, when challenged, one declared that he was trying to rake out the cheese from the water.)

like a bag of muck/shit tied up ugly [swEng]/ with string! Of a shapeless person.

ten pounds of shit in a five pound bag [Amer] Sloppily dressed person.

stink like a guanner bag [=guano bag—nLin]

F.9c Crow-scaring

scarecrow (n) [1590] Man so ragged and unkempt as to present a frightful, grotesque appearance; a boy so notorious to the police as a thief that he may as well stay at home.

scarecrows (n) Weapons (such as flame-and-smoke shells simulating a bomber being shot down) that were not themselves dangerous, but were used for the deterrent effect.

ragged/ugly as a scarecrow

flay-crow [wYks] Ridiculously dressed person.

mother-of-the-mawkins [=mawkin, a scarecrow] An uncanny body, witch [Slg]. (It is interesting that in the sense-ancestry of mawkin= scarecrow, there is that of mawkin=a female demon or spectre, quite close to the meaning of the phrase as used in Stirlingshire.)

your bonnet’s on colly-west, like a mawkin in a corn-lesaw [cornfield—Shr]

stand like a girt ttedie-bogey [=tatie-bogie, a scarecrow in a potato field—Fif Lnk: nDev] Stand helplessly inactive.

more like a mawkin than a man [Lin]

know no more than the mawkin in the field [War 1859]

man of straw [1599] Someone incapable of right action, person of no account; financier unable to produce the money to which he is committed; imaginary person serving as opponent; someone willing (for a consideration) to go bail for another, and
probably so-called from the practice of lounging about Westminster Hall wearing straw in the shoes [1830].

**straw-man** (v) Introduce a feebler-than-necessary argument to oppose your own thesis or preference.

**knock the stuffing out of**…[1887] Reduce to feeble impotence.

**shoot like a crow-keeper** [crow-scarer] Erratically, like a rustic.

**as the blind man shot the crow** By sheer luck. (Blind men were often employed as crow-starvers.)

**shoot the crow** [Sc] Abscond; steal away quickly without paying.

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**F.10a Horseman calling his horses**

**catch her sleeping/napping as Morse** [Dev]/ **Moss caught his mare** [Chs C16+passim] Detect someone in their negligence or error. Another version records that he caught her by feeding her through a hurdle.

**out of/beyond all ho/whooping** [C14+] Immoderately, out of bounds (being beyond the point of recall with a ‘ho!’).

**beyond recall** Lost irretrievably.

**neither gee** ['go'/'turn right’ to a horse] **nor hauve** ['turn left’—Der Yks Not Lin] Turn neither one way nor another, be stubborn [nYks].

**haw** ['turn left’—to horses and dogs—n, mid,-midw&swEng Amer] **and gee (about)** Lead at will, master, control.

**neither gee nor woy** [=wo=whoa, ‘stop!’/ ‘stand still!’—to horses and dogs—passim] Obey neither command nor entreaty.

**neither hait nor ree** He will go his own way, is wilful. (‘Hait’ is a call to horses and dogs to go on or go left, ‘ree’ to go right.)

**neither ree nor harve** [=hauve, see above] Prove stubborn [wYks].

**neither hap** [turn to the right—Sc Ire Lei Dev] **nor wynd** [turn to the left—of draught oxen or horses—Sc Ire] Be intractable, resist all influence and guiding.

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**F.10b Horseman managing his horses**

**work-horse** [1949] Person or machine well-known for hard and reliable work.

**bell-horse** [leader of a team of horses] Person who takes the lead [Wm Yks Chs Shr Hrf wSom Dev]. (See also K.50c, **bear the bell**.)

**all lay their load on the willing horse** [1546] A willing worker is exploited.

**work like a dray-horse**

**put no more on an old horse than he can bear** Treat age with consideration.
take time by the forelock [1539] (i.e. at the beginning rather than afterwards by the tail) Seize your opportunity; tackle things without delay.

pull the forelock Make a gesture of subservience. (The forelock of a horse gives power over the horse to whomsoever grasps it. For the horse it is the crown of its beauty, the sum of its power of self-assertion [Koran xi.59].)

hold your horses [1844] Pause a moment; restrain your haste or eagerness, be patient [Eng Amer, probably among cowboys].

haud the cuddy reeking [keep the donkey sweating, steaming—Sc] Work hard at a task.

without turning a hair [1897] Without any sign of exhaustion or discomposure, without effort or distress. (When horses sweat, there is a roughening of the hair.)

like a horse kicking [wWor] Strong and vigorous.

lift up heel against…[Cromwell—1655] Defy, revolt against…

everyone knows what to do with a kicking horse except he that’s got it [Cor]

kick (n) of a gun [1832], emotion etc. [1844] Powerful reaction, stimulant, thrill, excitement, as in ‘get a kick out of’, ‘doing it for kicks’=purely for pleasure, irresponsibly.

he who follows truth too closely will have dirt kicked in his face Do not pry too closely into abuse! ‘Follow not truth too near the heels lest it dash out thy teeth’ [1614].


cool your heels [1633] Wait idly; be kept waiting (like horses cooling their feet in water after work). Also ‘cool your cutes’ [ankles—Sc Nhb].

double harness [1858] Petty, unimportant (from the notion that a place that only supported one horse must be very poor).

—F.10c Horseman harnessing—

harness (v) [1927] Control, direct various energies or power to your own service.

in harness [Amer 1873] At work. To ‘die in harness’ is to die before retirement.

double harness Marriage; close co-operation.

you come for horse and harness For your own ends.

cinch (n) [<Sp cincha=strong girth-strap of a saddle or pack] A sure thing; safe proposition.

cinch (v) Secure a hold on a person, get them into a tight corner. (These came into the language via Mexico and the cowboys of America.)

collar (v) [1613] Catch, apprehend [nwLin].
collar the children Bring them up to work [Chs Hrt].

mouth like a horse-collar [Aus] Very large.

come under collar [Sus] Be obedient.

against the collar Fatiguing.

collar-work Uphill work for a horse; hence, severe effort generally.

work up to the collar Not shirk any work. (From a horse pulling its weight and straining against its collar.)
put to the pin of the collar [Ire] Driven to the limit of your abilities; hard-pressed.

slip neck out of yoke [War 1859]

out of collar Out of work [wYks Chs].

like Hicks’s horses, all of a snarl [Som] Of a tangled skein. (They say he had only one horse.)

allus backin’ i’ th’ breech-bant [crupper—Chs] Of a tardy person [sChs nLin].

hing [hang] in the breechin [Sc]/britchen [that part of a harness passing round behind a shaft-horse to enable it to push backwards—Nhb]/gears [nYks] Shirk work, like a lazy horse.

strong as a back-band [=backwiddy/rigwiddy/ridgerth, the horse harness that passes over the cart-saddle and supports the shafts—nYks]

not in shaft for…[Cum] Unable to accomplish.

limber [put a horse in the shafts] your shanks up [Lan] Go to work.

old chains gall less than new Better the restrictions you are used to than new ones.

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F.10d Horseman tending his horses

curry favour [c. 1510] Ingratiate yourself, especially by insincere flattery. (Favour is a corruption from Favel [c. 1400], the name of a fallow-coloured horse, proverbial as a type of cunning or duplicity.)

F.10e Horseman feeding his horses

eat horse-seed, corn is coming The recurring theme urging patience to the needy, on the grounds that things will improve.

corn’s no for staigs [one- to three-year old unbroken stallions—Sc Ire Eng Aus Amer] Youth needs no luxuries.


caff and draff [brewer’s grains, husks, refuse—Sc nEng] is gude enough for aivers [worn-out old cart-horses—Sc] Poor workers can expect no luxuries.

an old horse recognises chaff [Wal] With experience you know what is worthless.

it is a proud horse that will not bear his own provender [1546] In criticism of those who will not work for their living.

stand/come up to the rack [Amer]/stand your rack-ups Lakel] Face up to unpleasant consequences, responsibilities. (A horse has to stand up against the rack in order to reach its fodder.)

carrot [1895] Incentive (from the ruse of dangling a carrot in front of a stubborn donkey).

carrot and stick [1948] Combined policy of inducement and punishment.
nimble as a stone trough
drink from the same trough Be of the same kind.
you can lead a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink [1175] Said when something (such as education) is offered but refused.

F.10f His horses worn out

sold a horse and bought a donkey Came down in the world.
   jaded Overworked, worn-out. (As/from the above.)
   harridan [<Fr haridelle=a worn-out jade of a horse] Haggard and disagreeable old woman.
   hackney [horse, not usually a good one, mainly let out for hire] Drudge; uninspired writer or other worker reduced to working for money. Hence:
   hackneyed [1749] Used so often and indiscriminately and for such varied purposes that it has become stale and commonplace—of words, phrases, popular songs etc.

F.10g His horses in mud

aback-o’-behint, where the grey mare foaled [fouled, threw in the mud] the fiddler [Ant NCy] Emphasising the remoteness of a dwelling.
   bog down Come to a stop, unable to make further progress.
   bog(founder) (v) Dumbfound, confuse [Der Chs].
   mired Stuck, stopped (in playing a game).
   like old Jan Keat’s horse staggered [stuck in mud—Dev Cor] in the mud [Cor] In inextricable trouble.
   Dun is in the mire [G.Chaucer, The Prologe of the Maunciples Tale ln. 5–1386] Someone is in the dumps; things have come to a halt; this one mishap has stopped everything else.
   one is as deep in the mud as the other in the mire [Lei War] One as bad as the other.
   let the quick horse pull the dead horse out of the mire Mix, share or offset good with bad, smooth with rough.
   ye didna draw sae weel when my mear was in the mire [Sc] I am giving you more help than ever you gave me.
F.10h His horses dead

hard as Wrag lad [Der] (Wrag, a Chesterfield baker, sent his errand lad over the moors with a horse and panniers of bread. A snowstorm caught them, so severe that the horse died—but the boy survived. See also I.50f, under raglad.)

as easy to wed a widow as to catch/put a halter on a dead horse

he is trying to wakken/waken a dead horse [eYks] Works in vain, or at any rate for no pay.

ride/work (for/off/on) a/the dead horse [wYks nLan nwLin EAn Oxf Aus NZ: 1638] For wages already paid; to clear a debt, hence resented; take goods for wages; draw money on account.

skin off all dead horses [Slg] Finish work that has already been paid for.

flog a dead horse [1872] Labour without hope of results; continue with a policy that no longer offers any prospect of success.

drew it from him—like a fart from a dead horse [Sc] Only got him to do or say it reluctantly.

F.11a Cowman driving his cattle

little cattle, little care The only advantage of poverty.

he has flown high and let in a cow-flap at last Of one who, very particular in choosing a wife, makes an ill-assorted marriage in the end.

has hardly sense enough to call the cows out o’ the kailyard/kirkyard [Sc] (Where it is obvious they should not go.)

in the lane when he should be in the leasow [meadow, pasture, cornfield—Sc Ire nEng Stf Shr Wor Hrf Sus] Never where he is needed.

call them all through one ford [Nhbb] Treat them all alike.

goad (v and n) [1579] Irritate; drive into action (as if by a sharp goad, used originally for driving cattle).

amenable [<Fr amener=bring in or before<Lat minare=drive animals with threatening shouts]

lead by the nose [C16+] Cajole into obedience (as in handling a bull); have complete control and direction of.

the black ox has trodden on my foot [Sc Shr Nhp: 1525] Care; trouble; depression; old age has come; also of decay, misfortune, worse times.

leave her on a ley (land) [fallow, rough upland pasture], and let the devil flit her! [move to fresh pasture: Lin: 1599] Of a scolding wife.
F.11b Cowman milking; pails

you are one of a meek cow’s breed, you’ll stand without a bonoch [hind-leg tie for a cow being milked] A rebuke to the nonassertive [Sc].

milk the cow that stands still Do what you can when you can. (This was good advice in the days when milkmaids, those surrogate calves, went into the fields to milk.)

busy as a one-armed milker on a dairy farm [Aus]

milk ower the can [n&wYks] Say more than you should; speak at too great a length.

she has an ill paut [stamp—Sc nEng] wi’ her hind foot [Sc: 1721] She is stubborn and tricky (like a milked cow, kicking).

dinna cast away the cog [wooden milking pail—Sc Ire nEng Stf Ken Penn] when the cow flings [kicks: Sc] Don’t act rashly in misfortune; don’t make your troubles worse than they are.

skedaddle [spill, scatter milk, especially when running—Sc Nhb Lan] Flee, scatter in alarm.

thin as a milkin’ stool leg [Cum]


white as a loan-soup [=lane-sup, a drink of fresh milk taken in the lane by the milking field where the cogs were stood in the shade before being carried to the dairy] Very flattering [Sc].

crooked as a yoke-stick [the shoulder-pole on which two full pails could be carried from milking field to dairy] Badly deformed [nYks].

carry milk pails Walk with a woman on each arm.

drop your buckets [Amer] Make an embarrassing mistake.

strip it—as Stack stripped [milked out the last drops] the cat when he pulled her out of the churn [1678]

you serve me as the wife did the cat, cast me in the kirn and harled [drew, dragged] me out of it [Sc—1691+] You may have rescued me from trouble, but you got me in it in the first place.

long straws are no motes, quoth the good wife when she harled the cat out of the kirn [Sc] Said facetiously when you find a long mote in your food; this is too large to be overlooked; has gone beyond a joke. (In Scotland a mote is something added to milk or water—often a particle found in milk or butter like a husk or small splinter—Sc Ire Yks IW Wil Dor Som Dev Cor.) Another version runs: lang straes are nae motes [1737].

be sair-stressed stringing the milsie [cloth-strainer for milk—Sc Stf] Make much fuss over a little work.

I ken by my cog how my cow’s milked [Sc] I recognise the worker from the appearance of the work.

I ken by my cog who milks my cow [Sc] Spoken by a wife, suspicious of her husband.

take a stave/staff out of his cog [Ayr] Diminish his allowance; reduce his expenditure. (Like making his pail smaller. See also I.48a, take a stap out of his bicker/cog.)

cast a laggin-gird/leglen-girth [the lowest hoop on a wooden milk-pail—Sc nEng] Have a bastard child; be delivered of a child.
ungirth the laigen/laggin [Bnff Ire] (As/from the above.)
slip the girr/girth [Ayr] (As above.)
shine like a white gird about a shairney [= sharny=mucky, dunged—passim] cog [Sc]
swash-bucket [swill-bucket, sluicing pail] Farm servant or slattern [Dev].
like the cooper o’ Fogo, ye drive off better girds than ye ca’ on [=call, drive, knock—Sc Nhb nYks: Bwk] Of reformers who only make matters worse.
ca’ your gird [Sc] Get on with the job.

F.11c Cowman losing his cattle

work for need-fire Hard and frantically. (From the Scottish, Border and Lakeland custom of passing cattle afflicted with the murrain through smoke produced by rubbing two pieces of wood together. All fires in the valley or village had to be extinguished and when the new fire had been started—without the use of any metal—green stuff was put on and the cattle driven through the thick smoke. In 1851 need-fire was brought from Windermere to Troutbeck [H.Martineau, Guide to the Lakes—1855].)
hide-bound [1603] Strict; narrow-minded; conventional. (From the condition of ill-fed cattle, with tight skins.)
the tune the old cow died of [1732] A jocular disparagement of someone’s music; advice instead of practical help; a hideous row.
he never tint [lost] a cow that grat [wept] for a needle [Sc: 1628] Large losses inure you to small ones; experience helps to keep things in proportion.

F.12a Shepherding

pastor [<Lat pastor=giver of pasture] Minister of religion [1377],
shepherd (n) Pastor, minister of religion.
shepherd (v) [1851] Carefully guard and guide—resources etc.; marshal crowds; guide groups where they need to go; drive.
keep sheep by moonlight Hang in chains. [See A.E.Housman, On moonlit heath and lonesome bank—1896]
cogent [<Lat cum-agere=drive together] (To the early Latins this would be a vivid example of compulsion.)
compel [<Lat com-pellere=drive together] cogitate [<Lat co-ag-itare=keep driving together] (It is the regular practice of shepherds on the moors of the West Riding to ‘stir up’ their flocks.)
always in the field when he should be in the fold [sLan] Never there when you need him.
gather [1535] Infer; conclude.

**F.12b Handling sheep and wool**

**makes more noise than a sheep-shouter** [sLan]

a far cry from...[1819] Only remotely connected with it (as if the sundering distance had taken the shepherd’s dog or sheep nearly out of earshot and so out of touch).

head and ears/horn and ears/by the lug and horn [Per Edb] Roughly, violently.

advising a man in a passion is as daft as scrattin’ a tup-head [Yks]

warm as a sheep-net [Yks] Ironic.

kent [long spiked shepherd’s vaulting pole—Sc Ire Nhb] Tall person [Gall].

much cry and little wool! [1475] Much ado about nothing. Said when the talking prevents the work from getting done, or where there is much pretence but little to show for it. (There is a relevant and popular scene in a medieval mystery play where the devil shears a sow. ‘More squeak than wool’=more show than substance derives from this. Another version is ‘Mair wind nor woo’, like clipping a swine’ [Cum].)

(wits are) wool-gathering [1553] Daydreaming; wandering in mind (as a person will wander erratically who is gathering scattered tufts of wool).

gathers wool on his clothes [Sc] Improves his property.

not without wool on her back [sNot] She has means, possessions.

couldn’t knock the dags off a sick canary [Aus]

rattle my dags [Aus] Make a move; depart in haste.

shear against the wool Go contrary, do violence to sense and nature. ‘He sheres againste the wull’ [Palmer, *The Emblems*—1565].

shear the sheep too close Enquire too deeply into a sensitive question; press someone too hard for an explanation; risk all by being too demanding.

just enough and no more, like Janet Harris’ shearer’s meat [Sc]

sleep like a ringer [the fastest shearer in a team—Aus: Cor] Soundly.

head like a woolshed [Aus] Large and bulky.

looking for his swag-straips [Aus NZ] Contemplating a change of work. (Shearers in Australia move about from one ranch to another with their belongings strapped together in one swag.)

roll his pannikin [metal drinking mug] into another shed [Aus] Go to work for someone else.

off his pannikin [Aus] Out of his mind.
F.13a Pigman

he loves bacon well that licks the swinesty [1678]/pigsty door Of someone who goes to extreme lengths to get what he wants.

every man has his ain draff-poke [bag for carrying brewer’s grains, husks, hogwash], though some hang sider [lower] than others [Sc] Some show their faults more than others; we must all bear our own troubles, weaknesses etc.

better my hog dirty than no hog at all [1670] Comment on a bad husband!

it would be hard to follow a black dockt sow through a burnt muir this night [Sc] Of a dark night.

F.13b Feeding pigs


a poor man’s sow needs to have a good nose [1530] Of a poor family, used to fending for themselves; of one persistently inquisitive.

a red/sandy pig for an ackon [Not]/acorn! Of a red-haired man or woman with a strong sexual appetite. (See also E.251, sandy as a Tamworth pig.)

the hog never looks up to him that threshes down the acorns [1623] Take something for granted; fail to give thanks; accept and ask no questions.

try shaking another oak! To a beggar, recommending they try elsewhere.

mean enough to steal acorns from a blind hog [Amer]

say neither gruff/guff [grunt]/giss ['feed', a call to swine—Sc nEng] nor sty ['go to sty'] Say nothing [Lakel wYks]; neither one thing nor the other [eSc].

F.13c Handling pigs

make the young one squeak and you’ll catch the old one [1732] Question the children.

squeal (v) [1865] Inform the police about a (fellow) criminal.

have the wrong sow by the tail [Slk] Wheedle the wrong person.

get/have the wrong pig/sow by the ear/lug [Gall Cum Yks] Accuse the wrong person; hold a mistaken idea.

get a poor sow by the lug [Shl] Get a bad bargain.

make a pig’s arse/ear/PA of… Make a horrible mess of; bungle it.

cut (a) rig(s) [improperly castrated animal—sLin] Do something extraordinary, out of the way.
bring/lay the head of the sow to the tail of the grice [young pig—Sc nEng: 1721] Balance one loss with another gain, offset profit against loss.

he would gang a mile to flit a sow [to move her tether and give her more grazing: Sc] Of sauntering people who are easily diverted.

hog-yoke The old wooden quadrant used by American sailors. (Its shape resembled that of the yokes used on pigs to stop them breaking through hedges.)

drive the pigs through my game [Sc] Interfere, spoil sport. (See also J.7.)

drive a/the swine through (the hanks of yarn) [Ayr] Squander thrift; spoil painstaking work; frustrate, ruin. (The yarn spun through the winter by the thrifty Scots wife would be laid out by the burn in spring.)

pig (v) Spoil, damage completely—usually of tailors’ work. (See above.)

the pigs ran through it [Ant Dwn] Something interfered to prevent it.

a swine has gone through it/the kail [Sc: 1721] A marriage or other undertaking has come to nought. (See also J.7.)

F.14a Poultryman with ducks

there’s more than a duck to muck [wYks] Something important to be done.

a duck’s breakfast/dinner [Aus] Only a drink of water.

duck’s news [sDev] Old news.

lead from the duck-house [Aus] Start leading from the lowest cards in a suit. (See also K.28.)

dead duck [Amer 1829]/pigeon [Amer] Someone or something completely ruined.

F.14b Poultryman with geese

feather by feather the goose is plucked [1732] One at a time is hardly noticed, but the total adds up to a devastating result.

‘there are fools everywhere’—as he said that shod the goose

he that will meddle with all things may go shoe the goslings

shoe the goose An ancient reference to meddlers. ‘Ye medle of al thing, ye moot shoo the goos’ [Hoccleve, Poems xiii—c. 1410]. The theme appealed to churchmen. There is an inscription of c. 1434 in Whalley Church, Lancashire, ‘Whoso melles of wat men does, Let hym cum hier and sho the ghos’. And in the church formerly belonging to the monastery of St John at Beverley, in the East Riding, there is a carving of a blacksmith hammering a shoe on a goose’s foot. In Lakeland, in the days when geese were driven to market, it was customary to dip their feet in warm pitch and then sand so as to give them protection on the journey, and even as late as D.H.Lawrence’s time, geese driven to Nottingham Goose Fair were shod thus.
F.14c Poultryman with hens

start a fowl-roost [Aus] Adopt a surname with two elements and a hyphen between them (for the hens to roost on!).

have not a cock left to crow Be utterly destitute [Abd].

has swapped his hen for a hooter [owl]/ hullet Has made a bad exchange [Chs].

sell a hen on a rainy day [1639] Make a bad bargain; do something to your disadvantage [Sc].

plot [pluck a fowl—Sc Nhbc Cum Wm Yks] Fleece, swindle, reduce to poverty [Lakel]; chide severely [NCy].

don’t pluck the old hen till her feathers are all gone Don’t ruin someone who can still provide for you.

I can nobbut plot where I find feathers [Yks] Can only obtain money where there is some.

F.15a Plowing tackle

foul [ugly, coarse-natured—Lan] as a push-plow [a small farmer’s plow for two men, one pulling with a rope, the other pushing with his breast against a brattish]

nose like the coulter of a plow [Uls] A large nose.

slape [slippery—Cum wYks Lin] as a plow-slipe [the part that turns over the earth—Lin]

he that counts a’ the pins in the plow will never yoke [Sc: 1721] Over-attention to detail inhibits a man from getting on with his work; a comment on those who needlessly anticipate difficulties.

yoke (n) Of marriage.

yoke (v) [1400] Associate, variously; link.

conjugal/conjugate [<Lat coniungere=yoke together] (In early Roman times farmers intending to breed from two animals would yoke them together to get them acquainted.)

syzygy [=<Gk σύζυγος=yoked together]

subjugate [=<Lat subiungere=join or fasten on underneath, as when yoking a draught animal] (See also C.16.)

rivet the yoke Make someone’s servitude doubly secure, impose an inescapable labour.

bend to the yoke Submit.

we draw in the same yoke Are equally oppressed.

draw the yoke together Co-operate.

do not yoke well Are not matched, suited.

they don’t shut [yoke horses (to)] plows [Dor] They cannot agree.

shake off the yoke [1596] Free yourself from labour or servitude.

unyoke Retire, cease from work.
ride/sit bodkin [the draught-tree forming part of the harness for a plow, the horses or oxen being attached one at each end and the plow fastened by a chain to the centre—Som] Squeezed between two others, usually much larger than yourself [wYks+passim, 1638]. Such a ride for a boy returning home at the end of the day must have been only slightly preferable to walking. A ‘bodkin’ [Lin Not] is also a team of three plow-horses, two abreast and one in front.

out of theat(s) [the rope, chain or trace by which a horse pulls a plow—Sc] Out of order, practice or bounds.

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F.15b Plowing

put the plow before the horse [Ont] Work the wrong way round.

there belongs more than whistling to going to plow [1678] There is more to a trade or skill than first impressions would suggest.

more whistling than redd [tied, prepared] land [Sc] More noise than the results warrant.

either hold or plow [wYks] Choose one or the other. (You could not both hold the plow and drive the horses before about 1860 when both horses were harnessed to the plow.)

lang on little yird [=earth, ground—Sc] Little to show for your efforts.

not by running is plowing done [Wal] Haste is not always the way to successful work.

plow into…[1972]/through…[1952] Pass through violently, irresistibly; work laboriously through a task, book, deep snow etc.

plow-in [1965] Overturk of hovercraft when its skirt touches the water at speed.

gapes [bawls, shouts—Yks] and hollers like a plowman on a moor

better have one plow going than two cradles [1580]

at a/the broadside [Sc Som] Suddenly, on the spur of the moment (as if leaving the plowing abruptly). [The broadside is the board that turns the sod in plowing.]

don’t stop the plow to catch a mouse [1628] Don’t be distracted from an important job to a trivial one.

turn up [1613] Appear unexpectedly, casually, be discovered (as artefacts or treasures can be turned up by the plow).

plow a lone(ly) furrow Pursue an unpopular policy; lead a sequestered life; do what no one else does; carry on without help.

plow your own furrow Be independent; work to your own standard.

you cannot plow a straight furrow in a crooked field [Ire] Results are determined by conditions; to do well you should be in good company and circumstances.

don’t lay down the plow until you are at the end of the furrow [Wash] Persevere to the end of the work.

furrowed [1595] Lined with care, of a face or forehead.

sulcate(d) [<Lat sulco=cut furrows] Marked with parallel lines like plow furrows.

plow the sands [1590] Labour in vain.
leave/put him to the long sands [Sc] Leave him in difficulty; in the lurch; deprive him of his share. (The long sands would be the area of poorer ground.)

ing [ridge of plowing—NCy] and-fur/-furrow/-thurrow (v) [Sc nIr nEng Lei Hnt Nhp War] Cause wrinkles in the face [Nhb]; also in describing a ribbed cloth [Nhp] or knitted stockings [Cum].

turn on a narrow adlant/headland [Chs Shr: 1611] Have a narrow escape. (The headland is the turning strip at the end of each furrow, usually at the edge of the field.)

plow the adlants/headlands before the butts [Shr Hnt Hrf Suf Bdf nBck Oxf Glo Brks Ken] Begin a job at the wrong end.

make a balk [unplowed strip, fallow, waste ground—Sc Yks Der Nhp War Hrt] Blunder; disappoint; withhold deceitfully.

too keen-bitten [sharp, avaricious, ready to take advantage of another—Gall Lan Chs] to make a balk out of hayseed [Yorkshire fog—eYks IMa] Left no strip uncultivated merely because it was growing fog-grass.

mak nae bawks [=balks] o’ good (bere) land [land capable of growing good barley: Sc] Don’t throw away a good chance—often said when it is proposed to marry the younger daughter before the elder.

prevaricate [<Lat praeviricari=plow a crooked furrow—and so deviate from the straight truth]

delirium [<Lat delirare=leave the plow-ridge and drive a crooked furrow, deviate and so wander in mind like someone in a fever]

out o’ foor [=foor=fur, furrow—Cor] Delirious.

it’s ill rinning side-dykes wi’ you! [Per] You are so inconsiderate and mean that I cannot get on with you. (Side-dykes are the side-lands on the outside parts of plowland adjoining the hedges, running parallel with the lands or ridges. A mean plowman, by cutting too close to the hedge, could make it awkward for his plowboy to follow.)

drag the chain [Eng Aus] Be a slow drinker; last in a game. (A plowman’s criticism of a slow horse that does not keep its chains tight.)

F.15c Plowing with oxen

ox-bow [the curved collar that attaches to a yoke for oxen] The bend in a river, so-called because of its shape; also the land enclosed by the bend.

plow before the oxen Do your work back-to-front.

plow with the heifer [Nhb] Try to discover a man’s secret through his wife. Possibly originated in Judges xiv.18: ‘If ye had not plowed with my heiffer, ye had not found out my riddle’ [1560].

you must plow with such oxen as you have [1678] Use whatever means or resources you can get.

an old ox makes a straight furrow [1732] Practice brings skill; in age a person becomes more orthodox, conforms.

clumsy/dumb/strong as an ox
off-ox [1848] Awkward, stubborn, stupid person. (The off-ox is furthest from the plowman.)

poor as God’s off-ox [Nantucket, Mass]
stubborn as Adam’s off-ox [NC Tenn Calif sAmer]
not know him from Adam’s off-ox [NewEng]

beauty/nature draws more than ten oxen [1640] A comment on the strength of instinct, inheritance etc.

one hair of a woman draws more than a team of oxen (As/from the above.)
boustrophedon [Gk = turning the oxen] A method of writing or working that alternates between left-to-right and right-to-left.

bull week [midEng] The week before the annual holiday (because they work like bulls, for holiday money).

F.15d Plowing with other animals

plow with the ass and the ox [c. 1540] Work with a badly assorted team; arrange things badly.
plow with dogs [wYks Chs] Work in a futile, slow and painful manner.

F.15e Harrowing

harrowing [1600] Frightening; daunting; distressing. (Probably from the toad under the harrow—see below.)

lean as a harrow [Cum]
agree like harp and harrow [1563] Not at all.

the toad under the harrow [Sc Nhb Dur Cum n&wYks nLin Hnt Nhp Suf Ess Oxf wSom Cor: c.1150–1200] harve [=harrow—eCor] Someone suffering a miserable existence; under constant persecution. ‘Christene men may seye, as the poete seith in proverbe, the frogge seide to the harwe, cursid be so many lordis—when every tine turned him over’ [Wiclif—c. 1380]; ‘Lead the life of a toad under a harrow’ [Lin]; ‘May as well be a toad under the harrow as live like I do’ [Oxf wSom].

ower mony maisters quoth the paddock [frog, toad] to the harrow, when every tine gave him a tig [blow] [Sc] (As/from the above.)
under the harrow [Ire] Severely ill; in distress.

rehearse [OF = re-harrow] Practise for performance; go over (and over) in the mind; repeat [1375].
the ox is never wo till he to the harrow go [1523] Do not let the anticipation of trouble spoil present enjoyment.

coup [overturn] the harrows on… [Sc] Overthrow, get the better of someone.

the foal’s share of the harrow [Ire] Light work; the easy life.

a mad/wood [mad—Sc Ire nEng] horse and a rotten harrow are soon parted [nYks] Of an ill-matched marriage.

run away/off with the harrows [Sc] Go too fast; gain superiority, the prize; win the day; reason illogically; go too far.

have one leg/legs over the harrows [Sc 1816] Break loose; become unmanageable.

has gane over the tow [the rope or chain by which a horse pulls a plow or harrow—Sc] Has gone wrong.

clear the harrows [Sc] Gain your object, desire.

hear how the harrows are going [Sc] How things are progressing.

break faugh [harrow fallow-ground—Sc nEng] Calumniate, attack someone’s character [Ags].

where the harrow goes the thorn hurdle will go [Wal] If the richer, sophisticated character can gain admittance, then a rough, simple person can also.

trail an easy/a light harrow [neSc Kcd wYks] Live easy, unmarried, without cares.

F.15f Sowing

broadcast [1875] Disseminate programmes by radio or TV signal. (The old way of sowing grain was to ‘broad cast’ it by hand from a seed basket.)

sporadic [＜Gk σπείρω =sow, scatter seed] Well-scattered, occurring here and there at random.

sow his wild oats [1542]/kail-seed [Sc] Spend a wild, dissolute youth before steadying up.

eat next year’s seed-grain [1870] Be improvident in using resources needed for the future.

F.16a Reaper

owe him a day in harvest Owe him a good turn; be obliged to him [Sc].

take the notches out of the scythes [Hmp] Give money to mowers in harvest-fields when out shooting.

an ill shearer/bad reaper never got a good hook [Sc Ire Wis] A bad workman always blames his tools.

don’t put your hook in a field without being asked [Ire] Do not interfere.
if you don’t want to cut your finger, don’t put it before the hook [Ire] Don’t ask for trouble.
against/with the lay [Cai] With difficulty/ease. (The lay of the corn is the way it is leaning or lying.)
shear clean [Wm] Do work conscientiously; do your full share of the work.
shear your own rig [ridge of plowing with a crop growing on it—Wm] Do your own work; be independent.
cut a (wide [Amer]) swath Make an impression; be very drastic, destructive.
carry your breed [a stretch of land; swathe of scythe-mown barley; space covered by one broad cast of seed—Lakel Yks Pem] Do as good work as anyone. (When you ‘carry your breed’, you scythe the full length of the field without reducing the breadth of your cut.)
make a gratton of… [stubble—Yks Nhp EAn Hrt Glo Wil Ken Sur Sus Dor] Make a poor job of something [Ken]; do it in an indifferent manner.
all the corn’s no shorn by kempers [contenders for the harvest prize, and so some of the hardest workers—Sc] Others also do their share.

F.16b Tying, bands

hang in the same band [a tie of string or straw] Be concerned in the same matter [nYks].
hang in the band [wYks] Remain unsold.
have another band by the end Have a new pursuit in view.

F.16c Gleaning

on the headlands [Nrf] On short rations (because of a poorer crop on the headlands).
at the land-end [the eard-rigg or headland lying at right angles to the furrows and forming a less productive strip at the edge of a plowed field] Worn out, exhausted [n&nwLin].
glean (v) [1601] Search out diligently; gather mentally; scrape together small quantities of whatever.
glean before the cart has carried [1549] Be premature.
F.17a Threshing

straw-boss [Amer] An assistant to the real foreman without actual authority. (From threshing crews having a grain-boss and a straw-boss.)

sharply, too! says Jack Chumley (who, on a rick in Wem, being invited to have a drink, missed the ladder, fell and broke his leg)

thresh/thresh out [1882] Debate so thoroughly as to completely separate the good from the bad arguments; arrive at the truth after exhaustive investigation.

yield well in the threshing [War] Prove reliable in a crisis.

wale [choose, pick, sort out—Sc Ire nEng] the grain from the caff [=chaff—Sc Ire nEng] Use judgement; make a good bargain.


'I do what I can' quoth the fellow when he threshed in his cloak [1602] Of someone who would rather work at a disadvantage than countenance a change.

thresh (over old) straw Do unproductive or unprofitable work.

diatribe [<Gk διατρίβω=wear away by friction or rubbing, which was how the Greeks used to separate chaff from the grain] A wearing away of time, hence a lengthy (and wearying) speech of criticism or invective.

tribulation [<Lat tribulum=a threshing sledge, studded underneath with flints or iron spikes]

flail (v) Strike downwards and continuously (like a flail working)—‘with arms flailing’.

flail (n) [Bnff] Tall, ungainly person.

bald as a buailtin [the striking end of a flail—Ir-Gael]

tough as a swipple [the short bar of the flail, always made of the toughest wood—nYks] soople [Cum]

dwable/dwibble [flexible—Sc Ire] as a flail

there’s no fence against a flail [1730] No protection against blunt, unwelcome truths.

he has more on the floor than he’s flail for More to do than he can manage.

has mair stoor [=store of grain etc.] than he has flail for [Sc] (As/from the above.)

F.17b Winnowing

winnow (v) [1548] Sift good from bad—candidates, the evidence etc.

winnow/separate the wheat from the chaff [C14] Sort, distinguish the good from the bad, the useful from the worthless.

dry/light as caff [=chaff—Cum]

scatter like caff [Abd]

blow enough to winnow taters! [=potatoes—Oxf]
look/shine like the sunny side of a shernie/ shairney [=sharny=mucky, dungy]
wecht [=weight=hoop with skin stretched over it, for winnowing or carrying corn—Sc]
Ridiculing young folk in finery.
it will come out yet—like hommel-corn [= hummel-corn, lighter grain that has no beard and falls apart from the rest when it is fanned : Sc] Of secrets etc.

F.17c Bags of grain

dark as a poke [Cum]
empty bags cannot stand upright [1642] The excuse of a hungry person for sitting down.
a toom bag rattles ay [Sc: 1628] The empty-headed chatter most; a hungry stomach makes gurgling noises.
look like a bit of chowed/chewed twine/ string [nYks] Worn out, dissipated.
he has all his bant off [=band, string off—Lan] As much as he can do.
have the right end of the string [Sc] Be right; put a thing correctly.
tie up the poke before it is full [eYks] Rise from table still hungry.
knot and tie [nYks] Make both ends meet; match expenditure with income.
send back the bags with the strings [Lei] Pay on delivery.
every man thinks his sack heaviest [1640] Your own difficulties always seem worse than the next man’s.
throws the poke off his shoulders on to another’s back [wYks] Clears himself at the expense of another.
pock-/poke-shakings [Sc Cum]/shake-poke [Ant] Last child in a family; runt in a litter of piglets.

F.17d Straw

could have bound/tied him with a straw Of one helpless with mirth. ‘Might hae bund me wi’ a strae’ [Sc].
might ha’ coupit [toppled] me ower wi’ a strae [cE] a streea wad hae fell’t me [Wm] (As above.)
it is better to be putting knots on a straw than to be idle [Ire] Any employment is better than none.
not a straw between them No difference.
he will go to law for the wagging of a straw [c.1558] Of a litigious man, or one who overreacts to trifles.
fire of straw Fuss without foundation (much smoke and little warmth).
his eyes are gathering/pick/draw straws [1641] He becomes drowsy. (Rays of light seen through half-closed eyes resemble straws. Also, most bedding used to consist of straw.)

tine bottles [lose whole bundles]/tursses [= turrs, turves] gathering straes [ePer] Through over-attention to detail miss the main part; lose more than you gain.

F.18a Waller

strong as a dike [wall—Cum Sc Ire]

stone-waller [1889] Defensive and obstructive player or interviewee. Applied in cricket to players who bat only to defend their wicket.

the stone which is fit for the wall will not be long on the road A good man will soon be promoted, and a good woman will soon be married.

a rugged stone grows smooth from hand to hand [1640] The effect of society on rough characters.

capestone [=capstone, topstone—Sc NCy] Calamity beyond mending [Ayr].


dilapidated [<Lat dilapidare=scatter stones] Fallen into disrepair generally; decrepit.

close the gap [1879] Bring things disparate (such as wages) closer together; reduce the distance between you and your competitors.

another course would have done it A little more would have achieved our object—or would it? (From the story of the Yorkshire villagers who tried to wall the cuckoo into their parish so as to perpetuate the springtime. The sight of the migrating bird skimming over their wall elicited this rueful comment. This tale is also told of Chipping [Lan], where they are known as Chipping cuckoos in consequence; and of the ‘wise’ men of Gotham [1410], whose famed wisdom chiefly consisted in pretending to be stupid.)

let the sheugh [ditch—Sc Ire Nhb]/earth build the dike [nlre: 1628] Regulate your spending by your earning.

we maun bigg [build] our dikes wi’ the fail we hae [the turf we have—ShI OrI Sc NhB: Sc] (As above.)

F.18b Hedger

you seek a brack/break where the hedge is whole [1639] Look for faults where there are none.

stop two gaps with one bush [1548] Make one thing do two jobs.

you will as soon stop gaps with rushes [c. 1549] Of inadequate materials.

he that handles thorns shall prick his fingers [1611] Expect injuries from awkward, ‘prickly’ people.
eat like a hedger [Cor]

make not a gauntlet of a hedging glove [1639] Don’t enlist rustics for military service.

I wouldn’t touch him/her/it with hedging mittens! To emphasise extreme repugnance or reluctance.

pleached [intertwined, layered—of a hedge—passim] Married [WCy].

he made many a white hedge black Has stolen linen put out to dry.

winterhedge [wYks, 1885 Saddleworth, Lan] Clothes maiden (the wet-weather substitute for a summer hedge).
	rash [small branches, brash, hedge-cuttings—Pem Glo] Bad fruit; rubbish; riff-raff.

sprawty [like hedge-cuttings: nYks] Of horse’s hair grown coarse and lying the wrong way.

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F.18c Fencer

still as a stake ‘Bot thar he stod als still as stake’ [Cursor Mundi ln.7526—c.1320].

stiff as a stake [1563]/post/stoop [post] ‘Baz-zacked [beat] her while [until] she was stiff as a stoop’ [wYks].

deaf/dull/numb [EAn]/still as a post

stoop [Nhb] Support, help to another person—such as an old parent; staunch supporter, adherent.

that one is a hedge-stake! Of a stout pin.


you’d baffound [stun, perplex—n&midYks] a stoop!

eat/swallow a stake [1530] Become unyielding, unbending.

run your head against a post Encounter a major difficulty.

a load of post-holes [Aus] Of an empty truck.

edderer [<edder=long pliant hazel stick used in fencing—Sc Eng] Tall, thin man.

post-and-rail tea [Aus] Describing a drink of tea with stems etc. floating on it.

neither stake nor (y)edder [Yks] Neither one way nor any other; fit for no kind of work.

stake-and-ether/-hether/-yedder [a fence made by interweaving upright stakes with twigs or wattles—nEng Glo Wil] Insubstantial, leaky—variously [nYks].

thin as a hurdle [Oxf]

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F.19 Draining

drain (n)—on resources etc. [1732] Something that ceaselessly diminishes; a continual source of loss.
**drain** (v) [1625] Deprive gradually—of health, strength, property.

**drained** [1660] Emptied, exhausted by gradual withdrawal—of energy, vitality, passion etc.

**laal thowt on** [little thought of—Cum] as dike-water

**go down like ditchwater**

**go/waste like/as fast as dike-water** [Craven,-wYks] Disappear, be dissipated very fast, especially of money.

**laugh like a drain** Loudly and at length (from the laughter-like gurgle of quick-running water).

**dig into** [1832] Search for facts; study or research in depth. Hence:

**dig** (v) [Amer 1935] Enthuse over, understand and enjoy.

**cave in** [<WFlem in-kalven=fall in, the word used by Dutch drainage workers in the Lincolnshire fens in the early C18 for what happens when a bank is undermined by water] Yield, either to pressure from above or demoralisation from below.

**derive** [<Fr dériver<Lat derivare=divert water from the main flow of a river or stream] Obtain from an origin, as of a word from its root.

**channel** (n) [1537] Means of conveying; person through whom a power (of healing, love etc.) can be transmitted.

**channel** (v) Collect and direct in one force and towards a single end, energies etc.

**wants all the water to run down his own gutter/in his own ditch** [Som] Greedy and selfish.

**where the water sticks** Where discussion fails.

**run to waste** [1511] Be expended uselessly—of wealth, powers, love.

**let it run into the sands** Allow it to perish by neglect.

**ill as mucking with sand and draining with cinders**

**can make neither moss nor sand of...** [wYks neLan] Nothing useful; neither one thing nor the other.

**make moss of one and sand of the other** [swLan] Of inconsistency or favouritism.

**not worth a clod** [Sc 1500–20]

**wet as (a) sod** [Lakel wYks] Thoroughly soaked.

**down in the dike** Unwell; out of funds.

**like a flood through a broken dike** [Sc] Of a sudden departing rush.

**the gripe** [=grip, a ditch or drain—passim] **won’t meet the hedge** [Cor] Income falls short of expenditure.

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**F.20a Gardener digging**

**dig out** [1887] Bring out of obscurity; bring to light what had previously been ignored, neglected or forgotten.

**dig up** [1861] Produce out of the past, limbo etc.

**delve into**...[1650] Examine deeply; make detailed research into the past, history etc.

**dig with both feet** [nlre] Be very clever, able (sometimes sarcastic).

**dig with the same foot** [nlre] Belong to the same religion.
dig with the other/wrong foot [nIre] Belong to the wrong religion; the other side in the troubles.
left-footer [nIre] Roman Catholic (from the above).
easy digging [Amer] Anything easily done.
like the gardener’s dog that neither eats cabbage itself, nor lets anyone else do so [1642] Of a ‘dog in the manger’.
go to dig at Malvern Hill [Wor: 1659] Be ruled by your wife.
F.20b Gardener using other tools
writes out his account with a fork [Aus] Charges thrice too much (a three-tined fork).
he is standing on his forkle-end [=forked end, the lower part of the body—wEng] On his feet, well again, out and about [Dev].
the better end of the fork [Chs] Upper classes.
two-pronged/many-pronged—attack, initiative etc. Situation where there is more than one direction of thrust.
rake up...(from the subconscious etc.) [1581] Bring into the open what has previously been submerged.
rake among.../in.../into...(junk-yards, old records etc.) Search widely for specific items.
up-rake/up-reap [grub up weeds, bushes etc.] Recall an old grievance or unpleasantness [wYks]. (See also B.6e.)
comes oftener with the rake than the shool [=shovel—Sc] Comes for what he can get rather than give.
dull as a hoe [UK, passim NC Neb Calif]/grub hoe [Calif]
hoe your own row Mind your own business.
hard row to hoe [1835] Exacting task.
have another rig [ridge of plowing with a crop planted on it—NCy] to hoe Have something else or something better to do [wYks].
sieve (n) One who cannot keep a secret; leaky boat [Amer].
leak like a sieve [1576] Publish secrets; spend money etc.
a head/memory like a sieve [C17] One through which items deserving of memory seem to pass, and are lost.
pour water into a sieve Waste money etc., be madly extravagant.
carry water in a sieve [1477] Do futile work.
go through the small sieve Endure hardship; be strictly examined; suffer for something said or done [wYks].
would stop one hole in a sieve Is pointlessly mean and niggardly.
garble [<Arab kirbal=sieve] Mutilate by extraction of objected words or passages for purposes of misrepresentation.
as much sib as sieve and riddle that grew in the same wood together [Sc 1508] Closely related; also of those who claim kinship with their betters.
oppen [=open—Cum] as a riddle
riddled with...[1817] Perforated, permeated, penetrated by holes, woodworm, inconsistencies etc. (as a riddle is with holes).

F.20c Gardener in various crops

propagate [<Lat propagare=multiply, spread plants by means of layers or slips] Increase, spread around, disseminate.

grub out/up Reveal; retrieve from the past; rummage out.

a day among the dockens A day spent on things of little value, and with small result [Cai]; one producing a storm or a quarrel [Rxb].

a docken to a tansy [Sc] So different as to be beyond comparing.

not care/give/worth a docken leaf [Sc]

has hardly sense enough to keep a brock oot o’ the kailyard [a badger out of the cabbage plot—Sc]

can turn on a cabbage-leaf Of horses that are immediately responsive.

must have cabbages behind his ears [Yks] (if he is daft enough to believe that!)

a nose so red it would ripen cucumbers

you were dug up in the leek-bed [wSom] To an inquisitive child.

nae gardener ever lichtlied [belittled, undervalued] his ain leeks [Sc] You cannot expect a man to criticise his own children or work.

etiolated Enfeebled, withered; with your native vigour unnaturally sapped. (Vegetables like celery and leeks are commonly blanched for the customer by etiolating them during cultivation.)

knows his onions [1922] Is an expert in his subject.

off his onion(s) [Dor] Crazy (probably from the slang use of onion for head).

sair-stressed stringing injans [=onions] Busy about nothing [nSc].

teach/learn [teach] him another road to the peas [Ant] Not allow him to do it again.

getting peas above sticks Getting beyond himself; taking on more than he can manage; going beyond his proper support; behaving extravagantly.

pea-time is over/past [Amer] It is finished.

the last of pea-time [Amer] The end of your life; the last part of something.

tearing up the pea-patch [Amer] Hyperactive.

it only takes one bad potato to destroy what’s on the stalk [Ire] One bad character corrupts the whole company.

is your rhubarb up? (Usually to a woman.) Are you willing to make love?

broke through cement, like Madgie’s rhubarb (She lived at Vine Cottage, Newlyn [Cor].)

leave a swede in the grut [rut, grip, surface-drain—nLin] Let alone; leave a story unre-peated [Nrf].

come up from the bottom of the pile Make good from lowly beginnings.
F.21 Carter, lorry-driver

swear like a carter [1607]
keep your ain grease for your ain cartwheels [Sc] Use your criticism on yourself or your own people.
grease-horn [horn full of axle-grease]/grease-pot [Wm Yks] Flatterer, sycophant.
get into the cart Into a bad temper [nLin].
cart-horse—mentality, methods Outdated and outmoded; reactionary; remaining loyal to a bygone age.
work like a cart-horse Very hard.
have the fore-horse by the head Get out of debt; have things well in hand.
ride the fore-horse Take the lead; have the upper hand.
he/she is a whole team and a horse to spare (and a big dog under the wagon) A fine and capable person.
will neither heck [go left] nor ree [go right—carters’ call] Is unmanageable; will not hear reason [Cum]. (See also F.10a.)
ragged and dirty like a Leith carter’s pony
he that has neither horse nor cart cannot load when he likes If you depend on others you must await their pleasure.
fall away from a horse-load to a cart-load [1738] Sarcastically, of one quickly grown fat. Also:
worn from an ar(m)ful to a horse car(t)ful [Sc] Become fat, prosperous
you’ll make an end of your whistle [i.e. finish your tune] though the cart overthrow [1678] Neglect the main business for trivial amusements.
the best cart may overthrow [NY] Misfortune may overtake the best of us.
if ever I get his cart whelming [overturning], I’ll give it a putt [push—Sc] I will take my revenge, given the chance.
coup [upset—Sc Ire nEng] the carts Reject; overturn.
eith [easy—Sc] to tumble the unhappy/ unlucky man’s cart [Sc NY: 1628] He is easily overcome, distressed.
in a rut [1839] Stagnant; unable or unwilling to improve; trapped in a fixed pattern of behaviour.
bogged down [1935] Brought to a standstill, usually by detail or external irrelevancies.
put your shoulder to the wheel [1621] Get down to real effort, hard work. (There is the fable of the lazy man with his cart stuck in the mud who appealed to Jove for help. Jove retorted that the man should himself put his shoulder to the wheel and try to move it before appealing to the gods.)
get the wheel out of the rut Get free, make your escape.
left at cart’s tail Abandoned by wilful neglect (like baggage insecurely laden behind the cart, or like a calf or foal left tethered to the cart on arrival instead of being released).
where do you keck? [tip up (a cart) to unload it—nwEng Wm] Where do you stay when away from home?
come back/home toom-tail [go with a load but return empty—Sc] Return without achieving your purpose.
the cart doesna lose its errand when it comesna home toom-tail [Sc] Of those who accomplish more than their errand.
carry salt to Dysart and puddings to Tranent [Sc: 1628] Take things where they are not required.
pay the freight [Amer] Guarantee payment.
keep on trucking [Amer 1972] Carry on, plug away at what you are doing.

F.22 Roadman
dark as bit [=bitumen—Nhp]
  smooth his path [1592] Remove all difficulties.
pound away at…[1861] Work hard at…(as if with a heavy hammer).
like shot out of shool [=shovel—passim] Very quickly [Wil Dev].
road up for repairs! She is having her period.

F.23a Miner
work like a coal-heaver Work hard on a heavy job.
  merry as a miner in a kidley-wink/tidleywink [beer-shop, nothing as grand as an inn, but usually a room in an ordinary house—Cor]
  back on the old seam Back to his customary (and worse) ways.
keep the country abroad [Cor] Shore up a mine with pit-props (ensuring that the countryside overhead does not fall in).
at the coal-face Up against the realities of life, facing basic issues.
mine his own seam Follow his own ambition, plan, vision.
stick to his diggings [Not] Accomplish what he has undertaken.
wet as sump [puddle, especially a hole to collect water at the bottom of a pit—Cum neYks]
  sump-hole [NCy] Dirty person.
black as your hat [miner’s hard hat with a candle stuck in a lump of clay at the front—Cor]
dark as a pit
black as coal/coal-black/black as a cob [=cobble, lump of coal—Lan]
necessity is coal-black (Because necessity admits of no compromise or intermediacy.)
black as a collier’s sack
like a collier’s sack, bad without but worse within
strong enough to carry coal! Of bad or beery breath.
melancholy as a collier’s horse
that’ll knock the wheels off his trolley! [Cor] Will stop his nonsense.
slip his trolley [Amer] Become irrational.
off his trolley Out of his mind; behaving like a madman.
coal-pit cale [turn—Shr nEng] First come, first served (from the rule for farmers’ carts at the pit).
that won’t do, either at the pit or the wharf Under any circumstances, that is not good enough.
run-of-(the-)mine [the unsorted coal in its first state] Average, ordinary, everyday, unselected [UK, passim NYC WVir].
make coals or slack on it Finish it, one way or another [Der].
screening [grading coal, stone etc. through successive riddles] Prior selection.

F.23b Quarryman, heavy machinery

proud as limeburners [Som]
mouth as dry as a limeburner’s mouth/wig/ clog [Lan]
dry as a lime-kill [=kiln—sLan]/limebasket
come limer over… [Shr] Take an unfair advantage over someone (from the tale of the three limeburners who go for ale, and the oldest takes care to sit in the middle so that, when the jug passes to and fro, he gets most drink).
work like a stamp Regularly as a rock-crusher at a mine.
pulverise [1631] Crush overwhelmingly, out of all recognition; reduce to a weak remnant of its former self.
pile-driver Exceptionally heavy blow, powerful stroke etc.
bribery will split a stone [Ire] Has great power, effect.
keveller [<kevel, a large stone-breaking hammer—Sc nEng] A very powerful blow.
put the skids under…[1918] Arrange for the removal from office of someone not easily dislodged; cause to fail generally. ‘We’ve got the skids under us now’=our situation is sure to worsen. (Skids are logs or rollers on which to slide ships, heavy machinery, logs etc.)
grease the skids [Amer] Assist, expedite someone’s downfall.
hit the skids Start to move rapidly towards ruin; worsen quickly. (As/from the above.)
on the skids In such a situation.
heavy sledding Hard work and times.
as gude to ye tak’ a millstane oot o’ Penan [a quarry of difficult access—Sc] Of a very difficult task.
war and war [=worse and worse], and then comes Hutton Roofers [a remote community of hardy stone-quarriers, noted for stupidity—Kirkby Lonsdale, Wm]
F.23c Salt-miner

*scold like a wych-waller* [salt-boiler—Chs Wor WCy: 1670]
*back to the salt mines!* Back to work after a holiday; back to harsh reality.

F.23d Peat-digger

cut the first turf Make a small start in a large labour.
out of the peat-pot [hole that peat is dug from] into the mire [Sc: 1628] From a bad situation into a worse.
talking never brought the turf home [Ire]

F.24a Woodman

backwoodsman Someone remote and out of touch with worldly affairs; member of the House of Lords who seldom attends.
go to town on...[1940] Make a special effort with or excel yourself at something; do it energetically and enthusiastically (like an American backwoodsman who only goes to town on urgent business).

F.24b Clearing woodland

deracinate [<Fr déracinер=pull out by the roots]
eradicate [<Lat eradicare=root out]
extirpate [<Lat ex-stirpare=take out the stock]
moot (n) [the stump of a tree after felling—s&swEng] A man’s backside, buttocks [IW Dev].
green shoots (of recovery) [1980s] First signs of revival in an economy after a slump or recession.
stump up [1828] Pay up, usually reluctantly or unexpectedly (from the difficulty in extracting a root-stock).
root out—offenders etc. [1450] Completely remove.
root and branch Completely, without exception.
**root and crap** [bunch, cluster of branches—Abd Som Dev]/**crop** [head and branches of a felled tree—Chs]/**stump** [Lin] Completely.

**crop and stump** [a method of selling woodland, both crop and land—Der] Sharing a drink by the first man drinking half the tankard, and the second man the other half.

**crap** [=crop, top—Ked Abd]/**crop and root** [C14] Entirely, thoroughly, from first to last. (As above.)

**stick and stump** [wYks 1885] Completely annihilated.

**stick, stock and stone** Completely.

**you shall as easily move Tottenham Wood** [1611] Of a virtual impossibility.

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**F.24c Planting trees**

**more and mool** [root and soil—Dev Cor] Completely, entirely.

**clumsy as a beddax** [=beat-axe, a pick or mattock for paring turf—Cor]

**inculcate** [<Lat incalcare=stamp in with the heel: 1550] Implant firmly (as when heeling in young trees).

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**F.24d Forest fires**

**do not light a wisp** [handful of straw used for lighting fires] **you cannot yourself put out** Do not start an affair or trouble if you might not be able to control it.

**set the heather on fire** [Sc] Make a noise in the world; create a disturbance.

**muir-burn** [the yearly burning of a moor—Sc] Strife, trouble.

**spread like muir-burn** [Sc] Of bad news.

**brush-fire dispute/war** [1947] One that quickly arises but is confined to one area.

**burn the earth/wind** [Amer] Go at full speed.

**stamp out** [1851] Suppress, crush—rebellion, belief, disease.

**there was never yet a tree/wood but con-tained its own burning** [Ire] Everyone carries within them the possibility of their own downfall.

**burn charcoal** [wYks] Have no clothes to go out in on a Sunday. (Charcoal-burners’ clothes soon become black and smoky.)
F.24e Felling

It will be long ere you cut Falkland Wood wi’ a penknife [Sc: 1641] You will need the proper tools—for whatever. Also, of those who undertake much but with little means.

Lay the axe to the roots/strike at the roots of… Take the first and almost irrevocable step towards destroying something. (Once an axeman has started ‘rounding up’ a tree from its roots, it must be felled.)

The pine wishes herself a shrub when the axe is at her root [1732] On the safety of obscurity.

Put the blocks on… [Amer] Have sex with someone. (Once the winching blocks are on a tree, it will soon be flat on the ground.)

Axe (v and n) [1922] Cut out uneconomic sections of an industry (as Dr Beeching ‘axed’ the branch lines of British Rail); reduce expenditure.

It’s time for Greggles’s axe [nStf 1930s] When calling for economies.

Get the axe/chop Be dismissed from work.

Hag [chop, hew—passim] and trail [Lakel] Be self-dependent; fend for yourself.

He that hews too high may get a chip in his eye [1330]/Hew abune your heid, and ye’ll get a spale [chip, splinter—Sc Ire nEng] in your ee [eLth] Of one over-ambitious. ‘He that hews ower high, the spale will fall in his eye’ [Sc].

He hews above his head [Sc] Aims too high for his resources or ability.

You can tell a woodsman by his chips [Miss] His working methods illustrate a worker’s ability.

Hag at… Persevere with.

An oak is not felled at one stroke [1370]/It is but a feeble/simple [slight, insignificant] oak that is cut down at the first stroke [Paston Letter C15 Nrf] An answer to impatience; expect to spend time and trouble on any worthwhile work.

The tree falls not at the first blow ‘eigi fellr tré við it fyrsta högg’ [Njal’s Saga §103—C13 re events of 23 August 1011]

Little strokes fell great oaks [1539] Large works are completed by the accumulation of many small actions.

A little axe cuts down a big tree [SC] Great works may be achieved by small means.

A stroke at every tree without felling any In criticism of one who starts many jobs, but completes none.

Timber! [Amer] Cry of triumph, successful achievement.

Get out from under [Amer] Get out of the way of the danger; leave an awkward situation.

The higher the tree, the greater the fall [C14] The downfall of great men is all the more ruinous.

As a tree falls so must it lie You cannot escape the position where fate has placed you.

Ye may hew down the tree, but ye canna change its bend [Sc] However you treat a person you cannot change their nature.

F.24f Trimming

When the tree is fallen all go with their hatchet [1586] People are more interested in acquiring than in producing; many turn up for the easy, few for the hard work.
cut not the bough that you stand upon Do not damage or criticise the source of your livelihood; oppress not the commons [W.Tyndale, Obedience of Christian Men 304 (P.S.)—1528].

the rottenest bough cracks first [Miss] Of characters under stress.
be at the knag [knot in timber—Sc] and the wuddie [=withy—Abd] Disagree; pull opposite ways.
give the hallen [timber side of the partition between door and hearth]/hallen-post a hag [blow with an axe—passim] Make a mark as reminder of a noteworthy event, some special good fortune [Ayr Lnk Cum].
hassle (n) [a hack at something with a blunt knife—Cum] Trouble and fuss; argument, disagreement, confrontation; harassment [Amer].
hack (n) [Amer] An attempt.
make a hack in the post Use up a large part of…
knock a nick in the post Record it.
has lost her nick-stick [NCy] Is out in the reckoning of her pregnancy.
hang up your hatchet Stop work; take a rest—‘is slingling the hatchet’ [Dev Cor Amer].

F.24g Peeling

between the bark and the tree [Nrf] Well-adjusted, matched.
go between the bark and the tree [Nrf] Tell a tale in a roundabout way.
go twixt the oak and the rind Make over-fine distinctions; quibble.
ne’er meddle/put hand between the bark and the tree [man and wife—sLan] (This may have originally referred to the cambium layer below the bark, the lifeline and most vulnerable part of a tree.)
big as a bark stack [wYks 1885] Very fat. (Bark for tanning was often piled high in the forest.)

F.24h Logs, extracting

fall/lie like a log Stunned and helpless.
go up a hollow log [Aus] Hide.
lie/sleep like a log [1584] Still and soundly.
like a bump on a log [Amer] Stupidly silent and inert.
log-rolling [Amer 1823] Mutual puffery or admiration; helping someone by using your position to influence a decision in their favour; canvassing in elections. (‘Roll my log and I’ll roll yours’, like American settlers in forest clearings.)
log-roller A (none-too-scrupulous) ally in a literary or political etc. field.
carry both ends of the log Do most of the work (that should be shared between two).
have the right end of the tree Have the best in a dispute [Slg Dmb].
strong as a teagle-chain [timber-chain—nYks] (A teagle is a movable crane.)

Skid Row/Road [Amer] Rough, disreputable part of town (after the skidding track in a forest).
by hook or by crook [late C14] By one means or another; by fair means or foul. (This probably originated in the formula for forest rights whereby commoners might remove such dead wood as they could detach by hook or by crook. Another explanation suggests the choice between civil law—hook—or ecclesiastical law—bishop’s crozier or crook.)
hook Jack [Mass NY: 1840–50]/play hookey [Amer] Play truant. (As/from the above, the sense-connection being to hook Jack from going to school.)
abrupt [<Lat ab-rumpere—break off] Terminated, as if by a sudden break.

F.24i Sawing

saw wood [Amer] Attend to your own affairs; continue working as normal.
saw gourds/wood [Ind Kenty Geo Ala Msri Ark sAmer] Snore loudly. (Sawing gourds is especially noisy because of their hollow resonance.)
an empty gourd makes the most noise [Calif]
cut across… Transcend any restrictions or limitations.
free as a wood-sawyer

top-sawyer… The better or dominant one of a pair. (From the one who has the upper hand of a pair of pit-sawyers.) top-sawyer at= expert at—variously [nwLin].

get/have the upper hand [1430] Become dominant (as/from the above). Another possible derivation is from hand-wrestling in which each wrestler tries to twist their opponent’s hand from a hand-shaking position until their own is uppermost.

his/her tongue goes like a wag-saw [sWor] Is a chatterbox.
whipsaw (n) [long, narrow-bladed saw] A double disadvantage; bad dilemma; something that cuts both ways and is injurious whatever you do [Amer].
whipsaw (v) Take bribes from both sides; give conflicting advice; (in union negotiations) use a good settlement obtained from a weak firm as base for a similar settlement from a large firm; pit the bigger rivals against each other to the eventual benefit of the smaller [Amer].
caught by a circular saw [Wis Aus] Of a promiscuous woman unable to name her child’s father. (From the idea that there are so many teeth on a circular saw, you cannot tell which one cut you.)
hold at the long saw [C18-C19] Keep in suspense.
look like death on skytchers [=sketchers, two wooden legs with a cross-bar, used as a saw-horse—Gall] Of a lanky, clumsy person.
butt-cut [the first cut of the tree above the stump] Important or heavy man.
hask [dried-out, parched—Sc nEng] as sawcum [sawdust—nYks] Of dry bread etc.
woodshed (v) Rehearse music privately (say, in the woodshed where others are less likely to hear). Hence, woodshedding = singing without restraint or inhibitions; practising in private; punishing children away from the house where their hollering won’t be heard.

something nasty in the woodshed [1940] A traumatic experience in a person’s past; an unsavoury secret. Often as ‘saw something nasty in the woodshed’.

F.24j Wedging, splitting

not care which end goes first Be utterly reckless.

all knots like a Keskadale yak [=oak—Cum]

knotty timber must have smooth wedges [1670] Deal diplomatically with the awkward ones. Also, ‘To a crabbed knot must be sought a crabbed wedge’ [1539].

little knocks rive great blocks Small contributions add up to a large total.

splitting headache etc. [1847] Severe, as when the throbbing seems likely to burst open the head.

a blunt wedge will do where sometimes a sharp axe will not Of a fool’s success where wiser have failed.

the wedge goes where the beetle drives it [1637] Of the actions of one who is not responsible for them.

F.25 Tools

tool (n) [C16] Penis.

tool of another man His agent, servant.

get the hang of...[1847] Learn how to manage; learn how it works (as in getting to know the ‘hang’ of a new tool).

it is ill jesting with edged tools [1568] What is potentially dangerous should be treated with care.

F.26a Scythes

keen as a scythe [Cor]

the man with a cow doesn’t need a scythe [Ire] No chance of saving if you have dependants.
has a bit switch with her tail; she’s rather slack in the girse-nail [=grass-nail, a light stay supporting the blade of a scythe] Of a loose woman [Cum],

F.26b Sickles

bent/crooked as a sickle
falciform/falcate [<Lat falx=sickle] Shaped like a sickle.
falcon (Either from the sickle-curve of their wings or the hook shape of their talons.)
defalcate [<Lat de-falcare=cut off with a sickle] Reduce, generally.
sickle-feather One of the long curved feathers in a cock’s tail.
sickle-shins! Of a man with bent legs [Sheffield, Yks].
he’s got the great land/lond and the ill sickle [sLan] Of one engaged on a difficult matter.
I was asking about a sickle and he was replying about a hoe Of two people at cross-purposes. Harks back to the Greek ἅμες ἀπητοῦν, οἱ δὲ ἀπηρνοῦντο σκάφος =I was asking for my buckets back, and they denied me bowls.
Sheffield blight [nEng] Casualties among tree seedlings accidentally cut off by a woodman weeding with a hook.

F.26c Pitchforks, muckforks

wouldn’t touch him/her/it with a pike-fork [ =pitch-fork—Lan]
  rain pikels [pitchforks—sLan]/pitchforks with the tines downwards [nLin] Rains very hard.
two-pronged attack Double offensive.
’a begun turn is half-ended’ quo the wife when she stuck her graip [muck-fork—Sc Ire nEng Penn] in the midden [Sc] (Implying that that was all she intended to do.)
ay sticking his graip in his neighbour’s midden [Sc] Meddlesome.
flung aside like a broken graip [Forfar, Ags]
F.26d Rakes

rake (v)—with gunfire Enfilade (from the similarity to how the close teeth of a rake work across an area).

rake (n) [Sc] Thin, lanky person.

lean/poor/thin as a rake/rake-stale [wYks Suf Sus]

But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele

[G. Chaucer, Tale of the Wyf of Bathe ln.949—1386

greedy as a rake [Cum]

grin like the teeth of a rake [Dor] Also, teeth like a hay-rake [Som]


muck-rake (n) The tool of scandalmongers and pornographers. Also, muck-rake (v) and muck-rakers.

F.27 Ladders

ladder (n) [1838] A narrow strip of unknitted or unwoven material in stockings or knitting caused by one or more threads breaking, so-called from the appearance.

ladder (v) Develop a ladder as described above.

louse-ladder A run in a woman’s stocking; man’s side-whiskers.

climax [<Gk καλή μέταξις=ladder] Culmination; the last and highest point of an increasing series (like a topmost rung).

scale [<It scala=ladder] Ascending series—‘social scale’, ‘evolutionary scale’.

lazy as a sty [ladder—NCy] (Always leaning against a wall?)

on the bottom rung of the promotion ladder, life’s ladder

stee-hopping [stee=sty=ladder] Gossiping from house to house [wSom].

step after step the ladder is ascended [1640] Enjoining patience.

crosses are ladders to heaven

afflictions are the staves of the ladder that ascends to heaven [Wal] (As/from the above.)

you cannot climb a ladder by pushing others down You should be able to succeed without harming others.

he draws up the ladder after himself Is unapproachable.

kick down the ladder Abandon friends by whose help you have risen.

climb down [1887] Give up a purpose; admit defeat; withdraw from a position previously held.

condescend [<Lat con-descendere=climb down to be with someone]

the world is a ladder for some to go up and some down [1659]
come down in the world Lose social status; become poor.

F.28a Shovels and spades

call a spade a spade [1542] Speak bluntly but accurately, without euphemism or evasion.

face like/long as a Lurgan spade [nIre] One that looks miserable and bad-tempered.

hands like half-crown showls [=shovels—Cor] Large and rough.

hands and feet like No.4 showls [Aus] Large and broad.

shovel-head [Amer] Idiot.

put in his/her shovel [Msri 1884] Interfere, make an unwelcome contribution.

put to bed with a mattock/shool [=shovel—Dev]/shovel [1785] Buried [wSom].

A good day’s darg [day’s work—Sc Ire nEng] may be done with a dirty spade [Sc] A man may still work well for you even if he is a bad character.

would you have me trow that spade-shafts bear plums? [Sc] When someone attempts to impose on our credulity.

break your shovel [Amer] Spoil your record; lose favour.

F.28b Crowbars

bar-head [Abd] Numskull, chump.

stiff as a crowbar/gablok [Lan Lin Not Der]/ gayblock [=gavelock, a crowbar—Sc nEng]

stunt [obstinate, blunt, stiff—Yks] as a gaping

cold/keen as a gavelock/gavelock [Cum Wm] Hence, fit to starve a gavelock [Cum]

gangs frae the jilt [throwing cold water on someone] to the gellock [=gavelock, a crowbar: Sc] Turns suddenly from play to bad temper.

crowbar in Force in (as if by powerful leverage).

F.29 Wheelbarrows

daft/drunk/mazed [crazy, confused—Cor] as a wheelbarrow

barrow-backed [Cum] Bent from hard work, such as wheeling barrows.

mad as wheelbarrows [Cor]

you make as good music as a wheelbarrow
would charm the heart of a wheelbarrow Of discordant singing or whistling.
you’ll keep it no longer than you can a cat in a wheelbarrow
a wheelbarrow farmer [Chs] One whose acreage is not enough to warrant a cart.
go to heaven in a wheelbarrow Go to hell! (See the C17 window of Fairford Church, Gloucestershire.)
drunk/rusty as a handcart [Cor]
just/about my barrow It suits me; it’s what I’m capable of.
you never know till you take the barrow back You cannot judge a matter till the end.
go on with your barrow Mind your own business; move along.
push your own barrow [Aus] Look after yourself only; boast.
keeps up his/her barrow-steel [=stale, handle] Of one of a pair, usually married, who work and agree well together (as is necessary when two people are wheeling one barrow, a handle each) [Rxb].
has laid/set down the barrow Gone to ruin.
wallockin’ about like a barrow-trindle [wobbling like a barrow-wheel—Der Chs] Of one walking unsteadily.
ye hae nae mair need for ’t than a cart for a third wheel [Sc]
awkward as a barrow with a square wheel

F.30a Saws

keen as a cross-cut saw [sLan]
rough as a saw-edge [Yks Lan] Of a coarse character.

F.30b Hatchets

hatchet-face [1650] Narrow and sharp-featured.
hatchet-job [Amer 1944] Act of drastic reorganisation and reform involving dismissals, demotions etc.
blunt as a dag [hatchet; mining axe—Cor]
carry the hatchet Be the ugliest in the village [eYks].
cut smoke with a leather hatchet [Nhp] Attempt impossibilities.
do not use a hatchet to remove a fly from your friend’s forehead [Kan] Make the method fit the task.
rain hatchets and duckets [bill-hooks—Oxf] Rain heavily.
F.30c Shafts and axes

  heft-end [Sc] Beginning.
  as meet as axe to helve [1450] Ideally matched.
  as true to you as blade to haft
  like heft and blade [Kcd] Intimate.
  never judge a blade by the haft [Yks] Do not judge by inference, or by only one aspect.
  stiff-hefted [riveted into its handle]/tight in the haft Mean, stingy [nYks neLan].
  loose/lowse i’ th’ heft/in the haft [Nhnb n, w&midYks neLan nLin Chs] Unstable, unreliable, dissolute, disorderly.
  lowse-i’-th’-heft [Nhnb] A disorderly vagrant. (As/from the above.)
  up to th’ heft [wYks] Very angry.
  down i’ th’ heft Despondent, weakly.
  done to th’ heft [wYks] Worn out by toil.
  better bow [bend] than break Better to yield than be forced to worse.
  have both heft and blade to hadd [=hold—Abd]/in your hand [Sc: 1768] Have things entirely under control.
  hold him in the heft [wYks] Be a match for him.
  have by the stale [shaft/handle of axe, pot, spoon etc.] Have in full possession, control.
  have other hafts in hand Have other things to do.
  have no heft to your hand [Nhnb] Be unthrifty, extravagant.
  stick to the haft/haft [Per] Not desert, remain loyal.
  afraid of the hatchet lest the helve [shaft] stick in his eye/leg [Chs] Afraid of what is most unlikely to happen.
  (up) to the handle [Amer] Thoroughly, completely.
  fly off the handle [1843] Lose temper and self-control (As dangerous as a flying axe-head.)
  no better than an old haft when the blade’s gone [War 1859]
  throw the handle/helve after the hatchet/ head [Sc Chs EAn: 1546] Risk all that remains; continue regardless of further loss; abandon yourself to despair.
  send axe after helve [1546] Spend good money trying to recover bad debts; take yet another useless step.
  make a handle of… Exploit; turn to your own advantage [Sc Ire Yks Nhp]; turn to another’s discredit or ridicule [Nrf].
  don’t waste a fresh haft on a old blade Advising against marriage between young and old; don’t throw good money after bad [Chs].
  put axe on helve Solve the difficulty; resolve a doubt.
  the axe goes to that wood where it borrowed its helve The skills you teach the next generation can be turned against you; the comment on disloyalty to parents or country.
  grandfather’s axe Something completely renewed, though by only one part at a time.
F.30d Chopping blocks

chump [1883] Blockhead. (Originally a block of wood, then someone as stupid as one.)
loggerhead [blockhead—Sc Ire nEng Hnt Nhp War Som] (As/from the above.)
nae mair sense ner a gomeril [blockhead—Sc Ire nEng Lei EAn War Wor: sSc]
numb as a hagstock [chopping block—NCy]
lose stock and block Lose everything.
a chip off the old block [UK, passim WVir: 1626] A son who resembles his father.

F.30e Knives

dull as a fro(e) [=cooper’s froe, a heavy knife having its handle at a right angle, and a thick back for hammering, still used by Bill Hogarth of Greenodd—nLan 1992 : Eng Amer]
caller [cool, fresh—Sc] as a kail-blade [knife for harvesting cabbages etc.]
with a spring like a halfpenny knife Feeble, without resilience or self-assertion.
there was never a good knife made of bad steel [NY Ind SC]
false as my knife (Prepared to cut me, just as my knife would.)
have your knife shut [Der] Be killed.
shut your knife Finish the business in hand [Shr]; die [seWor].
pick up a knife [Wor] Have a fall from a horse.
can make nowt on him, neither back nor edge [Cum wYks Chs] Can make nothing of him, one way or another.
fall back, fall edge [Sc wYks Der: 1552] Whichever way things turn out.
back and edge [n&midEng Sus Hmp Mid Aus] Altogether, entirely. ‘He stuck up for me, back and edge.’ (Brewer suggests the phrase derives from driving a wedge home to split wood—DOPAF—but it corresponds well with the previous two knife metaphors.)
worn to the back half [Sc] Nearly worn out (like a knife worn half way to its back).

F.31a Sharpening saws

a voice like the sharpening of a hand-saw [nlre] Very squeaky and rasping.
saw-tooth Diagram of electricity depicting a slow rise and rapid fall of voltage or current (from the profile of saw-teeth).
saw-tooth roof One with a serrated profile.
F.31b Sharpening axes

a dull axe may still cut [Ill] A dim-witted person is still capable of working; don’t underestimate a weak opponent.

an axe too blunt to cut a turd off a dog’s arse [Furness, Lan] have an axe to grind Have an ulterior motive; private ends to serve. (The origin of this expression appeared as a story in the Wilkes-Barne Gleaner of 1811 that tells of an axeman who so flattered a boy that he inveigled him into not only lending his father’s grindstone, but even turning it until the axe was sharp. The stranger then summarily dismissed the boy to his school.) look like a Lochaber axe (fresh frae the grindstone) [Sc: 1628] Sour-faced; demure; silly; frightened; wild.

F.31c Sharpening with whetstones, grindstones

hone Sharpen up a style etc.; make it more incisive.
whet (v) [c. 1400] Make keen, sharpen—appetite etc. sharpening stone A lesson, learnt by hard experience [Bnff Sc].
blue as a leah [=ley=scythe—Cum] stone
blue [n&wYks]/dry as a whetstone Often of one blue with cold; also of Conservative politics [nEng].
want is the whetstone of wit [ingenuity] Makes it keener, more efficient.
wine is the whetstone of wit [entertaining, clever talk: 1597] Makes it sharper, brighter.
the world is a whetstone and man a knife [NY] Life sharpens you up, but wears you away at the same time.
may whet his knife on the threshold of the Fleet [the debtors’ prison: 1662] (being in debt to no one)
get/have a knife to grind [Lin] Make a visit with the intention of gaining some private end.
have my own scissors to grind Have my own work to do; business to attend to.
be/go off at the nail [Sc] Behave strangely, uncontrollably, without any sense of propriety; become incoherent (from a pair of scissors that have come apart at the hinge-pin).
round/round-shouldered as a grunstone [= grindstone—Lin] a Scot, a rat and a Newcastle grunstan are found in every part of the world [NCy: 1662] Suffolk cheese—hard as grundstones a tight hand at the grindstone [Abd] Of a mean man.
carry/have the grindstone (on your back) [seWor] Fetch the doctor or midwife to a woman in childbed [C18–C19].
crooked as a grindstone handle [Cum]
get/keep/put your nose to the grindstone [1557]/grunnelstone [=grindlestone=grindstone—n&midEng] Work hard or continuously; concentrate on… (someone so doing would often need to sharpen their tools).
with nose to the grindstone [sYks nDer] Humbled by adversity.
bite the grindstone [Ire] Endure severe toil or punishment.
nowt’s impossible—as the old woman said when they told her the calf had swallowed the grindlestone [Chs: 1917]
lick by lick the cow ate the grindstone [Texas]

F.31d Edges

blunt (adj) Plain, outspoken.
blunt the edge of… Cause someone’s grief, disappointment etc. to be felt less keenly.
it’s no delay to stop to edge the tool [Ire Oreg] An excuse for refreshment; maintenance is an essential part of work.
put an edge on… Make keen, sharpen—appetite, sensibilities etc.
put too fine an edge/point on…[1852] Express with unnecessary delicacy; go into excessive detail; not state bluntly.
the finest edge is made with the blunt whetstone [Minn]
at the cutting edge Where the effective, decisive action takes place.
the sharp end [1976] Where the action is; where results can be expected, the effective part of an organisation etc.
there is nothing sharper than a woman’s tongue [Ire]
a good edge is good for nothing if it has nothing to cut Of skill kept unemployed.
I’ve no harridge [=harris, an edge—Sc nRe nEng—and usually the edge of a scythe—Yks Lakel] for my food No appetite.

F.32a Wedges

wedge (n) [1909] Cause of division. ‘The quarrel proved to be a wedge between them.’
wooden wedge The last student on the classical tripos list at Cambridge, corresponding to the wooden spoon of the mathematical tripos (and probably deriving from Wedgwood of Christ’s who was given that place on the first list of 1834).
clemmed [pinched, starved—Lan] wur nor [= worse than] wedgewood [sLan] (A wooden wedge is fearfully squeezed in a tree.)
a wedge of the elm/oak splits herself [Ire NY SC] Internal divisions are the worst.
the thin end of the wedge [1858] A small beginning, but with something larger and more unpleasant to follow; a trivial thing, but more important in its consequences than is at first apparent.

**F.32b Edges**

edge (v)—in, out, forward Move imperceptibly, surreptitiously (as if gradually from the thin end of a wedge).

cannot get a word in edgeways! [1824] No chance of even starting to speak.

**F.32c Sledges, malls and beetles**

sledge-hammer argument/style Overpowering; one that irresistibly overcomes opposition.

a sledge-hammer to crack a nut Powers far greater than necessary.

dead as a mell [=mall=maul, a heavy posting- or sledge-hammer—Edb]

keep mell in shaft/shaft in mell [Lth Ayr Gall] Keep straight, right, prosper; make both ends meet; keep healthy.

the shaft is out of the mell [Rnf] Things are going badly.

fling the mell [sSc] Boast, exaggerate (cf. throw the hatchet).

dull/numb [Nrf eSuf] as a beetle [heavy wooden maul—dialect, passim]

he’s getten a head—and so has a mell! [Nhb nLin]


beetle-headed [wYks War seWor Glo Som]/hammer-headed Stupid.

Dovercourt beetle [made out of the twisted elms of Dovercourt—Ess] A noisy person.

between the beetle and the block [1589] Fatally trapped.

get a stick and make a beetle of… [Wgt] Magnify an offence.

fall on the feyest [those fated to die soonest; maddest—Sc Ire Nhb Cum], the beetle among the bairns [Sc] Spoken when we do a thing at a venture and let the event fall heaviest on the unluckiest (cf. G.1, have among you blind harpers!)

you will not sleep and the beetle without! [Sc] Chiding someone for being over-anxious for the return of a loan.

pick and mell [Cld] Thoroughly.
they hang together as pebbles in a withe/ wyth [willow-twig—NCy; hoop of osier—Grose] (Why pebbles were hung together in a withe is uncertain. There are three possibilities:

1 The pebbles were grooved and bound together with withes for beating down ore, as was done in the Spanish copper mines in prehistoric times [M.Ross & H.S.Cooper, Highl. Cantabria p.335—1885].

2 They were bored and hung on withes like conkers. A stone thus holed and hung on the top of the rack of a horse suffering from the disease anciently known as ‘nightmare’ was believed to effect a cure [T.de Grey, Compl. Horsem. p.271–1639].

3 Stones with a hole were accounted apotropaic and were hung on a thong or withe in the byre to keep the evil eye away from the cattle. These stones were called ‘dobbie stones’ in Cumberland and were hung together, one for each animal if possible, to avert the evil attentions of dobbies, those sprites or brownies with powers over animals for both good and bad [NCy Amer].)

**F.33a Hard work**

**uphill work** [1622] Unusually arduous work.
- it goes uphill and against the heart Of a hard task.
- be run off his legs Go bankrupt; be overworked.
- those who can’t fadge/schemy [contrive] must loust [make extra effort—Cor] Of those whose heads never save their legs.
- wet neither foot nor finger for... Obtain without exertion.
- roll up your sleeves Be ready to start work.
- shirtsleeves—area, occupation, situation [1924] Hardworking; informal; straightforward.
- any hand afore [wYks] Ready for anything.
- spit on your hands [1577] Prepare for serious effort and hard work.
- a man may spit in his loof [Sc]/ on his palm and do full ill [Sc]/ little [1641] Professed willingness to work is no use without the action to follow.
- hang your nooks [knuckles—wYks 1885] Feebly stand idle (with the arms hanging down uselessly).
- strengthen his hands Enable him to act more effectively.
- beforehand/behindhand Early/late (from men working together, the beforehand man anticipating his mate’s work, the behindhand one following up his actions with the next action in sequence).
- ahin(t)/behind/behint the hand In debt, arrears [Abd]; after the event [Slk]; in secret [Cai].
exaggerate [Lat \textit{ex-aggerare}=heap up] Literally, pile up, and so raise beyond the limits of truth.

make short work of...[1577] Dispose of quickly.

labour is light where love doth pay [1539] To work for love seems easy.

put your back into it [1882] Exert yourself. (From using all the muscles of the back, as in lifting, rowing etc.)

at a dead lift [wYks] In a difficulty where help is badly needed (as when a heavy object can only be lifted by sheer force of muscle). ‘A good hand at a dead lift’ describes someone valuable in an emergency.

at my heft [heaving, effort—Hrf Glo] At my convenience or pleasure.

F.33b Burdens

I will not lout [bend down—Sc Ire Nhb Yks Hmp] so low and lift so little! [Sc: 1721] Dismissing an unworthy suitor.

have...on your back Be burdened with someone or something.

knowledge is no burden

shoulder (v)/take on your shoulders [1582] Accept a burden, task, responsibility—usually competently.

hodman Unthinking labourer; literary hack.

too much praise is a burden (To live up to it.)

none knows the weight of another’s burden You cannot adequately appreciate what someone else suffers.

God shapes the back for the burden A man is adaptable to his labours.

the tighter the burden strap ‘t is most likely to break [Ont]

weighed down [1712] Mentally oppressed by cares, grief etc.

stoop to...[1743] Become so depraved, unprincipled as to behave unworthily. ‘I wouldn’t stoop so low as to...’—scornfully and disdainfully.

grief [<OF grief]<Lat \textit{gravis}=heavy]

lie heavy on—the conscience, stomach etc. Oppress—of guilt, a heavy meal etc.

have, but come stooping! (i.e. well-laden)

walk off with... Filch, steal.

carry heavy rakes [regular loads, for a man, cart or railway train] Swagger, show off.

too heavy or too hot Of anything inconvenient or impossible.

too hot to handle [1618] Too dangerous to tackle, usually of a woman, but also of a risky enterprise.

coup the creels upon... [Sc] Gain an advantage over a rival. (By loading your creel quicker, it slipped lower on your side of the horse, making it easier for you and harder for the other person; make 100 per cent profit. See also D.14.)

have the wood on... [Aus NZ: 1926] Have the advantage over...

a faggot above a load [Sus] Too much of a good thing.

a laid [load] abune a birn [burden on the back - Sc] ‘The last straw’.

lithermonsload [lazy man’s load—Shr] Pregnancy conceived out of wedlock.

drop the bundle [Aus NZ] Surrender; give up hope.

a load off my mind! [1852] The relief of losing a burden of worry.

exonerate [Lat \textit{ex-onerare}=off-burden] Clear someone of an accusation and so remove their burden of guilt. [See Henry VIII, Letter to Cranmer—12 April 1533]
F.34a Slaves

pay through the nose [1672] Heavily and painfully; pay an exorbitant price. (In the C9 the Danes slit the noses of those who did not pay the tax of one ounce of gold per house. Even earlier, Odin’s tax was one penny per nose, and those unable to pay had their noses cut off [Grimm, Deutsche Rechts Alterthümer, p. 299–1828].)

the old slave [wYks 1885] The first of a batch of oatcakes which was used subsequently to convey the thin dough over the bakstone, and tip it there to be baked.

master-and-slave cylinder In the clutch of a motor engine, one controlling the other.

slavishly Thoroughly and without question, initiative or imagination (as slaves are required to serve).


long flog Arduous journey or task.

bend his will Force him to do as you wish.

have him at her feet In complete subservience and subjection.

he that marries for money sells his liberty [1670]

sold down the river [1851] Betrayed by those above you. (Troublesome slaves were sold into plantations on the lower Mississippi where they were more harshly treated than in the northern states.)

nigger in the woodpile [1852] Strong suspicion; concealed motive; something underhand that spoils an apparently good thing. (From an old American explanation for the disappearance of fuel.)

be after him with a sharp stick [Amer] Be bent on either satisfaction or revenge.

F.34b Servants, servility

hither-go-there [nYks] Digression (in talk).

bear/carry coals [1522] Submit to indignity or humiliation; be imposed on; be ill-humoured.

carry water to the river Waste efforts on unnecessary work.

drunk as a porter (cf. Macbeth’s porter, and also the pun on the drink known as porter)

serve (tables) Drop out of a vocation to do menial work.

not remember from the hall to the hatch [Cor] Have a bad memory.

as long as you are in the fox’s service you must hold up his tail [1641] Be loyal, however distasteful, to the master you serve.

cap/hat in hand [1565] Suppliant; assuming an inferior position; tamely, obsequiously [Amer].

take off your hat to…[1856] Show respect; give credit to; express admiration for someone.

jump around and hang by nothing [Sus] Make haste.
slake (v) [lick—Sc Ire nEng] Flatter, fawn on [nYks].
lick someone’s boots/shoes Be servile. Hence, bootlick=flatter [Amer 1900+].
lick-spittle [1825] Toady.
pocket your pride Put it aside for a time; forget it.

F.34c Stewards, employers

he’s polishing his shoes for the ganger’s job Trying hard for promotion or recognition.
there’s a good steward about [Suf] A cold weather [boss’s weather] saying, implying that it is too cold to be idle.
John Tamson's news [Don Tyr] Stale news.
mucky his ticket [certificate, testimonial of character] Injure, sully his character, misbehave [wYks].
write your own ticket Make your own terms; be in a position to stipulate conditions.
geet the sack/seck Be dismissed from employment; be jilted [Sc], (From C17 France where a worker was given his sac [bag] of personal belongings when dismissed.)
give him the seck Refuse his love [Sc Ire nEng].
geet the pink slip [formal notice of dismissal—from the practice of certain employers to give such notice on a slip of pink paper—Amer] Get the sack. Also:
pink-slip (v) Dismiss.
G.1 Begging

go (a-)begging Be available for anyone who wants it—often of food left over from a meal.
  drunk as a beggar
  merry as beggars [1641]
  great [close companions] as two beggars [1639]
  comfortable as beggars in chaff
  beggars should not be tarrowers [finicks, grumblers about food—Sc Shl] Being in no position to be particular.
  beggars can’t be choosers [1546] To one who in asking a favour is too particular; also spoken by those who lack the means to buy the best.
  pride is as loud a beggar as want and a great deal more saucy [1732]
  her tongue moves like a beggar’s clap-dish [NCy] With unceasing demands.
  she hauds up her gab [mouth] like an awmous-dish [beggar’s dish to receive the awmous=alms—Sc] Of one who behaves impudently.
  know it as well as the beggar knows his dish
  ready as a borrower’s cap [1598]
  pass the hat [1857] Collect money for a particular cause (not usually now by actually passing a hat round for contributions).
  blushes (at it) like a beggar at a bawbee [halfpenny—Sc]
  have among you blind harpers! [1546] The cry of one who throws or shoots at random among a crowd; also to quarrellers, signifying ‘settle it among yourselves and don’t involve others’ [Ant Dwn]. (Probably deriving from the throwing of alms among begging musicians, either blind or pretending to be so. See also F.32c.)
  I’ll give thee bell-tinker! [Yks Lan Stf] A good thrashing. (Perhaps from belt-tinker, but more probably from bolli [measure, portion—ON]= ‘I’ll give you the beggar’s share’; possibly connected, too, with blows such as the tinker uses when he makes the kettle ring.)
  halting speech Stammering or hesitant speech.
  don’t halt [hobble, limp] before a cripple/it is ill crooking [limping] before cripples [Sc: 1721] (who, being expert will detect the deception) Don’t perform before your
betters; it is unseemly to parade a minor injury in front of someone with a major disability.

It is ful hard to halten unespyed Bifore a crepul, for he can the craft;
   [G. Chaucer, T&C IV. 1457–1374]

if you go a year with a cripple, you’ll limp at the end of it On the degrading effect of bad company
   beg like a cripple at a cross/on a bridge With great importunity [Lakel n&mid Yks].
   begged on me like a cripple at a door [sLan]
   would charm the heart of a beggarman’s crutch [nIre] Of discordant singing or whistling.
   get a foot/a toe in the door [1977] Gain entry or an interview, even though unwelcome; make a small start in an organisation; gain a position from which progress can be made.
   there’s a dub [puddle] at ilka door, and sometimes twa [Sc] Always a snag; murky past.
   you may find a dike [pool, puddle—Yks nwLin] at everyone’s door An imperfection or disadvantage in everyone and everything.
   knock/sing at a deaf man’s door [1601] Waste your efforts in making the request.
   deaf/dumb as a door [1377]
   no use keeping on knocking if there’s nobody at home Said when assuming stupidity in one who continues to disregard good advice.
   knock on other doors Try other openings, alternatives; widen the field.
   brazent [bold] as a brass knocker [Lan]
   buttonhole (v) [1862] Detain, as if by gripping the buttonhole to ensure a hearing.
   she’d talk the hind-legs off a cuddy [donkey—Nhb]
   talk a bird’s/dog’s/donkey’s/horse’s hind leg off [1877] With great loquacity and persuasion.
   swear/talk the legs off an iron pot [Bck 1838]/ a workhouse boy out of his breakfast (As/ from the above.)
   arrant [=errant, vagrant] (Became an intensive because an errant thief was a committed, habitual one [1386].)

G.2a Hostile receptions

not know…from a hole in the ground [Amer]
   in a hole In trouble, inextricably; in financial trouble [Amer].
   every man must climb out of his own hole [III] Must make the effort to better himself.
   if you are in a hole, stop digging Don’t persist with what caused your trouble in the first place.
in a tight corner (As/from the above.)
put him in a hole Swindle; defraud someone with whom you should be sharing.
between a rock and a hard place [Amer] In trouble, facing equally bad alternatives.
take the length/measure of his foot [wYks] Learn how far you may venture with him; find out the limits of his patience, generosity; accurately judge his character. (See also I.31f.)

G.2b Hostile receptions with mud

throw muck at…[wYks] Slander.
throw dirt/mud enough and some will stick If you make many accusations, some will be credited; a little of what you teach will be remembered.
if you threw him against the wall he would stick [nIre] Of a very dirty person.
make it stick Make an accusation that can be proven home.
sling mud Defame, slander. Hence:
mud-slinging Slander; abuse.
the easiest way to lose ground in an argument is to throw mud [Iowa]
slur (n) [=slur (v)=smear, daub dirty—Sc n, mid&cEng Som Dev] Insult, derogatory remark.
it all rubs off when it’s dry Consolation to one who has suffered a rebuke or summary punishment.
slather [thin, liquid mud—Yks] Smooth speech, flattery, cajolery.
slaum [slimy mud—n&midEng] Flatter grossly [Not].
slaurie [splash with mud—Sc] Abuse with vile names [Sc].
slart [splash, sprinkle with dirty water—Yks Lin Der Hrf Amer] Insinuate; accuse slyly [Lin].
tash [bespatter with dirty water—Sc] Slander, upbraid, taunt.
treat like dirt With disgust; unfeelingly; without respect.
mean as dirt
cast a clod at…[Cai] Reproach.

G.2c Hostile receptions with stones

cast a stone at…[Sc] Renounce all connection with.
throw stones at… Make accusations; cast aspersions.
he serves the poor with a thump on the back with a stone [1678] Is a miser.
give a stone for bread Mock with the pretence of help.
he has laid a stone at my door Has cut me; has fallen out with me. (A stone laid at the door is a reminder not to bother knocking again.)
object [<Lat obicere=throw in the way]

G.2d Hostile receptions with dogs

obstreperous [<Lat obstrepere=make raucous noises against, clamour against]
  harmless as a mad dog Ironic.
  snap at...[1579] Reply or speak sharply to someone.
  snag [bite, snap—Sc n, mid&wEng EAn Oxf Glo] Tease, chide, ‘nag’, scold [Sc nEng Lei War Glo].
  fly in the face of...[1553] Defy; challenge authority.
  bite/snap his head/nose off Speak abruptly; interrupt sharply.
  when your hand is in the dog’s mouth, withdraw it gently [Ire] Do not antagonise those who could injure you.
  the white dog bites him [Dur Cum nYks] He is lazy, sleepy.
  an old/still [quiet] dog bites sore [1545] Don’t underestimate age or apparent inactivity.

sarcasm [<Gk σακρακόειν=tear the flesh]
  a hair of the dog that bit you [1546] Mostly spoken by those who take or recommend a drink of what they were made drunk with the night before—to clear the head. (An old remedy involved putting a hair on the wound.)
  harass [<OF harer=set the dogs on] Worry and distress, both mentally and physically.
  hard-bitten [wWor] Insensitive; disillusioned.
  send away with a dog in his sleeve Sharply rebuke.
  once bitten, twice shy [1899] After a rebuff, disappointment, loss or injury a person becomes more cautious.

he that will throw a stone at every dog needs a large pocket No one can expect to deal with every injury or threat of one.

throw a stone in a pack of dogs, and the one that’s hit will holler [III] Provoke a reaction in order to identify someone.

bite at the stone and not at the hand that flings it [1546: S.Pepys—11 February 1668] Persecute a subordinate for their superior’s offence.

remors [<Lat re-mordere=bite back]
  revenge is like biting a dog because he bit you [Oreg]
  gang round by Lanark for fear Linton dogs bite ye [Sc] Choose a larger disadvantage than the one you are avoiding.
G.3a Begging for food

fair/soft words fill not the belly They leave things basically unchanged.

words will not feed the friars [Ire] (As above.)

she will as soon part with the crock as the porridge [1678] So mean!

as soon break his neck as his fast in that house A severe condemnation—of either food or company.

take the bit and the buffet with it Put up with some ill usage where you get advantage, accept the disadvantages along with the benefit.

G.3b A beggar’s meals

run of his teeth [Ire Lakel Shr Cor] Free board.

he sups ill who eats up all at dinner [1611] Of one who, through extravagance in youth, is needy in old age.

Roger Cary’s dinner [Chs] A scanty meal, scarcely enough. [Roger=a beggar pretending to be a university scholar—C16]

he that waits for another’s trencher eats many a late dinner [1670] The inconveniences of being dependent.

another man’s food tastes sweeter Temptations of covetousness.

have a hand in the dish Meddle, interfere (cf. finger in the pie).

I’ll not hold my dish under that ladle [nYks] I’ll not submit to or ask anything of that person.

my caup [=cap, wooden soup bowl or drinking bowl—Sc] is no aneath his ladle I am not dependent on him. (As above.)

bent [deviant] as a tin spoon

G.3c Carrying food

dangling round like a gaberlunzie’s [tramp’s, beggar’s] meal-bags [Per]

take the meal-poke/powk by the string [Gall] Go begging.

pee [squint—nEng]/peekle [peep, pry—Lakel] in your own poke-nook Mind your own business; consider how it applies to yourself.

pickle [peck up—Sc Nhb] in/out of your own pock-neuk/poke-nook Depend on your own exertions.

pickle out of one pock/poke [Sc] Share equally. (The food bags of Scottish beggars or gaberlunzies were called pokes.)
crimble [=crumble]-i’-th’-poke [NCy] Renege on an agreement; funk something.
estate in two parishes is bread in two wallets [1640]

G.3d Bread, pies

as honest a man as ever broke bread [1585]
eaten bread is forgotten [1670] Ingratitude for past kindness.
if you only have a crust, don’t spit it out If you have but little, look after it all the better.
crumble [1642] Disintegrate—of reputations, decaying stone etc.
crumb [1535] Small particle of comfort etc.
better some of a pudding than none of a pie

G.3e Meat

he loveth well sheep’s flesh that wets his bread in the wull [1450–1500] Of one immoderately partial. (See also E.23c.)
better a mouse in the pot than no flesh at all Be content with little if the alternative is nothing.
skin (v) [Amer] Defeat; be superior to; win all a player’s money at cards. (A sense-connection with ‘flay’?)
skint [=skinned] Penniless. (As/from the above.)
skin the cat Hang by the hands from a branch or bar, pull the legs up through the arms and over the branch and pull yourself up to the sitting position.
foul as a fried foumart
every man gnaw on his own bone See to his own affairs.
dry as a bone/bones; bone-dry (This may have had early origins in the beliefs of the Greeks about cremation and the removal of life-fluids from the skeletons of their dead in order to allow the ψυχή to depart.)
dry bone [Cromwell—24 March 1650] Useless person.
dry/thirsty as a sun-struck bone [Aus]
if wishes were thrushes, beggars would eat birds [1610]
he’d offer you an egg if you promised not to break the shell [Ire] Offsets his good deed with a mean condition.
better half an egg than toom doup [the empty end of an egg—Sc Ire nEng: c. 1641] Be content with what you have, the alternative is nothing.
she has eaten a snake [1519] Of an old woman, when she looks amiable. (An Italian proverb suggests that eating a snake delays the onset of ageing in women.)
G.3f Wild fruits

A black plum is as sweet as a white. Referring to black-skinned people.

What is a tree of cherries worth to four in a company? Insufficient to share.

He'll make nineteen bits of a bilberry [1678]. Is fastidious; hypercritical.

Huckleberry [a wild berry like a bilberry]. A small amount; someone of small consequence; sweetheart, partner, special friend [Amer]; a huckleberry Christian [Kan] is an indifferent Christian.

Be a huckleberry over/to his/her persimmon [a wild plum]. Be just a little better than... (where neither is very good). Also, risk a huckleberry to a persimmon [Amer]

A jump above my tallest persimmons. Rather better than I can manage [Amer].

Shake someone down. Extort money from or force them (even by blackmail) to pay up [Amer].

Shake down the persimmons. Gain an advantage; make something out of it [Amer].

The persimmon above your huckleberry. Something beyond your capability. 'Passes my persimmon to...’ [Amer].

Rake up the persimmons. Pocket the winnings [Amer].

The longest pole knocks/takes the 'simmon/persimmon [sAmer]. Success to the person who has the advantages.

That's (all) persimmon! That's fine! [Amer]

Take four bites at a persimmon. Make much of little [Amer].

That's the ripe persimmon! You've got it just right; well-timed! [Amer]

Friendship, like persimmons, is good only when ripe [Neb]

Pucker like a persimmon [Calif]

There was never a persimmon except there was a possum to eat it [Texas]. For everyone, somewhere, there is someone ready to exploit, marry them.

He may blag [gather blackberries—Yks]. Till hips are ripe! He can have all the trouble he likes for all I care.

Bлаг. Snatch a watch, chain and all. (As/from the above.)

Soon ripe, soon rotten [1393]. Of those who mature early.

Ripe for... Ready for—variously.


Many deaf nuts [Lakel Chs Shr]. Looks wellfed, prosperous.

A deaf nut. Something insubstantial, worthless.

Not care/give/worth a nutshell [1300].

In a nutshell [1831]. In brief; reduced to essentials, to the ‘kernel’ of the matter.

Has his heart in a nutshell [neLan]. Is a coward.

You and he piss in one nutshell. Are close friends.

Acorn-cracker [Ark]. Uncouth rustic.

He that bites on every weed must needs light on poison. You cannot expect always to be lucky if you continually take risks.
G.4a Roughing it out of doors

give him the air Reject him.
big as all outdoors [Calif]
left out in the cold [1886] Ignored, socially avoided.
he would live—even in a gravel pit [1678] Of a frugal, niggardly person.
it’s a bare moor that you’ll go o’er, and no get prick to your blanket [a thorn to pin your cloth with]/a heather-cow [tuft of heather—Sc] To a scraping person who makes use of trifles; ‘it’s a long lane that has no turning’.
dwindle-straw [=windlestraw, a dry straw of grass, stalk standing in the field—Sc Ire n&midEng] Any weak, puny creature.
not a windle [=windlestraw—Lan]/windlestraw [Shr] Not in the slightest; a thing of no consequence.
dwebble [Sc Ire nEng] as a windlestrae [wYks]
ye micht hae ca’d [=called, knocked, turned—Sc Nhb nYks] me owre wi’ a windlestrae [neSc Wm n&neYks] You could have knocked me down with a feather.
no more use than a windlestraw is for a stack-prop [nwLin Shr w&sWor]
he that’s red [=rad, frightened] for windlestraes should never sleep/not piss on leys [rough, upland pasture, fallows:Sc: 1628] Keep away if you don’t like it (cf. who’s afraid of leaves should not go in a wood).
you green [yearn, long—Sc Ire nEng] to piss in uncouth leys [Sc] Are too keen on novelties.
he has slept in a field and left the gate open [sLan] Of one who has woken up hoarse.
merry as a haystack-sleeper
lie in the long feathers [Lan sChs Shr] Sleep on straw.
he that lies on the ground can fall no lower A consolation(?) to one in extremis.
mucky as the ground [Cum]
he that falls in the dirt, the longer he lies the dirtier/fouler he is An encouragement not to resign yourself to a deplorable condition; clear yourself of slander quickly.
stick-in-the-mud [1733] An unprogressive, unambitious person who is content to remain in sordid surroundings.
takes the world for his pillow Wanders homeless.
hard (adj)—words etc. Unwelcome, unpleasant, cruel.

G.4b Under hedges

rough as a hedge
better shelter under an old hedge than young gorse Experience is a better protection than youth.
’t is good sheltering under an old hedge [1639] (As/from the above.)
looks as if he’s been pulled through a hedge backwards Very dishevelled.
gang ower the buss-taps [=bush-tops—Rxb] Behave extravagantly.
scorn not the bush that shelters you Do not be ungrateful to the person or
establishment that protects you.
  every man bows to the bush he gets biel of [ =bield, shelter—Sc Cum wYks nLan] Behaves well to those who support him; home loyalties.
    a thin bush is better than no shelter The inadequate is better than nothing.
    a wee bush is better than nae bield [Sc Cum: 1721] (As/from the above.)
    a bad bush is better than the open field [c.1300] (As/from the above.)
    good tree, good shelter [1599] Seek protection from the powerful.
    as the wind blows seek your bield/shelter Accommodate to change. (As the wind
blows =according to circumstances.)
  earth’s the best shelter Death is the ultimate and only absolute relief.
under cover of… Under the pretext of; protected by.
prick (v) Trouble; impinge upon. ‘Conscience pricks...’.
give him a brod [thorn, prick—Sc Lakel Lin] Jog his memory.
prickly Short-tempered.
it is soon espied where the thorn pricks People quickly locate the source of their
trouble; of an over-hasty accusation.
upon thorns [wSom] Unsettled; in a state of excitement.
on tither-thorns [Hmp] Tremulously anxious, in a state of jittery excitement. (J.
Wright does not identify these thorns, but there is probably a sense-connection with
titter=totter, shake, quake, quiver.)
  be/sit/stand on thorns [1528]/pins [Lan: 1811] (and needles) Be impatient, anxious,
in agitated suspense, especially at the prospect of being caught.
barefoot folk shouldn’t walk upon prickles [sLan]/thorns [1670] Remember your
weakness and don’t look for trouble.
while thy shoe is on thy foot tread upon the thorns Tackle the difficulty when you
are best able.
  a fool’s word is a thorn in the mud [Ire] To be disregarded on all counts.
give/take through the whins [Dmb eLth] Scold severely.
  come/go through the whins [Dmb Lnk] Suffer trouble.
in the briars In trouble.
lay in the briars [Wm] Hold fast.
leave in the briars [1520] Get someone into trouble.
stick in the briars/clay/mire Get involved in difficulties.
has a briar in the arse [Cum] Is restless, ill-sitting.
a great dowry is a bed full of brambles (because your wife will never let you forget
it!)
on nettles [Cai Bnff Abd Lnk] Impatient, anxious.
G.4c Old clothes

bare as a gablerunzie’s [tramp’s, beggar’s] coat [Edb] Of hilltops.

money is welcome, though it come in dirty clothes/a dirty clout [1659]/dirten clout [Sc]

wet as drip [Craven, wYks nLin] (So that the water drips out of your clothes.)

covers himself with a wet sack Makes vain excuses.

fall with a soss [heavy fall, especially into water—Cum]/swat [soss] like a wet sack

wrap up! [1949] Be quiet; stop making such a fuss! (As if bundling someone up in scarves etc. would muffle them.)

G.4d Old shoes

on his uppers [1891] Destitute (as when only the upper parts of your shoes are left).

toe-rag [the strips of old shirt used to prevent toe-blisters when no socks were available—C19] Dried Newfoundland cod, a regular (although unpopular) Friday meal on board [naut].

boiled to toe-rags [sLan] Of over-boiled meat.

welcome as water in your shoes/shoon [sLan: 1621] Ironic. Hence, ‘water in the shoes’ refers to an acute annoyance or discomfort.

hollow as the shoe when the foot’s out
he goes long barefoot that waits for dead men’s shoes/shoon [Sc Colo Texas] Do not count on an inheritance.

dead men’s shoes/man’s shoon [Sc] Property from the viewpoint of the prospective inheritor.

get cold feet [Amer C19] Be afraid; funk doing something.

G.5a Camp fires

easy as falling off a log

make no fire, raise no smoke Give no grounds for suspicion and you will be unsuspected.

fume—with rage, indignation etc. (As if the fires of rage etc. are giving off a sign of what is gathering but has not yet broken out in its full heat.)

much smoke, little fire Much fuss but with little justification.

no smoke without fire [1546] There is usually some basis to slander or suspicion.

no reek without heat (As/from the above.)
love and smoke cannot be hidden [Can Amer]
the fire which lights us at a distance will burn us when near Do not be tempted to get involved with dangerous or passionate characters.
fire drives out fire Two fiery characters cancel out each other.
black as a burnt log [Aus]

**G.5b Quenching fire**

big buckets can be filled at small streams [Kan] No source—of learning, inspiration etc.—should be despised.
good words quench more than a bucket of water Conciliate with speech.
bucket down [1926] Rain heavily (as if poured out of buckets).
that won’t hold water [1612] Of an excuse or explanation that will not stand the test of use or examination.

**G.6a Sticks—growing**

this must have grown at night Referring to a crooked stick and implying that it could not see straight.
a crooked stick will throw a crooked shadow [1640] The son of a crook is unlikely to go straight.
thraw [=throw, twist, bend—Sc] the wand/ widdyywuddy [withy] while it is green [1457] Youth is the time for learning.
timely crooketh the tree that will good cammock bee [J.Heywood—1546] (A cammock is a hockey/shinty stick—Sc IMa—also the knee of timber used in ship-building.)
soon crooketh the tree that good gambrel/ cambrel would be [C15] (The gambrel was the bent piece of wood on which butchers hang carcasses [Dev Cor]:=cammerel [NCy], a large stretcher used to extend the legs of a carcase when hung up to cool.) Specialise when young; also, on noting signs of incipient depravity in a young person.
crooked as a cammerel [=cambrel=gambrel—Cum wYks]/cammeril [eYks]
bent as a bucker [gambrel—Nhp EAn]
a tree must be bent while it is young Discipline young or never.
a crooked tree will never straighten its branches [NMex] Bad parents will not bring up their children to be honest.
it is not easy to twist the hardened twig [Ire] Hard to influence the old.
the crook in an old stick is hard to take out It is hard to correct faults in old people.
crooked/thrawn/tough stick A perverse person.
gib-nosed [nYks] Hook-nosed. (A gib was a hooked stick, used for nutting etc.)
knaggy as a thorn stick [Sc] Snappy, querulous, irritable.

G.6b Walking sticks

in a cleft stick [1782] In a quandary; position from which you can neither retreat nor proceed. (A cleft stick was used for catching snakes.)

put your hand in a cleft stick Fall into a trap.

have his cods in a cleft stick [Sc] Have him at my advantage.

if you pick up one end of a stick, you also pick up the other You are responsible not only for your action, but for what follows from it.

get hold of the wrong end of the stick [1890] Misunderstand without at first realising it. (If you take hold of the wrong end of a walking-stick, it is the dirty end.)

have the right end of the stick Be correct; hit on the solution [Lnk wYks].

have the better/worse end of the staff [C16– C19] Have the advantage/disadvantage. (As/ from the above.)

the dirty end of the stick The difficult or unpleasant part.

the thick end of the stick The worst of the bargain.

get hold of the thick part of the stick Get the best of the bargain [Der]. But see above!

off the stick end Directly, straight away. ‘Made it reet off o’ t’ stick end’ [Cum]=made it up impromptu.

hold the sticks to…/hold sticks with… Compete on equal terms with someone.

I’ll have a thrust [=thrust, try] at it if I lose my stick I will do it and risk the consequences.

queer as a four-speed walking-stick Very odd indeed; completely homosexual.

G.6c Staves

beggar’s staff State of bankruptcy [n&neYks; ‘we are brought to begger staffe’—Plumpton Letter—c.1505].

your staff stands next the door [1548] It’s your turn next; it’s time you were leaving. (The earlier arrivals would lean their sticks nearer to the door.)

take your stick (and hook it) [Lakel] Be off quickly.

argue from the staff to the corner Shift discussion to another issue.

keep the staff in your own hand [wYks Nhp Ont] Retain possession of your property.

hold/keep at the staff-end [neSc Abd]/staff’s end/stick’s end Quarrel with; keep at a distance; treat with reserve.

live at stave’s end Be unsociable; keep everyone at a distance.
hope is a lover’s staff (The sole support.)
the married man must turn his staff into a stake [1640] Must exchange freedom for constraint.
put [wYks neLan]/set [Rxb] up/down a staff Settle; make a halt; abide by a decision.
who hath noon hors, on a staff may ride [1444] You must needs use second-best if you do not have the best.
if you would know a knave, give him a staff [1640] Power brings out the worst in a man.
part with your staff [wYks Nhp] Give up possession of your property.
imbecile [<Lat imbecillus<im-bacillum= without supporting staff]

G.6d Reeds to lean on

lean not on a reed (For you will rely on a deceptive support—see below.)
broken reed [1611 Isa xxxvi.6] Person or thing no longer reliable.

G.7a Roads and streets

royal road [1793] A smooth, easy way; a system from which all difficulties have been removed.
would not cross the road to… Be entirely uninterested in, be unwilling to make the slightest effort to do something.
cross-roads [1795] Crucial point; critical juncture; the time or place for making decisions.
dirty work at the cross-roads! [1914] A lighthearted allegation of some dishonest, unsavoury or underhand activity.
could mind mice at cross-roads [Ire] Is astute, quick and clever.
distant Stand-offish, unapproachable.
on the (high) road to…[1700] In good prospect of, almost certain to attain.
road-block Obstruction—variously.
as far as that goes! A phrase to point out limitations (implying that it should have gone further, been more comprehensive).
grass does not grow in busy streets/the market-place [1659] The retort of a bald man to ‘Empty barns need no thatch.’
on the verge of… On the point of, on the very brink of, just about to…
G.7b Ways

anyway/any road [Lan] In any case, anyhow.
the narrow way The righteous life.
by-ways—of music, literature etc. The less accessible, neglected and unfamiliar areas of a subject.
the Milky Way Our galaxy when viewed on a clear night.
the life of man is a winter way [1640] (Beset with hazards and discomforts.)
method [Gk μέθοδος = way to go after something] Hence, pursuit of knowledge; system of investigation—originally into medical cases.
period [Gk περίοδος = a coming round again] Hence, the meanings of a recurring time, cycle, orbit, complete rounded sentence.
avenue Way of achieving an object. ‘There are other avenues open to him.’
explore every avenue Investigate every possibility.
path-breaker/path-finder/pioneer Aircraft or advance mission to find and show up a target for a following force of bombers.
pathfinder [1898] Promoter of new policies, ideas; trend-setter; a ‘pathfinder prospectus’ is one which precedes the official prospectus for the flotation of a company.

G.7c Lanes

in the straight lane [Amer] Normal and respectable.
the lang/narrow/red lane/lonnin/loan [Yks nwDer nLin Nrf War Suf Brks wSom] The throat.
it’s a long lane that has no turning [1778]/it is a long loanin that has no turn
[nlre]/it is a lang lonnin that has niver a turnin’ [Dur] Some change comes sooner or later; without variety, tedium sets in.
it is a lang loan as niver comes to an end [eYks] Everything must end eventually.
long as a Devonshire lane that has no turning
loup-the-lang-lonnin [NCy] Play at leap-frog.
if you know every weed in a boreen [farm lane—Ir-Gael], you’ll not fall into its potholes [Ire] Only full knowledge prevents errors.
down memory lane [1954] Reminding yourself of the past, revisiting old haunts, reviving former associations.
G.7d Signposts

point the way to… Show, and show how it can be achieved.

fingepost Clergyman—who points the way, but does not go himself.

still as a finger-post [signpost—nYks]

a crucial [<Lat crux=a signpost at a fork in the road] Involving an important decision (i.e. which turning to take?).

sign-post Indication, hint to guide the inexperienced, helpful information generally.

government sign-post The gallows.

the road to heaven is well signposted, but badly lit at night [Ire] As well as knowing what makes a good life, you need your own inner light when in doubt or trouble.

hilltop literature Serious and sound advice (from the road notice at a hilltop warning cyclists of the gradient).

G.7e Milestones

milestone (n) Measure of achievement; one point in a series leading to an objective; significant stage or event in life.

Sussex milestones The churches in the Downs.

milestones Heavy seas breaking over the decks when homeward bound (as if they emphasise how far to go and how slow the voyage).

milestone bread/cake [nYks] Where there are long distances between the pieces of fruit.

lonely as a milestone

answer (a summons) by milestones [nYks] Abscond.

ragged as a mile-iron [iron mile-post—Lin] (Battered, because boys threw stones at them.)

go whistling/whistle jigs to a milestone [Ire] Waste breath and time; go on a useless or impossible errand.

mud as weel ha’ whistled jigs to a milestoneop [wYks] (As above.)

G.7f On the road

make your journey shorter at one end Depart.

a journey of 1,000 miles starts with a single step [orig. China] Even large works have to start from small beginnings; you cannot foresee where a small start will lead.

take the first step [1602] Begin proceedings; start things moving.
he goes far that never turns  If you want to succeed, don’t be deflected from your purpose.

turn the corner  [1844] Pass the critical point of an illness and start recovery.

take the wrong turning  Make a misleading decision.

what use in running if you are on the wrong road?  Better to do right than do well.

go along with…  Assent to, agree with—a person, policy etc.

Kelso convoy, a step and a half over the door-stane  [Sc 1816] Accompanying someone on their way for a short distance only.

conducive/conduct  [<Lat con-ducere=lead together with, accompany]

fellow-traveller  [1936] One in sympathy with, but not a member of, a political party.

down the road  [Amer] In the future.

go down that road  Commit yourself to a course you are likely to regret.

not get very far along the road  Make little progress.

half-way down the pike  [=turnpike=road—Amer] Only partly developed or realised, incomplete.

middle-of-the-road man  [1894] One who avoids the extremes, a moderate.

arrive at/reach—a mental decision, conclusion; an agreement, compromise  (The pure meanings of coming right up to a distance or destination, and of grasping with the hand, have been extended into the mental and social spheres.)

reach the end of the road/line  [=railway-line—Amer] Arrive at a point beyond which you can make no further progress and further effort is futile.

you can’t get there from here  [Amer] It is an insoluble problem.

take the blue road  [Wil] Go to live or work in the town.

take the white road  [Wil] Go to live or work in the country.

there will be rubs in the smoothest road  Nothing is ever perfect.

a bump in the road  Minor difficulty, not enough to affect the issue or the progress.

a lean dog for a hard road  [1917] (because carrying no surplus weight) In hard times the fewer responsibilities and possessions the better.

‘it’s a hobbly/knobby [lumpy—Cum] road!’ as the man said when he fell over a cow in the dark  [nEng]

keep in the right path  Stick to your principles, do not be diverted from what you know to be right.

our paths crossed  We chanced to meet.

in/within sight of…  Near to achieving, almost arrived at your objective.

see your way (clear) to…  [1774] Bring yourself to; be able and inclined to do something.

love will find a way

come my way  Arrive fortuitously; receive gratuitously. The opportunity soon came my way to…”

go a long way towards  Make a generous contribution to; do much towards achieving—agreement, a satisfactory solution etc.

go all the way/the whole way  Carry lovemaking through to its conclusion.

go with…all the way  Support wholeheartedly, agree unreservedly with.

knows his way about  [1867] Is competent—generally.

parting of the ways  [1869] Moment when the decision must be made.

no two ways about that!  [1818] That is beyond doubt or dispute.
episode [<Gk ἔπει τὸν ἐξόδος = additional way into] Hence, additional and separate but not unconnected part of the narrative.

go all one way Die/sink fast.

has come/gone a long way since…[1922] Has improved greatly; has acquired much experience; has progressed well towards a goal. Also:

have a long way to go before… Need to achieve or improve a lot before…

in a bad way Very poorly; on hard times.

a shady lane breeds mud You must expect evil thoughts from a nasty mind and bad characters from a bad background.

have a dirty lane to go down [Lei] Have a bad time ahead.

we shan’t have to go down the clay lane now! [nLin] Said when an anticipated tribulation has been removed.

forth the gate [Sc] Straightforward, openly honest.

back-gate [road or way that passes round the back—Sc] Deceitful action; immoral conduct.

gang a black gate [road, way—Sc nEng] Sink into immorality.

gang/go a grey gate [Sc Ire nEng] Go to the bad, follow evil; adopt a hopeless policy, lead a cheerless life.

go to the gate Go towards ruin, destruction.

go his/her gate Pursue a selfish or solitary course.

go up the gate Die; be ruined.

out of gate [Nhb]/the way Dead and buried.

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G.7g Riding

if wishes were horses/if wads [=woulds] were yads [=jades—Sc], beggars would ride [1628] A reproof against pipe-dreaming and unrealistic desires.

set a beggar [1594]/sailor [1822] on horseback and he’ll never alight/he’ll ride to the devil None so proud as those who have risen in the world.

a merry companion’s as good as a wagon [c. 1526]

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G.7h Walking

expatiate on… Enlarge on…, treat expansively, discuss at length. This meaning has almost entirely superseded the earlier one of to walk about, range far and wide [<Lat expatarii=walk about in the open].

walk out on…[1896] Leave—a meeting/ partner/gathering on impulse and often as a protest.
pedestrian [1716] Prosaic, mundane, dull.
have feet (firmly) on the ground [1950] Be practical, realistic, without illusions, unlikely to be tempted into folly.
the boot/shoe is on the other foot [1834] The positions are reversed.
clog it along Go fast.
foot for foot With the greatest care, exactness.
lead...off his feet Make him change his opinions; desert his principles.
a spit and a stride A short way.
make great/staggering [amazing] strides forward Make fast progress.
the lame goes as far as the staggerer Physical handicaps are no worse than mental ones.
put in a stacker [=stagger—wYks] Bewildered, upset.
think of the sore feet [Ire] Look ahead.
think on your feet React quickly to events.
shuffle out of/off...[1565] Furtively evade obligations etc.; prevaricate.
plod along/on [1562] Persevere in some (tedious) work from determination rather than inclination.
stroll (n) [Amer 1908] Something effortlessly achieved.

G.8a Different towns and places

'tisn't all the world nor half a parish [Cor] In dismissing an exaggeration or a fuss over nothing.
there was ne’er a gude town but had a dub/ mire at one end of it [Sc: 1721] Always some disadvantage.
set out to...[1888] Start and intend to do something.
advent, circumvent, contravene, convene, convent, event, intervene, invent, supenvene (These compounds made up of a preposition followed by a part of the Latin venire [=come] have all acquired a particular meaning beyond that of their literal elements.)
old as Aldgate (Already an established London saying in 1725.)
has gone over Assfordby Bridge backwards [ =Asfordby—Lei: 1678] Of one past learning or who gets things in the wrong order.
the back o’ Bafuff [Fr] The ultimate in remoteness.
in and out like Bellesdon [Lei: 1678] (Because of crooked streets.)
out of Bisho’ Brigg [Dur] into Yorkshire From bad to worse.
travel up Bluebank [hill between Whitby and York where the debtors’ prison used to stand] Go bankrupt.
give Bolliton [Bridlington—eYks] Chastise.
worried as a Bostonian going west of Worcester [Calif]
dirty as old Brentford at Christmas
take a Burford bait [Oxf] Make a greedy meal; get drunk.
all round Burslem to get to Stoke [nStf] Doing or telling something in a lengthy, roundabout way.

like the mayor of Calenich [wTruro, Cor] who walked two miles to ride one (because his horse was pastured two miles from home) Of one who takes undue trouble to save their dignity.

give him Camborne [Cor] Punish him.

end in a ‘whew’, like Cawthorne feast/wakes [wYks neLan] Of anything that ends badly or in an anticlimax. (The parish authorities went round the village with a lamp which they blew out with a ‘whew’ at the end of the holiday.)

old as Charing Cross [1598]
dead/safe as Chelsea Referring to sailing conditions.

Cheshire cat Person with a fixed grin. (It is possible that the original Cheshire cat was one of Richard III’s forest rangers in Cheshire, a man with a wide, hideous grin.)


all on one side, like Chesterfield steeple fixed as Cheviot

a conscience as wide as Coldingham Common [before 1703 an undivided waste of 6,000 acres—Bwk]

Collywest/Collyweston [village largely rebuilt in the late C16, famous for its stone slates—Nhp] Back to front; contrary; contradictory [nwEng].

def as Corra Linn [a fall on the upper Clyde—Lnk] (Possibly by association with a ‘deaf carline’. [See W.Scott, Old Mortality vii])

a Coxall/Coggeshall job [Ess] An awkward or foolish act. (Proverbially a stupid community who used hurdles to divert a stream and chained up the wheelbarrow when a mad dog bit it.)

crooked as Crawley Brook [Bdf]

North Crawley Awry [Not Bek].

ancient as the floods of Dava [Tredavoe pond, the butt of much local wit—Cor]

send him to Dingley-Couch/DingletyCrotch [Ire] Send him to Coventry (q.v. C.11).

they that can hear Dumbuck may hear Dumbarton [which is nearer to Glasgow—Sc] Of those who pretend to know more than they do; are better informed than they pretend to be.

plain as Dunstable Highway [a part of the Roman Watling Street]

Eldon Hole wants filling! [1670] A retort to a boaster. (Eldon Hole is a deep chasm in the Derbyshire Peak District.)

‘that’s Exter’ as the old woman said when she saw Kerton Said when someone thinks their work is done and then finds there is still much to do. (The woman had walked to within sight of Crediton and thought it was Exeter, but that was eight miles further on.)

like the mayor of Falmouth who thanked God the town gaol was enlarged Of those whose moods are inopportune.

come home by Fool’s Acre Pay the price of your folly.

crooked as George Street West [Sydney, Aus]

Gloucestershire kindness Giving away what you don’t want yourself.

all on/to one side, like the Gourock [fishing village on the Clyde—Sc] (Probably because it is all on a hillside.)
nose like a Halifax door-handle Prominent.
like the man at Halton Shields—back where you started [Nhb] (He set off on a journey, travelled all night and found himself at his own door in the morning.)
like the mayor of Hartlepool, you cannot do that Of physical impossibilities. (A certain mayor, before 1678, reassured his old friends that he was unchanged by high office by saying he was still a man, there being many things he could not do.)
proud as a Highlander
sleepy as the Hill of Hoath [=Howth in Dublin—Martha Wilmot, Letter—17 January 1821]
strong as Hull
Irish as pigs in Shudehill [Manchester market] (A falter-euphemism for shit?)
all on one side, like an Irishman’s obligation [mid&wEng]
lithe as a lass of Kent [1579]
wears his/her hat on the Kildare side [Ire] Is jaunty, buoyant, gleeful. (Kildare is noted for racing, gambling and drinking.)
hard/old as Knock(’s) Cross [an ancient barrow near Port Carlisle—Cum]
a Lansallos treat, everyone pay for himself [Cor]
all stinking/upside-down like Lanson [Launceston—Cor] gaol (The notorious dungeons still exist.)
as much akin as Leuson [=Lewesdon] Hill to Pilsen-pen [=Pilsden—Dor] Unconnected (though both hills are in the same parish). Usually of people who are neighbours but neither related nor acquainted.
all together like the men of Maisemore and they went one at a time [Glo]
short [q.d. -tempered] as Marchington wake-cake [a crumbly short-cake—Stf]
like the mayor of Market-Jew [Marazion, Cor], sitting in his own light (He was a brewer who plied those in dispute with drink until they were mellow and reconciled, but in doing so left himself short of beer to sell. It is also recorded that when in his pew in Marazion church he was sitting in his own light.)
Marlborough-handed [Wil] Left-handed, awkward. (Marlborough folk were legendary for clumsiness.)
they’ve lids to their een [=eyes—Lan] in Marsden They are willing to connive; they will not see what they should.
always late like Mobberley clock [Chs]
like Morvah Downs, hard and never plowed [Cor: 1864] Of severe, rough and uncultured persons.
Newcastle greeting A bang with the head.
Newcastle hospitality Roasting to death; killing with kindness.
go round by Newcastle to get to Shields Relate something at unnecessary length.
her bonnet (etc.) stands North Crawley [Nhp] All on one side.
daft/old as Pandon Gate/Yatts [Yks 1649] (At Newcastle-upon-Tyne.)
all on one side, like Parkgate [one row of houses facing the Dee, the sea-wall being on the other side of the road—Chs]
there’s a part of him in Pembrokeshire [Cdg] He’s not all there.
God’s grace—endless as Pilling Moss [Fylde, Lan: 1662]
go round about Reves[s] [Rievaulx—Yks] Be slow at coming to the point; given to circumlocution.

carries his coals round by Richmond to sell at Barnard Castle Of one whose style of talking is indirect and irrelevant.

wide as Rimsid Moor [NhB]

all roads lead to Rome [1391] When many varied skills and efforts have a single purpose; when a variety of thinkers are converging on a common problem.

a man may speer the gate [ask the way] to Rome (But it does not follow that he intends to go there.)

mony ane speers the gate they ken fu’ weel [sSc] Of shy, diffident folk, and those who seek needlessly to confirm what they already know.

rank as the Roodee [=Rood-eye, Chester race-course, a fertile field—Chs] Very rich.

all on one side like Rooden Lane (The village is on one side of the road and Heaton Park wall on the other.)

everyone cannot live at Rotheras [a luxurious mansion near Hereford: 1659] In answer to the over-ambitious.

a Royston horse and a Cambridge MA give way to none [1662] (The Royston malt was sent to London by heavily laden horses who merited the right of way.)

like Ruan, don’t know and won’t be told [Cor]

plain as Salisbury (Not merely a pun; the spire is visible from afar.)

Scarborough warning [1546] No warning, but a bad shock. (Possibly from the occasion in 1557 when Thomas Stafford entered the town and occupied the castle before the townsfolk even knew of his coming, although as early as 1546 robbers were summarily dealt with.)

fause [crafty, shrewd—nEng] as a Scot

doa Sheffield Run away.

all in together like the folk at Shields [NhB 1846]

for a full hour by Shrewsbury clock [a most reliable clock in the C16] It was regularly cited to lend weight to exaggerated or improbable claims as to length of time.

‘We rose both at an instant, and fought a long houre by Shrewesburie clocke’ [Shaks, *Hy VI* V. iv—1597].

go through Shrubbs’s copse [Wil] Pass through adversity.

a Skairsburn/Skyreburn [Gall] warning [Sc] No warning at all (it floods so suddenly, rising from Cairnsmore).

Stepney [Street in Llanelli was the place of manufacture of spare wheels with tyres capable of being quickly fitted over the damaged one] A replacement, reserve, second-best generally.

in and out like a Surrey lane

all on one side, like Takeley Street [Ess] (The cottages are all on one side of the road, and the squire’s park on the other.)

in and out, like Toton Brook [NhP]

that’s me and my dogs at Tow Law [the uplands between Wolsingham and Satley—Dur] That’s as far as I’m going; I will concede no more.

ride to Turra [=Turriff in Banff, a village noted for merriment] Be in high glee [nSc].

Vermont charity [Amer] Only sympathy.
he is a Walberswick whisperer; you may hear him over to Southwold [two seaport towns on opposite sides of the River Blyth, and a mile apart]

give him Washington [Dur: NCy] Do the work for him quickly and roughly.

come home by Weeping Cross [1564] (Several places are so-named as far back as c.1500, usually at cross-roads where there had been a cross erected either for penitents to make their devotions or where the bearers carrying a corpse could rest their burden.) Be sadly disappointed, fail dismally.

crooked as Wembury steeple [=Wybunbury—Chs]
crooked as Weston Brook [St Neots, Bdf]
shine like Worcester against Gloucester
worse and worse, like Workington clerk [Cum]
all friends round the Wrekin [Shr 1706] All are friends round here! (Often as a toast.)
go all round the Wrekin to get to the Arkell Go to unnecessary lengths to do or say something.
go Yorkshire [Yks] Each paying their share of the expenses.
Yorkshire man Fly drowned in ale [Lin].
Yorkshire oyster Egg [sLan].
a Yorkshire way-bit [=wee bit] Longer than a mile. (The habit of northern rustics was to answer ‘A mile and a way-bit’, by which they meant two or three miles. Hence, a Yorkshire mile [Lan Lin]=more than a mile.)

G.8b In town

eavesdrop [1606] (From the trick of standing within the ‘eavesdrop’ of a house to listen to conversation while ostensibly sheltering from a shower.)
welcome as a back-scratcher in a doss-house

G.9a Fords

take the ford as you find it [1575] Accept the inevitable; do not prejudge.
roose [praise—Sc nEng] the ford as you find it Judge a thing on its merits and your own experience, not on hearsay.
the river is no wider from this side or the other [Ire] Little to choose between them.
cross the stream where it is ebbest [shallowest—Sc Nhb n, w&midEng: 1603] Adapt yourself to circumstances; make the best use of opportunities.
wade t’ water at shauldisht [=shallowest—Sc wYks neLan] Tackle difficulties in the easiest way (As/from the above.)
wade in/into—an opponent, task etc. [Amer 1863] Tackle vigorously and without hesitation.

wade through [1756] Read laboriously.
run over shoes Get heavily in debt.
over the shoes in…[1579] Deeply involved, immersed in.
over shoes, over boots [1615] Undeterred; no half-measures; may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.
knee-deep in… Deeply involved in; committed to; preoccupied with.
better return from the middle of the ford than drown in the flood [Ire] Withdraw from a risk betimes.
never praise a ford till you get over Don’t rejoice too soon.
he who has crossed the ford knows how deep it is [Ind] Troubles are only fully understood by those who have been through them.

G.9b Stepping stones

stepping stones [1653] Means to an end; necessary preliminary; jobs taken mainly for their prospects.

stand on stepping stones [Sc] Hesitate, especially on trifling grounds; make cautious advance.
hippinable [<hippin=stepping stone—wYks] Crossable, passable generally.

G.9c Bridges

pontifex [<Lat pons=bridge+facere= make] The priest, bishop or pope who makes a bridge for people between earth and heaven. Although the derivation [<Osco-Umbrian puntis=propitiatory offering] is historically probable, the C19 etymologists were true metaphors in deriving it from pons. The Celts have a saying ‘He who would be chief, let him be your bridge’. The Imperator of Rome was also Pontifex Maximus. (See also A.K.Coomaraswamy, Doña Luisa, ‘The Perilous Bridge of Welfare’, HJAS (1944) VIII, pp. 196–213.)

bridge/span the centuries, generations, years Make a link between what time has sundered.
bridge passage A musical connection between two movements or parts of the same work.
brIDING loan One covering a short period while other funds are being raised.
go to the bridge with someone [Miss] Support, befriend, stand by them.
don’t cross the bridge till you come to it [1850] Don’t anticipate trouble; don’t worry about things that may never happen.
beside the bridge Gone astray, off the track.
let every man praise the bridge he goes over [1678] Be loyal to his own people; faithful to his own religion.
make a bridge of his nose [wYks] Pass over him in climbing to advancement; miss him out when passing the bottle round the company.
water under the bridge [1927] The irrevocable past (best forgotten, or at least not discussed).
women and bridges always lack [need] mending (In the former case, cosmetics or adjustment of dress.)
Forth Bridge job [later C20] A never-ending task; continuous employment. (The painting of the Firth of Forth bridge took so long that by the time the painters reached one end, the other needed repainting.)

G.10a Across country

go astray [1535] Depart from the right way, morally or socially; often of men periodically but not permanently unfaithful to their wives [nEng].

planet [<_Gk πλάνης=wanderer]
ramble/wander in mind Act, speak or think disjointedly and incoherently, as in madness; babble in sleep or delirium.

obvious [<_Lat ob-via=directly in the way]
obviate [<_Lat obviare=to meet in the way, prevent]
aberrant [<_Lat ab-errare=wander off the way]
guide (v) Lead someone into correct ways of thought and behaviour.

misguided [1659] Misled, mistaken, often self-deluded (the opposite of guide, above).
in the steps of…[1240] Following their tradition; continuing their work.
tread in…’s footsteps Follow…’s tradition, example; do as…did.

footprint The area of smooth water left by the flukes of a passing whale.
retrace your steps [1839] Go over the same argument; follow a person or series back in order to trace an error.

run over—the alternatives, possibilities etc. Recapitulate briefly; rehearse quickly what has previously been considered at length; review mentally.

know where you stand [1950] Your legal position (as in trespassing).
on the wrong track [1889] Following the wrong line of enquiry; with a mistaken objective.

off the track. Mistaken; having digressed from the subject.
on an unknown path it is better to be slow [Ire Miss] Don’t take risks with the unknown.

devious [<_Lat de-via=off the road] Of those who get their way by roundabout, underhand and crafty methods; of clever but unorthodox schemers.

deviate from… Go aside from regular accepted practice. (As/from the above.)

previous [<_Lat praevia=having travelled the road before]
go off the beaten track Depart from the usual course, practice; act unconventionally.

the beaten way The well-used, frequented and accepted practice of many. ‘Tread the
ten track’=conform.

go out of my way to…[1748] Take exceptional trouble or pains to act, usually on
another’s behalf.

put yourself out (of the way) to… Go to trouble and inconvenience to…
go the extra mile [Amer] Make a special effort; do more than is strictly needed;
persevere. [See also Matt v.41]
don’t leave the highway for the short cut [Ire] Don’t desert the best way for short-
term advantage.
short-cut to… Quick method.
unswerving—loyalty, devotion etc. Continuing true and undeflected.
strike out Make a new start; go in a different direction. (Originally the full phrase ran
‘strike out new paths for yourself’.)
eyes bright as morning dew [Som]
fresh as a dewy field
dew-beater [Hrf EAn Wil Hmp] Awkward walker (with large, clumsy feet).
dew-licker [wYks] An extraordinary time or event.
gang/go/take to the bent [=bennet grass—Sc] Abscond, take refuge on the moors.
follow your nose [1650] Leave the route to chance or instinct.
visible Prominent; known to the public.
as far as the eye can reach [1667]
cover more ground than Burke and Wills [two explorers who crossed Australia
from north to south, but died on the return journey]

horizon (n) [1681] Furthest limit of mental scope; experience; involvement.
on the horizon In prospect, not too far distant.
have a low horizon Have little ambition.
landscape Situation, environment generally.
it sticks out a mile Is very obvious, in spite of attempts to conceal it.
see it coming a mile off Recognise, well in advance, that an event is inevitable.
within a mile of an oak Saucy reply in lieu of more exact information.
have but a mile to midsummer [c. 1465] (sc. midsummer madness) Be nearly mad.
hedge (v) Prevaricate; avoid definite commitment; go aside from the direct way (as a
walker would go round by the hedge or edge instead of straight across the field).
do not walk in the mud when there is a dry path [III] Do not take the worse
alternative.
every path has a puddle [1640] There is always some disadvantage.
thin as puddle [wYks] Of a liquid food.
splatter [splashing of mud or water] Outcry, hubbub.
stumble across/on…[1555] Discover by chance.
hardly able to stride over a straw [nYks] Very poorly, feeble.
stumble at a straw and leap over a block/ bink [bench—Sc: 1526] Surmount the
large obstacle, but come to grief over the lesser difficulty; on the illogicality of scruples.
offend [<Lat offendere=stumble, strike your toes against] Blunder; commit an offence. (The Romans considered it an ill omen to stumble at the start of an important journey, hence the tradition of carrying the bride over the threshold.)

he that stumbles two times at one stone deserves to break his shins [1580]

the stone that lies not in your gate/way breaks not your toe [1721] Do not worry about obstacles you might not encounter; no need to meddle in other folk’s affairs.

near as a snapper [false step, stumble—Sc Yks]
tumble to…[1851] Comprehend, perceive.
take a tumble to…[Amer] Realise the facts, the truth about someone—often yourself.
tumble—in value
put your foot in it Make a faux pas.
fal[l into—sin, the mistake of, danger etc. Allow yourself to succumb to…

he that looked at the stars fell in the dike, but he that looked on the ground found a purse He that seeks heavenly riches will have troubles on earth, but he that has humble ideas may well obtain wealth on earth. (Urging the practical against the idealistic.)

better go around than fall into the ditch [Can Amer] It is better to take trouble than to get into trouble.
in a sheugh [ditch, furrow, ravine—Sc Ire Nhb] In a difficulty.
a way round it An indirect solution to the problem; an overcoming of the difficulty by means not immediately obvious.

G.10b Stiles

it’s no good lifting your leg before you come to the stile Don’t be premature; there is a right time for everything. (See also G.9c, don’t cross the bridge…)

you would be over the stile before you come to it [1546] (As/from the above.)
go over the stile or through the gate [1678] Make up your mind and do it, one way or another.

leap over the hedge before you come to the stile [1553] Be excessively hasty; make work difficult by being too hasty.
by hedge or by stile By one way if not the other.
up/to meets with him to gap or to stile [Dev] Be equal with him—variously.

G.10c Gates

gateway Way out of a computer operation through which you can gain access to other computer areas, sometimes in other computers; computer set-up that translates between two different protocols or that gives access to another system [1990s].
one plank short of a gate [Lan] Brainless, not ‘all there’.
fond [daft] as a gate/gat [Cum Yks]/yat [Yks]
thin as a gate [Cor]
daft/fond as a yat (that opens both ways)/yett [Nhb]/yett on a windy day [Sc]
deaf [Yks]/plain as a yat-stoop [gate-post—nYks Cum]
still as a yat-stump [gate-post—Lan]
grave as an old gate-post
so moving it would bring an ache to the heart of a gate-post
gate-post singing [seWor] Where several sing different songs at the same time.
gate and stoop [nwLin] Totally, entirely.
pintle [the gate-spoke that goes into the hole in the stoop—Cum Lan] Penis.
hank [the loop of string, rope or withy used to tie hurdles and fasten gates]
Restraining influence, curb, hold over a person.

have a hank on/over…[Sc Yks Hrf Glo Som Ken Hmp Dev] Have the advantage over; have in trouble. ‘…the Serving men, who got a hank upon them they could hardly after clawe off’ [J.Aubrey, Brief Lives—Sir J.Danvers—c.1690].

have/hold/keep the hank in your own hand [Sc Uls Cum Yks] Retain control; hold your own; do the hard part of the work yourself.
in a hank [Yks] In trouble, confusion.
get into a hank [naut] Become angry.
break the hank Overcome the main difficulty.
little fields have big gates Of small women who have many (large) children.
open the gate for/to… Provide facility, opportunity.
if you don’t like my gate, don’t swing on it [Ont] You don’t have to criticise what need not concern you.

one gate for another! (A country horseman’s reminder to the Earl of Rutland that he had opened the previous gate.) It’s your turn now!

sound like the sneck of Pardshaw yat [Cum] Of a smacking loud kiss. (Pardshaw is between Lamplugh and Cockermouth.)
gate’s shut [Aus] Not talking.

get your tail in a gate [Amer] Get into a painful or perilous plight.

G.11 Weather

go down the weather Fare badly; go bankrupt.
go up the weather Prosper.
set fair With settled and favourable prospects (as with a spell of fine weather when the barometer reading is high and steady in the FAIR arc on the dial).
face the sun but turn your back on the storm [Ire] Be positive, optimistic.
under the weather [1850] Ailing somewhat.
like foul weather, you come unsent for [Sc]
winter wind/weather and women’s thoughts change oft [C15]
looks like being a wet weekend When a girl’s period falls at a weekend.
keep out of the rain Keep out of trouble [Aus].
knows enough/wit enough to come in out of the rain [1580] Can be relied on to cope with situations as they arise; will act prudently. Often as ‘has not the brains to come in out of the rain’.

weatherpeg Nose [Lan].

climate [1611] Prevailing state, trend, not necessarily permanent—‘climate of opinion’, ‘political climate’ etc.

G.12a Dawn

fresh as the dawn

begin to see daylight [1690] Arrive at the solution to the problem or mystery; come to understand what was perplexing you.

lightening [1584] That resuscitation of spirits that sometimes occurs just before death.

a false dawn Hopeful signs, as when success comes out of failure or a bad character reforms—but then the improvement is not maintained.

hail/worship the rising sun [1553] Curry favour with a new authority.

dawn on…[1852] Receive a sudden enlightenment; begin to realise.

see the light [1812] Be converted; be persuaded of the error of your ways.

G.12b Sunshine

brave [splendid, handsome: Nrf 1627] honest as the sun

bright/clear/plain as (a/the) day/noonday/ sun (at noonday)

bright as the sun on a summer’s day

sunny—face, disposition etc. Happy, genial.

like the sun on the hilltop, but a thistle on the hearth [Ire] Of one who is jovial at work, but bad-tempered at home.

let daylight/sunlight into…[Amer] Clarify; increase our knowledge and understanding of.

see the light of day Be born; come into existence—generally.

not see the light of day to him [Sc] See no fault in him (being so partial that the very daylight is eclipsed).

as long as today and tomorn [Craven, wYks]/ tomorrow Of a narrative, account etc.

as honest a man as ever the sun shone on

sunshine law [Amer] One providing for public access to meetings.

sunbeam Cheerful, warm-hearted girl.

warm as sunbeams
they that walk in the sun will be tanned at last [1553] Of anything assimilated without effort, merely by prolonged exposure to it; those who take risks will be caught in the end.

bask in...[1791] Passively enjoy—popularity, glory etc.
sun-burnt Deep-dyed, palpable—lie etc. [Lan].
a place in the sun [1688] A share in the prosperity or power; favourable situation.
the sun shines on both sides of the hedge Nature is impartial and luck indiscriminate.
the sun does not shine on both sides of the hedge at once [1879] Everyone cannot prosper all the time.
the sun will be on our side of the hedge yet We too will succeed; our luck will change.
on the sunny side of the hedge In luck, prospering.
sunny side [1831] The better, more hopeful side. ‘The sunny side of forty’=under forty years old.
sunny side of the wall The place where life treats you better. (See also E.30i.)
sunny side up! Fry my egg on one side only.
when the sun is highest he casts the least shadow The one in chief authority need be the least oppressive.
no sunshine without some shadow No good is unalloyed.
stars are not seen by sunshine No one notices lesser creatures when the main attraction is present.
in the mirlygoes/mirglygoes [dazzle, as of sunlight on water or snow—Sc] Seeing indistinctly; imagining what is not there.

G.12c Noon

wakken [wide awake, alert] as noontide [sLan]
zenith—of power, prosperity, felicity etc. [1611] Peak, culmination.

G.12d The sun, a star

sun and planet A gearing system converting reciprocating to rotary motion.
orb [1609] Sphere, region of activity, domain. (After the C16 version of the solar system where the planets moved in orbs or hollow spheres.)
there are spots even on the sun [1732] Faults even in the most eminent.
like fire-slaught [the northern lights] flisking [whisking, frisking, leaping] hither-thither [Sc]
gleam [1711]/glimmer [1837]/ray [1634]—of hope, comfort etc. Something bright but slight, a transient or temporary lightening of the gloom, albeit intermittently.
ray of sunshine A happy personality, effective in cheering up others.
spectrum Range, gamut. A broad spectrum = a wide range.
penumbra The hazy, twilit area between, say, truth and falsehood, or other indistinct areas between extremes. (From the partial shadow in annular eclipses of the sun.)

g.12e Sunset

go west [WW1] Disappear; be ruined; die.
his sun is set He is past his best; his prosperity is over; the end of his life is near.
men shut their doors against a setting sun [See Shaks, Timon I. ii—1609] Ignore, reject someone who is declining or out of favour.
the evening brings a’ hame [Sc NY] The latter part of life for reconciliations.
sunset industry, years etc. Decaying, declining.
sunset law [Amer] One providing for a specific termination or periodic review.
at the end of the day [1970s] When everything has been taken into account; in the final analysis.

G.12f Sky

blue as the sky
sky-high
the sky’s the limit [1920] There are no restrictions; you may take/do as many as you like/ can.
skyscraper Many-storeyed building, so tall as to seem to scrape the sky.
up in the lift [sky—Sc Ire nEng] Elated.
if the sky falls we shall catch larks A humorous reassurance to someone who is worrying about an unlikely event; a dismissal of an extravagant hypothesis. ‘We shall kacche many larkis whan hevene doith falle’ [Idley, Instr. 2.B.1181—c.1450].
maybe the lift will fall and smoor the laverocks [=smother the larks—Sc Ire n&Eng] In ridicule of an unlikely proposition or frivolous excuse; to pessimists who fear unlikely evils; optimistically suggesting that good could come even out of disaster. ‘What if the lift fall, then ye may gather laverocks.’
G.13a Breezes

breezy  Brisk and fresh—style or manner.

G.13b Wind

like the wind  Swiftly and powerfully.

like a sack of wind  [Ire 1827] (As above.)

free/kittle  [variable, uncertain—wSom]/wavering  [c.1500]/wild  [Calif]/wroth  [C14]

as the wind

in the guts of the wind  Fully exposed to the wind.

words are wind  (going beyond recall, and as liable to change)

like wind in a bottle  Full of empty talk and futile noise.

the wind sits in that quarter  That is the way things are going; we know what to expect.

the wind keeps not always in one quarter  [1579] You cannot expect things to continue without change.

woman’s mind and winter wind change oft  [C15]

whiffle (v) [=of a wind—blow here and there, veer and shift about, blow in gusts; also= blow, puff and drive objects; also=flutter and drift about as if blown by a whiffling wind—passim] Be evasive, vacillate, flit about aimlessly.

whiffle-minded  Fickle, easily persuaded, of a wandering, unstable disposition. (As/from the above.)


G.13c In the wind

cut the wind  Perform sword-drill.

cast stones against the wind  [1541] A senseless labour.

words and feathers are tossed by the wind  (Both are light and erratic.)

speak to/beat the wind  Waste time and effort.

sniff the wind  Gauge the situation before taking action.

throw straws against the wind  Contend futilely.

straws in the wind  [1654] Significant trifles; hints of coming events.
a straw shows/to show which way the wind blows [1689] From trifles we may learn the trend of events.
pluck the grass to know which way the wind sits Interpret the signs of the times.

I should be still Plucking the grasse to know where sits the wind,
[Shaks, Merchant I. i—1596]

what comes with the wind will go with the water [Sc] Easy come, easy go.

G.13d Winds blowing

great winds blow upon high hills [c. 1200] Prominent people are open to severest censure; lowly folk lead a less violent life.

shell [quick, keen—Sc Ire nEng] as the north wind [Gall]
as weel try to stop the north wind coming through the glens o’ Foudland [Abd] Of a difficult proposition.

like wind in a dike [Lakel] With great speed.
it’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good [1546] There is benefit to someone in every happening or disaster.
ill wind [Abd] Slander.
withering look, contempt etc. So hostile or scornful, you might expect the object to wither as before a scorching wind.

bluster [1535] Protest or threaten loudly; hector. (Like a blustering wind.)
gusts—of passion etc. Turbulent outbursts.
flurry Sudden on-rush—of visitors, activity, emotion etc.
flaw [gust of stormy wind—Sc Ire] Rage, passion [Ags].
fall a gussock [gust of wind—EAn] Fall violently.
cast/fling/scatter to the winds [1667] Waste words, advice etc., cast away where they will do no good.

gone with the wind Departed without trace (as if blown away by the wind).
kick up/make/raise a stour [shower of dust, chaff, snow etc.—Sc nEng] Make a disturbance [Sc Nhb wYks Som Dev].
put him into a stour Put him out of temper.
blow/cast/throw stour in his eye Impose upon by false appearance.
stand his/her stour [Abd] Endure a reproof from them.
he that blaws in the stour fills his ain een [Sc] Making trouble or a disturbance cannot but harm yourself.

get the stour out of your eyes [Gall] Cease to be deceived by appearances.
G.13e Storms (see also D.5)

gales—of laughter etc. Violent outbursts.
- come in like a gale of wind Of a blustering, boisterous entry.
- bring a storm about your ears Attract a violent upsurge of hostility or criticism against yourself.
- storm-centre Place where the crisis, violence, agitation etc. is concentrated.
- welcome as a storm [1583]
- ...up a storm [Amer 1953] With zeal, energy and to good effect; with great concentration, care and competence.
- free as a hurricane
- go to the lew [Dev] Go bankrupt (and seek the shelter of the bankruptcy laws).

G.14a Air

common as the/light as air
- in the air/hanging in the air Not finally settled, unfinished, uncertain.
- tread/walk on air [1874] Be elated, jubilant.
- floating on clouds [Amer] Deluded, through trusting in mere hopes and dreams.
- head in the air [1848]/clouds [1649] Out of touch with reality; a dreamer; abstracted.
- in the clouds Imaginary, unreal, not ‘of this world’.
- touch ground Return to reality, to where it can be a practical possibility. ‘Which of these ideas touch ground for you?’

G.14b Atmosphere, fog

atmosphere [1797] Mental or moral environment; these also in a book or work of art.
- evaporate [1631] Disperse, disappear without leaving anything to show for it—of money, ideas, intentions, enthusiasm etc.
- haze [1797] Mental vagueness.
- vague as a fog [Amer] Of one whose utterances are so nebulous and indefinite that you—cannot make out their drift.
- murky Of situations beset by vague uncertainty difficult to assess, evaluate.
- a fog cannot be dispelled with a fan Your means, method are inadequate.
- not the foggiest idea! Not even a faint idea (from the meaning of foggy as dim, faint).
- as much chance as plaiting fog!
- die in a fog [Chs] Give up a task in despair.
smog [a fog compounded of domestic and industrial smoke] State of confusion, deliberate obscurity.
nebulous [1831] Vague, insubstantial, hazy (like shapes in a mist glimpsed indistinctly).

G.14c Cloud

cloud (n) [1430] Cause of misery, gloom etc.
cloud of words Confusing talk.
cloud of grief Enveloping sorrow.
cloud of witnesses, insects etc. An innumerable body [see Heb xii.1].
behind a cloud [Stf Nhp] Of one whose reputation has been besmirched.
under a cloud [c.1500] Out of luck or favour; discredited, in disgrace.
overcloud (v) Throw a gloom over, spoil the enjoyment of.
shady—character Furtive and untrustworthy (preferring obscurity so as to be unobserved).
in the shade [Nhp War] With a stain on their character.
mirked [Sc E&SCy] Overcast in mind, saddened; sullied.
all clouds bring not rain [1584] Not all threats are fulfilled.
there is often great darkness but little rain [Ire] Of unjustified despair.
pass away like a shadow/summer cloud
after black clouds, clear weather After a quarrel, reconciliation; after anger, regret.
unclouded mind, relationship etc. [1641] Unworried, untroubled.
one cloud is enough to eclipse all the sun The good is all too easily obscured by the bad.
behind the clouds the sun is shining [Minn Calif] Never despair.
one cloud on the horizon Sole disturbing feature; anxiety for the future.
gathering clouds Ever-increasing signs of approaching trouble.
few days pass without some clouds Troubles return all too soon.
brake in the clouds/skies Sign or hope of an improvement.
cloudbuster [Amer] In baseball, a very high fly-ball.

G.14d Rain

rain (n)—of ashes, blood, bullets, kisses etc. A superfluity descending upon one place or person.
rain/shower (v)—benefits, blows, invitations etc.—on… Convey an over-abundance to…
right as rain [1894]
as sure as God made rain [Lin]
keep/save it for a rainy day [c. 1566] Against future need.
many drops make a shower The contribution of many small parts achieves a great result.
soft as showers
I didn’t come down in the last shower! [Aus] I am not as gullible or inexperienced as you assume.
when the wind is still the shower falls soft [Sc] A quiet person can do more good than a violent.
small rain lays a great dust [1670] By the combination of many small parts is a great work accomplished; a little sorrow effaces much bliss.
for a morning rain leave not your journey Do not be discouraged from a great work by a small hindrance.
it never rains but it pours [1726] Troubles, when they come, bring others with them.
to see it rain is better than to be in it Witness trouble rather than suffer it.
walk between the raindrops Lead a life fraught with risks.
come rain or shine Regardless of circumstances, in all conditions.
after rain, sunshine Things improve after their worst.
after sharpe shoures moste shene is þe sonne [W.Langland, Piers the Plowman—1377]
the brightest sunshine is after the rain [Ire] Reconciliation or restoration of harmony brings all the greater happiness.
rainbow [1839] Wide variety or range of interrelated things.
rainbow [Aus] Someone arriving after the trouble is over.
bent/crooked as a rainbow [NC Tenn Calif sAmer]
burp a rainbow [Aus] Vomit (because of all the colours in it).

G.14e Flooding

cataclysm [<Gk κατακλυσμός =inundation]
deluge (n and v)—(of) words, papers etc. [1555] An/in overwhelming quantity.
flood (n)—of letters, enquiries etc. [C19] Exceptionally large influx.
awash with… Overwhelmed by, having more than you need of…

G.15a Lightning

lightning/chain-lightning [Amer] Strong, low-grade alcoholic drink. (So-called because of its strength and speed of effect.)
so steep that chain-lightning couldn’t go down ‘em ‘thout putting the shoe on [braking—Amer]
quick/sharp/sudden as lightning; lightning speed
like/quick as a streak of (greased) lightning Unimaginably fast.
quick as a flash/in a flash
glistered [flashed, gleamed, shone out] like lightning [Lan]
Jewish lightning [Amer] The mysterious cause of fires on which insurance claims can be made.
eyes flash—defiance, anger etc. When a sudden shining shows in the eyes (as if of a flash of lightning reflected in them).
fire-flaught (n) [flash of lightning/northern lights/meteor—Sc nYks] Fiery, hot-tempered person [nYks].
go like a fire-flaught [Sc nYks]
lightning strikes the tallest trees Disaster befalls the greatest.
lightning never strikes the same place twice The same blow never falls on the same person again.
draw down on… Attract to a person (as metal attracts the electricity). ‘Drew down his father’s wrath on him.’
fulminate against… Condemn; criticise harshly [<Lat fulmen=lightning, thunderbolt].
escape the thunder and fall into the lightning Encounter a worse fate than the one you are trying to avoid.

**G.15b Thunder**

black/dour [hard, stern, sullen—wYks]/grue [terrible, grim, glowering—Yks; cold, raw, thick—Cum] as thunder
black/glum as a thundercloud
face as grue as (a) thunder(-cloud) [Yks]
highly charged—atmosphere, situation etc. Full of excitement, emotion (as are thunder clouds with a build-up of electricity).
look as foul as thunder [wYks] Look grim and menacing.
wild as winter thunder [Cum] Unruly, ungovernable.
he that’s feared of a fart should never hear thunder [Sc] Do not expect a lot from one who cannot cope with a little.
thunderbolt [1559] Punitive decree; sudden disaster, threat.
smooth as an oiled thunderbolt
brutum fulmen [<Lat=senseless thunderbolt] Empty threat, mere noise.
thunderclap Unwelcome turn of events or piece of news.
thunder (n)—of applause/thunderous Loud and resounding.
thunderstruck [1613] Stunned, confounded by an event or discovery.
thunder against Denounce furiously, vehemently.
detonate [\textit{<\textit{Lat de-tonare}}=thunder down]

useless as a dry thunderstorm [Aus]

rumble on Continue, disquietingly, after it might have been expected to be over and gone. (Thunderstorms often seem to threaten to return, and sometimes do so.)

sultry Of a woman who gives the impression of pent-up sexual passion.

clear the air [1380] Remove tensions, misunderstandings, suspicions, an oppressive atmosphere (just as a thunderstorm seems to clear the air of close, sultry conditions).

G.16a Cold weather

snell [sharp, keen, cold—Sc Ire nEng] Caustic, sarcastic, austere.

snide [cold, cutting (of weather)—Lin] Slyly sarcastic.

G.16b Snow

snow (n) Washed linen spread out on the hedge; hence, snow-dropper/snow-gatherer =linen-thief.

snow (v) [Amer Aus] Shower with persuasive arguments, fool with plausible talk; persuade to a dubious cause or conclusion (as in snowing under).

white as snow/driven snow/drip [driven snow—Cum Wm Yks Lan nLin]

chaste as untrodden snow

snowed under with work, votes, orders etc. [Amer 1880] Having an oppressive overabundance of something.

snowed in Under the influence of drugs to the point of helplessness (from the isolation thus induced).

rain blue snow Do the impossible.

snow again! Please repeat (I didn’t get your drift!).

tell me it snows! [1585] You do not need to tell me, I can see for myself.

it’s snowing down south [Aus] Your slip is showing.

snowstorm Visual effect of interference on the TV screen.

like snow off a dike [wall—Per Fif Ayr Gall nIre Nhb] Quickly. The blankets slippit doon like snow off a dike’ [Lnk]. Also of families that have rapidly died out.

go like snow off a rope Disappear rapidly.

dribbling like a barrel of snow [Cor] Of a running nose.

soft as snow on the sea
G.16c Hail, ice and frost

hail (n) [1597] Of blows, bullets etc.—very many, and in quick succession.

thick as hail

hard as hailstones ‘His nose would split a hailstone’ [Cum]—of a sharp-featured man.

cold/sliddery [slippery—Sc Nhbl Cum Yks Lan Lei War Dev Cor] as ice
cold as a cockabell [=cock-bell, icicle—Cor]/ conkerbill [Nfld NS NB]/ice-shackle [wYks]/ ice-shockle [Wm]/ice-shoggle [Nhp]/ickles [Lan Nhp] (These latter are local names for icicles throughout Scotland and northern England.)
brack [=broke] like ice-shoggles [Dur]
snapped the shaft o’ a besom clean in two wi’ his teeth, as easy as if it had been a hickle [=icicle—nEng Lei Shr Nhp War]
teeth chattering like cankervells [icicles—Som]
icy tones, look etc. [1593] Coldly hostile or disapproving.
sliddery Sly, deceitful [Sc].
slippy Unreliable.
a man never appreciates ashes till he slips on the ice [Miss]
on slippery ground In difficulties, all too liable to a downfall.
freeze (v) [1922] Hold at a fixed level—wages, prices, dividends, military movements etc.; make assets unrealizable.
freeze on to—an idea, object etc. Hold fast (as frozen water does).
frozen assets etc. Inaccessible.
frost (n) [Amer] Dismal failure; chilly reception.
born in a frost [wYks] Dull of apprehension.
find a frost Experience the bad results of an action.
shine like frost in the moonlight
thaw (v [1582] and n [1848]) Relax(ing of) tensions; improve(ment of) relations after a period of hostility; lessen(ing of) harshness; become(ing) more genial.
farewell frost! Good riddance! No regrets!
frost and fraud both end in foul
look like the break-up of a hard winter [Calif] In a mess.
melt away [1225] Diminish, soon disappear.

G.17 Night

twilight Imperfect enlightenment.
twilight homes [1934] Sanctuaries where old folk and animals can spend their last days in peace and comfort.
Celtic twilight That period of retrospection to, but decline from, the former glories of Celtic civilisation in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Cornwall and the Isle of Man. (The title of W.B. Yeats’ collection of Irish folk-tales.)

benighted [1610] In moral or intellectual darkness; in the gloom of sorrow.

black/close/secret [1602]/silent as night
black as midnight
dark as a (Yule) midnight
in the dark In ignorance.

feel your way [1818] Proceed cautiously in a tricky situation, by stages and with reappraisals (as if groping forward in the dark).

he that gropes in the dark finds that he would not [1670] A warning to those who pry into matters best left undisturbed.

keep it dark [1885] Keep it secret.

overnight [1939] Instantly acquired, achieved rapidly—‘an overnight reputation, popularity etc.’

G.18a Stars

stardust Idealism that tends to obscure reality; illusory dazzle—‘has stardust in her eyes’.

star/starn o’ th’ ee [=star of the eye—Sc] Pupil of the eye.

starry-eyed [1936] Idealistic, often unrealistically; romantic; politically naïve—because not yet disillusioned.

looking up all the time like a pilcher [= pilchard] in a star(ry)-gazy pie [pie with fish heads staring up out of the pastry—Cor,esp.-Mousehole]

you can’t walk and look at the stars if you have a stone in your shoe [III] Even a small personal irritation will distract a person from important, higher matters.

the stars [destiny] make no noise
two stars do not keep their motion in one sphere Two outstanding leaders will not cooperate. [See Shaks, Hy IVi V. iv—1597]

I’ll see the stars gang withershins first! [Sc]Never!

constellation Group of involved or likeminded people.
galaxy Brilliant gathering.

fight space with a hairpin Try the impossible.

above/beyond the stars Very highly, to excess. ‘Praise beyond the stars.’
hitch your wagon to a star Avail yourself of powers higher than your own.
meteoric Swift and brilliant, even though brief—often of a career.
overb (n) Ordained range, sphere, environment.
the moon is a moon whether it shine or not A comment on the (temporary) changes in a person’s reputation.

moon (v [1968] and n [1756]) (Show the) bare buttocks—as an insult or provocation.
(From the resemblance to the moon of those smooth white prominences.)

moon-eyed [swLin] Looking askance.

changeable as the moon

round as the full moon

mild as a moonbeam

hang the moon Be very important.

tak the gow [halo round the moon—Ags] Do a moonlight flit (see below).

moonlight (v) [1957] Do casual or extra work without declaring the earnings to the tax office.

moonshine Insubstantial, airy nonsense; visionary ideas; illusions.

bag of moonshine [Nhp War] (As/from the above.)

moonshine in the water Nothing of importance or significance; illusion.

put in hope of the moone shone in the water

[Paston Letter 1468 Nrf]

gravitate towards…[1673] Be drawn, attracted towards.

wane/be on the wane Decrease, decline, weaken generally. Of powers, especially after a period of gradual increase.

wax and wane Used generally of alternate increase and decrease.

half-moon spectacles For reading (from their shape).

half-moons The cuticles of finger and toe nails.

eclipse (v) [1581] Outshine, vanquish, put into comparative oblivion.

eclipse (n) [C20] Elimination, defeat—often in sport.

under an eclipse In temporary obscurity.

above/beyond the moon Extravagantly. ‘To cast beyond the moon’ [1516]=to guess wildly; be outrageously ambitious.

over the moon [1833] Rejoicing immoderately, highly delighted.

either over the moon or down in the midden [NCy] Of folk subject to extremes of mood.

he dotes on his midden and thinks it the moon [Ant] Of anyone infatuated or self-deluded.

she’ll look at the moon till she fall in the midden Of a woman over-particular about whom she will marry. (See also E.13d.)

he’ll stare at the moon till he fall in the midden Of a visionary.

he will shoot higher that shoots at the moon than he that shoots at the midden, though he never hit the mark [Sc: 1590] To encourage high endeavours.

better aim at the moon than shoot into the well [Ind]

moonlight-and-roses The epitome of extreme sentimentality or romanticism.

do a moonlight flit/walk [1721] Remove without paying debts.
like old Mode of Mobberley, that saw the new moon i’ th’ morning [Chs]
Foolishly gullible.
thinks/believes the moon is made of green cheese Will believe anything.
he’d make you believe the moon’s made of green cheese! To someone over-
credulous.
the moon does not heed the barking of dogs [1591] Of one in a position so high or
glorious that she can disregard criticism or slander.
satellite [1880] Artificial orbiting body projected into space for exploration,
communication or military purposes.

G.18c Earth, a planet

wide as the poles asunder [1830]/poles apart [1917] Very widely separated.
peripheral Not directly associated, at some distance from the centre and from central
issues (like the outer layers of the earth’s atmosphere).
off like a star-shot [shooting star—Cor]
what goes around comes around [Amer] Things like that are bound to occur sooner
or later.
revolve round… Be solely devoted to, controlled by someone.

G.19a Seasons

summer-and-winter (v) [Sc] Needlessly prolong a story by adding detail; take a long
time pondering something.
summer-and-winter (v) [Cum Vmt Ont NY] Know a person long enough to be
thoroughly acquainted.
cold as Christmas
cruel/poor as winter
wintry—smile, expression etc. Cheerless, lacking in warmth or life.
you never died o’ winter yet! [Sc Nhb] You’ll survive; things are not as bad as you
think.
dreaming of a dry summer Wits are wandering.
G.19b Months

December/January and May Age and youth.
   bare as January
   February [Aus] A brigadier (because to be on a charge before a brigadier inevitably meant twenty-eight days’ CB).
   a March sun sticks like a lock of wool
   fresh as April (Because of all the new growth.)
   welcome as May [Som]
   mild as May/a May morn
   green as May
   lazy/long as a day in June [Calif]

G.20a Hills, mountains and their valleys

old as the hills [c. 1500]/Eggardon hill [also Eggan/Aggan—Dor]/the fells [Cum]/Glastonbury Tor [1678]/Pendle Hill Very ancient.
   faraway hills look green [Ont Ohio Ill] On the attraction of the unattainable.
   if there were no fells there’d be no dells [Cum] You cannot have the better without having the worse.
   hill and dale Describing the undulations in the grooves of a record.
   up hill and down dale Taking things as they come; thoroughly, immeasurably [Frf].
   there’s always a hill against a slack Things even themselves out; every advantage is offset by a disadvantage. ‘A hill agen a slack (all Craven through)’ [Lan].
   set hills against slacks [Cum] Equalise by giving and taking.
   go up a gully [Aus] Depart out of the way, into hiding.
   have crossed too many dry gullies/been up too many hard stumps to be taken in by that! [Aus] Spoken by one who has, thanks to experience, seen through a deception.
   valley The hollow where two roofs meet in a depressed angle.
   quim [<Celtic cwm=valley] A woman’s sexual cleft.
   when there’s snow on the mountains, there’s no fruit in the valley [nLan] Too old to have children.
   he that stays in the valley shall never get over the hill [1616] No advancement without initial effort.
   so act in the valley that you need not fear those on the hill [Ont NY] The powerful are powerless against the righteous.
   the vale best discovereth the hill [1597] Learn best by contrasts or opposites.
   hop against the hill [1450] Act futilely; strive against insurmountable obstacles.
   catch on the ground-hop [Cor] Catch unawares.
   a stout heart/stiff shoulder for a stey brae [steep hill—Sc Nhb: 1721] Pith and guts to match the task; courage to tackle hardships.
go up the wooden hill [Oxf] Retire to bed. warsle [proceed with difficulty—Sc Ire nEng] up the brae/the hill Get on in life.

up hill and down brae [Ayr] Relentlessly, ceaselessly

over the hump [mountains on your route—Amer] Over the worst.

get over/up May Hill Survive. Of someone ailing through a cold, trying spring—‘I don’t think he’ll ever get up May Hill’.

standpoint [1836]/viewpoint [1856] Deliberately adopted position determining personal attitudes and opinions.

the higher we rise, the broader the view [Ohio Ill] For those who are promoted or who advance academically, the horizon widens.

he who stands on a hillock is sure to be noticed No privacy in public life.

a whisper in Nora’s ear is louder than a shout from the highest hill [Ire] Gossip travels far.

the top of the hill The age of thirty-five, when you can look backward to the cradle and forward to the grave.

on top of the world [1920] In excellent health and spirits.

peak Reach the maximum in a variable series (from the high point on a graph which often resembles the profile of a mountain peak).

culminate [<Lat culmen=summit, ridge]

beef-/butter-mountain Large accumulated surplus held by Common Market authorities.

make a mountain out of a molehill [1548–9] Exaggerate, fuss, attach undue importance to a matter.

promise mountains and perform molehills [1629] Fall behind expectations.

the old man of the mountain(s) One of ruthless and fanatical ambition. (It was the nickname given to Hasan-ibn-al-Sabbah who founded the Assassins [lit. hashish-eaters] in about 1090, a body of Muslim fanatics who undertook to murder Seljuk leaders and so gave the name to subsequent political murderers.)

the other side of the hill The unknown; subject of speculation; part of an uncertain future.

drive someone over the hill [Amer] Drive them mad, to distraction.

he who wishes to know the road through the mountains must ask those who have already trodden it [Ohio Ind] Take advice from those with experience.

go over the hill [Amer Aus] Desert from your unit.

over the hill [orig. Amer] Past the prime—in ability, health etc.; past the crisis, danger, the worst.

downhill all the way! Easy, quick progress—usually after early difficulties.

go down-broo [=down-brow, downhill—Cum nLan]/down the brae [Dmb]/down the bank [nYks] Fail in health, strength; decline towards death.

go down the hill Grow old.

go downhill fast [1782] Deteriorate rapidly.

if a body be going down the hill, each one will give him a push People will help a man to his ruin.

ding in the howes [=hollows, glens—Sc] Upset the arrangements, render unavailing.

in the howes Depressed.
G.20b Heaths, moors, cliffs and crags

bleak outlook, philosophy etc. Unpromising, cheerless, harsh.

**take to the heather** [Gall] Live as an outlaw. (The heather moors, especially in Scotland, were the only places wild, wide and lonely enough to be the refuge of a hunted man.)

**prominent** [<Lat prominere=jut out] Standing out from others, like a peak above the valley, or a crag or headland from a cliff.

**imminent** [<Lat imminere=lean over, overhang, impend] Standing out from others, like a peak above the valley, or a crag or headland from a cliff.

**impend** [<Lat impendere=hang over] (As above.)

**hang over**... Make an oppressive presence: ‘Doubt hangs over the question.’

**high places have their precipices** [1732] There are dangers to high office.

**on the brink/edge/verge of a precipice** In imminent and extreme danger.

**walk over a cliff** Come to sudden grief.

**craggy** Of a character—rough and unpolished, but homely and reliable.

**arduous** [<Lat arduus=high, steep—hence, hard to climb] Insurmountable difficulty, problem etc. [1696] One that cannot be successfully tackled or overcome.

**echo** (v) Repeat another’s words.

**echo** (n) An obsequious adherent.

**like trying to stop an echo by shouting at it** Of misdirected effort or a misconceived activity.

G.20c Volcanoes and chasms

**volcano** (n) Dangerous situation with an underlying threat of violent outburst; emotions that, if not controlled, could break out into violence.

**hot as a volcano**

**volcanic personality, passions etc.** Explosive, full of latent or suppressed violence.

**live on the brink/edge/verge of the volcano** Live an exciting, extravagant but precarious life; live in dangerous insecurity.

**dance on a volcano** Defy danger.

**sit/sleep/stand on a volcano** Disregard possible dangers.

**erupt** [1595] Burst out violently—of boils, passions, suppressed peoples etc.

**outburst** (n) Passionate, violent and often involuntary release of words, screaming, crying etc.

**petrify** [1771] Paralyse with fear, horror etc.

**extinct volcano** Someone whose powers and energies, once formidable, are now defunct.

**chasm** A wide gap marking differences of feelings, interest or position.
gulf [1656] Division that cannot be crossed, usually between irreconcilable persons, nations, cultures.
abysmal poverty, ignorance etc. [1817] Of extreme depth, immeasurably bad.
look before you leap [1528] Use foresight before acting.
a great leap into the dark [1698] Of death or a rash experiment.

G.20d Unsafe slopes

on the slippery slope Heading for ruin, disaster, disgrace, and with very little chance of escape.
be on dangerous ground Take risks—variously.
avalanche Unexpected and overwhelming onrush.
landslide [Amer 1888] Powerful, irresistible force. (Often for political parties, where a large swing in the voting sweeps them from or into office.)
let things slide Allow events to go their own way; make no attempt to correct a tendency.
slide (n)—in prices, performance etc. Deterioration, falling-off, rapid decline.
backslide (v) Relapse.
backslider One who rejects the principles they formerly held.

G.21a Rocks

firm/steady as a rock Steady, undeviating, completely reliable.
rock-ribbed [Amer 1887] Staunch, resolute, absolutely uncompromising.
rock bottom The solid facts underlying appearances.
rock bottom prices etc. The lowest possible (as in bed rock).
rock-hearted Cruel and unyielding.
granite/granite-headed/granite-hearted Hard and unyielding in character.
impervious—to argument etc. [1650] Allowing no entry (as impervious rocks allow no water to penetrate them).
percolate Of news etc.—filter through a community (as rainwater seeps throughout the strata of permeable rock); penetrate the mind [Amer].
G.21b Stones

blind/cold/dead/deaf/dumb/hard/mute/naked/still as (a) stone
  stone-blind, stone-cold, stone-dead, stone-deaf, stone-naked (As/from the above.)
no more wit than a stone [1601]
dateless as a stone [Lan] Unconscious.
  hard as a cobble [stone]/beck-stone [Cum]/ dornick [=Ir-Gael dornog, small stone—Conn Penn WVir Vir Ind Msri Calif]
  stony—stare, grief etc. Cold, without either life or hope.
  spring/be sprung of (a/the) stone Have no known kin.
  you cannot get blood out of a stone [1580] You cannot obtain a thing from someone who hasn’t got it. Often, too, said of misers who will part with nothing, implying that they are stone-hearted and lack humanity.
  start the stone rolling Start something that could lead to unforeseen, even disastrous consequences.
    roll the stone Discuss the matter.
    stand on a rolling stone Be in a precarious position generally.
    a rolling stone gathers no moss [1362] Someone always on the move acquires no wealth, possessions—or encumbrances!
    rolling stone Wanderer, unsettled person.
    stocks and stones Unfeeling people; idols, gods of wood and stone [Aelfric on Deut xxviii—c.1000].
  constant dripping/dropping wears away a stone Importunity succeeds even with the hardest characters [Ancrene Riwle—c.1200].
  time and patience will wear out stone posts (As/from the above.)
boil/roast [1522]/wash a stone Waste effort.
  went down like a stone Usually of ships that sink quickly.
swim like a stone [1666] Not at all!
  dive like a feather and swim like a rock [Calif] (As above.)

G.21c Flint

hard as flint
  true as flint Describing loyal allegiance.
flint-grey
flint-hearted/heart of flint Quite unfeeling.
flint-eyed With steady, grey eyes.
face like a flint Adamant, steadfast.
G.21d Marble

cold/hard/pale as marble
marble-hearted/heart of marble Cold and hard.
marbled Veined, mottled like marble; hence:
marbling In meat—the lean streaked with thin layers of fat.

G.21e Other stones

blue [Cum]/hard as whinstone [E.Brontë, Wuthering Heights—1847]
  breasts like whinstane [Sc 1819] Pitiless, inflexible.
gravel-throated/gravel-voiced With a deep, rough, growling voice.
scrupe [<Lat scrupulus <scrupus=a rough hard pebble, seen as a source of anxiety]
pebble (n) Pet name for a person or animal hard to control [Aus].
game as a pebble [nwDur Aus] (As/from the above.)
grit (n) [Amer 1825] Enduring courage, stamina in danger (from the durability of grit particles, and also from the association of gritting the teeth when resolute in trouble).

G.22a Earthquakes

earth-/world-shaker Someone or some event having a devastating and far-reaching effect.
  earth-/world-shaking Momentous and violent. (As/from the above.)
earthquake Revolution; social convulsions.
upheaval [1850] Violent alteration; social convulsion. (A geological term for a volcanic raising of crust-levels.)
  feel the earth move [1940] Experience the extreme sensations of passion, ecstasy etc.

G.22b Geological features

glacially slow [Amer 1975]
  strata Levels, layers—often in society.
  substratum [the underlying layer of rock etc.] Basis, foundation—of truth etc.
underlying Implicit, basic.

fossil [1841] A stagnant institution or society; individual incapable of further development; obsolete word that has only survived by being embedded in a phrase still in use—as ostracize (see D.12), which contains a fossilised oyster shell.

become fossilised/ossified Reach a point beyond which no further growth or progress is made.

erode [1969] Reduce gradually. ‘Taxation eroded his savings.’
cavernous Being or having a very large hollow.
wasteland Hopeless degenerated state, time or organisation; a situation of impasse.

**G.22c Earth and soil**

down-to-earth [1932] Plain, unpolished, basic in style and subject.
quiet as the ground [Nrf]
dry/thick as dust
a dusty answer [1862] A disappointingly unhelpful answer.
clay-brained Dull-witted.
cold as clay/clay-cold [Ayr Shr Glo Dor]
moisten my clay Have a drink.

**G.23a Water**

water of life Spiritual truth; enlightenment.
like water In abundance; recklessly. ‘Spent money, shed blood, wine flowed—like water’.
lemmock [limp, flabby—Lakel Yks Lan] as water
watery Insipid, uninteresting talk, style etc.
fluent [1625]/flowing [1553] Of speech, writing etc. that proceeds smoothly and without interruption.
fluid [1642] Moving, unstable—of world or political situations.
liquid assets [1879] Accessible, not frozen.
trickle (n) [1853] Arrival, but in lamentably small amounts—‘the merest trickle of news’, ‘a trickle of survivors’.
pour (v) [1573] Issue in abundance—of news, a crowd etc.
bubble The epitome of what is short-lived and insubstantial; visionary scheme.
thin as a bubble-skin
prick the bubble of… Reduce to its true size; shatter an illusion; end someone’s complacency, vanity.
the bubble burst Your hopes and plans have been shattered.
he will find his own level [1799] Socially, intellectually—as water does naturally.
believe water will flow uphill Believe anything, be very gullible.

G.23b Springs

fount/fountain/fountain-head/source/spring/ spring-head [Fr F Dor]/well-spring
Original point of issue; generous giver—of wisdom, inspiration etc.
gush (v) (over…) [1864] Speak, enthuse (over…) extravagantly, effusively; wax over-sentimental.

the fountain is clearest/purest at its source [Okl Texas] Go as far back as possible
for the least corrupted text, report, historical record.

the water that comes from the same spring cannot be both fresh and salt Children
will turn out compatible with their family or education.

from a pure spring, pure water flows [Ont Tl] From a good character, good works.
test the water(s) Make wide-ranging checks in the hope of hitting on what is really
wanted; make tentative, preliminary enquiries, ‘fly a kite’ (q.v. K. 71).
rivers need a spring Even great people have small, simple origins.

G.23c Ponds and lakes

lake of… Surplus.
milk-/wine-lake Surplus stock held by Common Market authorities.
he would drink Lough Sheelin dry [Cav] Of a bibulous man.
standing dubs [Sc]/pools gather dirt/filth [1639] Idleness is corrupting.
stagnant [1749] Reactionary, unprogressive, degenerate—of a mind, society etc.
it will ay be a dirty dub between them [Sc] A continuing cause of contention.

G.23d Bogs

where there are reeds/rushes there is water Sure signs of trouble—variously.
in the mire In a mess, in trouble. Often ‘bring, drag, lay, leave, stick—in the mire’.
drag through the mire/mud Involve in the same sordid predicament as yourself.
morass Engulfing and foul condition—of vice, doubt etc.
soggy Sluggish, lifeless, lacking in clarity.
swamp (v) [1818] Inundate—with applications, votes etc.
plum as a juggl-meer [soft as a quagmire—Dev]
soft as a Dartmoor bog
old as Killylea bog [Dwn]
all of a quob [marsh, quagmire, quicksand—mid, w, s&swEng] In a mess; in a heap, often of a bad bruise; in a confused jumble [wYks Cor].
all in a gogmire [=quagmire—Wil] In inextricable difficulties.
slump [fall and sink into a bog] Decline sharply—of prices etc.
lair [sink—passim] yourself deeper in the shog-bog [quaking bog—Sc Nhb] Get into greater and greater difficulties—usually offutile effort.

G.23e Drains
dead/disdainful/dull/flat (of beer or cider) as ditchwater ‘She was as digne as water in a dich’ [G.Chaucer, Reve’s Tale ln. 3964—1386].
black [Ken]/thick as guttermud clear as mud Ironical, of something uncomprehended.
common as clarts [Nhb Dur] Used derogatively.
rile [=roll, disturb and muddy a stream—passim] Annoy [1836].
muddy springs will have muddy streams The outcome of bad parentage or upbringing will also be bad.
muddy [1611] Of mind, thinking habits, literary style=muddled, vague, confused, turbid.
drumly [muddy, turbid—Sc Nhb] Muddled, confused in mind; obscure.

G.24a Streams
stream (n) [1735] A continuous coherent flow of ideas, words, moving people, vehicles etc.
streamline (v)—a business, manufacturing process etc. [1936] Remove all unnecessary obstructions to swifter progress. (From the streamlining of ships, railway engines, cars and planes to enable them to move faster through the water or air; originally from the study of water and air currents caused when such vehicles were propelled through them.)
streamline(d) Slim, smart, neat—of women’s figures.
mainstream [1831] Traditional, orthodox, following the prevailing currents of opinion, fashion etc. (from the phrase ‘the main stream of a tradition’); a mainstream school is the one that most children in an area would normally attend.
tributary Effort contributing to major one (as a tributary stream increases the volume of the main river).
dry up [run out of words, ideas] like a sun-struck billabong [creek, backwater or blind channel drawing water from the main stream only when it is in good flow—Aus]

a little stream will quench thirst as well as a big river The supply need be no larger than the requirement from it.

be in the beck [brook, stream—Lakel] Be out at elbows; outrun the constable (q.v. H.13b).

bourne [<Sc burn=stream]

we must not wish the burn [brook, stream—Sc] dry because it wets our feet [1832] Do not quarrel with the nature of your benefactor over a small disadvantage.

when the burn does not babble, it is either over-empty or over-full [Sc] We do not know whether their reaction is caused by lack or surfeit of feeling.

the water is shallowest where it babbles [Wal] Chattering is an indication of a shallow mind.

should/shawl [=shall, shallow—Sc] waters mak maist din/shallow streams make most noise [1576] (As above.)

shallow mind, personality, reasons etc. [1586] Merely superficial, without profounder qualities.

a youth’s promise is like the froth of water [Wal] Light and soon forgotten.

G.24b Rivers

flow (v) Move smoothly and effortlessly.

as the stream flows, so flows the river Children prove similar to their parents; the adult’s behaviour may be inferred from the child’s, ‘the child is father to the man’.

influence [<Lat in-fluere=flow in] (Just as a river affects the bed it flows in and the land it flows through.)

flow (n) Smooth, uninterrupted sequence, succession.

river (n) Large quantities or numbers—of blood, refugees, lava etc.—all flowing in one direction; the accidental effect of spaces between words on a printed page falling into a continuous line, more obvious when the page is tilted towards the plane of eyesight.

go to the brink Go as far as you can or dare without going too far to be able to withdraw.

margin (n) [1852] An additional but limited amount allowed for contingencies or emergencies, as in ‘safety margin’, ‘margin for error’.

ebb-minded [Sc] Shallow, frivolous.

still waters run deep [c.1400] Quiet people are profound, thoughtful; an unobtrusive manner can hide depths of emotion, knowledge or cunning.

a still river never finds the ocean [Ont] Inaction achieves nothing.

a running river never freezes [Ont] To stay alive, keep active.

the years slide by Pass imperceptibly.

nature will have her course Her path, the way along which it must travel (like a river in its course). As, also, ‘the course of the narrative’.
watershed [1962] Parting of the ways; turning-point in history; moment of parting; separation of two forces. (From the line of an artificial bank or pier in the middle of a river which divides its waters into two separate streams.)

G.24c Rivers in flood

open/raise/release the floodgates—of emotions etc. [1548] Release a powerful force from its former constraint.

(water) over the dam Past and irretreivable.
a long-gathered dam soon runs out [Sc] Repressed emotions quickly break out.
where the dam is lowest the water first flows over [Ill] Mobs, passions etc. break out where there is least control.
superfluous [<Lat super-fluere=flow over the top]
sweep him/her off his/her feet Overwhelm suddenly, usually by sexual attraction.
spate [1614] Large, overwhelming quantity; unusual increase, often of words.
torrent [1647] As above—often of abuse; violent onrush.
turbid Obscure, confused—style.
afluent [<Lat ad-fluere=flow towards, flock in abundance]
in full flow At the time of fullest lucidity, coherence—of artists and performers when giving abundantly of their best.
overflow Break or overwhelm the usual bounds or restraints—of feelings, populations, suppressed activities.
overrun with... Plagued by excessive numbers of noxious pests or people. (From an inundating river or even a hostile army overrunning a countrysiide.)
inundate Overwhelm, as if by flooding; submerge.
drift-wood Aimless people.
drift-wood never goes upstream [Ill] Those without proper purpose make no progress.

left on the haugh [flat land within a river bend—Sc nEng] anunder’ Lishaw [=Ellishaw, near Otterburn—Nhb] Left behind, stranded, abandoned generally, missing somewhere, mislaid. (From the quantities of assorted flotsam and jetsam left there after the River Rede has flooded.)

G.24d Dangerous rivers

so lucky that if he fell in the river he’d only get dusty

he leaps into a deep river to avoid a shallow brook Takes the worse of two bad alternatives.
if you don’t see the bottom, don’t wade Undertake no venture whose limits go beyond your powers.

on the bank Out of danger [Sc Ire Dur Yks Pem].

escape Clude and be drowned in Conway [two Welsh rivers: 1662]/escape Tees and be drowned in Tyne [two rivers—neEng] Applied to those who overcome one difficulty only to come to grief on another unexpected one.

G.25a To the woods

have an eye to the wood Be on the look-out for some advantage.

cannot see the wood for the trees [1546] Be unable to see the whole through over-attention to the parts; cannot take the comprehensive view.

there are more ways to the wood than one [1533] Other ways of achieving our object.

go the wrong way to the wood [1546]/to work [Paston Letter 1475 Nrf] Fail to achieve your object through using wrong methods.

break/strike for the tall timber [wild forest—Amer] Escape, get away from it all; live in seclusion.

go to the woods Lose social status; be banished from society.

take to the woods Run away from your responsibilities.

go round the trees Say or do something in a roundabout way.

G.25b In the wood

in a wood [Nhp War: 1608] Puzzled, bewildered, in difficulty or trouble.

in the wood of...[nSc] Eager to do or obtain (in the sense of being in the place where it is done or obtained; ‘in the wood of learning’).

all in a copse [Hmp] Indistinct.

thick as a nood [=a wood—Som]

dense Stupid, thick-witted.

forest—of masts, raised arms etc. A crowd of vertical risers sticking up together.

overarching [1929] Comprehensive, all-embracing.

give/take umbrage [shadow, shade; hence= vague suspicion, disfavour] Give/take offence [1620].

overshadow [1581] Loom large over; diminish the importance of someone by virtue of your own pre-eminence.

live in/under the shadow of... In the close vicinity of; diminished by; under the threat of.

feel our way Proceed cautiously.
way out in/in the sticks [in the backwoods: Amer 1905] In a remote, lonely and backward rural area; in the provinces.

up in the boughs [Shr Wor Oxf Glo] Quickly out of temper; easily offended; over-excited.

discrepancy [<Lat dis-crepare=creak apart, get out of harmony—like boughs that rub together in a wind]

it is a good wood that has no withered branch in it No group or society without its weaker members.

it’s a sarry [poor] wood that has never a withered bough in it [Sc: 1721] There is usually something to be obtained from every organisation.

accident [<Lat accidere <ad-cadere=fall upon, against]

incident [<Lat in-cadere=fall on to, befall]

he that fears leaves, let him not go into the wood Have regard to a person’s susceptibilities.

fall like leaves in October
just because there are no leaves on the trees doesn’t mean there’s no life in the limbs [Okl] When a man goes bald he is not necessarily in his dotage.

the woods are full of them [Amer] There are plenty around; they are not that uncommon.

looks as if the wood were full of thieves [1641] Appears frightened.

lost in a wood like Geordie Potter o’ Sadberge [Dur] (He was a pedlar living at Sadberge who was put in the stocks somewhere in Yorkshire and wrote to his wife while in them that he had got into a wood and although he could see over it and also through it and under it, yet, in spite of his teeth, he couldn’t get out of it.)

you’ve lost me there When someone can no longer follow the train of an involved argument or explanation.

don’t halloo/holloa/shout/whistle while [wYks]/till you are out of the wood [1801] Don’t rejoice prematurely.

go/run round in circles Move or act aimlessly or inconclusively; exert much effort to little effect.

come through Survive; successfully overcome—difficulties, a crisis, test etc.

out of the wood Out of danger, difficulties.

G.26a Seeds

germin First beginning of an idea etc.
germinal Capable of new development, new ideas etc.

seminal Not yet developed; rudimentary.

disseminate [<Lat disseminare=scatter seed] Scatter and leave to grow—of ideas, sedition, permeating diseases etc. (like the plant that distributes its seed over a wide area).
G.26b Roots

root (n) Prime cause, origin (of trouble, evil etc.); the lowest groove of a screw thread. A ‘root fallacy’ is one from which others derive.

rooted Firm, ineradicable. ‘A rooted objection to…’

rooted to the spot Of someone who is so shocked, frightened etc. that they are unable to move.

deep-rooted [1669] Of opinions so firmly established as to verge on the obsessional and obstinate.

have roots in… Derive from, be in continuous succession from.

have roots in a place Have home and past associations there.

put down roots Settle down.

take/strike root Become established; lose the will or power to move (facetious).

true praise roots and spreads [1640]

idleness is the root of all evil


there’s more in the fruit than there is in the root Somebody’s conduct is more significant than their birth.

G.26c Stems

stem (n) The main line of descent of a family; also many forms resembling the stem of a plant, as of a glass, thermometer etc.

stem from… Originate from or develop out of something.

offshoot A collateral branch or derivative—of a family, business etc.

sprig Scion, youthful member—of the nobility etc.

G.26d Sap and fibres

sap (n) The vital spirit, especially of youth.

fibre Strong cohesive element in a character, as in ‘moral fibre’.

pith (n) Essential, vital source of strength; gist, essential meaning [Paston Letters C15 Nrf].

dry as pith

pithy Brief, to the point (from the idea of the pith being the central and essential part, like marrow).
**G.26e Flowers**

budding Developing, promising—as in ‘budding genius’.
burst into—tears, song or whatever has been but can no longer be contained. (See also G.20c, outburst.)
blossom into Become, mature into.
blooming—health etc. Vigorous, in the prime.
come to full flower Reach the final stage of development.
flourish (v) [<OF floriss <vulgLat florire= Lat florere=flower] Thrive vigorously (as a plant or tree appears to do when in full flower).
flourish (n) Decoration, embellishment or brandishing employed for show and effect. (From the similarity to the outward exuberance of a plant coming into flower.)
flower—of the nation, his/her generation The best, prime, choice, supreme embodiment.

* fresh as a flower just blown
* fresh/welcome as the flowers/roses in May [1591]
* pretty as a May flower [Ire]
* good as the dew to flowers
* like a flower [Wor] Easily.
* get the flower of [Suf] Get the better of.
* cross-fertilisation—of ideas, cultures [1889] Improvement by interchange.

**G.27a Trees**

scrab [stunted tree, heather stump—Sc Dur Lin] Puny, shrivelled person [Bnff Cld].
family tree [1807] Genealogy (from the likeness in shape when all the branches of a family are written down).
lame as a tree [nLin]
...doesn’t grow on trees! [Amer 1669] Is hard to obtain.
scion [shoot, sucker, slip] Heir, descendant.
sprout Youngster.
he’d weary a growing tree [Lan] Is a bore.
he that would climb the tree maun tak’ care o’ his grip [Sc] The ambitious man must be able to take care of himself.
bend with the tree that bends with you [Ire] Adapt to changing circumstances.
bend with the wind/before the storm Yield before stronger forces; be diplomatic in a crisis.
the shored [blamed, threatened—Sc nEng] tree stands lang in the wood [Sc] Persons who might be expected to die soon, often live long.
the tree that is a long time shaking is not the first to fall [Farney, Tip] The one who is in poor health for a long time often lives the longer.
shake his tree Put moral pressure on him; over-persuade him.

G.27b Roots, stumps and bark

stock-still; deaf [1513]/still as a stock [tree-stump, post]
back of/beyond/this side of the black stump [Aus] Somewhere out of the way, in the remote outback. (A jocular imitation of the sort of directions given by bushmen.)
root and rind [bark] Surely and completely of a known origin.
you cannot judge a tree by its bark Cannot judge by appearances.
fits like/thick as the bark on a tree
near as bark to tree [1580]

G.27c Branches

twig of a—boy, girl etc. [nDev] Small person.
branch (n) Lateral extension—of a family, business, knowledge, road, railway.
branch out Expand, extend into new areas of business, activities etc.
ramify [=Lat ramus=branch] Branch out; form numerous lateral extensions, offshoots—generally.
ramifications Involved and complex series of subdivisions and interconnections. (As/from the above.)

G.27d Leaves

their memory stays green Dead but not forgotten.
quiver/shake/tremble like a leaf
curl up Give up as if dead-beat, collapse (of horses in a race); react with horror, embarrassment.
dother [=dodder, wobble about—nYks]/light as/tremble like an aspen/esp [=aspen—Cum NCy] leaf
light as a leaf
light as leaf on linden [lime tree: 1310]
dwable/dwebble [shaky, weak, flexible—Sc Ire] as a wallant [withered—Sc] leaf
[Bnff]/bent [ =bent grass]
leafless tree Gallows [1750–1850].
the wood will renew the foliage it sheds [Ire] Things will improve.

G.27e Different trees

bare as the birch/birks [Sc] at Yule even ‘Like birks at yule, completely barren’ [Peb].

pappy [soft, mushy] as the pith of an elder-stick [wYks]

you are asking an elm-tree for pears An impossibility in nature—of hopeless expectations.

hore [grey-haired] as an hawthorne [W.Langland, *Piers the Plowman*—1377] (The hawthorn is often the host to much grey lichen.)

within a hundred yards o’ t’ hollin buss [Lakel] Never very far away; ubiquitous.

never lies but/only lies when holly’s/hollin’s [Sc] green! i.e.always.

evergreen Everlasting, constant, continually renewed; perennial favourite [Amer].

brant [proud, pompous, erect, vain—nEng Lin]/ right/sound as an acorn [Lan Chs wWor]

thick as acorns in the fall [Amer]

robust [<Lat *robur*=oak]

storms make oaks take deeper root [Ont NC] Strong characters are fortified by opposition.

oaks may fall when reeds stand the wind The safety of humility.

And reed that boweth doun for every blast,
Ful lightly, cesse wind, it wol aryse;
But so nil not an ook when it is cast;

[G.Chaucer, *T&C II* 1387–1374]

straight as a pine

brant [nEng]/tall as a poplar

stringy-bark [local variety of eucalyptus tree—Aus] Rough, uncouth dweller in the outback.

sound as a bog sally [Don]

dour [hard, obstinate—Rnf]/stiff [Frf]/thrawn [perverse, obstinate—Rnf]/tough [Abd Frf Ayr Bwk Ant wYks Der] as a widdy/withy [willow/ willow-rod/cow-band made of osiers—Sc Ire nEng]

(the geslins are) growing like young withies [Lan] Very vigorously.

withy-cragged [NCy] Having a loose, pliant neck.

the branch of the willow breaks not from the snow [Oreg] Better to yield to harsh conditions than be shattered by them.

bend like a willow

willowy Of a girl’s physique—tall, slim and lissom.
soople as a saugh [=supple as a sallow/ willow—Elgin, Mry]

pliant as a hoop-willow [Sc 1819] Amenable.

feckless [Sc]/limber [pliant—Yks Not]/semmant [soft—NCy] as a willow wand

a mere willey-wand [NCy 1829] Tall, thin person.

limmock [pliant] as a willow-stick [Lin]

thin as a willow rod [Cor]

small [slender: 1530]/straight as a wand [Cum]

get the thief in the withy [either the willow tree (traditional for hangings) or the noose made from willow withes] Corner an offender.


cheat-the-wuddy One who (unfortunately) has not been hanged, as yet.

throw [=throw, twist, bend—Sc] in a widdy Hang [Edb].

dance in/on/from a withy [Mry Ayr Nhb] Be hanged. (As/from the above.)

it’s nae laughing to girn [=grin, grizzle] in a widdy [Sc: 1737] Of forced laughter, a mirthless situation.

the water will never rob/wrong/war [worsen, injure, defeat—Sc Ire nEng Nhp Dev] the widdy/withy He that is destined to hang will never be drowned [Sc eLth]. An echo of this superstition occurs in

methinks he hath no drowning marke upon him,

his complexion is perfect Gallowes:

[Shaks, Tempest I. i—1611]

missed by the water but caught by the widdy [Sc] Escaped drowning only to hang.

a withy tree will buy a horse before an oak will buy a bridle and saddle [Wil: 1662] (Because of its more rapid growth.)

G.28a Crab apples

the crab tree has a sweet blossom [Ire] A bad-tempered old age can follow a happy youth.

sour as a crab [1530]

cross as crabs [a name for ill-tempered, sour-natured folk]

bitter as a bask-apple [crab-apple—Sc NCy]

it’s no use plucking a crab when there’s an apple in reach [wYks sLan] Don’t take what is worse if you can get what is better by waiting.

getting near to crab-harvest Will soon be out of work [Wor].

not worth a hatful of crabs [Glo]
G.28b Bullaces

black/bright/sour as a bullace [wild damson] ‘Eye as bright as a bullace’ [Cum eYks].
sour as a grig [bullace—Som Dev Cor]

G.28c Cherries

black/blue as a mazzard [small black cherry—Ire s&wEng]
eyes black as mazzards [Cor]
has a nose fit for a mazzard-picker [Dev wSom] Of one with a hooked nose (from the saying that you must hold on with your nose and pick with your hands).

G.28d Sloes

black as a sloe/sloes/sloon [=sloes—passim] Often of eyes.
bitter as sloes
not care/give/worth a sloe
sloe-eyed With dark, blue-black eyes.

G.28e Berries

brown as a berry [1386]
he’s no the berry, nor yet the bus [=bush] it grew on [Sc] Is not without faults.
berry-moucher [one who wanders about picking berries—Wil] Truant from school.
cackleberry [nwAmer WVir] Egg.
thick [plentiful] as haws/haaves [haws—wEng]
not care/give/worth a haw [1280]
red as (a/the) (h)ep(ps) [=hip—wYks midLan]
not care/give/worth a hip [Lan sChs]
juniper lecture [Hrt] Reprimand, curtain lecture (because of the pungency of the berries, a bitter talk).
as many as rowans in the bunch [Sc]
G.28f Blackberries

as fond [foolish] as a bass [coarse mat, doormat made from dried rushes] and as black as a bleg [blackberry—wYks]

plentiful/thick as blackberries ‘...if reasons were as plentiful as blackberries...’

not care/give/worth a blackberry [1420]

dewberry snail [Dev Cor] Truant from school. (The dewberry is a close relative of the blackberry.)

go a-blackberrying Go missing, fail, go wandering anywhither; be absent when required.

For myn entente is nat but for to winne
And nothing for correccioun of sinne.
I rekke nevere, whan that they been beryed
Though that her soules goon a-blackberryed!

[G.Chaucer, Prologue of the Pardoners Tale ln. 406—1386]

fast as a maid can eat blackberries [swEng]
a bummel-kite [=bumble-kite, blackberry—nEng Hmp] with a spider in it Disappointment; bad bargain.

bumblekite [wYks] Clumsy child.
you’ll never get from the bramble but a blackberry [Ire] Like can only beget like.

blackberry (patch) baby [Msri Ark] One born out of wedlock.

G.28g Bilberries

blue as a bilberry

plentiful as bilberries on a moor [wYks Der Chs Shr neWor Hrf]

G.28h Nuts

nut (n) Madman, eccentric.

not care/give/worth a nut
where there are no bushes there can be no nuts [Sc 1814] Don’t ask for something we have not got.

when the nut is ripe it must fall [Ire] Wait for the right moment to obtain what you want.

hazel-eyed With eyes of a light greeny-brown colour, like that of a hazel-nut.

nut-brown The reddish-brown colour of a ripe hazel-nut—of hair and skin, ale etc.

lean out [come away from their shells—Sc nEng Lei Hnt Nhp War] Undress; part with money.

brown-leamer [wYks]/brown-shiller [hazel-nut when ripe and ready to eat—Nhb] A generous person.

brown as a chesten [chestnut]

G.29a Prickles and stings

distinguish [<Lat distinguere=separate by points]

instigate [<Lat instigare=goad, spur, prick on]

instinct [<Lat instinguere=prick on, sting]

stigma [<Gk στιγμα=mark made by pointed stick or brand]

stimulate [<Lat stimulare=prick, goad into action]

stimulus [<Lat stimulus=prick, goad]

acumen [<Lat acumen=point to prick or sting with]

piquant [<Fr piquant=pricking, stinging] Sharp, pungent—of smells and flavours.

piquant—wit, style, remark Telling, penetrating, stimulating. (As/from the above.)

pique [<Fr pique=prick, sting]

G.29b Roses

rose (n) Bull’s eye in old glass [wYks IW]; tuft of bristles on a pig [Nhp]; division of hair on horses or oxen [nLin].

fresh as a rose

fair as a wild rose

the rose hides the briar [Ire] Lovely looks do not preclude a cruel nature.

rough/sharp as a briar

truths and roses have thorns about them
G.29c Thorns

sharp as a thorn
hunger is sharper than thorn [1553]
it pricketh betimes that will be a good thorn [c. 1350] A child soon shows signs of future propensities.
thorny Painful, difficult to handle; full of difficulties and frustrations—usually of problems and vexed questions.
the blackest thorn bears the whitest blossom [Ire] A good deed in a bad man is all the more praiseworthy.

G.29d Gorse

rough as gorse/Babby’s ‘ood gorst [=Babin’s Wood gorse—Shr]
sharp as whins [Cum]
close [secretive—Ayr]/wick [full of life, animosity—wYks] as a whin Very secretive.
coarse as Hickling gorse
sweat like a fuz [=furze—Cor] -bush on a dewy morning
inches don’t break squares in a load of whins [Uls] A little thing like that makes no difference here. (See J.27b.)
ye canna gather berries off a whinbush [Sc] Of someone who is inherently incapable of giving anything away.
pleaing at the law is like fighting through a whinbush—the harder the blows the sairer the scarts [Sc: 1832]

G.29e Other prickly plants

friendly as a bramble/black-kite [blackberry—Cum] bush
thick [plentiful] as thistles
thistle-down [Ire] Children wandering about on the moors or common-land.
back to the cactus [Aus] Home and away (out of the city).
G.29f Burs

**bur** (n) A person hard to shake off.
- **cleave/cling/stick like a bur/cocklety-bur/ crocklety-bur** [=cocklebur—Cum]/cuckoldy-bur [Cum Yks EAn Glo Som Dor Dev Cor]
- **cleave together like burs** [c.1330]
  - so smooth it wouldn’t catch a bur if you dragged it from Bendigo to Bourke [Aus]
  - Of a blanket.
- **stick together** Combine, make common cause.

G.29g Nettles

**nettle** (v) [1562] Annoy.
- **bad-tempered** [Cum Yks]/rank as nettles
- **he that handles a nettle tenderly is soonest stung** [1579] Discomfiture follows a feeble approach to problems.
  - **grasp your nettle** Tackle the difficulty boldly.
  - **nettle-seed needs no digging** Unwanted, troublesome elements flourish without any encouragement.
  - **the tallest flowers hide the strongest nettles** [Ire] Those in high places have the worst faults.
  - **better stung by a nettle than pricked by a rose** [1580] Better to be hurt by one whom you dislike than by one you love.
  - **cast/throw his frock to the nettles** [1916] Renounce the clerical life (=jeter le froc aux orties—Fr).

G.29h Other woody plants

**cling like ivy**
- **clinging** Reluctant to release; requiring continual support from a partner or protector, usually of over-dependent children or womenfolk.
  - **not care/give/worth an ivy leaf** [1390]
  - **coarse/rough as heather**
  - **heathery-headed** [Sc] Unkempt, bristly, dishevelled.
  - **red as fields of heather on fire/a heather-hill**
  - **hardy as ling**
sage-brush rebel Political opponent of Federal protection for America’s national forests.

G.29i Brackens and ferns

common as brackens
growing like a fern [bracken—Cor] Of a child or animal that thrives.
thrive like a breckan [Gall]
farntickle [=ferntickle, fern-seed—passim] Freckle on the face.
ferny-fire [Cor] Quick-tempered person. ‘Like a ferny-fire, soon hot and soon cold.’

G.30a Daisies

fresh as a daisy/May gowan [daisy—Sc Cum]
clean as a gowan [nEng 1939]
dink [neat, finely dressed—Sc nEng] as a daisy Presentable, well-dressed.
common as daisies
happy as daisies in the sunshine [Som]
not care/give/worth a gowan [Abd]
gowan-gobbit [Lth Rxb]/gowany [Fif] Of a day which starts deceptively bright, but turns stormy later.
as like as a dock to a daisy [1621] Ironic.
cow the gowan [wSc Lnk] Beat everything—said in surprise.
leap at a daisy [1553] Be hanged.

G.30b Other flowers and herbs

blue as a blaver [=blawort, cornflower—Bwk]
buttercup [Amer] Innocent and attractive girl.
fresh as a buttercup
yellow as a crow-flower [buttercup—War]
green as duckweed Foolish, but only by reason of simplicity and inexperience.
fat/full as a fitch [=vetch, wild pea—Cum Wm n&wYks Lan] (Referring to the pods.)
blake [golden yellow]/yellow as a gollan/gollin [nLan]/gowlan [=water gollan, kingcup—Nhb Cum n&eYks]
yellow as a gowan [either=lockin gowan, globe flower—Cum]
  blake [yellow-gold—nEng] as (a) marigold(s)/ Mary gold [Wgt 1743]
yellow as a meadow-bout [kingcup—Chs]
yellow as the guilde [=gool, corn marigold—Sc]
holler as a humlock [=hollow as a hemlock: Sc Tyneside, Nhb Dur]
couldna hae played pew upon a dry hum-lock [Sc 1819] Was quite out of breath.
a withered kiskey [=kex] of a man [Cor] Made dry and light by age.
frush [=frough, brittle—Sc Ire nEng Mid Brks Wil Hmp] as a bennel [the hollow, dried-out stem of fennel—nIre] (Incorrectly printed as ‘fresh as a bennel’ in WDD.)
agree like butter and mells [=mauls/malls, the marsh mallow seeds, called cheeses by country children] Not agree at all!
  blake [golden yellow—nEng]/yellow as a paigle [cowslip—passim: 1678]
like a primrose in a casson [dried cow-turd—midEng: Lin] Of an incongruous piece of finery (see also E.13d); an ugly lass in a fine bonnet [nwLin].
yellow as a ragweed [ragwort—Ire]
sardonic—smile, remark A wry, bitter, disillusioned one. (A bitter plant grows in Sardinia which makes each eater contort their face into a grin. *Immo ego Sardoniis videar tibi amarior herbis, [Vergil, Eclogue vii.41].*)
sour as sab [sourdock=sheep’s sorrel—Cor]
snowdrop American military policeman (from his white helmet).
that’s something like a tansy! Well said! Perfect! Perfectly! [C17 C18].
meek as a violet
shrinking violet Shy, retiring person leading a sheltered life.

G.31a Grasses

green as grass
  fresh as the summer’s grass
every blade of grass gets its own drop of dew [Sc NY] Everyone has some gift from above.
  hear the grass grow Have preternatural acumen.
  fescue Teacher’s pointer.
  white as moss-crop [cotton grass—NCy] ‘Head like a moss-crop’ [wYks 1885]=with white, silky hair.
  traneen [straw of crested dog’s tail grass—Ire] Anything worthless. Hence:
  not care/give/worth a traneen
  hassock [tuft, tussock of coarse grass—Sc] Untidy shock of hair [Sc EAn].
  weak as a winnelstrea [=windlestraw, dry stem of grass blown about by the wind—Cum]
G.31b Reeds and rushes

slender as a reed
green as a bennel [long reed used as ceiling material—Nhb]
reedy Of a voice—high-pitched, thin and edgy, not round and clear, but slightly abrasive.
good words without deeds are rushes and reeds [1670] Of little value compared with hay grass.
straight as a rush [A bd Lnk Ayr Gall Nhb Cum nYks]/seave [rush—Cum]
the point of a rush would draw blood from his cheek [Ire] Is very frail.
his hair stood up stiff as a bunch of rushes
bostoon [=bastun, a switch of rushes—Ire] Useless, spineless wastrel [Dub 1914].
not care/give/worth a rush [1377]
find/seek a knot in a rush/bulrush [1340] Raise minor points or objections that are not really there.
smooth/straight [Yks] as a bulrush

G.32 Fungi

mushroom (n) Upstart; anchor with a mushroom-shaped head [Cor].
mushroom (v) Appear overnight; grow up; expand rapidly.
weak as a mushroom [Cor]
mushroom growth [1911] Very quick or overnight growth. ‘Spring up like mushrooms overnight.’
paddock-stool! [toadstool—Sc] Term of reproach.
hollow as a puckfice [=puckfeist, puffball—NCy Nhp War Wor Glo Oxf Suf Wil Dev] Of a loose, light, uncompacted soil.
dry as a puck-fyst [seWor] Thirsty. (See above.)
soft as a fuzz-ball [puff-ball—wYks]

G.33a Bees

queen bee Automatically controlled flying target for anti-aircraft guns, pursuit aircraft or guided missiles (after the mating flight of a queen bee when she is hunted by a congregation of drones).
brisk [1732]/busy/quick [1546] as a bee
as many as bees [Gall]/like bumbles in/bum-bees bizzing frae a byke [nest—Abd]
 Numerous.

put your head in a bees’ byke [Sc 1886] Interfere in a troubled situation.

busy as a bee in a treacle-pot as eident [industrious, assiduous—Sc] as midsummer bee [Fif]

busy as bees on the moor [nYks]
 like a bee in a box Fussy and busy to no purpose.
 like a bee in a bottle Of a monotonous sound, or someone reading without expression.

bumming/bummed [eYks] about like a bee in a bottle [Cum] Of someone furiously busy.

busy as bumble[ers] [Nhb Dur Cum nYks Nrf]
 buzzing about like a bumbler bee [Nhb] Fussing about.
 hummed (the tune) like a bumm[ler] in a rose bush [Nhb] Of a minister in church.
 sweet as the clover with the bumbees humming over it [IMA]
 like a dum’ldary/drumbledrane in a flappadock/flappydock [foxglove—wSom Dev] Of a tiresome preacher.

 a hummo bee i’ t’ ha’se [=halse, throat: wYks] Of a droning, boring speech.
 the loudest bummer’s no the best bee [Sc] A reproach to a loud boaster.
 bumbledone/-dore/-drane/-drone [bumble bee—s&swEng] Boring speaker or preacher.

a bumble-bee in a cow-turd thinks himself a king [1670] Referring to delusions of grandeur.

brisk as a bee in a tar-pot
 nimble as a bee in a tar-barrel
 thrang as a bummely [Cum] Overworked, busy as a bumble bee.
 like a bumble bee in a churn [Stf War Wor: 1894] Of an indistinct speaker.
 busy and merry as a bumbledore in a pitcher [Som]
 like a humble-bee in a pitcher [Glo] Indistinct.

wimble [quick, lively—sLan] as a hummo-bee
 big/weak as a bee’s knee
 bare as a bumbee’s knee [sLin] Of a bone.
 the bee’s knees [1923] The very best.

beeswing The second crust in old wine, especially in port (from the similarity in appearance).

old beeswing A cheerful drinker.

a bee was never caught in a shower The best workers keep out of trouble.
 a bee-line [1849] Straight line, most direct route (as bees are supposed to fly on their way to their nest).

mellifluous [flowing with nectar, used of those flowers most favoured by bees] Sweetly sounding, musical, gratifying.

where the bee sucks honey, the spider sucks poison Different characters will produce different results from the same opportunities.
a bee in his bonnet [1648] An obsession, idée fixe. (Bees are thought to be connected with the soul and are therefore admitted to the Muslim Paradise. They were also thought to be the messengers of the gods and that is why a bee-keeper tells his bees the family news. Fancies, conceits, dreams and obsessions were often called ‘bees’.)

G.33b Bee-stings

sting (v)—into action etc. Impel suddenly and painfully.
tanger [stinger—nEng Brks] Deceitful person [wYks].
stinging words Words that give acute pain.
the sting of a reproach is the truth of it
stung Swindled; hurt; goaded, incited.
take the sting out of... Render less unpleasant, less formidable.
pleasure has/hides a sting in its tail Brings pain or distress afterwards.
sting in the tail [1820] A subsequent disadvantage, not always noticed at first.

G.34a Wasps

angry/mad [angry, bad-tempered—IMA nYks Lan]/sharp [bright, intelligent—Oxf]/tetchy [peevish—Sc NCy] as a wasp
keen/kittle [excitable, easily upset—Cum] as a wamp/whamp [wasp—Cum Wm Yks Lan War]
wampish [Lakel]/waspish/wapsy [nYks Brks Sus Hmp Dev] Irascible; peevish; petty and malignant; sharp-tongued.
wasp-waist An extremely slender waist.
little in the waist as a dirt-dauber [small masonry or sand-wasp—Miss]
stir a wasps’ byke [nest—Per: 1659] Cause trouble (usually to yourself).
mad [angry] as a wasp in a bottle
like a wasp in a bottle Bad-tempered, obstreperously frustrated.
troublesome as a wasp in your ear
quiet as a wasp in your nose [1616] Ironical.
sleepy as an October wasp
they agree—like a wasp with a bee Ironical.
like a wasp on sugar [Brks] Very eager.
thick as wasps round a plum [Brks]/in a hummo-bee nest [Lan Der Not]
as hot as if he had a bellyful of wasps and salamanders
G.34b Hornets

hornet (n) Malicious enemy; cantankerous person.

anger is a stone thrown into a wasps’/ hornets’ nest [Ill Kan]

mad [angry] as a hornet [UK, passim NC Tenn Neb Calif sAmer]

spiteful as a hornet [Cor]

mild as a hornet [Glo] Ironical.

quick as a ball-hornet [Amer]—to defend their round nest which hangs from the branch of a tree.

bring a hornets’ nest about your ears [1590] Cause a disturbance or provoke trouble which soon recoils upon yourself.

G.35a Ants

ant Drug-carrying courier.

busy as an ant [Calif]

brant [proud, pompous, erect, stiff, stuck up, vain—nEng Lin]/ merry as a pismire/ pissimire [=pismire, ant—Sc Ire nEng EAn] (Some people interpret pissimire as being the Yorkshire word for a dandelion, but this is unlikely, being less appropriate, for the simile will refer to the action of certain ants in rearing up on their hind legs to offer hostilities and to squirt formic acid at an intruder.)

He is as angry as a pissemyre

[G.Chaucer, The Somonour his Tale In. 1825–1386]

drunk/game [=very courageous—Aus] as a piss-ant [=pismire, ant—Sc Ire nEng EAn Shr Wor Amer Aus]

formication Sensation of the skin as if ants were crawling on it.

thick as eemocks [=emmets, ants] in a clod [Rnf]

any spoke will lead an ant to the hub [NY] There are many ways for a diligent searcher to reach the truth.

G.35b Beetles and weevils

beetle (n) Short-sighted person (like the Maybug which bumps into things as if not seeing clearly).

beetle away/off Depart suddenly (like a beetle taking to flight).
blind/deaf/mad [=very silly—Aus] as a beetle
so mean he wouldn’t give what would blind a beetle’s eye [Ire]
one ciarog [beetle—Ir-Gael]/beetle knows another [Ire] Said when someone gives evidence of their acquaintance with disreputable facts or persons.
clean as a clock [beetle, especially the shiny dung-beetle: UK, passim Calif]
humble as a crawling clock [nYks]
if you fool with a tumble-turd bug, you are apt to be splattered [Miss] Bad company has a bad influence.
kill clocks wi’ clubs [Nhb] Use means in excess of what is necessary; promise more than you can perform.
buzzard [=buzzing, cockchafer beetle, May-/ June-bug] Dull, stupid, blundering fellow; timorous person [Cum].
blind as a buzzard [Yks Der Chs Glo Dev] (Because they bang into lights or white objects at dusk and night-time.)
happy as a June-bug
beetle-browed With bushy eyebrows (from the bristly eyebrows that some beetles appear to have).
ride on the beetle Walk in company with a party on horseback.
tears running down his cheeks like beetles up a hill! [Ire] In ridicule of a child crying over nothing.
like a ‘devil’s cow’ [ladybird—Dor] in a dish of buttermilk! Of anything ridiculously small in relation to its surroundings.
slape [not only shiny and smooth, but also prone to slip about on smooth surfaces] as an ackron [cockchafer—Cum]
boll-weevil [Amer] Union scab (the insect spoils cotton bolls); Southern Democrat who votes Republican when elected to Congress.
’twix de bug en de bee-martin ’taint hard ter tell w’ich gwineter git kitch [NY] Where a conflict is unequal the outcome is obvious.

G.35c Cockroaches

game as a cockroach (They are bold fighters.)
hopping like a roach in a skillet [small saucepan, or cauldron with feet and a long handle] Very unsettled, nervously frantic (especially if the pan was getting hot) [Amer].
crawl out of/back into/lurk in the woodwork [1964] Emerge from/scuttle back into/maintain a preferred obscurity (implying that whoever behaves thus has much in common with insect pests lurking in old houses).
G.35d Crickets and grasshoppers

lively/wick [Lan] as a cricket
merry as a cricket [1530]/ingle-crickets [sLan]/crickets in an oven
peart [healthy and active, lively, brisk, alert, smart, cheerful—eAmer from Conn southwards, and inland to Ill Msri Ark+Miss] as a cricket
gasshopper-mind One incapable of concentration; one that jumps arbitrarily from one subject to another.
knee-high to a grasshopper [Cor Amer Aus: 1851] Of someone very short [prob. orig. Amer].
sweat like a brock [frog-hopper, cuckoo-spit insect—Nhb Lan Yks Lin] (Because of the frothy moisture with which it surrounds itself.)
not care/give/worth a cuckoo-spit [Ire]

G.35e Earwigs

earwig (v) Influence by secret communications (from the figurative use of earwig as an earwhisperer, flatterer).
look/stare like a twitchelled [pinched, confined by the nose with a cord etc.—Lan War]/ throttled earwig [sChs] Of someone overdressed or wearing outlandish clothes [wYks].
brown as a twitchbell [earwig—nYks]

G.35f Other insects

centipede Nautical device consisting of a piece of wood with many holes through which ropes are rove and from which an awning may be hung.
feel like a centipede with athlete’s foot [Calif]
lower than a centipede with fallen arches [Calif]
under the stones In secret, out of public knowledge.
G.36a Spiders

spidery—writing Small, fine, fussy but disjointed handwriting (giving the impression that a spider with inky feet might have walked across the paper).
  cruel as a spider/atter [spider—Cum]
  attercop [spider—Sc Ire nEng] Ill-tempered, peevish and malignant person.
  attermite [water-spider—Lakel Lin] Small person; dirty child.
  spider-and-fly Destroyer-and-victim relationship; ensnarer and ensnared.
  enough to deafen a spider Of a long or uninteresting discourse [nwLin].
  swallow a spider Go bankrupt.
  spider-man [1955] Steeple-jack, man capable of working at great heights (where, from below, his rope would be no more visible than a spider’s thread).

G.36b Cobwebs

every spider winds his own ball of thread [Ire] Everyone looks to his own interests; prepares his own deceptions.
  cobweb (v) Delicately interconnect, by threads of association etc.
  have a cobweb in the throat Feel thirsty.
  cobwebs of antiquity Evidence of great age.
  cobwebs of sophistry The intricate entanglements of argument practised by some of the Sophists of Ancient Greece who were strictly pragmatic teachers of oratory and debate, and whose avowed intention was to make the weaker argument appear the stronger.
  blow away the cobwebs Clear away staleness, fustiness; refresh someone from the effects of being too long indoors.
  weave spider’s webs for… Lay traps for.
  spin a web Practise an intricate and involved deception.
  femmur [slight, slender, feeble, delicate—Nhb Cum nwYks] as a spider-wob [Cum]
  femmur as a musweb [=mouseweb, cobweb—n&nwYks]
  light as gossamer
  laws are like spiders’ webs that catch flies but let hornets go free [1412]
  big flies break the spiderweb [NY] Powerful men evade the law.
  habits are cobwebs at first, but cables at last
  spiderwork Fine, darned netting.
free/light as a fly [1509]  
gaumless as a fleg [Lan Yks] Stupid as a fly.  
not care/give/worth a fly [1297]  
go down like flies Succumb to an epidemic etc. without resistance.  
thick as flies on a cow’s nose  
like flies (after meat) In profusion.  
like a fly in a glue-pot/tar-box [wSom] Nervously excited.  
could do no more than a fly among treacle  
on the flypaper Known to the police (subject to the Prevention of Crimes Act 1909, known as the Flypaper Act).  
in amber Perfectly, permanently and beautifully preserved (as flies are in amber). ‘I kept ’e like amber’ [Cor]=clean and fresh, a mother of her baby.  
a fly in amber [1735] A curious relic; something preserved from long ago by a happy accident.  
never open the door on the first day of March to keep the flees [=flies] out all the year [Dor] Premature precautions are useless.  
fly-on-the-wall [1951] Unnoticed observer; style of documentary film-making or reporting where everyday events are recorded as they happen, with the minimum of manipulating or editing.  
kill two flies with one flap [1678] Complete two tasks in one operation.  
a fly has its spleen [1580] Everyone, however insignificant, has (and is entitled to) their feelings.  
he wouldn’t hurt a fly (Because he is too kindhearted.)  
no flies on…! [1848] He is astute and worldly enough not to be outwitted. (An energetic horse will not allow them to settle.)  
catch flies [Amer] Distract an audience’s attention from another performer by making unnecessary gestures; yawn.  
don’t let flies stick to your heels! Don’t delay.  
daub yourself with honey and the flies will eat you! [1620] To one ingratiating himself, or to a woman who makes herself unnecessarily charming.  
get up my nose Annoy, infuriate me.  
buzz-word [Amer 1970] A jargon word, often borrowed from a specialist or technical vocabulary and used for effect and to impress the ignorant (a sort of ‘blinding with science’). The unfortunate result, inevitable if the word becomes common, is a looser and less precise use of it. ‘Parameter’ is a recent sufferer.  
bizzing about like a dirt-bee [dung-fly—Bnff]  
like the dirt-fly that flies high in the day, and falls in a turd at even [nSc] Of someone who waits too long for a good marriage, and weds badly in the end.  
summer flies are seen only in the sunshine [Cor] Prosperity brings round many ‘friends and relatives’.  
buzzing around/rushing about like a bluearsed fly Officiously and ridiculously busy.
as fond of a raw place as a bluebottle Of one who trades on others’ distress or misfortune.

hum Stink. (The hum of flies over a corpse is associated with its putrid smell.)

G.37b Maggots

fly-blown Tainted—variously; penniless [Aus].

blown upon Spoilt, defiled.

crawling with… Containing or covered with far too many...

dead [of men or animals—wSom]/fat/fierce [wYks]/lively [Shr]/mad [Aus NZ]/mute/peart [lively, brisk, sprightly; healthy, likely to survive: also (of people) skilled, nimble-fingered, open, clear, straightforward—passim] as a maggot

mawk [maggot, especially of the bluebottle—Sc NCy] Fancy, whim, joke [Lan Yks].

dead [Sc]/fat [Lakel wYks]/silly [Cum]/white [unhealthily pale—n&cEYks n&nwLin] as a mawk [Lnk]

mawkish Feeble, insipid, sickly and sentimental (the imagined characters of a mawk=maggot).

maggoty Short-tempered, peevish, irritable [Aus NZ]. (From the effect of bot-fly maggots on cattle.) go maggoty=lose temper.

maggoty-headed Describes a curious person, full of whims and fancies.

tar and maggots [Eng schoolgirls] Rice pudding with treacle.

fierce as a maggot with his tail cut off Justifiably but futilely furious.

the way the maggot jumps [Cor] The current situation, state of things.

a smell so bad it would make a maggot gag [retch; be/feel on the point of vomiting—Amer]/enough to gag a maggot [Amer] Generally revolting.

G.37c Clegs, warble flies

light as a cleg [Yks] Which alights so lightly on the skin that it cannot be felt—until its needle penetrates.

cleave/stick like a cleg [a blood-sucking fly so intent on drinking that it can be easily swatted—Cum Wm Yks Lan Lin]

like a cleg on a bull’s arse Of a small hat on a big head; or a small man making love to a large woman.

oestrus [<Gk οἶστρος=gadfly] (From an observed similarity between the maddened frenzy of animals stung by the gadfly and their compulsive sexual activity when in rut.)

gadfly [breeze or bot-fly, a torment to horses and cattle] An annoying and harassing person.
get under his skin Annoy; fascinate excessively (like a warble-fly maggot under the living oxhide).
when the maggot bites [1687] When the whim takes someone.
the grubs bite him hard [EAn] Is sulky.

G.37d Midges, gnats, mosquitoes

midge/midget (n) Undersized person, dwarf.
light as a midge
wouldn’t give what would blind the eye of a midge [Ire] Is most ungenerous.
fast as a midge in a treacle-pot [sLan] Stuck fast. ‘Could do nae mair nor a flee amo’ triacle’ [Abd].
not care/give/worth a gnat
a gnat’s heel [Amer] Something of no consequence.
the gnat is small, sure, but she is not the servant of the cow [NY SC] Even the weak will assert their independence.
would skin a gnat for its hide Very miserly and cheese-paring.
thin as gnat’s piss Of a watery drink.
tick [=thick] as tuggemö [thick swarm of insects or birds—ShI]
able to kick the eye out of a mosquito [Aus] Supremely competent.
ribbed up (to the neck) like a mosquito [Aus] Round-barrelled, of a barrel-chested horse.

G.38a Moths

moth Someone hovering round temptation.
lively as a moth [1874]
hover (v) Remain undecided; uncommitted.
hover about/round… Keep in close attendance on someone.
fine as a buzzart [large moth that buzzes round the light—Lan Der]
the fly that plays too long in the candle sinest his wings at last [1565]
singed his wings Ran into trouble through being over-ambitious, usually in love affairs.
gipsy moth [Amer] Republican who sides with Democrats on budgetary issues, the northern equivalent of the boll-weevil (q.v. G.35b).
G.38b Butterflies

**butterfly** (v) Flirt, philander.
**butterfly** (n) Trifler, frivolous person; inconstant lover.
**pavilion** [<Lat papilion-em=]butterfly] (From the resemblance of bright colours and flapping cloths.)
**gaudy as a butterfly**
**butterfly mind** [1961] One that flits from one fancy to another, being incapable of concentrated work.
**butterfly kiss** [1871] The fluttering of eyelashes against the cheek.
**butterfly effect** [UK 1989] The process by which an insignificant event leads progressively to momentous effects (as if the draught from a butterfly’s wings were to set off a chain of reactions eventually resulting in a hurricane).
**Brooklyn butterflies** [Amer] Cockroaches.
**butterfly cabman** [Yks Chs] Taximan operating only in the summer.
**butterflies in the stomach** [1908] Nervous trepidation producing a fluttering sensation in the stomach.

G.38c Caterpillars

**cankerworm** [a caterpillar that feeds on leaves and buds] Source of corruption. (The canker-worm is the type of what will insidiously destroy from inside or from underneath.)
**kail-worm** [caterpillar of cabbage-white butterfly—Sc] Tall, slender person.
**worm your way into**… Insinuate yourself (like a grub into an apple).
**caterpillar tractor** (From the way in which it crawls on tracks.)
**cluster—of leukaemia cases etc.** A denser grouping than would be expected from an average scatter.
**cocoon** (v) Wrap snugly; (over-)protect, keep in a stifling and restrictive home environment. **in a cocoon** Thus protected.

G.39a Slugs and snails

**slug** (n) Fat child; contemptible and/or fat person; slow, idle person or animal.
**slimy** Repulsive, unwholesome and treacherous.
**smooth as a bulhorn** [snail—Cor]
**hoddy-doddy**  [=hodmadod/hoddamadod, snail—s&eEng] A revolving light in a lighthouse (from whirling a torch, sparkler etc. in ever-widening circles, so describing the spiral of a snail’s shell) [sIre Dev].

**hoddy-doddy shape** One squashed down, like a snail into its shell [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—17 November 1830].

goes dreaming about [in a brown study] like a hoddidod [snail Ess]
slow as a snail
slippery as Jan Jakes [a snail—Cor]
footery [slippery—Brks] Sly.

**snail’s pace** [1400–50] Very slowly.

**whip a snail** Go at a snail’s pace.

**snail-creeping** Boring holes in the timbers of ships under construction to facilitate the movement of air and so to reduce decay [1791].

**quick as a snail crawling through tar!**

**the snail deserves the end of its journey** Achievement after long labour.

**the snail slides up the tower at last-though the swallow mounts it sooner** [1580] Do not belittle the slow worker; their final achievement is no less than that of the swift.

**the snail is as soon at its rest as the swallow** (As/from the above.)


draw in his horns [Sc nEng Nhp Hnt War Dor: C14] Be less extravagant; retract opinions; exercise restraint—variously.

draws in his horns like a snail at a bairn’s finger [Sc] Withdraws quickly.

**has got his horns out now** Of a child or animal becoming confident after initial shyness.

**put out feelers** Make tentative, unobtrusive enquiries to test opinions (as snails, insects and lobsters put out feelers or palps).

**tramp on a snail and she’ll shoot out her horns** [1721] Even the mildest person will react aggressively when attacked.

**draw a person out** Induce to talk; elicit information (as in drawing a snail out from its shell).

**has come out of his/her shell** [n&wYks: 1889] Has stopped being withdrawn and on the defensive, and has become more sociable (as do snails and tortoises when no longer alarmed); is prospering, succeeding in business.

**retire into his shell** Withdraw from society, become a recluse.

in his shell Sulking, not talking.

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**G.39b Worms**

**worm** (n) Abject, contemptible person; computer program that spreads copies of itself throughout a network [1975].

**worm out of...**[Amer] Evade.

**squirm** (v) Feel, show acute embarrassment.
fidget/twine [wriggle, twist]/twingle [wriggle—Abd Cor]/twist and turn like an
angle-twitch [earthworm—Gmg Pem Dev Cor]
naked as a worm [c. 1400]
nervous/restless/fidgety as worms in hot ashes [Tenn Calif]
wriggle like worms in hot ashes [NC Calif]
earthworm Grovelling person; miser, greedy person [wYks].
brains of an earthworm Very low intelligence.
worm’s-eye view Close up, detailed impression from a low viewpoint or humble
position (cf. G.45a, bird’s-eye view).
a little worm will lie under a big stone Commenting on a person’s pretensions; an
exhortation not to be overawed.
even a worm will turn [1546] Expect violent reaction, even from the lowliest, if
provoked.
he who makes himself a worm should not holler when trampled on [Ill] Those
who belittle themselves should not complain if others treat them accordingly.
hasn’t as much land as would choke a worm [Ire]
be worms’ meat Be dead and buried.
Spanish worm The nail on which a carpenter jars a saw or chisel.
has an angle-twitch in/till her rewden [reed-bonnet] Is slightly mad [Dev].
stunt [ill-tempered, stubborn—Yks Lin Not Rut Cmb Ken] as a dead worm

G.40 Fleas

fleck (n) [flea—Bnff] Small, frivolous person.
not care/give/worth a flea
not care/give/worth the lungs of a flea/louse
innocent as a fleyk [flea—sLan]
cobby [nimble, brisk, cheerful—nEng Stf Bdf]/ crouse [lively—Sc Ire nEng]/light
[Cum]/ nimmel [nimble—NCy]/wick [lively—Yks] as a lop [flea—Yks]
peart [lively, brisk, sprightly; healthy, likely to survive—passim] as a lop [Dur eYks
Lin Nhp] Of a baby.
fit [eYks Not]/wick [lively (of a dog)—nLin Not] as a flea
hasna the spirit o’ a flea [Sc]
the flea’s eyebrows! The last word in acuteness.
flea’s instep Something quite insignificant.
flea-bite/lop-fret [eYks] Trivial injury; slight expense or inconvenience; trifling
affair.
little as a flea-bite [nYks]
 flea-bitten—of a horse With small grey spots on its coat. Usually, and variously, used
darker flecks or spots on a paler ground.
bitten with… Enthusiastic for; devoted to a craze, hobby etc.
what’s biting you? Why are you so preoccupied, bad-tempered etc.?
uneasy as a flea in a sock
take the fleas their fittle [=victual] Go to bed [seWor].
stick like a flea in a fleece [1872] Persevere.
close as/like a flea in a blanket Snug and well-suited.
fleas and a girning [grumbling, moaning] wife are wakerife [wakeful, restless] bedfellows [Sc]
flea-bag Soldier’s sleeping-bag.
busy/jumpy as a bag of fleas [Suf]
sit on a bag of (hen-)fleas Sit very uncomfortably.
trails up and down like a fleyk in a glue-pot
lost—like a lop in a barn/church [eYks]/coal-pit [wYks] Of someone living in a house too large for them.

sent away with a flea/fleighk/fleyk/fleck [= flea—Lan]/lop in his ear With a stinging rebuke; defeated in argument. ‘Fleen in myne eres’ [c.1430].
put a bug in…’s ear[Amer] Impart confidential information.
have a bug in the ear Have an idée fixe, ‘a bee in the bonnet’.
have a flea in the lug [Lth] Be restless, giddy.
Cotherstone—where they hopple lops and knee-band spiders [NCy] Imputing that they hobble very small beasts there.
so bare (of vegetation) you could flog [drive with whip] a flea across it [Aus]
he who sleeps with dogs shall rise with fleas [1573] Bad company brings bad habits or disadvantages that are soon felt.
a flea on a dog’s back [Amer] Someone of little account in the organisation.
in a flea’s leap Promptly.
flisked [=frisked, leapt] off like a lop [Nhb]
jump (n) Sudden rise, often of prices.

G.41 Lice

lice The hairy seeds in hips [Rnf] (because they make you itch).
ousy Vile, disgusting, offensive.
ousy with [1843] Having an over-abundance of something.
not care/give/worth a louse [c.1380]/dog-louse [wYks]/three skips of a louse [1624] crous[e] [lively, bold, keen, proud—Sc Ire nEng]/ mean/poor/proud [wYks] as a louse fit as a biddy [a louse—Lan]
brag [proud—Lan]/brisk/busy as a body-louse
has not the pluck of a louse Of a timid person, lacking in spirit.
crouse as a new-washed/washed [Sc wYks: 1641] louse Of ragged people who get new clothes; of any sudden improvement; brisk, cheerful.
sure [secure] as louse in bosom [Chs: c. 1610–40]/Pomfret [=Pontefract, west Yorkshire: 1631] Hence ‘bosom friends’; ‘your bosom friends are turned into back-biters’.

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a hungry louse bites hard [WVir] The needy are all the more demanding.
a louse not killed is sure to bite again [Ont]
nit (n) Stupid fool.
dead [of animals—NCy Nrf Shr Oxf Glo Brks wSom Ken]/poor [wYks] as (a) nit(s)
nits will be lice [1700] Children will take after their parents, especially in their worst features.
there’s more than nits and lice in his head That is, brains as well!
needs his/her head examined! [1949] The comment when a person has done or said something that brings their sanity into question.
he needs to have a clean/heal pow [head] that ca’s his neighbour’s nitty now [=noll, lousy head—Sc: 1621] If you criticise you need to be above criticism yourself.
drive a louse to London for the hide and tallow Be very greedy and grasping.
he’d skin a lop [Yks]/louse for its hide/the tallow/creesh [=grease—Ags: sSc Nhb] (As/ from the above.) Hence:
skin-the-louse [Sc] A skinflint [Kcb].
flay a louse [1591] (As above.)
‘ware skins’, quoth Grubber, when he flung the louse into the fire A friendly warning to watch out.
bats [blinks] his eyes like a louse in the ess [ =ash: Shr]
prick a louse Be a tailor.
a rogue’s wardrobe is harbour for a louse [1626] (To wit, the rogue.)
he goes as if dead lice dropped off him Slowly.
it won’t last a louse by the tail Not long.
thou guesses within two tumbles of a louse [sLan] Very near the mark.
louse up Spoil, make a mess of…

G.42a Ticks
tick (n) [sheep-tick] Repulsive, despicable person.
full/tight as a tick [n&cYks wSom nwDev Amer] Often of one who has drunk too much; hence, tight=drunk.
taut/tote [fat, inflated, fit to burst—EAn Glo Dev] as a tick
tighter than a tick Very mean, uncommunicative.
bonny [plump, well-filled out—Yks St Helens, Lan]/sharp [quick in jumping on and taking a bite—Cum] as a sheep-ked [sheep-tick—nYks]
twangs [walks crookedly, wears a shoe down on one side, turns toes out while walking—Lan] and shails [walks awkwardly, staggers, stumbles, shuffles—Lan Yks Dur Morte d’Arthur Lin (1400) Wil Dor Glo] like a sheep-louse
G.42b Bugs

**bug** (n) An irritating intruder or error in an incorrectly made computer program; a snag in equipment or machinery; a concealed microphone for phone-tapping or secretly recording other conversations.

**bug** (v) Install such equipment in a room.

**batty/crazy as a bed-bug** [Amer]

**cosy/snug as a bug in a rug/blanket** [1769]

**cute as a bug’s ear** [Amer]

G.42c Leeches

**horse-leech** [larger than the common leech and, contrary to belief, less of a blood-sucker: EAn] Insatiable person; extortioner.

*I was never horsleche for bloude* [Elizabeth I, Letter—October 1593] Bloodthirsty, cruel.

**fastened on like a clemmed** [starving] leech [Lan]

**stick like a leech**

**bloodsucker** Parasite that drains its host’s resources; lazy member of the crew; extortioner.

G.42d Other parasites

** parasite** (n) One who benefits from, or even lives on the work or earnings of others without working himself.

**worm-i’-the-cheek** [Sc] Toothache.

G.43a Freshwater fish

**thrive like fish** Prosper and grow healthy.

**drink like a fish** Very thirstily.

**drunk/dumb/mute** [c.1450]/nervous [Calif]/ sound [c.1300]/wet/whish/whist [silent—Sc nEng]/whole [healthy: c.1300] as a **fish**
wet fish Feeble, inept, effete individual. wet (adj) has the same meaning.

fish-eyed [Amer] Cold and calculating.

fish-eye lens Wide-angle photographic lens (so-called from the convex shape which resembles the contour of a fish’s eye).

tight as a fish’s arsehole (Because it has to be watertight!)

fish-bellied [Nhb] With the underneath curved, like the belly of a fish.

thick as the spawn of a fish

has shot his fry [Sc Nh b Yks Lan War Shr] Has made a last effort; has done the worst or most he can; has collapsed after a good initial showing [wYks]; has done his utmost [neLan]; has lost the good opinion of others [wYks]. Cotgrave [1611] renders it il n’en peut plus. (Like a spent or rotten fish.)

fish bred in dirty pools will taste of mud The effect of bad environment.

the fish that sooms [swims] in a dub will ay taste of mud [Sc] (As/from the above.)

big fish in a little pool Someone only important by comparison.

small fry Insignificant, unimportant persons, things etc.; young children.

some fish, some frogs Some good, some bad—variously.

fish-tail (v) Cause the tail of an aircraft or the back of a vehicle to swing from side to side in order to reduce speed. (The action of a swimming fish.)

fish-tail (n) [Amer] Flare at the bottom of a skirt.

dead fish always go/swim with the stream [1937] A lifeless sort of person agrees with the majority.

G.43b Eels

yellow-belly [1787] Fenman (from the yellowbellied eels which abound in the fen ditches).


all that breed in the mud are not eels Do not judge from environment only.

mud chokes no eels [1732] Foul conditions are no punishment to those who are used to them.

vanish—like eels into weeds

G.43c Pike

better be the head of a pike than the tail of a sturgeon

they agree like pikes in a pond—ready to eat up one another
G.43d Trout

as a trout
caller [cool, fresh—Sc] as a trout Of plump, rosy people.
old trout [1897] Frumpish older woman (but not too elderly) who seems old-fashioned in clinging to the style of her own heyday, but who has attained sufficient social consequence that she no longer needs to keep up with the trendy (like a large trout which, although no longer as smart, quick or graceful as smaller fish, is well-established in the pool and enjoys a good life there).

G.43e Other fish

chub [short, fat river fish; hence, ‘chubby’] Person foolish through inexperience; callow youth.
sound as a roach [Lin Not Der Lei War]
roach-backed; roach-bellied Humped or paunched; with convex profile.
the longer the pinkeen [small minnow—IrGael] swims, the less he sweats With experience comes skill and less effort is needed.
sound/straight as a loach/loitch [Lakel Yks] (Refers to its direct line of swimming.)
miller’s thumb [1599] A small child with a large head (like the fish).
get the spike Get into a temper (like a perch or stickleback).
moss-back/mossy-back [name given to a large inactive fish, often a bass, that develops a growth of water-weed on its back—Amer] An old-fashioned, conservative farmer, often in a remote area in the western states of America. First applied to those men who went into hiding to avoid conscription in the Civil War, from the idea that they laid low till the moss grew on their backs.
mossy [Amer] Very conservative, reactionary, old-fashioned. (As/from the above.)

G.44a Reptiles, snakes

reptilian/reptile Mean, despicable, grovelling, repulsive.
slink away Depart stealthily or guiltily, intending to go unnoticed. (Originally [AS] only of snakes and reptiles, but by C14 of animals and people.)
creepy Disconcerting, disturbing, producing feelings of squeamishness, revulsion, even horror.
snake (v) (about) Evade pursuit when in the air by, as it were, wriggling the plane about.

snake (v) (off) Depart unobtrusively (as do most snakes).
could crawl under/lower than a snake’s belly [Aus] Despicable, morally repulsive.
snake-hips [Amer] Smooth, sinuous dancer or runner.
column snake Soldiers in single file.
insinuate [<Lat insinuare=wriggle, slide into]

snaking The action of a mowing cutter-bar when loose in its bed; of a plane’s rudder or a trailer—wringing from side to side instead of following true (from a snake’s motion).
kink [wriggle—IW] like a snake

slive [slide, creep—nEng] up to Ingratiate yourself in an underhand manner.
spawn—ideas, art forms etc. Produce abundantly something unwelcome.

slough off Shed, discard what is no longer fit for the purpose.
gone to a slough [Lakel wYks] Become very thin.
could charm the skin off a snake! Of a very persuasive person.
a snake in the grass [1386] Some treachery lurking, unseen danger; treacherous deceiver [Lei War], secret informer.


snake (in the tunnel) [1972] Narrow range of fluctuation in currency exchange rates.

hold a serpent by the tail Act recklessly, foolishly.
speak with a forked tongue Say one thing and mean another.

snake-bitten [Amer] Ineffective, incapacitated; dogged by bad luck.
a man once bitten by a snake will jump at the sight of a rope in his path [Texas] Painful experiences produce heightened nervousness.

every man has got to kill his own snakes [Texas] Must do his own work himself.

a caution [warning] to snakes! An outlandish costume or eccentric character (implying that such a one would be a likely molester of snakes).

G.44b Adders

taisy/teasy as an adder [nWil Cor] Fretful, fractious, ill-tempered, troublesome.
bitter/crazy as a hagworm [viper—NCy]
eat your own side, speckle-back! [Hmp] A New Forest reproof to greedy eaters. (A girl who shared her breakfast with a snake said this when it took too much.) A variation, used to children who want more than their fair share, is ‘Get on your own side, do, grey pate!’ [Oxf].

G.44c Lizards, newts, turtles

green/cold [Calif]/lish [quick, supple, easy-moving—nEng: Cum Wm] as a lizard
leap like a lizard [Aus] Dart forward.
better the head of a lizard than the tail of a lion
lounge lizard Social idler; one who angles for easy patronage.
hard [Lan]/rotten as an asker [newt—nw&midEng: lizard] (From the lizard’s ability to shed its tail to avoid capture.)
cold enough to freeze/ugly enough to poison askers [nStf]
dumb/drunk/tight as a newt (From its apparently loose-limbed and relaxed movement in water.)
sure as cooters [turtles, terrapins—NC Geo Ala Flor Msri Miss Ark] crawl before a rain
drunk as a cooter [Amer]

G.44d Toads
toad (n) Disgusting, hateful person.
fow [foul]/hateful [1548]/rumped up [hunched up—Dev]/ugly as a toad
as devoid of gumption as a toad is of feathers [Lin Not] ‘As free through brass as a toad through feathers’ [wYks]=as lacking in money…
like trying to get feathers off a toad [Cor Ont] Of an impossibility; hopeless request.
dead as a toadskin [Cum Yks]
awkward as a grund-toad [=ground-toad—Lin] Of one difficult to get on with.
hard as a ground-/groundsle-toad [Lin Stf midwEng] Of one looking strong and healthy.
black as a turf-rick toad [Cor]
hard as a grundit [=grounded, buried] toad [Yks] Referring to a hibernating toad, stiff and rigid.
full as a toad of poison
gloat [swell—IW]/swell like a toad [1541]
blowed up like a toad upon the dew [Cor]
full of anger as a blown toad [Chs]
turgid—style etc. Inflated, overcrowded, full of pompous rhetoric and overstatement.
toad-in-the-hole [Lei Hnt Nhp War EAn Oxf Wil wSus Hmp Dev Cor] A dish of sausages or lumps of meat baked in batter.
lazy as a toad at the bottom of a well
better a big toad/frog in a small puddle than a small toad in a big puddle [Ont NY Mich SC]

pine away like a toad on a prick [thorn—possibly in a shrike’s larder: sLan] Die of a lingering illness.
fit to skin a paddock! [toad—Cum] Of a strong wind.
skin a toad for the hide and tallow [nYks] Act with extreme meanness.
blink like a toad in a hailstorm [Tenn Calif] Stare blankly.
blown about like a Mulfra toad in a gale of wind [Cor]
all of a motion like a Mulfra toad on a hot showl [=shovel—Cor]
sit like a toad on a shovel [nLin]/chopping-block/hurdle [Wor Glo] Temporarily and precariously, as on a horse or otherwise.
toadstool Ground fungus with single stem and pillow top, originally and wisely imagined as toad-stools to deter children from sampling them, many being poisonous.
like a toad in muslin [n&nwLin] Of a vulgar woman in fine clothes.
proud as a toad with a side-pocket
as much need of it as a toad/dog of a side-pocket [Lin Glo] ‘Don’t want that no more than a toad do want side-pockets’ [Cor].
I’d titter [sooner, earlier, rather—Yks] take a toad by the face than… Expressing great repugnance for.

G.44e Frogs
cold as a frog/paddock [frog, toad—Sc Ire nEng Suf Ess Ken]/quilkin [frog—Cor]
clam [=clammy, moist—Lin]/clammy [Cor] as a frog Of a hand.
I can never spin tow enough to please him; he’s sic a reeden [peevish, irritable—Cum Wm Yks Lan] paddock [general term of reproach—Sc Wm: Ann Wheeler (1735–1804), of Arnside Tower]
frogman/frogwoman Someone who dives and swims wearing flippers shaped like frogs’ feet.
gleg [keen, eager—Cum Yks Lin Nhp] as a puddock [=paddock—Sc nEng] after a shower [Dmb]
(blate [shy, timid, diffident—Sc nEng] and) mim [prim, prudish—Sc sLan EAn] as a May puddock [wSc: 1823] (From the belief that in May, when frogs cease to croak, their mouths are sealed.)
hard as a frog at harvest [Lan]
paddock-cheeks Puffy, yellow cheeks.
you can’t stick a feather in a frog’s tail and make a peacock out of it [Kenty Tenn]
A superficial alteration alters nothing.
  bare as a frog is of feathers
  naked as a frog [1626]
  fine/fit as a frog’s hair [Amer]
  it is easy to make a frog jump into water if that’s what he wants to do [Ill]
  frank and gowdy [=gaudy] like a frog in a dump [deep pool of water—Sc Yks]
Quite free [nYks].
weather meet to sette paddocks abroode [outdoors] in [J.Heywood, Proverbs—1546]
  how are you frogging? [proceeding, as a frog or baby crawling along] How are you progressing, getting along? [War]
  leap/loup like a puddock [=paddock: Slk]
  paddock-loup [Nhb] A two-boy somersault performed by each holding the feet of the other and then rolling over and over.
  leap-frog [1599] Children’s game or exercise where one jumps over the bent back of another who is stooping with hands on knees.
you cannot tell from the looks of a frog how far he can jump [Can Amer]
frog-march (v) Carry a prisoner by the limbs, face down between four men; later extended to a march where the victim’s arms are held from behind and he is propelled forward by knee-blows in his back.
  have a memory like a frog-tail [Lin] Little or none.
  like a frog on a chopping-block [1678] In splendid, if precarious, isolation.
  pert as a frog on a washing-block [1732]
  more spawn [luck—Cum] than two frogs!
blown up like a wilky [=quilk in, frog—Dev Cor] Over-full of food.
  like a tom-toddy, all head and no body [Cor]

G.45a Birds

blithe as a bird on a cherry bough
  peart [lively, brisk, sprightly; healthy, likely to survive; also (of persons) skilled, nimble-fingered, open, clear, straightforward—passim] as bird on bough [Wil Som Dor]
  like a bird Swift and easily.
  bird-legs [Amer] Thin, bony legs.
  bird-brained/bird-witted Having only feeble intelligence.
  bird of his own brain Conception of his own.
way out (with the birds) In a fantasy world of one’s own. (As/from the above.)
(strictly) for the birds Worthless; fit only for the gullible.
peck (v) Kiss perfunctorily; eat fastidiously.
feel peckish Feel rather hungry.
keep your beak/pecker up [1853] Stay cheerful, do not lose heart. (A bird that mopes or is sickly hangs its head and lets its beak go down. See also K.58b.)
down in the pecker [Brks] In low spirits. (See above.)
hold him with his bill in the water Keep him in suspense.
it’s the early bird that gets the worm [1636] Advice to those who come too late to get what they wanted.
the first bird, the first eass [earthworm—Dor NH RI] (As/from the above, first come first served.)
God sends every bird its food, but he does not throw it into the nest [WVir Wis Oreg]
fain/glad as a fowl of a fair day

fayn as foul of fair morewen

[W.Langland, Piers the Plowman—1377]

all of a twitter In a flutter of nervous excitement. Hence, twitter the nerves = generate a nervous anxiety [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—17 November 1830].
jargon [<Fr jargon=a twittering of birds] Specialised language, usually incomprehensible to the layman.
refrain [<Prov refrain=repetitions in birdsong] A regularly recurring line or chorus reminiscent of the repeated phrases of the song thrush.
the scales fell from his eyes He saw what he had previously been blind to. (‘Scales’ are a film or flake covering certain insects’ eyes and the eyes of certain birds. See Acts ix.18.)
bird’s-eye view An overall, comprehensive view.
the topmost/highest branch is not the safest perch/roost [1563] Higher jobs, appointments carry greater risks.
pierk/perk (v) [=perch—Cum Wm nLan] Take up a point of vantage; enter a hiding place.
pitch/throw/turn over his perch [1594]/knock him off his perch Disconcert, upset, ruin, end, kill him.
tip over the perch Die; be ruined.
drop/fall/hop off the perch Die.
fall off the sticks [Fif] Die.

come/get off your perch Be more conciliatory, humble and accessible.
dight [wipe clean—Sc Ire nEng Sus] the neb [beak, nose] and fly away/up Take your departure (like birds that wipe their beaks on the ground and then fly up to roost); give up whatever you have been doing and depart; you have done enough harm, now go [Sc].
sticky-beak (v) [Aus] Take too much interest in other folk’s affairs.
keep bill under wing [1548] Stay quiet, inactive (like a bird asleep).
**G.45b On the wing**

wing (v) Give added speed. ‘Fear winged his steps.’

lend wings to… Speed up.

wing (n) Important part, usually at one side—of an army, building, collar etc.

on the wing [1622] Ready to depart (like a flock of birds about to migrate).

aisle [<Lat ala=wing]

volatile [<Lat volatilis=flying] Flighty, excitable—especially of personalities whose emotions are quickly aroused and as quickly alter.

gull-wing Car door that opens upwards.

make not thy tail broader than thy wings [1597] Do not have too many attendants.

however far a bird flies, it carries its tail with it Whatever a man’s achievements, his faults and his past are still with him.

fly laich [low] and fly lang [Sc] The less ambitious survive better.

mischief has swift wings Travels quickly.

misfortunes come on wings and depart on feet Are quick to come but slow to go.

the bird must flutter that flies with one wing/the bird maun flichter that has but ae wing [Sc Nhb] Don’t expect perfect performance from one with a handicap.

don’t try to fly without wings Don’t attempt anything without the proper means or resources.

free as a bird in air

ill news flies apace Bad news travels fast.

the bird has/is flown [1562] When a wanted person evades arrest by an early departure.

spoken words are like flown birds; neither can be recalled [NY] (See also C.2c, the spoken word…)

bird of passage A wanderer, one who does not stay long in one place.

flop Failure; collapse (as when an alighting bird flops down; or perhaps there is a sense-connection with tossing pancakes, when a venture that fails is said to fall flat, a ‘flop’).

flag Lose vigour, droop (as when birds’ wings flag and they fly with decreasing energy)—of wit or any performance when it begins to fall off.

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**G.45c Feathers**

pen (n) (From the time when quill pens were used in writing.)

light [1535]/nimble as a feather

light/soft as down

fluff [1906] Journalistic or sentimental writing that is light and trivial.

fluffy [War] Pretentious, but lightweight and unreliable.

like a feather on a hill Of an inconstant man.
feather-brained/-headed/-pated [nYks] With very little sense, bird-brained.

feather-legged Terrified.

feather-edged [wYks] Of a stone thicker along one edge than the other.

in full feather With plenty of money (like a bird not in moult).

he’s frae the tap o’ the wing, but ye’re a grey neck-quill [Sc] He’s a better man than you.

not have a feather to fly with Lose all.

he would fain fly but wanted feathers [1549] Had the ambition, but not the ability to realise it.

grow your feathers Grow your hair longer (a privilege of prisoners approaching their release date).

gain more feathers Grow larger—of rumour etc.

clear your feathers [Stf War Wor Glo] Get out of debt.

singe his feathers [1664] Incur insult or injury through taking risks.

ruffle his feathers Annoy, disconcert him. Hence, ‘ruffled’=with his usual composure lost; ‘unruffled’=with no loss of aplomb or control.

smooth your ruffled/rumpled feathers Recover equanimity after discomposure.

plume/preen yourself on…[1386] Pride/congratulate yourself on something.

plume of feathers An inconsequential person, all show and no substance.

cut a feather Cut a dash. (When a ship is going fast and making a foamy ripple from the cut-water, it is said to ‘cut a feather’. See also C.2b.)

has a feather in his mouth Shows his bad temper, while keeping it under control. (As/ from the above. The foam was held to be a sign of past or future bad weather.)

strike with a feather and stab with a rose Chastise playfully, inflict a token punishment.

crop the feathers of… Strip of bravery and pomp.

pull the feathers off… Defame.

fine feathers make fine birds [1592] A recommendation of good clothing and appearance.

birds of a feather flock together [1578] People of the same interests and character associate together.

if every bird took back its own feathers, you’d be naked! To one whose clothing and property have come from other people.

bare as a bird’s arse Of a bankrupt; one who has lost all their possessions [Lin].

dry as a bird’s arse [Aus]

every bird is known by its feathers You may judge someone’s character from their appearance.

overlap Where two or more disciplines or areas of knowledge or influence share common ground, they are said to ‘overlap’ in the same way as birds’ feathers, fish scales and roofing slates overlap each other.
G.45d Nests

feather by feather birds build nests Many small contributions add up to a large achievement.

little by little the bird makes her nest (As/ from the above.)
he would build a nest in your ear [Ire] Clever enough to outwit you.
you can’t keep the birds from flying over, but you can keep them from building nests in your hair [Can Amer] Insults, injuries, sorrows will come, but must not become obsessions.

nest (n) Of goblets, drawers, tables etc.—a series of articles fitting into each other. A nest of guns is an emplacement containing several machine guns.
every bird likes its own nest You must expect people to praise and prefer their own homes and possessions.

feather/line your nest [C16] Provide for your own future comfort; seize the opportunity for personal enrichment; of a girl, grow pubic hair [Aus].
a little bird is content with a little nest [1616] Small-minded or unambitious folk are easily satisfied.
a warm nest on a rotten bough [F.Kilvert—11 June 1876] A happy, comfortable life or home, but an insecure one, not likely to last for long.

nestle together Huddle together companionably.
it’s an ill/ugly [sHmp IW] bird that fouls its own nest [1250] Do not defame home or country.
dirten/dritten [Sc] fouls their nest Spoil things for themselves; expose family failings to the world; be unable to return where they have misbehaved; disgrace themselves at their lodgings.

like a flash of fowl-shit [Cum] Suddenly. (A flash of rain is a sudden, short shower.)

there are no birds in last year’s nests Things change; do not expect still to find youth in one now grown old; the past can never live like the present, nor can we ever re-enter it.

G.45e Eggs

ill bird lays an ill egg Of inherited faults.
sure as eggs in April

gain to the nest [Chs] Begin to have a family about you.
hatch—a plot etc. Bring to working point, maturity; develop.
incubation period That preparatory time required to bring an idea, scheme, plan etc. to the point when it starts to be active.
every bird must hatch its own eggs None can delegate family responsibilities or personal work.
in the shell Undeveloped; still in embryo.
die in the shell [sLan] Lead a lonely, miserable life.
gaddled—brain Confused, unsound (like a rotten egg).
quiet as an addled egg [sLan]
as good be an addled egg as an idle bird Better unborn than useless. [Lyly, Euphues 1. 325—1579]
empty as a blown egg
scarcely out of the shell yet [Sc: 1542] Still very young.
toom [empty Sc] as an egg-shell [Yks]
shell (n) Exterior husk or appearance only, devoid of the life or content to give it a true identity, purpose etc. Variously used, as in the remains of a building; the carcase of a ship; a car body; the unlined body of a coat or jacket [Amer]; the thin casing of pastry that lines a pie-dish; a company that is still quoted on the Stock Exchange after it has ceased to trade.
egg and bird [Myo] From first to last; from youth to maturity.
never good, egg or bird [Sc] No good, either in youth or age.

G.45f Chicks

keep a nestling Be restless and anxious (like a parent bird with young).
naked as a gorpin [new-hatched bird—Teesdale, Yks]/gorlin [Cum]
bare as a balchin [unfledged nestling—Lei]/ bubbling/bublin [unfledged chick—Lin]
all eyes and guts, like a balchin blackbird Of a fat baby.
his wings are sprouting! Implying that his reformed behaviour qualifies him for angelhood.
in abeyance [<OF aber=gape for…] In a state of waiting or suspense. (Via the French legal term referring to the aspiration of an heir to an undecided property.)
gape, gorbie, and thou’ll get a worm [Cum]/ gape, gorling, and thou’s be fed [Wm nYks] Keep on asking and you’ll get what you don’t want. Also a jocular rebuke to someone with their mouth open.
agape—for news etc. Eagerly awaiting.
look over the nest [Sc] Begin to be independent.
top bird of the nest [Rnf] Pride of the family.
unfledged Undeveloped, callow.
fledged/new-fledged Just arriving at maturity; recently independent.
fully fledged—accountant, pilot etc. Trained, competent, qualified.
flapper [newly fledged duckling or partridge] A very young prostitute.
nestling/nestlecock [wYks] Youngest child.
peck him out of the nest [Nhp] Send him out into the world to earn his living.
spread/stretch her wings [1864] Enjoy greater freedom; develop her full potential.
he bats his wings a long time before he flies [Peb 1910] Of an over-hesitant person.
give it a fly [Aus] Give it a trial, a chance; have a go.
flight of fancy etc. Aspiring, extravagant attempt to go beyond the normal bounds.
fligged and flown [=fledged and flown—n&midEng] Absconded, suddenly departed [Yks].
flushed and fled [=fledged and flown—Cor] Of children grown up and left home.
under her wing [1250] In her mothering care (from how a mother bird gathers her chicks under her wings to protect them). ‘Take a person under your wing’=adopt as your protégé.
empty-nester [Amer 1962] Parent whose children have grown up and left home.

G.46a Ravens

roupy [hoarse—Yks]/hoarse as a raven
croak (v) Die. (From the similarity between the death-rattle and a raven’s croak.)
raven-black
raven’s bill A T-shaped tool used by hurdle-makers [mid&wEng].
to the raven her own chick is white [Ire] Family loyalty, partiality.
small ravens must have food A justification for a heartless action (as if by a raven for killing a lamb).
yong ravens must have foode

[Shaks, MWW I.iii—1597]

G.46b Crows

crow (n) Clergyman (because of black clothing).
black/hoarse/lean [wYks]/poor/ragged [wYks]/ roupit [hoarse—Sc] as a corbie
[crow—Sc]/ crow/crake [wYks]/craw [=crow—Sc]
crow-poor [swLin]
they’re a bonny pair—as the crow said o’ his legs [Sc]
a crow’s age [Not] A long time.
midden-crow [NCy] Low-born person.
dirty as a dawp [=dowp, crow—Nh Dur Cum Wm Yks]
a crow is no whiter for being washed [Mich Ohio Miss]
crake (v) [=croak, cry harshly—Sc Ire nEng Shr Nhp War Som Dor Dev Cor] Complain, fret, whimper for something.
pull a crake [grumbling, complaint] ower his lugs [eYks] Call him to account for a minor offence,
fast [secure—Lan] safe as a crow in a gutter [1579]
strut like a crow in a gutter [1579]
as easily fluttered [=fluttered, alarmed] as a field of crows [Forfar, Ags]
sit like crows in the mist Sit in the dark.
white crow Rarity.
crow’s nest [1818] Look-out near the top of a ship’s mast.
mouth like the bottom of a crow’s nest, all shit and twigs
crow thinks its own bird fairest/white/every crow thinks its own chick whitest [Sc Ire nEng Can Amer: 1513] Parents’ opinions are too doting or partial.
like crow like egg [1536] The child takes after its parents.
thou’d wonder wurr if the crows built in thi head and took thi nose for a nest-egg [sLan] To one who is unwarrantably surprised.

ye wad ferlie [wonder—Sc] mair if the crows bigg’d in yer cleaving [fork of human body—Sc Nhb] an’ flew away with the nest [Sc] (As/ from the above.)
hungry as a June crow (Because it is then feeding its young.)
all gab and guts [Ant Dwn nEng Lei Shr]/all guts and gob [Nhb] like a young crow

Often of those who eat and talk at the same time.
crow-hearted Of cabbages without centres.
crow’s feet Wrinkles at the corners of the eye.

So longe mote ye live, and alle proude,
Til crowes feet be growe under your ye

[G.Chaucer, T&C II.402—1374]

like a crow’s tail, you grow backwards [Sc] Never any improvement—at school etc.
craw was born there A flippant reason for someone’s attachment to a remote or unpleasant house (the best that can be said in its favour).
crow-gaper [Hmp] Very hot day.
night brings crows home To latecomers.
as the crow flies In a straight line.
too steep for a crow to fly down without breeching [braking—Aus]
on the crow road [Sc] Dead or dying; fit only for carrion.
crow-bait [Amer] An old or worn-out horse.
give/make the crow(s) a pudding [NCy: 1598] Die; fall suddenly from prosperity [Nhb].
corbies dinna gather without they smell carrion [Sc] The comment on a gathering of gossips or trouble-makers.
corbie-steps/craw-steps [Sc]/crow-steps Architectural feature like steps going up the slope of a gable.
a crow in a cage won’t talk like a parrot [NY] Change of environment does not bring change of character.
carrion will not kill/poison a crow There are some people to whom nothing comes amiss, applied to greedy eaters. ‘No carrion will kill a crow’=nothing can be too bad for him!
have a crow’s eye [Aus] Be alert.
crows do not pick out crows’ eyes [1573] The wicked are friends together.
the tae corbie winna pyke oot the tither’s ee [Sc] (As/from the above.) it is kittle [tricky, difficult, requiring caution] shooting at corbies and clergy [Sc Nhb Dur: 1737]
gone corbie [Lnk] Dead man.
if you had not been among the crows, you would not have been shot Keep bad company and you will be treated like them.
pull/pluck a crow with… Tackle someone about a disagreeable or awkward matter; quarrel with them [Sc Eng, c. 1460]; beat, pull someone’s hair, shatter their pretensions—like pulling the feathers from a bird [wYks].
have a craw to pull with someone [Sc Yks Lin] Have a grievance to settle with them.
I’ve a crow to pick/pluck with you (and a poke to put the feathers in) [c.1460] An accusation to which there can be neither answer nor evasion.
wait like a chaw [=chough—Cor]

G.46c Rooks

rook (v) Cheat, swindle (from the C16 use of rook (n)=swindler).
gape like [Cor]/hoarse as [Shr] a young rook
ding [knock, thump] down the nests and the rooks will flee away [Sc nEng] Disperse the villains by destroying their hide-outs. A slogan much used during the Reformation.
put him where the rooks won’t shit on him Underground.

G.46d Jackdaws

jackdaw (n) A snapper-up of gaudy trifles.
kae (n) [jackdaw—Sc] Mischievous, thievish person; small, neat body [Bnff].
kae-witted [Sc] Scatter-brained.
wise as a daw [1525] Very foolish.
daw (n) Chattering fool [nLin]; sluggard [Sc].
cackle like a caddow/cadowe [jackdaw—Nhb Yks Lin EAn Hrf]
a jackdaw in peacock’s feathers Someone behaving out of character; making vain pretensions.
waie worth ill company quo’ the kae [Sc: 1721] Said when criticism comes from someone just as blameworthy.
dawplucker Slanderer, critic. (As in G.46b, pull/pluck a crow…)
G.46e Jays

jay (n) One gaudily or absurdly dressed; a chatterer.

peart [lively, brisk, sprightly; healthy, likely to survive; also of persons, skilled, nimble-fingered, open, clear, straightforward—passim] as a jay [Bdf]

jay-walker [Amer 1917] Pedestrian who, by disregarding road-safety imperils himself and others. (From jay=stupid person [Amer].)

naked as a jay-bird [=blue jay—Amer Can] (‘Bird’ surviving from the period when bird= chick, jay chicks being featherless when new-hatched.) The simile has given rise to:

jay-bird [Aus 1970s] Woman who does her housework in the nude (see above).

jaybirds don’t rob their own nests [NY NJ SC]

pleased as a jay with a bean [Glo]

skrike [shriek-squawk—sLan] like a jay

ricks [chatters—Yks Lan Chs] as bad as a jay [Chs]

G.46f Magpies

magpie (n) A chatterer; scolding woman [War Cor]; an acquisitive person, inveterate collector [1903]; an Anglican bishop (because of his black-and-white vestments [1645]).

mag (v and n) Scold, abuse(r), chatter(box).

keck-meg [=cackle-magpie—Lan] Chatterbox.

proud as a magpie

skrike like a pianet [squawk like a magpie—wYks]

noisy as a nest of pianets [Lan]

peart [lively, brisk, sprightly; healthy, likely to survive; also of persons, skilled, nimble-fingered, open, clear, straightforward—passim] as a pynot [magpie—sLan]/pyet [magpie—Sc Cum nYks]

And she was proud and pert as is a pye

[G.Chaucer, The Reves Tale ln. 3950—1386]

like the pyot, all guts and gangyls [all paunch and limbs—Bnff]

pyotred [Sc Yks] Freckled, piebald (because of the magpie’s black-and-white colouring).

magpie mind One attracted to trifles, gaudy trinkets.

chatter like a magpie

chelp [chattering cry, like that of a magpie—Cum Wm wYks sStf Der nLin Rut Nhp] Chattering, quarrelsome talk.

chitter like a flock of magpies [Cor]
G.47a Eagles

eagle-eyed Very keen-sighted. ‘under the eagle-eye of…’ [1603]=under someone’s close scrutiny and strict supervision.
- a\linebreak[0]quiline\linebreak[0]\linebreak[0] nose One hooked in the shape of an eagle’s beak.
- has a hook at every finger [Nhb] Of a greedy person.
- you cannot fly like an eagle with the wings of a wren Do not let your ambitions outstrip your ability.
- the eagle does not catch flies Implying that some opponent is beneath regard.
- eagles fly alone, sheep flock together Quality or nobility is likely to be lonely, non-gregarious.
- scream like a wounded eagle [Can] Make a loud protest, fuss.
- day the eagle screams/shits [Amer] Pay day. (The eagle is the symbol of US government.)

G.47b Hawks

lively/wild as a hawk
- hawk-eyed With keen sight.
- hawk-nosed With a hooked, aquiline nose.
- sparrowhawk (v) [1990] Pick up homeless youngster for sexual exploitation.

G.47c Kites, gleds and buzzards

kite (n) Rapacious person; sharper; flying toy held up by the wind and held down by its string (from the similarity of hovering).
- gled (n) [Bnff] Greedy person.
- hungry/kind (ironical) as a kite/gled [kite/ buzzard—Sc]
- tongue as glib as a gled [Bnff]
- tough as a kite’s sinews [Lan] Describing tough meat.
- yellow as a kite’s foot [Cor: 1509]
- gentle puddocks [=puttock, kite/buzzard] have long toes [1721] Do not despise an inactive authority; you could be apprehended at any time.
- ask a kite for a feather and she’ll say she has but just enough to fly with The rapacious are also avaricious.
no kite ever flew so high but what its tail followed it [Kenty] However high people rise in the world, their faults and failings are not forgotten. (See also G.45b, however far a bird flies…)

freeckled like a gled [Cum]

owes a pudding to the glade/gled [Sc: 1721] Of a dying animal.

a hungry kite sees a dead horse afar off Greedy folk are naturally skilled at discovering what is to their advantage.

a hungry eye sees far [nIre] The ambitious person plans ahead.

they wadna be a jiffy o’ gripping ye like a gled, they’re no sae ae-haunt [one-handed—Sc] Don’t underestimate them.

it’s no for naught that the gled whistles [Sc: 1721] There is some reason behind their talk; an ulterior motive is suspected.

buzzard [Amer] Nasty old man; arrogant, jealous, vindictive man; coward [Longtown, Cum 1900s].

G.48 Owls

owl (v) about Moon about out of doors after dark.

owl (n) Solemn dullard; wiseacre.

howlet (n) [Sc nEng Hrf] Fool; noisy or dirty person.

night-owl [Aus] Night-worker, someone who is out or active late at night.

blind (i.e. in daylight)/drunk/grave/mum [silent, secretive—passim]/sleepy/solemn/wise as an owl

crazy [NC Neb Calif]/drunk [Calif] as a hoot-owl

howlet-blind [Lnk] (Because of blinking in daylight.)

eyes sharp as a hoolet’s [wYks]


owl-eyed [Amer] Drunk.

poor as owls

stupid as owls [1892] Of farm-workers, drowsy from sleep.

all eyes and feathers, like a young owl [wSom] Of someone small but well padded-out with clothes.

thou favours [resemble—Lan] an old barn owl at’s moulting [sLan]

gloarin’ [glowering] like ony hullet in a loophole [wYks]

like an owl in an ivy bush [1553] Useless, inactive, with a wise but vacant look; having a large wig or bushy hair.

like an owl geeking [peering, spying, staring about—Cor] out of an ivy bush (As/from the above.)

hoolet looking out of a whin bush [Long-town, Cum 1900s] Unkempt person.

goggle (for gapes) like an owl at an eagle [wCor] Stare foolishly, look astonished.

blink like an air-up hoolet [=early-wakened owlet—eLth]/blinking like a hoolet [Gall]

lazy as a hoolet [wWor] (Because it makes no nest.)
kens nae a mavis [thrush] frae a madge howlet [barn owl: Sc]
owl-bus/owl-car/owl-taxi/owl-train [Amer] One plying between night and dawn.
owl-show [Amer] Late-night show.
darkness waukens the owl [Sc] Mystery leads to enquiry
hooting pudding [Nhp War sWor] A plum pudding with so few plums that they can be heard hooting at each other across the wide open spaces.

I was not born in/I live too close to a/the wood to be scared by an owl [1864] To one who has made an ineffectual attempt to startle.

he lives too close to/has lived too long in the wood(s) to be frightened by owls [1738]/oolet(s) [=howlet(s)—Shr Hrf Glo Som] Familiarity breeds contempt; don’t imagine he will be put off by the likes of…
surprise [<OF sur-prendre=take from above]

the owl can live in the wood as well as the kite, though he does fly a bit higher [Shr] There is no reason why people of different pretensions should not be neighbours.
an owl thinks its young the fairest [1576]/ prettiest and a rook the whitest Parents are blind to their children’s faults.

the owl thinks all her young ones beauties (As/from the above.)

they wad be fonder o’ cock birds than me who wad gie tippence for the stite [foolish talk—Abd] o’ a howlet The reply of a woman teased about a suitor.

G.49a Ducks

yellow as a duck’s foot [Lin]
they follow each other like ducks in a gutter

succeed Originally, purely in the sense of follow [<Lat sub-cedere=come close after]; thence, to happen; then to happen well= fortunately=happily—the commonest use today.
get/have all your ducks in a row [Amer] Be fully organised; so arrange things that success is likely, if not assured; carry out the plan to your own satisfaction.
go tail first, like Donegal ducks
drink only with the duck (i.e. water) [1377]
duck’s nest [Sus] Fire-grate with iron bars in the shape of a shallow nest.
out for a duck [1868] Without scoring a run in cricket. (The shape of a zero on the scoreboard is like a duck’s egg.)

lay an egg [Amer] Fail, achieve nothing.
make ducks and drakes of… Squander money. (The game is to skim coins or flat stones across the surface of water.)
took to it like a duck to water [1894] (As to your natural element.)

swim like a duck [1552] Well and naturally.
went off him like water off a duck’s back [1824] Produced no effect, was disregarded; was hardly noticed, let alone appreciated. Said when a person seems impervious to criticism etc.
G.49b Geese

fierce as a goose
  a grey goose [Sc] A large stone settled on the ground.
  a wild goose never lays a tame egg/reared a tame gosling [Ire] You cannot expect children to be better than their parents.
  as great a pity to see a woman greet/weep as to see a goose go barefoot [1548] (The natural condition.)

G.50a Swans

swan around [1942] Wander about aimlessly, although with apparent purpose, as swans appear to do on a lake.
  swan-neck The designation of certain bends in pipes named after the shape of a swan’s neck.
  black swan Curiosity, rarity, oddity, eccentric. (The use clearly antedates the discovery of Australia.)
  brank [hold the head high and affectedly—Cum] like a steg swan

G.50b Coots

coot (n) Stupid person; eccentric [Amer] (from the behaviour of breeding coots).
  bald/bare [=bald—nwLin]/black/crazy [Amer]/ lousy [Not Lin]/poor [Cor]/queer (especially describing homosexuals)/stupid as a coot ‘No more wit than a coot!’ [1548]

G.50c Bitterns

like a butterbump [bittern—nEng], foot longer than leg [Chs]
  roar like a bittern at a seg-root [=sedge-root] Of a noisy expression of impotent rage [Shr].
  cannot tell a bitterbump from a gill-hooter [owl—sLan]
  a bittern makes no good hawk Of one naturally unsuitable for whatever is being proposed.
G.50d Loons

crazy [UK Amer]/drunk as a loon [great northern diver] (Because of its wild cry, like maniacal laughter, and strange evasive actions.)
  straight as a loon’s leg [naut] Absolutely straight.
  chewed to loon-shit [Can] Ground or broken up, ruined—of road surfaces etc.

G.51 Herons

like the (cragget [long-necked—Sc]) heron, all guts and gangyls [lanky limbs; cf. gangul (< gang=go)=a lanky, loose-jointed, ungainly creature, person or beast] Fit only to eat and walk.
  crane-gutted [Nrf] Very thin.
  long and lanky as a herringsue [heron—Yks]
  like a molern [Oxf]/moll heron [=hen heron—midEng Mid Brks Wil], all legs and wings [Oxf]
  all legs and wings! [Lakel] Of an awkward, lanky youth; also of an overmasted ship.
  thruff-gutted as a herringsue [=through-gutted as a heron] (From the belief that carp can swim right through and into the water again.) Describing those whose meals do not satisfy them for long.
  cold enough to frizzle a yan (=freeze a heron) which will stand still in a pond in the coldest weather [Stf War Wor Glo]
  crane at…/crane the head [1799] Stretch the neck and peer (as does a heron [=crane] when fishing); hesitate before attempting a hedge or other difficulty.
  cran-craig(ie) [crane-neck(ed)—wSc] Long-necked.
  have a gut like a crane [Aus] Be very thirsty. (A misconception; they only appear to be always drinking.)
  pedigree [<OF pie de grue=crane’s foot: 1412] Family tree, genealogical table (from the mark denoting succession in a pedigree).

G.52a Thrushes

thrush [Amer] Female singer.
  proud as a thrush
  fat as a young thrush
  stare like a choked throstle [sChs]
  sweet as a song thrush after rain [Som] Of a girl’s voice.
sing like a Bromwich throstle [a donkey]
every thrush thinks her mate sings the sweetest [Ire] Loyalty in marriage.
sings inwardly, like Gud o’ Jamie’s throstle [Lan] Of a quiet person.
as happy as an owd mavish over a dodman [thrush over a snail—Suf]

G.52b Fieldfares

farewell fieldfare! Good riddance (because the fieldfare migrates at the end of the hard weather). There is also the idea of finality, resignation and being reconciled to reality [see G.Chaucer, T&C III.861—1374].
rumped up [huddled up—Dev] like a dwindle [fieldfare—Dev]

G.52c Redwings

weak as a winsel [redwing—NCy]
wisht [miserable, sickly, haggard—swEng] as a winnard [redwing—Dev Cor]

G.52d Blackbirds

black as an ousel [Lan]
out your worm, here comes a blackbird Said by girls to boys fishing or bathing naked.

G.53 Cuckoos

cuckoo (n)/gowk (n) [cuckoo—Sc Ire nEng Shr Hnt Wor Glo Sur Dev Cor] A repeater, crazy person; half-wit; awkward person.
occyx [<Gk κόκκυξ =cuckoo] (From the imagined similarity to the shape of the cuckoo’s beak.)

crabbed/crazed [angry—nYks]/hoarse/hollow (of gaunt animals [suggested by the call?])/ lousy (hence ‘get cuckoo’d’=get infested with lice)/mazed [crazy, confused—
Cor]/*mean/ merry [Nrf]/*naked (from the supposed deplumed condition of the bird in winter)/ ragged [Oxf]/*roupy [hoarse—Yks]/*scabbed [shabby, worthless (perhaps because of its irresponsibility)—Sc Cum Not and = scabby, rough, dirty, mean, shabby—nEng] as a cuckold

hasna the gumption of a cuckoo [Sc]
lazy as a gowk (or howlet as don’t make a nest) [wWor]
cuckold [1250] (So-called because he is a similar victim to the bird in whose nest a cuckoo lays its egg.)

make John Gowkston of… Make a cuckold of…
a cuckoo in the nest Trouble-maker in the home; unwelcome intruder.

get the cuckoo [wYks] Have unsatisfactory work returned.
gowk and titling [moorpeep, meadow pipit] Incongruous pair; inseparable friends [Sc Ire Nhb Dur Cum Yks].

cuckoo and the little bird [Lakel Lan] Ill assorted couple, usually one large and one small.

when the cuckoo sings [Yks] Putting off a person anxious for something to happen.

like a cuckoo/gowk, ye have ay but one song [Sc: 1530] To someone with an oft repeated theme.

you breed o’ the gowk, have ne’er a rime but ane [Sc] (As/from the above.)
hunt a gowk Receive a disappointment.
a gowk’s errand [Sc] A fool’s errand.
beggowk (v) [trick, fool—Sc Peb] Deceive, generally.
huntigowk/huntagowk (n) [Sc Ant Dwn] One sent on a fool’s errand. From the April Fool message,

Don’t you laugh and don’t you smile,
Hunt the gowk another mile.

see the gowk in your sleep [Fif: 1846] Imagine things without foundation; change your mind; think better of something.

then…we will hear the gowk [Sc] After that, nothing would surprise me.

Jerusalem cuckoo [Army in Palestine—1917] A mule; ass [War]. (From its oft-repeated call.)

G.54a Lapwings

weak as a teufit [lapwing—Cum]
live like a plover On air, on next to nothing.

laughing like a peewee [EAn]

hornywinky Desolate, outlandish, like the places where live hornywinks [lapwings and also, less commonly, toads and slugs—wCor].
the lapwing cries most farthest from her nest [1580] Of those who make most fuss over trivialities; or who distract from their real concern by exaggerating their feelings on minor matters.

hunt the teuchit [=tewit=tuit, lapwing—Sc] Engage on a frivolous or fruitless pursuit.

traipse [trail, like a bird pretending to be injured] her wing for [Nrf] Set her cap at.

lie like a lapwing (Because of the way they can deceive you about the position of their nests.)

play dikkop [plover—Du] Try to deceive [SAfr].

kibitzer [=Yiddish <Ger kiebitz=lapwing, busybody] Meddlesome onlooker, the sort who overlooks a game of cards proffering unwanted advice.

the lapwing runneth away with the shell on her head [C16–C17] Used as a symbol of foolish precociousness. [See Shaks, Hamlet II.ii—1600] She may be young and inexperienced, but already knows enough to look after herself. (Lapwing chicks can run soon after hatching, a long time before they can fly.)

G.54b Curlews

mad/mazed [crazy, confused—Cor]/silly [Aus] as a curlew/curley [=curlew—Nhb Lan Lin Cor] (Because of its evening antics.)

lean as a whitterick [curlew—eLth]

a whaup [curlew—Sc neEng] in the nest [Sc] Something wrong; a trick; troublesome intruder.

whaup-nebed [Sc] Long-nosed.

whaup-neckit [eFif] Long-necked—of a bottle.

mournful as a curlew’s cry [probably the stone curlew—Aus]

G.54c Snipe

snipe (n) Lawyer. (They both have long bills!)

enough to sicken a snipe [Glo]

guttersnipe Street urchin; child who plays in filth.

mire-snipe [Bnff] Person with hard features.

snipe-gutted [swLan] Thin.

the neb of the mire-snipe [Sc] The last extremity.

snipie-nebbit [Sc]/snipe-nose(d) (Having) a long, pointed nose [Wm Lan sNot]. Often of a narrow-minded person.

the snite [snipe] need not the woodcock betwite (for its long bill) [Som: 1581]
G.54d Other waders

mudlarks Poor scavengers, especially of copper nails dropped by the ship’s carpenters on to the Thames mud in the C19; harbour thieves who receive stolen goods passed overboard by the crew; those who salvage metal objects, like horse-shoe nails, from the gutter.

run like a redshank [Highlander, bare-legged person—Sc Ire nEng] It is not clear whether this simile derived from the bird or the barelegged Highlander.

cheeks as red as da feet o’ a shalder [oystercatcher—ShI] in da ebb-stanes woodcock hay [hay that would have to be stored before the migrating woodcock arrived in Britain] Something useless and of poor quality.

one woodcock does not make a winter [1617] There is more to it than just that!

G.55 Robins

blithe/dead (perhaps because of ‘Who killed Cock Robin?’)/naked [Shr War: 1883]/peart [lively, brisk, sprightly; healthy, likely to survive; also (of persons) skilled, nimble-fingered, open, clear, straightforward—wYks War Dev passim]/ragged (because of the ragged robin flower?)/wet [wet through—Lei] as a (cock) robin/robinet [wYks: C16]

peart as a rabin urdick on Cursmus day [= robin ruddock on Christmas Day—Dev]

spry as a robin herdick [=ruddock; Som]

one bush cannot harbour two robins Those who need space must not live too close to each other.

G.56 Skylarks

skylark (v) Act the fool, play about lightheartedly or out of high spirits. (Originally nautical and connected with games in the rigging.) lark (v) has the same meaning, but is undoubtedly influenced by laik=play [Sc nEng Lin Not].

skylarker Burglar posing as bricklayer in order to spy out the land.

light/merry as a layrock [=laverock, skylark—Sc nEng Lei Nhp War Wor]

brisk/gay/happy/lively/melodious/merry [1606] as a lark

lark-heeled [nIre sDon Yks Lan Lin Not Der Shr Nhp eSuf] With long, projecting heels; with slender ankles [Nhp]; nimble.

tootle like a layrock [Sc nEng Lei Nhp War Wor] Chirrup, whistle cheerfully.

sing like a lark [1590]
loud as lark in air [Spenser, *FQ* II. vi—1590]
grass-lark Donkey [Wor],
rise/up with the lark [1580] At dawn. (The lark is traditionally the first bird awake and singing.)
better to hear the lark sing than the mouse cheep Go out early in the morning rather than go to bed late at night.
lift it and lay it like the lugs of a laverock [nIre] Make frequent changes; move things from place to place.
live on love as larks/laverocks [Sc] live on leeks [1546] (Their habitat but not their food.) Of those who eat too little.
every bird as it is reared and the lark for the bog [Ire] Folk are only really happy in their home environment.

G.57 Other birds

peart [lively, brisk, sprightly; healthy, likely to survive; also (of persons) skilled, nimblefingered, open, clear, straightforward—passim] as a bullspink [=bullfinch—wYks eLan;= cock chaffinch—NCy, 1790 Grose, Yks]
run like a skitty [corncrake—Dor]
listen to the crake in the corn [Rxb] Court in the open air, on summer nights.
dotterel [NCy] Doting old fool; one whose mind is failing. (The bird is easily caught.)
bring pinnock [hedge sparrow] to pannock [1552] (Pannock is a nonsense-word derived echoically from both pinnock and haddock, the expression having the same meaning as bring haddock to paddock, q.v. D. 13d.) Bring something to nothing, waste resources, ruin an estate.
dapper as a dunnock [Dor]
stare like a throttled isaac [=haysuck= dunnock, hedge sparrow—wEng]
gay as a goldfinch
sharp [clear (of song), quick (in movement)] as a linty [=linnet (occasionally, lark)—Shl nEng] Neat, tidy, smart [Abd Nhb Cum].
trig [smart, spruce] as a lennard [=linnet]/ lennert [Nhp]
active [Nhb Dur]/blithe as [Sc]/sing like [wSc]/ trig as [Per Dmb Ayr] a linty
as like as a duck to a linty [Shl] Very dissimilar.
Cambridgeshire/Dutch [EAn]/fen nightingale A frog. (Edible frogs were introduced into the fens in the early C19.)
the nightingale and cuckoo both sing in one month Those who have a time relationship need not necessarily be associated in any other way.
left warbling on the topmost bough Left with unwanted stocks and shares.
night-hawk [nightjar—Cld IW] Person who ranges about at night.
squab Short, fat, awkward woman, flabby person [wYks Shr Hrf wSom Hmp] (like a squab =young pigeon in the nest).
squab-job Employment for young girls.
full pigeons find cherries bitter There is no pleasure in having too much.

quail [Amer] Immoral woman [C17–C18] (see below); girl, young woman, college student.

fat [Sc 1504]/hot as a quail (Reputedly an amor ous bird.)

snow-bird [name variously given to the snow-bunting, snow-finch and snow-sparrow—UK Amer] Drug addict (from snowed in—see G.16b); a soldier who enlists for winter food and clothing only, and then deserts in the spring [Amer]; a northerner who overwinters in the south to avoid the cold weather [Amer].

sparrow (n) Cheeky, sharp-witted city-dweller; member of underground guerilla movement in the Philippines, so-called because unobtrusive.

spur [=spar, sparrow—Sc] Small, lively person.

peart as a sparrow [Dev: 1610]

chipper [lively and cheerful—Amer] as a sparrow [Neb Calif’s Amer]

sparrow-brain Dimwit.

sparrow-fart [Lan Chs Aus] Very early morning; person of no consequence [Ire].

sparrow-cop [Amer] Policeman in disgrace and relegated to parks and boulevards to patrol for petty offenders.

in the twinkling of a cock-sparrow’s eye-brow Very quickly.

sparrow’s knee-caps Insignificant muscles—a term of insult or derision.

you may talk to him while [until] your tongue’s as small as a sparrable [= sparrow-bill] Whatever you say to him will avail nothing [eYks].

sparrowbills/sparables [Nhb Cum wYks Chs Nhp Nfld] Short nails for shoe soles and heels. (From their shape.)

be hard sparrowbills with...[Lan] Be hard and exacting on someone.

two sparrows on one ear of corn are not likely to agree [Mich]

sitting in a row, like sparrows on a twig

like a flock of spuggies [sparrows—Cum Lan] flying up your arse Describing a boy’s first experience of sexual intercourse.

like sparrows/swallows/wild geese flying out of your arsehole [Aus 1959] (As/from the above.)

swift as a swallow [1551]

one swallow does not make a summer [1539] Do not take the part for the whole; do not judge prematurely and on small evidence.

swallow-tailed coat Frock-coat with tails. (After the swallow’s two tail feathers.)

swallow’s nest—organ, gun position etc. Of organ, a type frequent in Swiss churches, built high up, near to the roof; also, of gun batteries, placed in high, commanding positions.

little tit all tail (Tit here may mean horse, but it is just as likely to refer to the long-tailed or bottle tit.) The application is usually sexual.

to and agen [to and fro continually] like a can-bottle [long-tailed tit—Stf Shr War Hrf: Shr] (A good observation of the bird, either when bringing feathers to the nest, of which many hundreds are needed, or else when feeding its numerous chicks.)

like a tomtit on a round of beef [Stf War Wor Glo: 1849]/quarter of horseflesh [Dor] Of a small person in a place of vantage; also a children’s cry to someone wearing a small hat on a large head.

(standing there) like a tit in a trance Dreamily, with thoughts elsewhere.
happy as a turtle-dove
shake like a chickchacker [wheatear—Cor] (It bobs and vibrates its tail.)
will die like a chickchacker Of a delicate person at the onset of winter. (A caged wheatear would not survive long after the migrating date.)
jump and skip about like a utick [whinchat—Cum Yks Lan Not Der Chs Lei Shr War Oxf] upon a hard-iron [knapweed plant] [Cum wYks]
woodpecker (n) [Amer] Machine gun (from the rapid sound).
woodpeckers don’t breed sparrow-hawks You cannot expect the children to be much better than their parents. ‘Never noo wode-woll dyde brede a sperhawke’ [Caxton, Blanchardyn—c.1489].

worn-out/exhausted as a woodpecker in a petrified forest [Calif]
if woodpecker want sweet meat, he haffa don’t mind jar ’e head [SC] There is always some trouble in obtaining what you want.
weak as a wranny [=wren—Cor]
dapper as a cock wren
as sore fight wrens as cranes [1641] Even the weak will stoutly defend their rights.
wrens may prey where eagles dare not perch Someone who goes unnoticed is less restricted than the public figure.
ever came a hearty fart from a wren’s arse [Sc] You won’t get a generous gift from a miser.
peart as a gladdy [yellow hammer—Dev]

G.58a Animals’ fur

snoad [smooth, sleek—Sc Ire nEng] Sly, soft-spoken, plausible.
bristle with… Be thick with… (as an animal’s skin is thick with bristles).
bristle (v) Be annoyed. (An animal’s hide bristles up when in fear or anger.)
horrid [<Lat horridus=bristly, rough and hairy]
against the hair Contrary to nature (as when stroking hair withershins).
go widdershins [Shr: =withershins, lie (of fur), circle (of heavenly bodies) or coil (of tendrils) in an unnatural direction] Act out of character; go against nature. (The extreme example would be if the sun and stars were to rise in the west and set in the east, a C16 fantasy.)

G.58b Animals’ tails

tail (n) Last of a series; in a cricket team, the later and weaker batsmen.
on his tail Following closely.
tail-end The unpaid balance of an account.
tail away/off Diminish, taper.

long-tailed showers Those where the rain continues after the main shower has passed over.

has a silver tail [Cor] Of something new.

queue [<Fr queue=tail] A line of people awaiting their turn.

G.58c Animals’ teeth and nails

in the teeth of… In defiance of, or in spite of opposition from; directly against.

shows her teeth [1615] Reveals how formidable she can be; adopts threatening or defensive position.

toe-biter [Lan] Something surprising and re-markable.

hides her teeth Hides hostility under a show of friendliness.

lacks teeth [1925] Has not the power to do what is necessary. The body was only made advisory; it hasn’t the teeth.’

tooth and nail [1534] With every resource; with utter ferocity.

hard as bone/horn [Cai: c. 1420]

claw off Beat/turn to windward from a lee shore, far enough to avoid shipwreck.

G.58d Animals—miscellaneous

mammoth Very large. ‘Mammoth Sale’ etc.

on all fours Quite analogous, corresponding. These cases are not on all fours.’

prey on—someone’s mind Cause continual anxiety.

a prey to—fear etc. Under the domination of; oppressed by.

lie low [1880] Keep out of the way; avoid attracting attention (like a hare in its form).

smoot (v) [<smoot (n)=an animal track in undergrowth or under cover—e&midYks] Sneak along under cover; also of coy lovers or children hiding their faces from a stranger. Hence:

smooty-faced [e&midYks] Shame-faced. (From the above.)

dormant Inactive, unobtrusive generally (like a hibernating animal).

bolt-hole Line of retreat; way of escape. (The hole of refuge for a fox or rabbit.)

fight like a teggan [a fierce animal such as a ferret—Cor] Ferociously.
G.59 Wolves

**wolf** (n) [1847] Man with predatory designs on women; ruthless rake.

**wolf** (v) **food** [1862] Ravenously devour.

**wolf-tree** [n] Large misshapen tree dominating and damaging nearby trees.

**hungry as a wolf** [UK, passim Calif]/**she-wolf with pups** [Calif]

**dark as a wolf’s mouth**

**lone wolf** [Amer 1909] Person who works alone, an independent; criminal operating alone; fighter pilot who breaks formation.

**lone-wolf** (v) Live, work alone.

**man is a wolf to man** [1554] A predator on his fellows.

**throw to the wolves** Sacrifice someone to the enemy in order to save yourself; betray without compunction.

**do not wake a sleeping wolf** Do not interfere with what is potentially dangerous. [See Shaks, *Hy IVii* 1.ii—1598]

**see/have seen a wolf** [1554] Be tongue-tied. (From the old belief, dating from at least C5 BC Greece, that a man on seeing a wolf that had first seen him, lost his voice.)

Also (of a woman) be seduced. The idea was current in England in 1565 [Palmer, *The Emblems*].

**between dog and wolf** That time of twilight when the imagination sees a dog as a wolf. (Occurs in Cambridge Assize Records for 1260.)

**if it had been a wolf it would have worried you!** [Sc] To one who went very near to what they were looking for, but did not see it.

**wolves never prey upon wolves** Those who are wicked and formidable respect each other.

**it is a hard winter when one wolf eats another** [1579] The rapacious prefer to victimise the weak.

**like an Irish wolf she barks at her own shadow** [Ire] Makes wild accusations.

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**καί μοι δοκῶ εἰ μη**

**πρότερος ἐωράκη σύτον ἤ**

**ἐκείνος ἐμέ, ἀφωνος ἄν**

**γενέσθαι**

[Plato, *Republic* 336D]

**‘οὐ φθεγζῆ;**

**λύκον εἴδες;’**

**ἐπαιξέ τις**

[Theocritus, *Idyll* 14]

**lupi Moerim videre priores**

[Vergil, *Eclogue* ix.54]
howl (v) Make threatening noises, as in ‘the wind howls’ and ‘a mob howling for blood’; draw attention to a glaring mistake, a ‘howling error’—a howler.

who keeps company with the wolf will learn to howl [1579] You pick up the bad habits of the company you keep.

howl among wolves [1578] Adapt yourself to your company, although disapproving of it.

wolves lose their teeth but not their nature [1616] Lack of opportunity for doing harm does not mean that someone evil has become good.

the wolf will die in the skin in which he was born [Wal: c. 1400] A vicious man’s character does not change.

turn and rend Turn against, abuse fiercely and unexpectedly.

close in for the kill Act in unison against a victim, ruler etc.

lick blood Gloat over others’ misfortunes (as when the media publish distressing details about a disaster).

wolf-pack Group of German U-boats hunting Allied convoys [Berlin, Ger 1940].
go/send to the pack [Aus NZ 1916] Lose/dismiss from a position of authority or distinction (as when the leader in a pack of wolves or hunting dogs is relegated to the pack).

G.60a Foxes

foxy/fox Crafty (person).

foxy [cunning, sly, deceptive—Ire Eng, passim] Uncertain, unpredictable—of weather.

foxes of the sea [Cor] Mullet (likewise wary and cunning).

fox (v) [1602] Elude, deceive, confuse, pretend. ‘None of your foxing!’

out-fox Outwit, excel in cunning. (As/from the above.)

crazy [cunning, shrewd—Amer]/fause [shrewd, sharp, clever in a cunning/deceitful way (of a dog or a child)—Lan nLin Not]/ ram [rank, fetid—NCy Dor]/rank/red as a fox [1386]

crafty as a Kendal fox

hard [hardy] as a north toad [=tod=fox—Sc Ire nEng]

hard as a fell-teadd [=fell-tod, fell-fox—Cum]

greedy as a fox in a hen-roost

quietness is best, as the fox said when he bit the cock’s head off [Chs: 1886]

fire! quoth the fox when he pissed on the ice [1736] Of those who have high hopes about an unlikely outcome.

sheaf [<ON skauf=fox’s brush]

thieving as a fox’s snout [Ire]

dark as a fox’s mouth

a fox’s sleep [Chs Ess] Pretended sleep, but in reality, very alert.

either the tod or the bracken bush [1659] To those who cannot speak with certainty.

beware the fox in a fern-bush Hypocrisy concealed.
that’s all fox-fire [Amer] Deception, not the real thing; something of no consequence. [Fox-fire is the phosphorescent light emitted by rotting wood—nYks nDer Vmt Penn Vir SC Geo Ala Miss Texas: 1483]

the tod’s bairns are ill to tame [Sc: 1721] It is hard to educate children of poor parentage.

like the tod’s bairns, if one be good all are good Of a bad family.
like the tod’s whelp, ay a day aulder a day waur [Sc] Of a child growing naughtier.
gamesome [playful, frolicsome—nYks] as a young fox
the fox may grow grey but never good [1572] Of a character who does not improve with age.

the fox preys farthest from his hole [1639] (to distract attention) Of a wily person who sins, but far from home.
fox-hole Slit-trench or dug-out shelter for troops, especially in the 1914–18 war; place of refuge generally.

he’s a proud tod that winna scrape his ain hole [Sc: 1628] A rebuke to those who will not do their own housework; the necessity of doing necessary work.

the tod keeps ay his ain hole clean [Sc] (As/from the above; a warning to bachelors not to interfere with their housemaids.)

oxoxes always smell their own hole first Said to someone complaining of a fart.
a fox does not smell his own stench [Ont Wis NDak] Folk are unaware of their own faults.

grin like a fox eating yellow-jackets [wasps or hornets—Calif]
it is an ill sign to see a fox lick a lamb [1678] Implying ulterior motives, especially of an older man with a girl.

when the tod preaches, tak tent [care] o’ the goose/lambs [Sc] Sanctimoniousness in a bad person is doubly suspect.

the fox barks not when he steals a lamb [Calif] Folk don’t advertise their misdeeds.
it is a silly goose that comes to the fox’s sermon [1580] Of those who take advice from one prejudiced against them.
the fox fares best when he is cursed [1548]/curses mak the tod fat [Sc] The ill wishes of victims are a sign of success.

I carena whether the tod worry the goose or the goose the tod [Sc] I do not care how the matter turns out.

set the fox to keep the geese [1589] Entrust your goods or family to unreliable persons.

send a goose on a message to the fox’s den [Ire] Send a stupid person to deal with a clever one.

don’t put the fox to guard the hen-house [NY Mich]
it is no use sending a chicken to bring home a fox [Ire] Of an incompetent messenger or one who is likely to be outwitted.

a fox dies not in the dirt of his own ditch Men are rarely hurt by the things they are accustomed to.
G.60b Vixens

vixen (n) Ill-tempered, quarrelsome woman.

- cunning as a clicket/klyket [vixen on heat—Lan]
- fow [angry—Chs] as a vixen with a sore head
- worried as a pregnant fox in a forest fire [Can]

G.61 Boars

rattle like a boar in a holme [holly] bush [Hmp]

G.62 Badgers

- blue [depressed]/greasy/grey/ry as a badger
- brock-faced White-faced.
- smell like a badger’s touch-hole Smell foul—often of someone over-perfumed.
- stink like a brock [a badger: c. 1400]
- brock (n) Foolish, dirty, smelly person [Sc Ant Dwn].
- bauson [badger—Lan Yks Chs Der Shr War] Fat person; ugly, frightful, noisy, empty-headed person [wYks].
- silly as a bauson [Lan Yks Chs Der]
- rough as a badger’s arse [Cor]
- like a badger, one leg shorter than the other (A popular fallacy by which a badger was reputed to have an advantage on hilly ground.)
- badger-legged With one leg shorter than the other. (As/from the above.)
- grizzling [grinning, snarling, baring the teeth—mid, s&wEng] like a badger going to feast

if the badger leaves his hole the tod will creep into it Do not neglect a place or a person whom you care for.

G.63a Wild-cats

wild-cat Woman of fierce temper; rash investor, speculator (see below).
glower like a wullicat [wild-cat—Sc]
mean as a wild-cat [Calif]

wild-cat—strike, speculation, railway train etc. Unofficial, unscheduled, risky, unsound. (This use derives from the printing of bank notes backed by no capital by American banks before 1863. One Michigan bank’s notes carried the picture of a panther or wild-cat and were called ‘wild-cat notes’.) Similarly, a ‘wild-cat well’ is a boring for oil or gas drilled not according to the pattern or geological evidence, but on a hunch. And ‘wild-cat whiskey’ is the product of an illicit still.

looks like a wild-cat out of a bush [Sc: 1721] Dishevelled, savage.
turn the wild-cat [Gall] Go head over heels on bar or rope.

whip his weight in wild-cats [Amer] Be fighting fit and extra strong.

G.63b Otters

greedy/hard [hardly]/keen [sLan]/nice [fussy, particular—because of taking only one bite out of a fish] as an otter

cowd enough to starve [freeze] an otter to death [Lan]
bites as keen as an otter, he can dinge iron [Lan]
stink worse than a bitch otter in a bean bed [Cum]
grin like a she-otter [Lan]

G.63c Polecats

crouse as a fitchet [=cross, sharp-tempered as a polecat—Som]
stink like/worse than a fitch [Som Dev Cor]/fitchock [Shr Hrf]/polecat [1533]
strong (-smelling) as a fummard [Not Lin]
stink like/worse than a fummat [Yks Lin]/foomert/foomet/foomurt [Wm Yks Lan]
hungry as a foumart-dog [sLan]
blared [bellowed] at her like a polecat [sHmp]
lazy as a polecat [Wal] (Because it regularly sleeps for twenty out of the twenty-four hours.) This is the animal called ‘wild-cat’ by Shakespeare:

and he sleepes by day
More then the wild-cat:

[Merchant II.v—1596]
G.63d Stoats

screech like a whitneck/whitrack/whitret/whitterick [stoat/weasel—Sc nEng Nhp Dev Cor]

wacken/waken/wakken [lively, quick-witted, wide awake—Lin] as a whitterick [Lin Fif]

clever as a whitret [Sc]
harmless as a whitret without teeth [Sc]
souple [=supple] as a whitterick [Fif]


fuck like a stoat Vigorously and promiscuously, of both sexes.


G.63e Weasels

cross [Ire]/sharp [quick-moving]/wick [lively—Yks Lan] as a weasel/wizzel [Cum] Bright, intelligent [Oxf].

soft-hearted as a rezzil [nYks/wizzel [Cum] Ironic.

fause [shrewd, sharp, cunningly clever—Lan Yks] as a weasel with its een bored out

weasel-faced [nWil] Sharp-featured.

grin like a weasel in a trap [nYks]

sken [squint, peer sideways] like a trapped weasel [sLan]

glower like a weasel frae a humplock [hillock—Sc Ire] of stones [Lnk]

catch, a weasel asleep [Ant wYks Wor] Achieve what is hardly possible—usually of

very vigilant people. (Weasels are wary animals.)

bit by a barn weasel Drunk.

weasel-word [Amer 1900] Deceptive phrase; a word that destroys the force of a
statement by equivocal qualification; deliberate ambiguity. (From the weasel’s habit of
sucking an egg and leaving the shell apparently intact.) Also weasel concepts, ideas etc.

are similarly evasive ones.

weasel (n) Misleading claim, especially in advertisements. (As/from the above.)

weasel (v) Use weasels and weasel-words (see above); slip out of a place; extricate
yourself from a predicament in a cunning, elusive and dishonest manner.

G.64a Deer

sprout antlers Become sexually aroused.
of the first head [describing a deer at the age when its antlers are first developed] Of a man newly promoted.

stag-headed tree Having a spreading crown, like branching antlers; with the upper branches dead [Nhp].

trip/trot like a doe/roe [1530] Delicately and gracefully.

doe-eyed With large, timid, gentle eyes.

buck (n) A man among men; a merry, dashing fellow.

hearty/mad/wild as a buck [1530]

piss his tallow [c.1450] Grow lean (like bucks after rutting which are described at that time as ‘having pissed their tallow’ [Shaks, *MWW V.v—1597*]).

blow the buck’s horn Engage in any futile activity you may care to choose (possibly influenced by the buck’s reputation for madness). Used in similar contexts to *pipe in an ivy leaf* (see K.6b). ‘That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn’ [G.Chaucer, *The Milleres Tale* ln.3387—1386].

buck-toothed With large, projecting teeth.

like a buck of the first head [1606] Brisk, pert, forward.

buck-jumper [Brks] Horse that jumps like a deer, with all four feet off the ground together.

browse on/through [1823] Peruse selectively; read desultorily.

browser (n) [1990s] Computer program by which the user can search around and view different internet resources.

a dog in a deer’s den [Sc] Of the second spouse of a widow or widower, inferior to the former.

swank [supple, agile, active—Sc Nhb] as a roe

lish and yal [=yauld, alert, sprightly, active] as any deer [Kcb]

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**G.64b Hares**

hare off [1908] Set off at great speed, like a flushed hare.

fleetharty/mad/wild [n&wYks] as a (March) hare

mad as a March hare [C14]


wild as a March hare [wYks neLan Not Lei War Sus]

mute as a mawkin [Sc]

mawkin-mad [mad as a hare—Sc]

hare-brained [1548] Crazy, extravagant, impracticable—scheme, proposal etc.

hare-sleep A pretended sleep.

hare’s fur A dark glaze streaked with silver or yellow used on some Chinese pottery.

mawkin-hippit [Sc] With thin hips, like a hare.

squander [scatter about, disperse—Sc nEng Shr War Amer] Scatter or dissipate money profligately. (A bird like the plover, or an animal like the hare, regularly squanders its young for their safety.)


lame hares are ill to help Folk are most intolerant concerning infirmities of their best qualities.

it’s either a hare or a brake bush [1659] Something—if we only knew what.

make a hare of a man [Ire] Overcome him in argument.

G.64c Rabbits

rabbit (n) A beginner or poor player in any game (suggested by the nature and behaviour of rabbits: much victimised in nature, they seem born losers, scampering about aimlessly, even allowing themselves to be mesmerised into surrender, and surviving only by virtue of numbers); computer program designed to exhaust a time or space system resource—such as disc space etc.—by replicating itself indefinitely [1990s].

rabit (n) [Aus] A stolen article (often concealed in a rabbit carcase).

rabbit (v) [Aus] Pilfer. (As/from the above.)

run the rabbit [Aus] Procure liquor, usually irregularly (from the above).

rabbit (v) [Dev Amer] Scuttle along, run away.

jack-rabbit [Amer] A motorist who anticipates the green traffic light before it has changed from amber.

shuttle [nimble, supple, quick—Som] as a rabbit

rabbit-hearted/rabbit-scared As timorous or panic-stricken as a rabbit.

show the white rabbit-scut [wYks] Funk, act the coward.

would make a rabbit spit at a dog [Ire] Of strong whiskey.

little rabbits have big ears! Careful what you say, the children are listening!

you can’t tell how far a rabbit can jump by the length of its ears [Ill] To someone drawing a false inference.

in the snifter [snuffle, sniff—Sc Ire nEng] of a rabbit Instantly.

want to piss like a rabbit Urgently.

like a rabbit, fat and lean in twenty-four hours [1678]

burrow into Investigate in depth and in detail.

warren [1649] Overcrowded district in a town; area with many narrow interconnecting streets.

erode [<Lat e-rodere=gnaw out/away]

gnaw at the root of… Gradually and insidiously destroy from below.

goes like a rabbit Of someone’s sexual activities, frequent and enthusiastic.

coupled like rabbits, a fat and a lean

G.65 Squirrels

squirrel (n) Hoarder; eccentric [Amer] (from the connection with ‘nutty’).
squirrel (v) (away) [Amer 1939] Hoard, cache, store away; set aside for a particular purpose.
squirrel-headed/minded Scatterbrained, shallow.
lively [sLan]/nimble/ruddy [Cor] as a squirrel
lish [active, nimble, supple—nEng] as a squirrel [nYks]
crozzled up [huddled together—nYks] like a squirrel
fat as a con [=connie=squirrel—Cum]
bright-eyed and bushy-tailed [Can 1940s] Alert and well-groomed, presentable.
a tall tree makes a squirrel saucy [Ark] Of those who are bold only when protected by someone else.

G.66 Rats

ratton (v) Steal or destroy a worker’s tools [Sheffield, Yks]. (From the way in which rats destroy goods secretly and treacherously.) Later used of a particular type of sabotage in which the bands or straps of a grind-stone were damaged in such a way that the whirling stone might disintegrate and kill or maim the operator [wYks].

ratton (n) Small, sly person [Sc].
dead as a mawky ratton [=maggoty rat—Cum Yks]
rat (n) Despicable, treacherous, unpleasant person—always male!
cold [=very cold—Suf]/drunk/fause [shrewd, sharp, clever in a cunning way]/fierce/poor/rank/sick/weak as a rat/rot There are many rat adjectives, all derogatory—one of the most popular avenues of abuse.
fierce as a buck rat [Cor] Of facial expression.
fit as a buck rat [NZ]
flash as a rat with a gold tooth [Aus]
so mean he wouldn’t give a rat a railway pie [Aus]
ratty Bad-tempered, in a temper, irritable.
rough as rats [Cor] Of a ruthless, aggressive, uncouth, selfish person.
hungry as a roton [=ratton, rat—sLan]/ two rattons [Lan]
look like a streak of rat’s piss Thin and nasty.
piss-taily as a rat [Calif]
rat’s tail File shaped like a rat’s tail.
rat-tails/rats’ tails Long unkempt strands of hair [wYks].
look like a drowned rat [1500] To someone soaked by rain or immersion.
rat-run Minor road or track allowing drivers using it as a short-cut or detour to evade traffic congestion on the main route.
rats’ nest State of perpetual turmoil [Rxb].
look like a rats’ nest [Calif] In a nasty mess.
you don’t get rats out of mice! On inherited stature, or the lack of it.
even a rat, when cornered, will turn and fight [Ind Oreg]
G.67 Mice

drunk/dun/mim [prim, precise—eFif Lnk s LAN]/mum [silent, secret—Per Cum]/mute/
quiet/shy/still/timid/trig [full, stuffed to the limit—NCy Lin]/whisht/whist [quiet—Sc NCy] as a mouse

mouse (n) [1935] Timid, retiring person.
mouse (v) [Dev Cor] Proceed aimlessly, quietly.
creep-mouse [1766] Inconspicuous, furtive, shy.
tight as a mouse’s ear’ole Of a woman’s vagina.
snod [smooth and sleek] as a mouse(’)s back [wYks Lan]
sleep like/drowsy as [Cor] a dormouse Very soundly.
slept as sound as a seben-sleeper [dormouse—Som]
warm as a dormouse [Ire 1821]
full as a blowed [fly-blown] mouse [War]
looks like a chowed [Rxb eLth]/chewed mouse
looks like a drowned mouse

Thou shalt lye drenkelyd [drowned] as a mous [Castle of Perseverance—c. 1425]

don’t pour water on a drowned mouse [1628]/rat [SC] Don’t act or prolong work unnecessarily.
a dead mouse feels no cold Do not waste sympathy on someone who is beyond feeling anything.
a mouse must not expect to cast a shadow like an elephant Limit your ambition to your ability.
today a man tomorrow a mouse [1609] On the uncertainty of fortune.
a wee mouse will creep beneath a muckle corn-stack [Sc] The size of an organisation does not prevent small members participating.
mouse-neeze/nest [wYks Lan] Dishonest act, trick.

G.68a Shrews

shrew [C14] Spiteful, sharp-tempered woman.
shrewd Astute, calculating (from the meaning of wicked, bad-tempered, which derived from what was at one time believed to be the malignant nature of shrews).
better a shrew than a sheep [Texas] In preferring a bad-tempered wife to a spirit-less one.
every man can tame a shrew but him that has her [Mich Ill]
ranny-nose Long and pointed, like that of a ranny [shrew-mouse—Nrf].
G.68b Bats

blind/sleepy as a bat
wakerife [wide awake] as a back-bearaway [bat—Yks] i’ t’ gloaming [nYks]
bat-eyed Near-sighted [nwLin].
hang/hing [Sc 1886] together like bats in a steeple Loyally support each other.
get in my hair [1851] Annoy, worry me (like a bat entangled—see also I.32g).
catch a bat Depart [Wxf].

G.68c Moles

mole (n) Confidential informant—to the press etc.
blind as a mole
nimble as a moulwarp [mole—wYks]
blind/fat as a mouldiewarp [Not]
snood [smooth and soft—Cum] as a moudiwar
slick/slike [=sleek—Sc Ire Eng Amer]/ smooth/soft [Cor] as a moudiwar [Lan
nStf]/mole [War]/oont [=want, mole—Shr Wor Glo]
skin as soft as a moudiwar [Cum Wm]
mim [prim, prudish—Sc sLan EAn] as a moudie
mim and sleek as any moudie [Slk]
a man would like to be loved, but who would mool in wi’ a moudie![Sc] There’s a
limit to what any relationship should require.
plum [soft] as a want-pile [molehill—Cor]
gone to the mole country [EAn] Died.
mole out Extricate (information etc.); elicit skilfully (like digging a mole out of its
run).

G.68d Hedgehogs

hedgehog (n) A boat having many oars [naut]; repellent person, hard to get on with.
hedgehog (v) Disclose information when in drink (like a hedgehog unrolling in
water).
hedgehog gene The gene responsible for transforming embryos into vertebrate
animals (so-called because a fly will sprout bristles when this gene from a hedgehog is
implanted in it).
scrumped up [huddled up, shrank together—mid, s&wEng Yks] like a hedgehog
**clewed up** [rolled up, like a clew/ball of thread—Sc] like a **hurchin** [=urchin, hedgehog—Sc]
lay like a half-dead **hurcheon** [=urchin—Sc]
pricky as an **urchin** [Cum]
prickly as a prickly-back **urchin** [Yks]
sharp as the bristles of a hedgehog
hair stood up like the birses o’ a **hurcheon** [Sc]
deck a hedgehog and he will seem a **baron** Clothes can transform.
H

THIEF

H.1 Thieves

furtive [\textit{<}Lat \textit{furtivus} = like a thief]

\textbf{thick} [collaborative, in a conspiratorial manner] \textbf{as thieves} [1833]

\textbf{procrastination is the thief of time} [1742]

they are not all thieves that dogs bark \textbf{at} [1577]

creep like a thief out of a hedge

\textbf{looks like a thief} \textbf{than a horse}

\textbf{like a thief in the night} \textbf{Describing one whose movements are furtive and secret.}

\textbf{dark as a thief’s pocket}

\textbf{like a bandit} [Amer] Successfully.

\textbf{one-arm(\textit{e})d bandit} [1938] An automatic fruit machine worked by one handle and incorporating a small gamble as an incentive to customers; a warning system in a train-driver’s cab.

\textbf{set a thief to catch a thief} [1386] An expression used when someone is appointed to supervise an activity or people with whom he was himself previously associated.

\textbf{war makes thieves and peace hangs them} [1640]

\textbf{save a thief from the gallows and he’ll cut your throat/come to hate you} [C14] An argument against helping criminals.

\textbf{kind as Cockburn} [=William=Piers Cock-burn, d.1529, a renowned freebooter on the Borders] Cockburn lived at the old square tower of Henderland [Slk] and was executed by James V, giving rise to the ballad \textit{The Border Widow’s Lament}:

\begin{quote}
I took his body on my back
And whiles I gaed and whiles I sat,
I digged a grave and laid him in,
And happed him with the sod sae green
\end{quote}

The ‘kind’ is probably ironic.

\textbf{big/high/proud} [\textit{Nfld}] \textbf{as Gilderoy} [a famous thief who robbed Cardinal Richelieu and Oliver Cromwell: Ul] (See also H.21e.)
neither dim/Nim [thief] nor Doll [beggar] Undecided [Cor].
rogue Plant, animal, machine or vehicle exhibiting untypically bad characters.

H.2a Trespass

on the right side of the hedge [1600] Legally in the right.
where the hedge is lowest, men may soonest over [1546] People will go where there is opportunity.
on the wrong side of the hedge [wYks sLan nwDer] In the wrong, badly situated, mistaken.
on the wrong side of the hedge/door when the brains were given out! A jocular account for someone’s lack of wit.
trespass (v) Encroach, generally.
trespass (n) Sin, offence [Lord’s Prayer].
trespass on—your hospitality, good nature etc. Make unwarrantable demands on them.
on trespass/trespass-ground [nLin nWil] Over seventy.
forbidden ground Topic or subject not to be mentioned.

H.2b Breaking-in

the hole calls the thief Don’t offer temptations.
gate-crash [1927] Intrude, uninvited, on a private party.
freeloader [Amer 1950s] One who gatecrashes at parties or who otherwise sponges or cadges free food and drink; who obtains under false pretences: ‘Liars are freeloaders.’
an open door may tempt a saint [1659] Better not to tempt folk.
you force an open door Demand from a willing giver; use unnecessary sanctions or compulsion.
jemmy (v) [1970s] Force an entry, generally.
your key does not fit that lock Your method, solution etc. will not avail in this situation.
Katie-bar-the-door [Amer] Prepare for trouble; a saying to be used at times of crisis. (A possible origin is the occasion in 1437 when Kate Barlass [Lady Catherine Douglas] thrust her arm through the staples of the door, from which the bar had been removed, and so succeeded in delaying the assassination of James I.)
warning bell Presentiment of crisis, danger (sensed as if by an alarm bell in the head).
tread lightly Show tact, consideration, caution.
in for a penny, in for a pound Once you have decided to take the risk, be bold; something started must be finished at all costs.
‘How’s that?’ says Dufton [Cum] An expression used when someone comes up against the unexpected. (This was the puzzled exclamation of the notorious thief, Dufton, who stole corn from farmers’ granaries by boring a hole with an auger through the floor and holding a sack under it. One farmer had nailed sheet iron over his boards and, on failing to penetrate it, ‘How’s that?’ says Dufton…)

H.3 Stealing

stand in the way of… Obstruct generally; be a bar to another’s promotion, success etc. 

daylight/highway robbery! The protest at exorbitant prices.

impudent as a highwayman’s horse

who’s robbing this coach? [Amer Aus] This is my concern, mind your own business. (From an American tale of train-robbers threatening to rape the women. A passenger appeals to them to spare the women, prompting the question from an elderly lady: ‘Who’s robbing this train anyway?’)

give him an inch and he’ll take an ell [1546] / give an ell and he’ll take a mile [Vmt Geo] Of one who demands more the more he receives.

he gangs early to steal that canna say na [Sc: 1460] Those who are too amenable are soon in trouble.

I shamed [blushed, felt ashamed—Lan] like as if I’d stolen summat [sLan]

to give a thing and take a thing is to wear the devil’s gold ring [1571] Stealing out of confidence placed in you is a satanic depravity. Originally said in reproach to those who ask back a gift. Schoolchildren witness to the irretrievable nature of a gift by swearing ‘no backers’.

squail at…[throw weighted sticks at a tree to bring down fruit, birds or animals—n, mid—w&sEng] Cast aspersions on, slander [Hmp].

throw squoyles at…[=squails—see above] Throw glances at [Hmp].

easy as to rob an orchard when no man keeps it [1639]

one that might rob an orchard when another must not dare peep over the wall [Martha Wilmot, Letter—11 April 1824] Is permitted to offend where others would be punished. (See also H.5, one may more readily…)

take a sheet off a hedge Steal openly.

swear/scold like a cut-purse [1599]

a rip-off An outrageous theft; swindle; financial fraud. (Probably, in the first place, from ripping valuables from a shop’s display board etc.)

give up the girdle Submit. (The girdle was where money was carried.)

snatch from under his nose Obtain in defiance and in spite of someone keeping watch, yet without being perceived.

with his hands in the till In flagrante delicto.

agree like pickpockets in a fair Quarrel violently.

abuse/chitter [Cor] like a pickpocket

he’d lift the cross off a cripple’s beads [Ire] Depraved as well as dishonest.

easy as taking toffee from a child/candy from a kid [Amer Can]
with his hands in the cookie-jar [Amer] In the very act.
grope—for information etc. Seek cautiously, tentatively; explore genitals under clothing.
sweet [light-/quick-fingered, skilful at stealing—cant] as your hand Skilful, dextrous.
steal his/her heart Win his/her affection.
steal his liver out of his belly Steal his love.
steal the show [1928] Unexpectedly become the chief attraction, outshine all other performers.

H.4 Stolen goods

forbidden/stolen fruit tastes sweetest The attraction of what you know you should not have.

sycophant [<Gk συκοφάντης=demonstrator of figs] Informer, flatterer, toady. (Probably originally from the gesture of showing a fig when making an accusation in the law courts of ancient Greece. That stemmed from the offence of selling contraband figs or figs stolen from sacred fig trees. Then there was a gradual degradation into a rude gesture both among Italians, far la fica, and the French, faire la figue à…, where the fig represented a woman’s genitals.)
a woman at the window is like a bunch of grapes on the highway [1666]
poach [<Fr pocher=put in a bag]
in the bag [1922] As good as certain, virtually assured.
honour and profit lie not in one sack [1599] Are irreconcilable.
left holding the bag Deserted by comrades and left alone with what should have been a group responsibility.
a crafty knave needs no broker Clever enough to do their own dirty work when it is profitable.

H.5 Rustling

rustle up Collect together money or support. (From gathering sheep or cattle in order to steal them.)
head…off the pass [Amer] Forestall, prevent. (From pursuing cattle thieves etc. over mountainous country.)
one may more readily steal a horse than another look over the hedge Some are privileged, others persecuted in law.
acknowledge the corn [WVir Geo Ala Msri Ark: C19] Make a qualified confession; minimise the offence; admit to as little as possible. (When a man was charged with
stealing four horses and some fodder, he answered ‘I acknowledge the corn’. There is another less likely American anecdote about a barge loaded with corn.

he that will steal an egg will steal an ox/he that will steal an arrow will steal a horse [Oreg] Once a decision has been taken, the enormity will not deter a criminal.

steal a cow and give the horns for charity Make paltry amends for a serious offence.

steal a goose and stick down a feather [1545] Add insult to injury.

those who steal geese should hide the feather-poke To those who advertise their failings.

always looks as if he’d been caught robbing a hen-cote [Lan] Has a suspicious appearance.

H.6a Poaching

trespass on his preserves [area set aside for preserving game or fish] Meddle in something that he regards as exclusively his own—field of study etc.; hence, the preserve of...=his personal, jealously appropriated concern.

sneaking—suspicion, regard etc. Unad-mitted, furtive, kept unobtrusive.

brevit [hunt, sniff, beat about after game—mid&sEng] Interfere, pry into other folk’s affairs [Wil].

poach (v) Encroach, generally (i.e. in tennis doubles when a player takes a ball better left to their partner, or when a union enlists members from another union).

poacher-turned-gamekeeper Someone who, after success in one field, turns or is appointed to a career in direct contrast or opposition to their former activities; of people who now preserve what they formerly destroyed. Also vice versa.

A theef of venisoun that hath forlaft
His likerousnesse and al his olde craft
Can kepe a forest best of any man

[G.Chaucer, Phisiciens Tale ln.83—1386]

cony-catching Swindling, cheating.

it’s rabbits out of the wood A wonderful windfall; sheer profit.

you cannot gather rabbit-meat without finding nettles [e&wYks nLin War wSom Sus nDev] There is a disadvantage to everything.

rabbit-punch [the edge-handed blow to the nape used in despatching rabbits] Similar blow to the back of a victim’s neck.

smell trap Suspect danger.

man-trap Applied variously to whatever causes a man’s downfall—holes in the road, marriage, unsafe vehicles etc.
**death-trap** Building, structure, vehicle not obviously but actually and lethally dangerous.

**catch red-handed** [1819] *In flagrante delicto*, in the very act (like a poacher who has not yet had a chance to wash his hands after gutting and cutting).

### H.6b The poacher’s dog

**face like a robber’s dog** [Aus]

**have him taped** [1914] Have him under control. (From the practice of muzzling dogs with sticky tape to prevent them barking and so giving away a poacher’s presence.)

**let the dog see the rabbit** [1938] Out of the way! (A plea for freedom from interference.)

**got the dog to hold** [NCY] Was made a scapegoat; was the victim of a mean trick.

**rabbit-hund** [wYks] Of a thin undeveloped child.

### H.6c The poacher’s ferret

**ferret for/out** [1601] Persistently search out.

**red as a ferret**

**eyes as red as a ferret’s** [1530]

**run the ferret** [Railwaymen] Descale the Severn Tunnel water main by putting a propeller into the pipe.

**go rabbit-hunting with a dead ferret** [1732] Use a method that is no longer effective.

**don’t make your stew until you catch the rabbit** [Ont] Don’t anticipate success; it may never happen.

### H.6d The poacher’s traps

**trap-door** L-shaped tear in cloth; process by which a computer-user can get at other users’ data which are supposed to be inaccessible; also a computer function for cracking certain codes.

**sharp/smart** [clever] *as a steel trap* (shiny when new, but soon rusty when in use)

**spring it on him** Confront him with it suddenly and without warning.

**fast** [=held fast] *as a bussock* [rabbit—Glo] *in a snap-gin*
shut your trap! Be quiet! (Originally from potato-trap=mouth [c.1780].)
leave it shut [nYks] Make no further mention of it.
up to trap Knowing, worldly wise; aware of all the possible tricks and deceptions (as a cunning animal, wary of traps).
trip-wire Concealed trick or trap, often in legal or parliamentary situations where a questioner tries to catch someone out with a verbal trap; small military force operating up front, which is supported by larger forces as soon as there is an engagement [Amer].
the trap is down The attempt has failed, has been frustrated (as if the trap-door falls before the bird is in the trap).
run your head into a noose Trap yourself; engineer your own downfall. (Running nooses are set as snares for rabbits.)
trap/ensnare a person Trick him into betraying himself under a cunning cross-examination or otherwise.
snare (n) Undue temptation to err; trap; cause of error or deception.
step into the net [c.825] Fall into the trap; get caught.
spread the toils Make careful preparation to catch someone out or outwit them.
cast thaime in their own snayres [James VI, Letter to Elizabeth I—Sc 1585]
who spreads nets for his friends snares his own feet Identify yourself with your friends.
you cannot catch the wind in a net Of things naturally insubstantial, immaterial or hard to comprehend. [See Sir T.Wyatt, Sonnet 7—c.1530]
the rough net is not the best catcher of birds [1549] Gently is best, especially in courtship.

H.6e The poacher’s bag

in a/the box/hat In a fix, predicament.

H.6f Poaching birds

he that feareth every bush must never go a-birding [1526] Don’t attempt a job about which you are over-scrupulous.
a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush [1530] What is secure is more valuable than a larger amount that is uncertain.
a feather in the hand is better than a bird in the air (As/from the above.)
kill two birds with one stone [1656] Obtain two results in one operation.
that duck’ll be off! That suggestion will not be taken; that idea won’t be acceptable.
**hunt the loon** [great northern diver—see G.50d] with a **hand-net** Grieve over the loss of a loved one; repine from unrequited love. (The loon is believed by the Algonquin to be the spirit of creation, the only bird to survive the flood.)

**bring the screw to the neb of the mire-snipe** [Sc] Bring matters to a head. (The screw was probably a device used in trapping or wild-fowling.)

**stand like a bog-stalker** [one who goes over bogs after the eggs of wild fowl] Be unsure, in a dilemma, not knowing which way to turn [Sc Nhb].

**bird’s nesting** The bad habit of a horse turning its head from side to side; hence, generally, being distracted.

**find a wicker’s nest** [Wil] Be seized by irrepressible fits of giggling. (A whicker is a neigh, whinny or giggle.)

**suck the eggs of**… Take the goodness out of; cause to be unproductive.

**suck eggs** [Amer] Be mean and irritable; be disgusting; do something nasty.

**break the egg in his pocket** [C18] Spoil his plan.

**bird-lime** (n) [1914] Recruiting sergeant (carrying the connotations of being betrayed into loss of freedom and made to sing in hostile surroundings).

**lime** (v) Trap, betray [Elizabeth I, Letter—November 1592]

**bird-limed** [Aus] Convicted for another’s crime.

**mean as bird-lime** (Because it sticks to what it has got and will not let it go.)

**fingers made of lime-twigs** Light-fingered.

**hop the twig** [1785] Run away from creditors; die. (As a bird might hop off the limed twig.)

**hop it/go on/play the hop** Go away; play truant.

**could call/charm a bird off a twig** Of a very persuasive person.

**see neither feather nor bone of**…[Suf] Find no trace of…

**you can’t catch old birds with chaff** [1481] The retort to a youngster who is trying to trick or deceive their elder.

**put/throw salt on his/her tail** Catch someone—for marriage or otherwise. (From the teasing advice to children that the best way to catch a bird is by sprinkling salt on its tail [1580+].)

**fleying** [scaring] a **bird is no the gate** [way]/ **way to grip it** [Sc Okl: 1721] A frightening man is not attractive to women; conceal your evil designs.

**it’s no the way to grip a bird, to cast your bonnet at her** [Sc] (As/from the above.)

**bat-fowl** [catch birds by night by dazzling them first and then batting them down with a stick—C16+] Dupe the gullible, swindle the silly and inexperienced.

**make a dead bird of**…[Aus] Make absolutely certain of it.

**bird in the bosom** A person’s own conscience; a secret.

I have kept/saved the bird in my bosom Said when summing up a story; it was pronounced by Sir Ralph Percy when he lay dying at the battle of Hedgeley Moor [Nhb—25 April 1464], meaning that he had kept his oath and promise to Henry VI.

**bird-cage** A woman’s bustle; the plight of huntsmen who find themselves surrounded by wire fences.

**be a box of birds** [Aus NZ] Be fine, excellent, happy and healthy.

**no bird can sing without seed** A performer’s plea for food, or payment.
H.6g Birds poached

he would steal the egg from the crane [heron] and finally the crane herself [Ire]
Totally unscrupulous.

put a whaup [curlew] in his rope Frustrate his plans.

a whaup in the rope [Sc: 1721] Something amiss. (The explanation is that a cliff-hanging bird-fowler shouted up There’s a faut [= fault] in the rope’ which was mistaken for ‘There’s a whaup in the rope’ and so those above shouted ‘Grup till her, man, she’s better than twa gow-maws’ [=gull-mews], failed to haul him up and he fell to the rocks below.)

sitting duck [1944] Easy victim; person who invites exploitation; easy target, especially of immobilised shipping.

pull a finch/plover Fraudulently rob a gullible person.

he thought he had got a goldfinch, but it proved a wagtail [Yks] He married for money, but his wife turned out a flirt—or worse.

suck/whistle the laverocks [larks] out of the lift [sky—Sc Ire Nhb Cum Yks] Possess great powers of wheedling or charm.

gone—like Jemmy Rule’s larks

a leg of a lark is better than the body of a kite [1546]

pigeon (v) Deceive, swindle.

pigeon (n) Person easily cheated.

pluck/pull a pigeon Defraud a person.

catch two pigeons with one bean Achieve two ends by only one means.

catch/meet with a mire-snipe [common snipe] (Fall into the mire and so…) Suffer an accident, mishap [Slk].

a sparrow in hand is worth a pheasant flying by

woodcock Simpleton, dupe. (From the ease in trapping woodcocks.) Hence:

play the woodcock [1582] Be a fool.

wise as a woodcock [1512]

a springe to catch a woodcock [1579] Of woman’s beauty.

a wren in the hand is better than a crane to be caught [Ire]

H.6h Poaching fish

let slip through your fingers Just allow to escape (as in tickling trout etc.); miss an opportunity.

get his hooks into…[Amer] Get possession of.

damming and lading [=ladling out, teeming—wYks Der]/lading and caling [=scaling, scattering, spreading around, redistributing—Sc n&midEng]/teeming [Lan Chs] Incurring one debt to pay another; saving in little things so as to make ends meet, (From a method of poaching where you dam up a stream to divert the water and then
throw the water out of the pools below your dam and so catch the stranded fish. ‘Scale-water’ is water diverted by a sluice, and a ‘scale-dish’ is a shallow milk-skimmer dish.)

fools lade the water and wise men catch the fish Clever people will take advantage of the foolish.

Folus lade polys, wysemen ete þe fysshe

c.1450

\[ damming and laving \text{ [baling]} \text{ is sure fishing} \text{ [Sc]} \text{ A sure gain, though small, is better than a larger but uncertain one.} \]

\[ fish \text{ in other men’s ponds/waters} \text{ [1644]} \text{ Intrude into their province, area of work or study.} \]

\[ \]

H.7 Deceit

underhand By fraud, concealed deceit, clandestinely.

many kiss the hand they wish cut off Outward acts do not always correspond with inward feelings.

act soft and I’ll buy you a coal-cart To someone who is pretending not to understand.

put the old man on… Trick, outwit.

H.8 Fraud

sell a dummy [sham or counterfeit object] In rugby, evade a would-be tackler by pretending to pass the ball.

how much did they rush you for that? Implying that you paid more than it was worth. (From the idea of a hasty and enforced purchase.)

give him the bag to hold Occupy his attention so that he might be the more easily swindled.

let the cat out of the bag [1760] Reveal the secret (from the trick of offering a cat in a bag as a piglet for sale—a pig in a poke!).

empty the bag Tell the whole matter and conceal nothing. (As/from the above.)

he that puts the cat in the pock kens best how to tak’ her out [Sc] Those who make trouble should be the ones to rectify it.

buy a cat in the sack Be defrauded.

canard Hoax; false report; absurd story imposing on people’s credulity. (From the French phrase vendre un canard a moitié=half-sell a duck, a confidence trick which was the subject of an anecdote in the early C17.)
Cock Lane ghost False tale intended to frighten. (From a fraud perpetrated by Charles Parsons, Smithfield, 1762.)

gold brick Fraud perpetrated by giving something worthless a superficial appearance of value.

gold-brick (v) [Amer] Avoid work, while maintaining a showy pretence of being busy.

a Smithfield bargain [1604] A fraudulent one, where the buyer is cheated; also of a marriage where money is the chief interest.

come Yorkshire over…[1700] Overreach, cheat, prove too smart for, use sharp business practice on.

they have mixed sugar and sand Have committed adultery.

the fine/small print [1960s] The part that is played down, not much in evidence, unstressed, purposely disguised or concealed (from the company’s escape-clauses hidden in a welter of small print in, for example, insurance contracts).

H.9 Forgery, defacing the coinage

give three slips [forged coins, ostensibly worth twopence] for a tester [sixpence] Defraud, deceive.

pigott (v) Forge; tell a shameless lie (from the C19 forger of this name).

scale [diminish coinage by scaling off flakes of metal—Act of Elizabeth I—1576] Cheat, defraud, steal [Aus NZ].

H.10 Perjury, slander

common/easy as lying

glib as a liar’s tongue [nYks]

ask my brother am I a liar Referring to biased witnesses.

a long disease doesn’t tell a He; it kills at last [Ire]

with a hook at the end With a mental reservation. (It is still the custom in some parts for witnesses, when they swear falsely, to crook their finger and annul the perjury.)

turn the cat in the pan/cat-in-pan [1384] Pass on information of your own starting as if it had some other origin or authority. (Of obscure origin, but probably a version of the French tourner côté en peine=change sides in trouble.) Also:

be a turncoat [wCor] The earliest uses were in the sense of turning a thing right round so that it seemed to be the opposite of what it really was.

wise as a scold [coarse-spoken, abusive woman] from her badge [=budge=bag] Informed by nothing more reliable than her own sources and imagination.
H.11a Poisoners

**poison** (v) the mind etc. Destroy healthy working; corrupt, pervert to wrong uses, attitudes.

**poison is poison, though it comes in a golden cup** [1565] Don’t let fine exteriors disguise the inner reality.

**poisoned chalice** Something immediately attractive, but which ultimately turns nasty.

**poison-pill** Stratagem, damaging to any who accept the gambit, used by businessmen to fight off take-over bids.

**vitriol** Savage criticism or abuse. (From its use as a weapon of attack in the form of a highly corrosive acid [sulphuric] thrown in the face.)

**vitriolic** Of writing, speech, people. Caustic, scathing, malignant.

**intoxicate** [<Lat *in-toxicare*=smear poison on <Gk τοξίκον>] Now restricted to alcohol-poisoning.

**shot in the arm** [1922] Revitalising introduction; stimulus. (From the injection of drugs into the arteries practised by those drug-addicts known as main-liners—see A.4c.)

H.11b Incendiarists

**incendiary** [originally one who committed arson] One who inflames the passions of others.

**incensed** With passions aroused, infuriated, inflamed.

**burn a house and run away by the light** Do wrong for no better reason than the hope of escaping the consequences.

**burn the water** [Sc] Spear salmon by torchlight.

H.11c Assailants

**lurking fear** Not in evidence, but waiting and malevolent.

**cradle-snatcher** [Amer] Person who courts or takes a much younger partner.


**shriek...of...** Proclaim visually, but with as compelling an impact as a loud call; declare blatantly. ‘His suit shrieked of Oxfam.’ Similarly lurid colours are said to be ‘loud’ and to ‘shout’ or ‘shriek’.

**ravishing** [1430] Irresistibly attractive—as if you are forced (by beauty or some other allure) to yield in spite of yourself.

**nobody’s riving your clothes** [Sc] No one’s forcing you.
you could have knocked me down with a feather! [1740] So weak from the shock.

**take a knock** Receive a severe setback.

**clapperclaw** (v) [deliver a vicious blow, one that combines biting with scratching—nwLin Amer: 1590] Revile, abuse.

**knock someone dead** [Amer] Delight, impress them greatly.

**break Priscian’s head** Violate the rules of grammar. (Priscian was a celebrated C6 grammarian.)

**mayhem** [the old crime of maiming someone so badly as to render them incapable of selfdefence, probably the equivalent of today’s GBH] Violent destruction, random vandalism.

**put the boot in** [1916] Resort to strong measures; press your advantage hard.

**lead-pipe cinch** [Can] A venture that cannot fail; an absolute certainty (as is a lead-pipe as a weapon).

**bludgeon—your way out of a situation etc.** Use immoderate arguments or means; act or react over-forcibly.

**sand-bag** (v) Coerce roughly; criticise devastatingly. (Hoodlums and muggers bludgeon their victims with sand-bags.)

**get/give the (barbed/maroon/purple) shaft** [Amer] Receive/inflict a painful dismissal; cruel jilting; degrading insult. (From the idea of penetrating the rectum with a painful object.) Hence:

**shaft** (v) [nAmer] Cheat, treat badly, take advantage of…

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**H.11d Hoods and gags**

**hoodwink** Deceive; prevent someone from realising the truth. (From the act of blindfolding a victim with a hood.)

**gag** (v) Censor, prevent someone from speaking out. (From the use of gags by assailants to prevent their victims from shouting for help.)

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**H.11e Prostitutes**

**prostitute** (v) talents, art etc. Do for money what should be done for love.

**meretricious** [<Lat meretrīx=harlot] Showily attractive, gaudy but worthless.

**Dorcessed out like a Hill street-walker** [nwLin] Dressed incongruously, in absurd fin-ery, as one might be whose clothes came from a Dorcas Society [a body of charitable women who provided clothes for the poor, named after the early Christian disciple called Tabitha or Dorcas, who had made coats and garments for the widows of Joppa and who was raised from the dead by Peter—Acts ix.36–41].
turf-war [Amer 1990s] Upsetting re-organisation, re-allocation of work or spheres of influence in an organisation. (From turf—that street or district in town claimed by a prostitute as her own area; also the territory claimed by adolescent gangs.)

common as a whore

more commotion than/smell like a whorehouse on Saturday night [Calif]

smell like a whore’s boudoir/garret [handbag]/handbag Often of a man who smells of perfume.

up and down like a whore’s drawers (on Boat Race night)

cold [Tenn Calif]/hard [Calif] as a whore’s heart Ironic.

always in trouble, like a Drury Lane whore [reputed to over-dramatise their troubles] Of one who wallows in self-pity.

ugly as an old bawd

couldn’t organise a fuck in a brothel! In criticism of inefficient organisation.

when the paddy wagon [police van—Amer] comes, they take the good girls with the bad When the market crashes, strong stocks fall as well as weak ones.

untidy as a Javanese brothel [Aus]

piano-player in a brothel [Aus] Someone implicated but not responsible.

H.12a Murder

assassin Decorative bow on woman’s corsage (worn to deadly effect).

slay [Amer] Impress powerfully.

murder (v) Of music—destroy its quality by bad performance.

murder on the mountain A pudding consisting of a mound of semolina topped with red jam.

lady-killer Seducer.

kill the widow [printers’ term for one word isolated on a line] Rearrange the spaces to avoid having a one-word line.

he would cheerfully do murder for a sixpence with a hole in it Of an unreasonably violent man.

blow your top Lose control; go mad. Originally=to lose your head by blowing your brains out, then, via drug-taking, to the modern meaning of ‘go off your head’.

hold a pistol to someone’s head Coerce them by drastic or desperate means.

shoot your granny/grandmother Imagine that you have discovered what was well-known before; be disappointed; be mistaken.


hot as a three-dollar pistol [Amer] Often of recent news.

Harriet Lane [naut] Preserved meat, especially Australian tinned meat. (She was the victim of a butchering murder.)

Kennedy (n and v) A poker/a blow with a poker/hit someone with a poker. (The name of a man murdered thus—before 1823.)
Fanny Adams [an eight-year-old girl murdered in 1867] Tinned meat, stew.

know where the bodies are buried [Amer] Have exclusive knowledge of something criminal or scandalous; intimate that blackmail is threatened.

H.12b Stabbing

stab (n) of conscience, regret etc. Mental anguish.

make a stab at...[1895] Attempt, while trusting more to luck than skill; have a try, albeit diffidently (like someone wildly striking out in a scuffle).

stangs [pierces] to my heart like a knife [nYks]

stab in the back [1922] Act of treachery from an unexpected quarter.

stabbed with a Bridport dagger [Dor: 1662] Hanged. (Hemp was grown around Bridport.)

has got his knife in me Persecutes, victimises me maliciously.

has got his knife into...[1890] Behaves vindictively towards them.

gives the knife a twist Inflicts further pain.

swear like a cutter [cut-throat, bully]

dead by/of a thousand cuts Many small injuries or annoyances that altogether add up to something serious.

cut each others’ throats [C19] Compete ruinously, especially in business.

cut-throat competition (As/from the above.)

a fool’s tongue is long enough to cut his own throat

cuts his own throat (with his own knife) Is the means of his own downfall.

my belly/wame [Sc nYks sLan] thinks my throat/wizran [=weasand, windpipe, throat—Sc] is cut/cutted [Sc] (q.d. and that is why it receives no food) Am desperately hungry.

cut the throat with a leaden sword [1533] Persuade with a weak argument.

H.12c Stifling

take by the throat Elicit a strong response.

have it/the game by the throat [Aus] Control the situation.

smother in/with... Excessively cover, overwhelm with—mud, kisses, gravy, jewels etc.

smother (up) Conceal, suppress—a yawn, feelings, facts.

stifle (v) Suppress criticism, emotions, enthusiasm, initiative, personality.

stifling, suffocating—relationship, environment One oppressive through its demands and restrictions.

anguish, anxiety [<Lat angere=throttle, choke]
burke Stifle enquiry or discussion. (From the name of an Irish murderer who smothered his victims with pitch-plaster and sold the corpses to professors of anatomy. He was executed in 1829.)

H.12d Other killings

coup [throw—Sc Ire nEng] him over the heugh [cliff—Sc]Undo, ruin him.

bishop (v) Murder by drowning (after a man called Bishop who drowned a boy in 1831 in order to sell the body for dissection).

H.13a Police

fear, the beadle of the law

big stick policy [Amer 1900] International or industrial threats with a backing of force.

policeman Timber prop to keep a shifting haymow in place.

policeman’s helmet The glans penis (from the shape).

sleeping policeman Ramp in road to reduce traffic speed.

better than sleeping with a dead policeman! An understatement in celebration of something (hardly) enjoyable.

hit/press the panic button [1955] Call, in a panic, for immediate help or action; react violently to a crisis (from the buttons fitted to a variety of systems designed to raise the alarm in case of fire, attempted burglary etc.).

start the panic bells ringing Resort to crisis procedures; finally respond to warnings; give in to fears. (As/from the above.)

like gang-busters [Amer] Energetically and successfully (after the heroic actions of anti-mob law-enforcers ‘gang-busters’ as portrayed in crime fiction).

H.13b Pursuit

paste—an accusation, criticism etc. on… [Amer] Accuse formally; indict (from sticking up a notice of crimes committed under the portrait of a wanted criminal).

look back over your shoulder Be obsessed with the past; view the past with regret or recrimination; consider the approaching challenge of possible successors to the leadership.
afraid of his own shadow [1568] Unnecessarily nervous; very timid.
walk by owl-light Fear arrest.
whistle in the dark [1939] Keep up your courage by pretended sang-froid.
he that runs in the dark may well stumble Working from insufficient knowledge can easily lead to errors or even disaster.
a hot trod A severe, hard, earnest mission. (A burning turf on a spear proclaimed the party were hunting a criminal and were not to be delayed or molested.)
witch-hunt [1885] Hysterical persecution based on fear and superstition. Often of political purges.
hue and cry Alarm, clamour generally (from the Anglo-Norman legal phrase calling for general pursuit of a recreant).
rumble (v) [<C17–19 sl. romboyle=make hue and cry after a criminal, seek by warrant] Realise; come suddenly to understand the unsavoury facts about someone, discover the truth about them. (The chain of meaning that arrives here is (1) order a criminal out of their house, and (2) examine a suspect for evidence.)
yell blue murder Raise a very loud outcry.
hot-foot Running fast, either pursuing or pursued.
come up against a blank wall [one without any gap or doorway: 1930] Meet an insuperable obstacle.
slip up Make a mistake. Also a slip-up=a blunder.
haste trips up its own heels
trip up In questioning, trap by eliciting a self-condemnatory answer; detect a blunder.
catch tripping Detect in a blunder.
supplant [<OF supplanter <Lat sup-plantare =trip from underfoot, overthrow] Hence= appropriate the position thus vacated.
forset [waylay—Cum Wm Lan Lin] Upset, hinder.
bloodhound One who relentlessly pursues their victim (like a bloodhound hunting a criminal).
bad as Barrington’s bloodhound [Ker] (In penal times a Captain Barrington and Colonel Nelson hunted down suspects with a bloodhound which viciously savaged them.)
drink like a sleuth-hound
a lie can go a mile before the truth can put its boots on [III]
a miss is as good as a mile [1821] A phrase usually expressing the idea that the result of a close miss is the same as that of a wide one. (In the days of the Bow Street Runners, if they shot at a man and missed, he could run a mile in the time it took them to reload.)
would run a mile not to… Of an encounter or situation you would go to extreme lengths to avoid.
outrun/overrun the constable [1670] Overdraw on the bank, run into debt. (At one time the constable could arrest for debt.)
fingerprint/thumbprint Distinctive characteristic; trick that identifies a person.
H.14a Arrest

**hole and corner** Secret, underhand.

**cornered** [Amer 1824] Forced into a desperate or embarrassing position.

**unmask** Expose someone’s villainy.

**search me!** The exclamation of one confronted with a question to which, it is implied, there is no chance of them having the answer.

**arrested by the bailiff of Marshland** [1662] Stricken by the ague.

**Banff bailies** Large white cumulus clouds.

**the bailiff of Bedford** [C17] The floodwater that chronically took possession of the half-mile wide strip of land between the Old and New Bedford Rivers, the idea of Cornelius Vermuyden [1630s].

**thumb-tied** [swLin] Restricted, not free to act.

**have your hands tied** [1642] Be powerless to act, variously.

**tie down** Completely circumvent; restrict action to a minimum.

**golden handcuffs** [Amer] Financial inducement to stay in a job.

**Black Maria** A police van, usually black, for transporting prisoners. (Named after Maria Lee, a powerful black woman from Boston who ran a sailors’ boarding house, and often helped the police to make arrests.)

**amenable** [<OF amener=bring before authority]

H.14b Bail

**go bail for**… Corroborate, guarantee the truth.

**give leg-bail** [1774] Allow to run away.

**Highland bail** Escaping the constable by knocking him down, with the aid of an accomplice.

H.15 The law

**need has no law** A justification for transgressing the law in a case of dire necessity.

**his word is his bond** He regards his spoken promise as being as binding as a legal agreement.

**join issue with**…[jointly submit an issue for a decision] Take an opposite side.

**at issue** In controversy.
moot point [C20] A difficult or doubtful question requiring expert debate before a conclusion can be reached. (From the name given to the discussions by students at the old Inns of Court about hypothetical cases.)

make indentures with your legs [1548] Be drunk (from the erratic zigzags along the torn edge of an indenture—see I.24f).

Stafford law [C16] The law of the big stick. (Probably a pun, as also ‘clad in Stafford blue’ [c.1410].)

summoned before the mayor of Halgavor [near Bodmin, Cor: 1662] (Where they make fun of the slovenly dressed.)

Halgavor trial Hang first and try afterwards.
Halifax law Condemned first and enquired upon after.

Jeddard/Jedburgh cast/justice/law [Sc nEng] Summary execution; first hang someone, then try them (from the action of Regent Morton at Jedburgh in 1574).
Lydford law (As above.)

in the morn they hang and draw,  
And sit in judgement after

[W.Langland, Piers the Plowman—1377]

(Another explanation is that Lydford, in Devonshire, had such foul dungeons that those awaiting trial at a Duchy of Cornwall court often died before their case was heard. Lydford was the chief town of the Stannaries.)

do as the cow o’ Forfar did, tak’ a standing drink (Because the accused cow had drunk beer from a cooling tub outside the inn while standing, the Bailies of Forfar found that the cow’s owner was not liable for damages, it being the equivalent of a doch-an-doris, or stirrup cup, which was never charged for.)

H.16 Torture and interrogation

torture (v) Force out of normal position; twist a meaning; spoil by excessive alteration - ‘tortured out of all recognition’.
   extort [<Lat ex-torquere=twist out of]
   twist his arm [1953] Coerce him, variously, though not by actual force; apply hard pressure.
   turn on the heat [C20] Increase pressure in negotiations or interrogations. (Either from turning on the heat of the electric chair or else in torturing or ‘grilling’.)
   make It hot for… Make things very uncomfortable. (As/from the above.)
   blowtorch applied to the belly [Aus] Severe test of political endurance.
   hold his feet to the fire [Amer] Use painful persuasion on him.
   prolong the agony Deliberately make something unpleasant (like an anxious time of waiting) last longer than necessary.
wild horses would not drag it from me! [1591] The promise of someone to keep a secret even under the torture of being quartered apart by four horses.

break (a fly) on the wheel Spend a disproportionate amount of energy on a victim; punish too harshly.

a butterfly broken on the wheel Something or someone delicate spoilt by cruel strength, often a woman ruined by the social system.

excoriate \[<Lat excoriare=flay\] Censure severely.

flay (v) Severely criticise.

cat-haul [Amer] Interrogate harshly. (From the torment of dragging a clawing cat down a victim’s back.)

on the rack Intensely anxious, in torment of mind, fearfully expectant.

rack your brains/memory [1583] Think, or try to remember, with great mental effort (as if on the rack where victims were tortured by stretching).

nerve-racking [1812] Torturing with fear or anxiety Also, racked with pain

put the screw/screws on… Increase pressure so as to persuade or coerce someone to do what you want. (From that old torture, the thumbscrew.)

turn of the screw Additional annoyance, punishment, penalty, taxation.

call/fetch/haul over the coals [1565] Rebuke. (From the treatment given to heretics or Jews who refused to pay; or even those on trial by fire.)

drawn over the coals [wYks] Called to account. (As/from the above.)

I could have bitten my tongue off as soon as I had said it! Spoken by someone who immediately regrets an injudicious remark. (Certain victims of the Inquisition bit off their tongues and spat them at their tormentors. The Greek philosopher Anaxarchus is probably the first recorded to have done this, when being pounded in a mortar at the command of Nicocreon, tyrant of Cyprus.)

iron maiden [the medieval torture clamp with inward-facing spikes] Strict, severe and ruthless woman [Amer].

the iron entered his soul He suffered agonies of mind; became embittered. (Like instruments of torture entering the body. This phrase originated from a mistranslation into the Vulgate of the Hebrew in Psalm cv.18.)

water torture [a Chinese torture in which incessant drips of water fell on one spot on the head] Something innocuous in itself which becomes intolerable through constant repetition.

H.17 In court and on trial

prejudice (n) \[<Lat praejudicium=prior judgement\] Judgement previously formed, preconception, an opinion reached in haste and without due consideration, a bias, partiality for or against.

summon (up) Call to your aid or presence—courage, friends etc.

advocate of… Formally supporting, recommending [c. 1735].

in the court of sour-milk session In disgrace, disfavour.
out of court Not entitled to be heard or considered; of arguments etc. not worth considering.

put out of court Refuse to consider.

laugh out of court [1909] Ridicule a case until rejected.

swear by… Express absolute confidence in and reliance on (as when taking an oath in court).

plead Proffer as an excuse. ‘I can only plead ignorance.’

streaker’s defence [Aus—‘It seemed a good idea at the time, your worship’] Spontaneous but feeble excuse.

witness Give evidence of… ‘A blush witnessed her confusion.’

testicles [<Lat testiculus=little witness]

detest [<Lat de-testare=call witnesses] Abhor (as you would expect to hate one against whom you must call witnesses in court).

truth has a scratched face [1594] (Because people don’t like hearing it and are disposed to react like a slandered woman.)

the rusty sword and empty purse plead performance of covenants [1664] (Because the opportunity to default by using force or litigation is not available.)

sue a beggar to catch a louse [wYks Ken Ind: 1659] Enter a futile lawsuit.

throw the book at… Accuse of all the possible crimes; award the maximum penalty.

an open-and-shut case, game etc. [1841] One where the outcome is certain (as if the portfolio containing the case papers is no sooner open at the beginning of the trial, than it can be closed at the end of it).

don’t be like David Lowe, go to prison for dreaming! (In 1757 David Lowe, a carpenter of Nottingham, dreamt where some stolen property was hidden. It was found where he described, and on this evidence alone he was gaoled.)

make amends [<OF amendes=fine, restitution in money or kind] Annul an injury by restoring property, confidence, good relations etc.

five-or-seven Drunk; a drunk. (Five shillings or seven days was a common award by magistrates judging cases of drunkenness.)

return to our muttons [1821]/sheep Get back to the point or subject. (In an old French law case about stolen sheep, the plaintiff was often distracted from his case by indignation at another wrong he had suffered from defendant’s counsel. The judge as often recalled him with the words ‘Revenons a nos moutons.’)

travel out of the record [deviate to matters not within the record of the case before the court] Wander off on to another subject.

a hanging matter [1970s] Something regarded, and treated, seriously and severely.

get away with murder [1921] Be so favoured as to escape all retribution and hardly to be accountable even for your worst actions.

Star-chamber [room in the C14 and C15 palace at Westminster where the king’s council dispensed a justice which, under James I and Charles I, became summary and tyrannical] A term of abuse, or at best suspicion, applied to any interrogatory procedure or irregular investigation.

Dovercourt—all speakers and no hearers [near Harwich, an annual court consisting chiefly of seamen; another explanation stems from the legend that Harwich church once contained a cross that spoke, and the church became so full that the doors could not be closed: 1600]
stands condemned Has been dismissed as worthless after due trial.


H.18a Judges

arbitrary [<Lat arbiter=judge (who will pass a verdict without reference to anything other than his own opinion)]

grave/sober as a judge [1682] sober as a judge—on Friday Not exactly sober.

bigwig An important, prestigious personage. (It was noticeable that the grander the man, the bigger the wig.)

a wigging A rebuke delivered authoritatively, if not magisterially.

bad as Jeffries [=Jeffreys, the harsh judge who condemned many supporters of the rebel Duke of Monmouth to death and transportation at the ‘Bloody Assizes’ of Dorset and Somerset in 1685]

lynch law An illegal, unofficial trial and verdict. (Originally from the name of an C18 American, Charles Lynch, who was chosen at a time when the judiciary was weak to act as judge in Virginia because of the fairness of his verdicts. The word has since devolved to the meaning of lynch=execute summarily, usually in response to the demands of mob hatred and hysteria.)

‘the case is altered’ quoth Plowden (He was a judge in Elizabeth I’s time and when plaintiff asked what legal remedy there was against some trespassing hogs, said he might have good remedy; but the other telling him that they were his own hogs, ‘Nay, then, the case is altered’ quoth Plowden.)

H.18b Juries

a fox should not be of a jury at a goose’s trial [1732] Hinting at some partiality of judgement.

the jury is still out [Amer] No decision has yet been made.

wise as the Westmorland jury, who found a man guilty of manslaughter who was tried for stealing a grindstone
H.18c Lawyers

has as many tricks as a lawyer
(country) lawyers [Chs Lei Hrf EAn Glo Brks Ken Sur Sus IW] Brambles (similar in act and effect).
know as much as a Devonshire lawyer [Cor]
it would puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer [UK] Of a difficult problem.
hell and chancery are always open Implying other similarities.
in chancery In deep trouble. Often used of someone whose head is pinioned by his opponent’s weak arm for the other arm to punch.
brief (v) Give last-minute and detailed instructions to soldiers or airmen on the performance of a military mission (as when detailing the future conduct of a case in court).
hold a brief for… Be concerned to maintain the cause of (as a lawyer with a brief); be partisan for; be obliged to argue in favour of; be involved with.
exceed your brief [the requirements or limits of an investigation as laid down by government or Parliament] Go beyond your instructions; overstep the bounds of your authority.
that’s Halkerston’s cow, a’ the ither way! [Sc: 1721] Of someone who soon changes their position. (When lawyer Halkerston gave permission to one of his tenants to feed an ox, it was gored to death by one of Halkerston’s heifers. The tenant told the story in reverse of what happened and Halkerston said, ‘Why then, your ox must go for my heifer; the law provides that’ ‘No,’ said the man, ‘your heifer killed my ox.’ ‘Oh!’ said Halkerston, ‘the case alters there’ and forthwith reversed his tactics.) J.Kelly spells the name ‘Hackerton’.
endorse [officially approve or sanction by writing on the back of a relevant document] Generally support or confirm an action or decision.
the whole ball of wax [Amer] Everything, extras included. (Probably from a stratagem of dividing an inheritance by drawing secret bequests hidden in a ball of wax.)
legacy—software etc. Outdated computer equipment which has become too costly either to maintain or replace.

H.19 Prison

fly [cunning, crafty, smart] as a jailor [Sc]
keep your tongue a prisoner, and your body may go free People are nearly always condemned by their own words.
Godes presoner [=God’s prisoner—Stonor Letter, 11 June 1478] Someone confined to bed by illness.
wedlock is a padlock [1678]
shackle Restriction by rule or imposition. ‘Shackles of convention’ etc.
fetter (v) Restrict, restrain generally; hinder, hamper.

no man loves his fetters, though they be made of gold [1573] Riches can never compensate for loss of liberty.

unfettered Unrestricted—often of rights of free speech, access etc.


drag a lengthening chain Delay, take longer and longer, have ever more to do.

a dungeon of/for…[Sc Nhb Yks] A mine of, rich storehouse of; exceptionally capable or prolific in.

dark as a dungeon [Ant]

see day at a little hole [1546] Infer truth from slight evidence; you don’t need much evidence to recognise truth.

bang/dash/knock/run your head against a brick/stone wall [1553] Strive against the unyielding; oppose what is irresistible.


blue Indecent, obscene. (Probably deriving from the colour of the gowns given to convicted harlots when serving in the C16–C17 houses of correction.)

born on the steps of Newgate Of very dubious ancestry.

false as Newgate

black as Newgate [Oxf] Describing dirty clothes or an angry face.

Newgate fashion In pairs (as the Newgate prisoners had to go).

Newgate fringe The hair under the chin, between chin and neck. (The position of the noose.)

dark as Newgate knocker [a curl worn by costermongers etc.—Cockney Sur, still in use in 1940)]

get cracking [1937] Start work in earnest. (Probably an expression of the convicts working in the Dartmoor stone quarries.)

Buckley’s chance [Aus] The most remote of chances. (William Buckley was a convict who escaped and survived thirty years among the aborigines.)

reveal the secrets of the prison-house Tell everything.

H.20a Punishment, by confinement

tied So committed as to have no freedom or leisure.

debt is a rope to your feet [Minn]

safe as the stocks [Cor]

right or wrong, put Bagley in the stocks When someone has a bad reputation, he is liable to be blamed even for what he has not done.

in the shoemaker’s stocks [S.Pepys— April 1666: wYks] With shoes too small for the feet.

lay by the heels Overthrow, disgrace, restrain through illness [1748]. (From confinement in fetters or the stocks.)

impede [<Lat impedire=fetter, shackle]
pillory (v) Expose to public ridicule. (The pillory was a frame where offenders were fastened by the neck so that they could be pelted with bad eggs etc. by those of the community so minded.)

in the pillory Open to public ridicule. (As/from the above.)

from pillar to post [=from pillory to whipping-post: 1420] Harassed from one place to another.

strait-jacketed—mentality etc. Confined, restricted (as was the violent prisoner or madman in the strait-waistcoat or strait-jacket which confined the arms).

canvass (v) [bounce and bump in a canvas sheet, a punishment inflicted by offended neighbours or villagers without process of law] Test thoroughly, examine; ascertain the likely outcome of an election by previous interrogation, hence, solicit votes.

H.20b Punishment, by labour

treadmill The daily round of incessant toil; monotonous work, generally.

punishing—work, weather, training, schedule etc. Cruelly arduous. Also, punish (v) and punishment (n) are regularly used in sporting contexts to describe a situation where the efforts of one are overwhelmed by the strength and severity of the other.

H.20c Punishment, by burning and striking

tar-and-feather Express group or public disapproval. (The punishment was first used on robbers during the C12 crusades.)

burn the old witch [n&eYks Lan] Celebrate the end of harvest by parching peas on a stubble fire and with general merriment.

branded as... Stigmatised, publicly recognised as. ‘This deed branded him as a swindler.’ (From the old punishment of branding convicted criminals with a hot iron carrying the initial letter of their crime.)

burnt with the same/one iron Guilty of the same offence; none better than another.

marked man One already subject to suspicion and accordingly kept under observation.

brand—of goods, manufactures etc. (After the trade mark, originally put on with a branding iron.)

he’ll have to suck the hammer [wYks] Suffer for wrongdoing.

kick ass and take names [Amer 1970s] Assert a rough and punitive authority.
H.20d Punishment, by beating

take it lying down [1888] Take punishment or criticism without resistance, abjectly (like someone submitting to a beating).

thin as a whipping-post [a post where offenders were tied for a whipping] Ironic.

sharp as a whip

a swingeing attack [1530] A furious one (as if by someone with a whip).

bosthoon [Ire bastun=whip of green rods] Awkward, tactless fool.

scourge (n) Terrible punishment or slayer. Often used of epidemics or the fearful warriors of old.

under the lash of...[S.Pepys—24 June 1666] Severely criticised by, smarting from.

lashed—into a fury etc. Cause a violent reaction.

backlash (n) [1921] Reaction, repercussion—of anger etc. (as in the backlash from a strong whip).


he’s sairest dung [beaten] that his own wand dungth [Sc] He suffers most who is responsible for his own troubles.

let his own wand ding him [Sc: 1641] Let him suffer for his own folly.

reverberate [Lat re-verberare=scourge, lash back]

every whip-while [Nhb Cum] As often as the whip falls in a flogging.

whips-while [Ess] A short time.

H.20e Punishment, by transportation

put his pot on [Aus] Report, inform against him (from the days of the penal settlements when an escaped convict’s pot was brought back into use when he was recaptured); catch him out; stop him from doing wrong [NZ].

H.21a To be hanged

may as well hang for a sheep as a lamb When there is an inevitable drawback you may as well get the best advantage first. Ray’s version is: As good be hanged for an old sheep as a young lamb’ [1678].

he that hath an ill name is half-hanged [1546] A man’s previous life will influence judgements about him.
if you steal for others you will hang for yourself [1732] A man is himself solely responsible for his actions.

he that killeth a man when he is drunk shall be hanged when he is sober [1538] Wrongdoing when irresponsible or merry has grim consequences nevertheless; people are free agents when they decide to take drugs or alcohol in the first place, and are therefore fully accountable for what happens after-wards.

say ‘please’ to the judge, for you won’t be able to say ‘thanks’ when the hangman’s job is done [Ire] The duties of reverence, if neglected in this life, are pointless in the next.

as meet as a thief for the widdy [=withy, the willow tree or else the plaited noose, both mostly used for hangings: 1641]

like hanging, it concentrates the mind On the salutary effect of an approaching crisis, ordeal etc. (From the saying of Dr Johnson: ‘Depend upon it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates the mind wonderfully’ [C18].)

the father to the bough, the son to the plow [1576] Of gavelkind; though the father is hanged, the son inherits.

in the cart [1889] In great trouble or danger; in the wrong (as if on the way to be hanged).

ride backwards up Holborn Hill [1594] Go to be hanged.

easy over the stones! [1711] Take more care; be considerate of others’ weaknesses. (The appeal of someone being dragged on a hurdle to the gallows.)

I’m in no hurry, as Temple said when Berry hanged him for smoorin’ [=smothering] his mother-in-law [Lan]

H.21b Gallows

gallowses [Sc Ire nEng WVir Vir] Braces (because the trousers hang from them).

cross as the gallows [Cor]

gibbet (v) Expose, hold up to contempt.

be buried/die under the gallows [wYks nLin Sus] Kill yourself with hard work.

H.21c Ropes

slip-string [someone who deserves hanging, but manages to elude it] person/ways/work [Nhp War] Slovenly, careless, wild, irresponsible.

as meet as a rope for a thief [1540]

with a halter round his neck In as great danger as one about to be hanged.

he has made a halter to hang himself [1575] Has done or said what is enough to condemn him.
John, John, pit your neck in the nick to please the laird [Sc] (Said by a wife to her husband who was resisting being hanged.) Of anyone over-obedient to his superiors.

‘nay, nay’ quoth Stringer when his neck was in the halter [1678] Of one who speaks too late.

give a man rope enough and he’ll hang himself [1639] Give him the chance and he will say something to condemn himself; too much freedom is self-destroying.


sigh [=stretch—nEng]/stretch a/the hemp [Don]/the neck [Ker] Be hanged.

he’ll support you—as a rope supports a hanged man!

it is ill talking of a halter in the house of a man that was hanged [1599] Respect people’s particular susceptibilities.

H.21d Hangmen

hang-dog—look etc. Appropriate only to hang a dog or be hanged like a dog.

the hangman leads the dance Of someone with many dependent followers.

fond [foolish, simple] as the men of Bolton who hanged a sheep for stealing a man [Lin]

derrick (n) Hoist, boom, crane (after the type of gallows erected at Tyburn by a notable hangman of that name c. 1600).

derrick (v) [Penn] Die/kill by hanging. (From the above.)

H.21e Hanged men

stand like Mumphazard/mute as Mum-chance who was hanged for saying nothing [Chs]

don’t be like the saddler of Bawtry who was hanged for leaving his liquor [1790] (It was a custom at York for criminals on their way to execution to stop at a certain tavern for a last drink. This the saddler of Bawtry refused and was promptly hanged, but if he had stopped there for a few minutes, his reprieve, which was on the road, would have arrived in time to save his life.)

he was hanged that left his drink [1670] An unknown predecessor of the aforementioned saddler.

hung higher than Gilderoy’s kite Be punished out of proportion to the offence. (Gilderoy was a notorious Perthshire highwayman who picked Cromwell’s pocket and was hanged in 1636—see H.1.) ‘Knocked higher than Gilroy’s kite’ [Amer 1887].

higher than Gilderoy’s kite Very high; out of sight. (As/from the above.)
camac [C19 cleric hanged in Wexford for uttering false halfpennies] Valueless trifle [slre]; substitute word for any noun; complicated contrivance for achieving something simple.

dangle (v) Keep in suspense, either by ‘dangling something in front’ of a person so that they do not know whether they are going to get it or not, or by ‘keeping a person dangling’ in a state of anxious uncertainty.

twist slowly/in the wind [Amer] Suffer prolonged humiliation, misery, regret.

I wouldn’t like to be hanging by the neck since she was thirty [Ire] Implying that she is considerably older.

Greenacre The loss of a load through failure of a sling when unloading a ship. (From a murderer of that name whose gallows rope broke at Newgate in 1837.)

H.22 Executions

he eats in plate, but will die in irons His life of luxury will result in a wretched end.

dead-warrant End, destruction. ‘This refusal was the death-warrant to his hopes.’

sign your own death-warrant Precipitate your own downfall.

lay your head/put your neck on the block for... Expose yourself to dire consequences; make a disinterested sacrifice of yourself.

on the chopping-block In serious trouble.

guillotine A parliamentary device for ending protracted debates.

heads will roll [1940] Offending persons will be disciplined—with loss of positions, jobs etc. (after the mass guillotinings of the French Revolution).

pardon after the execution Of something that comes too late to be of any earthly use.
I
AT HOME

I.1a Maidenhood

maidensize One where there is none for trial.
maidendown [Brks Hmp] Hill that has never been plowed.
maidencastle One never captured.
maidenover An over in cricket off which no runs are scored.
maidenspeech A member’s first speech in Parliament.
maidensword One that has drawn no blood; also, maiden soldier
maidentide A tide on which no ships either enter or leave harbour.
maidentree [Nhp] One as yet unlopped.
maidenvoyage A ship’s first voyage.
you’re looking for maidenheads! For something unprocurable, or at least very scarce.

Malkin’s maidenhead [1377] Something which will never return; what is non-existent. (Mal-kin was often used for the name of a slut.)

it’s far to seek and ill to find, like Meg’s maidenhead [Sc] Of what is lost beyond recall.
cool as a virgin [RN WW2] Composed, relaxed.

fair as a virgin’s vows

virginforest Self-sown, unplanted.
damsel (n) Iron for warming a bed.

the damsel of the wood The silver birch.

virginsoil Ground not previously cultivated.

virgincomb Comb used once only for honey and never for brood.

virgin honey That produced from the hive of a second swarm from the parent stock [sChs].

he’d take his mother for a maid Is very simple, gullible.
I.1b Courtship

go together—like lads of Brigg and lasses of Beckermet [Cum]
court disaster etc. Try to achieve something which will encompass your own ruin.
at first blush In the very beginning.
won with a feather and lost with a straw Of an inconstant person.
flirt with an idea etc. Give passing attention or consideration to it, but not seriously.
come-love tea [Aus] Weak tea (the phrase suggesting an affectionate rather than a passionate relationship).
hold someone's hand Give moral support; back them up.
go hand in hand [1576] Be inseparable; co-exist in mutual dependence.
hand for niece with...[Cai eLth Lnk Rnf] In league with.
snuggle up to... Make pointed efforts to associate with, ingratiating yourself with.
hug the shore Sail as close as possible to it; be unadventurous.
hutching-fain Very glad [hutch=go, huddle together—Lan],
all-embracing Comprehensive, all-inclusive.
get round a man’s neck-hole [space between the neck and the collar] Gain influence, control over him [War].
lady’s waist [Aus] Slender, shapely glass; a drink served in such a glass.
squeeze-me-tight Raspberry jam sandwich.
kiss the dust/ground Be killed; be brought low, to abject submission.
osculating circles, curves etc. Lightly tangential [<Lat osculari=kiss].
kiss and tell Betray intimate secrets.
accord [<Lat ad cor=(heart) against heart, to heart]
concord [<Lat concors < cum-cor=with hearts together]
discord [<Lat discors < dis-cor=with hearts apart]
sweetheart [Amer Aus UK: 1959] A separately negotiated agreement between management and trade union without consultation with membership; the person who makes such agreements.
sore as a snouted sheila [rejected, spurned young woman—Aus] Resentful.
if thou won’t have me, old Shenton will A saying round Kelsall [Chs] when a reminder is needed that there is competition. (A servant girl at a farmhouse was being courted by two men, the first of whom she hid in the oven when the second arrived. When she saw fit to mention to him ‘If thou won’t have me, old Shenton will’, ‘Will he?’ came a voice from the oven.)
she’s waited of boots while [until] clogs will not have her [Lan] Of a woman who meant to marry higher.
seduce Persuade someone to do wrong against their better judgement by offering an irresistible attraction. Hence also, seductive.
‘all new things sturts’ [affects], quoth the good wife when she gaed ly with the hireman [=went to bed with the servant: Sc] An excuse for curiosity.
limp-dick [Amer] Ineffectual, incompetent person.
a stiff prick knows no conscience [ Colo]
you come home with your knickers torn and say you found the money! You can’t expect me to believe that; you will need to concoct a better story if you hope to convince me.

she has a man’s head under her girdle [1546] Has him in control, at her mercy.
harder than pulling a soldier off your sister [RN]
cheese and money should sleep together one night The reply when payment is demanded before delivery.

incestuous relationships/processes The situation in a group of companies where there are cross-holdings of stock supporting a financial empire; pointless redeployment of staff within the profession.

strange bedfellows [See Shaks, Tempest II.ii—1611] People (or animals or things) not usually associated together.

cheek by jowl Closely associated; in close proximity—of people or things not usually found together.

jazz [perform the sex-act—black Amer] A vigorous exciting music with African rhythms originating among black Americans.

touch the G-spot [=Gräfenberg spot, a highly erogenous zone in the vaginal wall] Of singers and orators who evoke an uncontrollable response from their audience; arouse various reactions [1980s].

run away with—an idea etc. Adopt on impulse and without due thought or consideration; also, ‘don’t let your imagination run away with you’=don’t be beguiled from reality to fantasy.

I.1c Marriage

wed Attach closely,
wedded to—an idea, opinion etc. [1542] With a lifelong commitment to it.
marry (v) Join two things closely together; correlate as a pair; splice rope-ends together without any swelling [naut].
marry up… Put two lots together in an auction, one unlikely to attract bids with one more in demand; update a document with new material.
espouse [1622]/embrace [1399]—a cause, religion etc. Join yourself to it; undertake to serve it for life; accept eagerly; adopt variously.
marr"ed to the mools [=moulds, soil—Sc] Buried before married.
marry the widow with the wooden leg Hang. (The gallows is the widow of the last man to swing.)
simmer like a bride on her wedding day [1678]
endowed with…[1420] Naturally gifted or favoured with.

paraphernalia [1736: <Gk \(\pi\α\rho\partial\phi\epsilon\rho\alpha\) = things beyond the dowry; legally those personal possessions additional to the dowry and thereby in the ownership of the wife and not of the husband] The traditionally indispensable though largely useless concomitants of a trade, entertainment etc.; a mixed and incongruous assemblage of items of dubious
value (the extended meaning attributable to the dismayed reaction of husbands as they unloaded the contents of their bride’s cart into the future home).

**disparage** [<_OF _desparagier_ = marry unequally—someone of higher status] Discredit.

**fathom** [<_AS _fæðm_ = an open-arm embrace] (From the way of measuring rope with both arms outstretched.)

**with open arms** Cordially, with a welcome.

he that _kisses his wife in the market-place/ at the market-cross [Sc] will have many to teach him_ [1636] Expect interference if you do in public what should be done in private.

**on and off like a bride’s nightie** Of something quickly taken and as quickly discarded. Also, **up and down like a bride’s nightie**.

**long ere four bare legs heat in a bed** [Sc] You need the means to marry with.

**more belongs to marriage than four bare legs in a bed** [1546] There is more to this than you like to think; you must look further than first impressions.

**he can’t get up yet; his wife is lying on his shirt-tail!** (A euphemism.)

**the honeymoon** [1580] is **over** [1969] The good relations with which they started their association no longer obtain.

**light as love on a Monday morning** Describing a cake.

**divorce** (v and n) Irrevocably separate—ambitions from reality, explanations from the facts etc.

### I.1d Conception and pregnancy

**carry the seeds of**… Carry the potential for change, possess certain powers internal to a person, integral to a system or endemic to a society that will inevitably develop into a force for transformation.

**conceive** Imagine, grasp mentally.

**he has only to throw his trousers on the bed and his wife’s pregnant** Of one apparently very fertile.

**embryonic/in embryo** Incipient; as yet undeveloped; rudimentary; at its earliest stage of growth.

**gestate** [1961] Be in the preliminary stages of producing a work of music, literature etc.

**salient—point, fact etc.** Conspicuous, prominent. [The salient point is the heart at its first appearance in the embryo—C17]

**with child to**…[C16] Desperate for, with strong desire to; impatient to. (From the compulsive cravings of a pregnant woman.) ‘Longs for it like a woman with child.’

**make little ones out of big ones** [Amer] Serve a prison sentence (from breaking stones).

**beget** (v) Lead inevitably to; produce as a result of its own nature.

**money begets money** Will increase, if there is enough to start with.

**teach your father to get children!** [1670] To one giving unnecessary advice.
birth-control hours [mid C20] Shift or night work that results in one spouse sleeping by day and the other at night.

I.1e Wives and husbands

just the thing, like old Berry’s wife
all worse and no better, like Tom Norton’s wife
scolding wife [nLin] Watchman’s rattle (used to keep rabbits in their enclosure).
adulterate [<_Lat adulterare=commit adultery with, corrupt]
send a husband into Cornwall without a boat [1565] Cuckold him (a play on Corn- = horn, the symbol of cuckoldry).
if it was raining naked women one night, even supposing I could catch one, it’d be the wife [Nhb] So unlucky.
repudiate [<_Lat repudiare=divorce]
we live as Jacob Dawson’s wife died—in luxury (She died in Kendal on 19 June 1700, and her epitaph reads: ‘Who by a free and cheerful resignation of herself, even in the midst of this world’s affluence, has left us grounds to hope she is now happy’.)

I.2a Giving birth

abortion [Amer] Disaster, generally.
abortive Of anything that ceases before it gets properly started; that tries but fails.
had her bairn under the savin-tree [a juniper from which an abortifacient could be extracted] Had an abortion. [See Hugh MacDiarmid, Sabine—1926]
dead in the water [amniotic fluid] A nonstarter, hopeless case, doomed never to get going or be functional. Of schemes, projects that are certain to fail.
still-born Of plans, projects etc. that, doomed from the beginning, never get properly started.
you ride as if you went to fetch the midwife [1678] To someone in great haste.
go for the doctor [Aus] Make an all-out effort, usually of race-horses.
maieutic [=bringing to birth <Gk μαίευτης=act as midwife] The Socratic method of eliciting truth through a series of questions.
bad as a lying-in job [sLan]
in the throes [birth-pangs] of… In the hard process of producing something.
boil not the pap before the child is born Don’t do work earlier than it is required.
it’s no use making porridge for the child before it’s born [sLan] (As above.)
bairn is eith [easy—Sc Ire Nhb Dur Cum Wm Yks] to busk [dress, make ready—Sc Ire Nhb Dur Cum Wm Yks Lan Chs Lin EAn] that is unborn The reality seldom as good as the anticipation; a task may seem easy—until you have to do it.

innocent as a/the babe/child unborn/new-born babe/day we were born

naked as they were born [c.1400]

give birth to… Bring into existence.

afterbirth Stewed rhubarb.

I.2b New-born

happed/lapped/wrapped in/up in (the tail of) his mother’s smock [1585] Born lucky, or lucky in love; attractive to women. (From the belief that a baby born with a caul is lucky.)

sooterkin A supplementary or imperfect piece of (often written) work. (From the C17 legend that Dutchwomen produced a living afterbirth, small and ugly like a changeling, while sitting over the stove.)


genuine [<Lat genuinus=true-born, freeborn]

ingenuous [<Lat ingenuus=native-born, free-born, noble]

come alive to…[C18] Become keenly aware of, emerge from unawareness to a full realisation of.

come to life Become fully realised, vividly revealed. Often of religious truth, works of literature and art.

smooth as a baby’s bottom

white as a baby’s arm

niver been weshed since th’ howdie [midwife] weshed tha [eDur] To a dirty child.

wash/wet the head of a new baby [1885] An expression meaning to take a drink to celebrate the birth.

weak/helpless as a babe/baby

no more fend [energy, ability, capability] than a new-born bairn [nYks]

bawbee [=baby, a halfpenny (the fee for going to see one of the infant kings of Fife)—Sc]

sleep like a baby [NC Calif sAmer]

in its infancy At an early stage; with much growth still to come. Referring to projects, institutions etc.

infantile landscape Terrain in the earliest stages of erosion.

smell of the baby Not yet have outgrown childish ignorance.

in long clothes In early stages, in ‘infancy’.

doesn’t know yet he’s been born Has no experience of life in the world.
I.2c Bastards, foundlings and changelings

be born/come on the wrong side of the blanket [1771] Be bastard-born.
father…on to… Impute to (as with a baby of disputed paternity).
it is a thrawn-faced [distorted, misshapen—Sc Ire Dur] bairn that is gotten against his father’s will [Sc: 1628] Extorted kindness is begrudged.
drop/dump/throw in the lap of… Delegate a problem to; shift the burden to.
drop into the lap of… Be acquired without effort
lay at the door of…[1683] Attribute, impute to. (From the recourse of leaving a newborn bastard on the father’s doorstep.)
doorstep (v) [1945] (As above.)
lie at the door of… Become their responsibility. (As/from the above.)
put out on the shool/shovel Cast out of doors; disown [Slre]. (From the treatment of a child suspected of being a changeling or bewitched.)
left in the basket Neglected, uncared for. (At one time foundling hospitals used to place baskets at their doors for the reception of abandoned babies.)

I.2d Giving suck

harmless as the soukin’ wean [sucking baby—Rnf]
safe as a child on its mother’s breast
wants it like a baby wants its titty With an urgent personal need, not so strongly felt by others.
it’s the crying baby that gets the milk [Amer]
mother’s milk An essential, elementary need.
a face so sour it would turn the milk in a fair lady's breast
mild as mother’s milk
milk for babies [1641] Doctrine, literature etc. simplified for the young or ignorant.
has his mother’s milk in the nizz [=nose—Sc] Behaves like a baby [Abd].
your minnie’s milk is no out of your nose yet [Sc] You are too young. (=the above.)
an hour’s cold will suck out seven years’ heat The negative force is more drastic than the positive.
suck (v) [Sc] Drain, exhaust variously.
suck it all in [Nhp] Understand as literal what was spoken in exaggeration, or ironically.
suck dry Exhaust the resources; extract the last penny.
nurse/wet-nurse (v) [1869] Cherish solicitously; take pains to care for. ‘Nurse an estate/ constituency’; ‘wet-nurse members of a union’. To ‘nurse a drink’ is to hold the glass and only drink very slowly; to ‘nurse a grievance’ is to nourish its growth.
nurse (n) A competent ship’s officer who is in virtual command of the ship while assisting someone who is captain in name only [naut].

nurse-tree One left to protect the young crop (cf. Mére Dubois, the French name for blackthorn).

nursery Beds where young plants, trees etc. are raised; training ground or club for promising young players.

the nurse is valued till the child is done sucking [1732] A sort of cupboard love, esteemed only while useful.

sugar-tit [Amer] Something that gives comfort.

wean from—bad habits, company etc. Cure, distract, rescue from...(usually by enforced withdrawal and counter-attractions); redirect and transfer—energies, loyalties etc. to the next stage.

I.2e Baby-food

blow-pobs [Yks] A soft, spoilt, fussy child or person. (The suggestion here is that not only has the child not progressed beyond baby-food, but that someone has to blow it for them.)

fancical [faddy, fastidious] as a bairned wean [new-born baby—nYks]

milksop [bread soaked in milk] Spiritless, feeble person.

easy/soft/wet as pap
give pap with a hatchet [1587] Do a kind act in an unkind manner; punish someone under the pretence of doing them a kindness.

spoon-feed [1864] Over-subsidise, spoil industries favoured by government; supply information in easily digestible amounts, requiring no effort to learn them.

nought/nowo but what was put in with a spoon [Cum] No intellectual vigour.

stop two mouths with one morsel Use resources doubly economically.

feed into… Insert for processing (as a program into a computer).

nourish (v) vain hopes, resentful feelings etc. in the heart Foster and encourage them.

I.2f Teething

teething troubles [1937] Initial hitches, drawbacks in something new, such as a new house, job, vehicle, manufacturing process etc.

scream the place down Report a burglary to the police.

drool [drivel, dribble like a teething baby—swEng Amer] Babble foolishly.

cut your teeth Reach an age of discretion.

he cut his teeth on…Was familiar with, gained experience of it from a very early age.
 softly as a milk-tooth leaving a baby’s gum
 has cut his eye/wisdom teeth/has all his back teeth  [Sc] Has reached years of discretion; has acquired some worldly experience.

I.2g Baby-care

swaddling clothes  Restraints on freedom.
 this won’t buy the baby a new frock  We are achieving nothing like this.
 carry/hold the baby  [1890] Be left with an unwelcome responsibility; the hardest part of a job. Often as ‘left holding the baby’.
 in the safe hands of  ... Securely entrusted to, completely managed by, in the care of— generally.
 ...subjicz, being dandeled, will make ther owne raignes  [Elizabeth I, Letter—October 1594]
 in the lap of luxury  Living in supreme luxury.
 cradle (n) Starting, formative place. ‘Athens, the cradle of European civilisation.’
 cradle (v) Hold carefully. ‘Cradled the animal in his arms.’
 shoed in the cradle and barefoot in the stubble  [Sc] Prosperous in youth, poor in age.
 some folks never get the cradle straws out of their breech  [e&wYks: 1678] Of one who, though adult, still behaves in some ways like a child.
 rocked in a stone cradle  [wYks]/kitchen  Weak in the head. (The explanation is that the jolting of a cradle on an uneven floor so jumbled up the child’s brains as to make it addled and disordered in mind. See also J.7, half-rocked.)
 better have a bairn wi’ a mucky face than wash its nose off  [Yks] Of excessive discipline or protection; accept things as they are; do not let an imperfection detract from what is basically good; do not lose an essential by too-drastic reforms.
 better a snotty child than his nose wiped off  [1611] (As above.)
 bite the bairns  [Sc] Repay good with ill.
 not dry/wet behind the ears  [1914] Innocent as a babe; childish, inexperienced—of those who think they are adult but should still, it is implied, be in the care of their mothers. (Cf. the French a encore du lait derrière les oreilles.)
 duck-shover  [Aus] Manipulator; someone who uses unfair business practices, especially a cabman who breaks the rank. (As if a child were to resort to shoving instead of blowing their duck in races at bath-time.)
 throw the baby out with the bath-water  Be so intent on getting rid of what you do not want, that you also lose what you do want  [G.B.Shaw, Preface to Getting Married—1909].
 till Los Angeles river wets its bed  [Amer] For ever.
 eleven o’ clock, and no poes emptied, no babies scraped!  Applied to work that should have been done sooner, this is a jocular comparison with a homely situation to reduce the crisis or anxiety of a more serious one.
 get out of your pram  Become excited, agitated, angry; out of control.
mouth like the bottom of a baby’s pram, all shit and biscuits Describing a hangover.

nursery slopes Those gentler snow slopes where beginners can learn to ski in safety; easy targets over which trainee aircraftsmen practise their bombing runs.

I.2h Crawling

the baby that always gets carried will never learn to walk [Amer]
you get him where you left him [Sc] Of a placid, even-tempered person.
creep (v) Be flat, stale. Of literary style.
first creep and then go [walk: 1350]/bairns maun creep ere they gang [Sc] Do/learn things in their natural order; do not attempt anything before you are ready.
love will creep where it cannot go Does not mind how, as long as it progresses.
speaks as though he would creep into your mouth Ingratiatingly.
crawl (v) Behave in an abject manner; debase yourself to obtain favours.
down on all-fours [Amer] Depressed, in recession.
wake before you run/don’t try to run before you can walk Do not try to make progress too quickly.
send a baby on an errand Invite failure by the way you organise your work.

I.3a Children

brain-child The creation of one person’s thought, ideas.
tetchy [peevish—Sc nEng]/scatterbrained/thir-tingill [=thirtover=thwartover, unruly, obstinate, perverse—Dor]/weak as a child
like/merry as a two-year old Very lively, energetic (possibly from a young horse).
lish [nimble, lissom, active—Cum] as a two/- four-year old
blithe/brisk/happy/lively/merry as a grig [lively, restless child—Ire Eng: 1566] (See also J.5a.)
wide-eyed Innocent, naïve.
bashful as a girl [Ire]
gentle [eSuf]/mute as a maid
merry as the maids [1630]
cold as a maid’s knee
as bonny a lad as ever bit the edge of a muffin [sLan]
as bug [proud, stuck-up—Lin; vain, conceited—eYks] as a lad with a leather knife
as happy as a bastard on Father’s Day [Aus] Father’s Day is a commercial swindle on the same lines as Mother’s Day. It originated in America in 1910 and youngsters are persuaded by advertising and sentimental family pressures to waste their pocket money
on a gift for their father on a day when it isn’t even his birthday. The lucky exceptions are those who don’t know who are their fathers.

not brittened yet [Yks] Lacking in experience (as if not old enough to be put into trousers).

fain [pleased—sLan] as a lad with a new suit of clothes and a butter-cake
make whim-whams for a goose’s bridle [Ant Dwn wCor] Waste time on a ludicrous activity; also a ‘put-off’ answer to an impertinent question. A variant is make whim-whams for ducks to perch on.

you’re a pretty fellow to ride a goose a gallop through a dirty lane! To a smartly dressed child.

as good as ever water wet
innocent as a devil of two years old [1678]
Billy has found a pin A sarcastic disparagement.
a burnt child dreads the fire Experience brings caution.
go with your finger in your mouth [wYks] Without food or money. As also:
stand with our fingers in our mouths [Cromwell—14 November 1649] Helplessly inactive.

never a one like another, like Harry’s children of Leigh [Chs: 1670]

I.3b Children with mothers or nurses

every mother thinks it is on her own child the sun rises [Ire] The partiality of parenthood.

let not a child sleep upon bones [1678] On the nurse’s lap.
many kiss the child for the nurse’s sake [1470] Have ulterior motives.
kiss the bairn for love of the nurrish [Sc] (As/ from the above.)
he that wipes the child’s nose kisseth the mother’s cheek [1640] Sure sign of affection.

keep in leading-strings [1677] Keep a close control over…(From the reins held by mothers of toddlers.)
cling to—beliefs, past associations, the shore (=hug the shore, q.v. I.1b). Retain, adhere to them with unnecessary or untimely tenacity.

hang upon the skirts of… Keep close to someone, not venture far from them.
hide behind her skirts [1938] Allow a woman to protect you.
look after…[1597] (Derives from the first requirement of caring for a young child, constant watching to prevent harm.)
nanny state Country where the government treats the citizens like helpless children who need supervision and guidance, even in their domestic affairs.
dry-nurse (v and n) Instruct seniors in the requirements of their rank or position; one appointed to do so.
baby-sit [Amer 1976] Care for drug victim; look after the source of a story (for a newspaper).
I.3c Children standing, falling

stand on your own feet/legs [1657] Be independent, self-reliant, manage without help.
get under my feet Interfere with my work or business.
don’t fall before you’re pushed Don’t anticipate trouble.
did he fall or was he pushed? [C20] An ironic enquiry suggesting that things might
not be as innocent as they seem.
don’t lift me till I fall [Ire] I do not need your help yet; don’t interrupt, I have not
finished.
falling is easier than rising [Ire] (sc. in the world)
fall to the ground Fail through lack of support; be abandoned.
downfall Ruin, failure, misfortune variously.
fall flat on your face Come to sudden and unexpected grief, fail utterly.
so unlucky, if I fell backwards I’d break my nose [1641]
no more to do but ha’se [=halse, put arms round neck—Sc nEng] and go to gody
[godmother—Sc] Of sudden friendship that we suspect to be temporary and calculated.
uplifting—experience, message, friendship etc. One that has an improving and
exalting effect.
he that is fallen cannot help him that is down Seek help from the strong.
set him on his feet Give him a new start.
cuiter (v) [set on cutes=ankles] Restore to health [Ayr].
piggyback (v) Assist, subsidise.
piggyback heart A second heart introduced by surgery into a patient whose own heart
needs supplementing.
piggyback aircraft [1946] Plane that transports another smaller plane.
piggyback rail-car [1953] Flat railway wagon for carrying trucks or containers.

I.3d Children crying

you cry before you are hurt Complain prematurely.
cry out for… Demand vehemently, imperiously, pitifully; require urgently. ‘Cries out
for a new roof.’
cry for the moon [1550] Demand the impossible, the unattainable; be over-ambitious.
greeted like a wean [wept like a baby, small child—Nhb]
it is a sair-dung [badly beaten] bairn that may not greet [Sc: 1628] I have reason to
complain and will do so.
all of a drilsy [monotonous low murmur, as made by a small child—Cor] Confused.
I.4a Parents

dependency is the parent of all vice/the mother of poverty
the father (and mother) of... Someone or something exceptionally large or severe.

I.4b Mothers

mother (n) Begetter, creatrix, producer generally.
congruity is the mother of love
diligence is the mother of success/good luck
ignorance is the mother of devotion/impudence
the muck-midden is the mother of the meal-ark
clover is the mother of corn (in a proper crop-rotation)
mother-gate [NCy Nhb Dur] Principal road in a coal-pit, the (future) trolley way.
necessity is the mother of invention [1608]
night is the mother of counsel
poverty is the mother of health/all arts and trades
under her thumb [1754] Under her absolute control, influence.
go over his mother’s thumb [Per] Break from all control or authority.
bring a person about the thumb [Paston Letter 1469 Nrf] Make them do as you like; control them.

I.4c Fathers

father (v) Be the originator of, produce generally; own responsibility for.
the wish is father to the thought We believe what we want to believe.
time is the father of truth
that’s for the father and no for the son [Sc] Of work done with such poor materials it will not last a generation.
the daddy of them all! The biggest, most exceptional, most remarkable.
I.4d Daughters

daughter The nuclide of another nuclide by nuclear disintegration. Also, daughter-
city,—colony, -cell, -nation
  truth is the daughter of time
  ingratitude is the daughter of pride

I.4e Sons

son of the soil Man who owes his living to the land.
  affiliate [<Lat affiliare=adopt into the position of a son or daughter]

1.4f Brothers and sisters

germane Closely connected; pertinent; appropriate.
  respect is younger brother to love
    Charlie [Not et al.] Hunch(ed)-back. (After a hunchback who said he was ‘carrying
    his little brother Charlie on his back’.)
    sister—arts, nations, schools, ships etc. Related by common origins, interests and
    other similarities.
    weak sister [Amer] Feeble, unreliable woman—or man; the failing one in a group,
    such as a commercial element or branch that is losing money.
    full-blooded Complete; whole-hearted, unadulterated.

I.4g Grandparents

babushka [<Rus=grandmother] Head-scarf fastened under the chin.
  grandmother the cups Prevent them slipping by wetting the saucers.
  Grandmother/Auntie has come to stay/is with her She is having her monthly period
  [c.1890+].
  long and narrow like the boy’s granny
teach your grandmother to suck eggs! [1707] The retort to one who presumes to offer advice to someone with ample experience. Other variations are: teach her to spin/grope ducks/grope a goose/sup sour milk/roast eggs.

old woman Man who is fussy and ineffectual.
cailleach [old woman—Ir-Gael] Last year’s potato (usually wrinkled) [nIre].
old woman’s luck [nwLin Oxf] Having the wind against you going and returning.
this beats my grandmother Of something astounding.
blunt as my grandmudder knees [Cum] the Grand Old Man of… Old person of outstanding ability, achievement and reputation in…(First used of W.E.Gladstone in 1882.)

I.4h Uncles

uncle (n) Man possessing an avuncular personality.
as true as I’m his uncle [1678] Usually said when something is false.
he’s gone to visit his uncle Has left his wife soon after marriage.
avuncular Congenially familial; supportive without being patronising; bluff, homely and fun-loving.
quietness is the best noise, as Uncle Johnny said when he knocked down his wife [Cor]

I.4i Cousins

first cousin to… Very similar to, indistinguishable from.
cousin Betty/Tommy [wYks] Deranged person.
cousin Jack A Cornish miner.
a Welsh cousin Relation far-removed.
country cousin [Geo Ala] The time of a woman’s period; naïve or rough-mannered character (after the stock figures in Restoration comedy).

I.4j Step-, foster-relations

stepmother A kind of cold blue clay [Chs].
stepmother [wYks neLan Chs Penn NJ] stepmother’s blessing [Lan: 1818] stepmother jag [1818] An agnail or the small strips of skin that peel away from
the knuckle above the finger nails. (Children with stepmothers, possibly in emotional torque, are more likely to get these through nail-biting and other nervous habits.)

- **snell** [keen and biting (of winds)—Sc Ire nEng] as a stepmudder/stepmother’s

- **breath** [Cum]

- **stepmother’s breath** [Tyr] Cold and frosty weather.

- **feel like a stepchild** Feel deprived, left out of things.

- **foster** (v) Encourage generally.

- **foster-mother** Brooder house for raising incubator-hatched chickens.

### I.4k In-laws

cold as mother-in-law’s breath [Aus] it’s looking black over the wife’s mother’s Spoken (with some relish) when the weather looks ominous in a certain direction (the imputation being that she has caused it, or at any rate deserves it).

- **you breed o’are like the good man’s mother** [mother-in-law], you are ay in the gate [way: Sc] You are always getting in my way.

### I.4l Kin

- **akin to**… Connected, related—variously and not solely by blood.

- **kindred** (adj)—phenomena, ideas, subjects etc. Connected, similar, allied.

- **kindred spirits** Persons close in their interests, outlook etc., if not in family.

- **sympathetic detonation** The spontaneous detonation of other devices in the neighbourhood through shock waves from the first explosion.

- **pedigree** (n) Life history; criminal record.

- **long as a Welsh pedigree** [1615]

- **poor relation** Inferior, deprived or subordinate member of any group.


- **orphan collar** [Amer UK] Collar that really belongs to a different shirt.

- **heir to**… Morally entitled to; destined for something generally.

### I.4m Friends and folk

diamonds are a girl’s best friend (More reliable than men friends.)

- **bosom friend** Wad of money concealed in bra.
a soldier’s best friend is his rifle
backfriend [one who hangs back instead of helping, a false friend—sChs Wil] The jag of skin behind a finger-nail.
hunger knows no friend
fause [shrewd, cunning—sLan] as two folk [War 1857]
be two folk Be unfriendly.

I.4n Named acquaintances

introduce (joc.) ‘Needs introducing to the soap and water!’
middle name Someone’s main characteristic. ‘Candour could have been her middle name.’
knock three times and ask for Alice! An exclamation in exasperation at long-winded directions [Cockney].
Amy Florence [Nhp] An untidy, tawdrily dressed body. Also, Florence about (v).
the chap as married Anna [War]/Hannah [Not Shr] The right man, the required person; a good start; good for you! (Mainly a woman’s saying.)
busy as Betty
mim [prim and proper—Sc sLan EAn] as Betty Martin at a funeral
I’m for peace and quiet, as Billy Butter-worth said when he put his mother-in-law behind the fire [Lan]
are all Billy Butterworth’s children [sLan] Are all descendants of Adam.
Brown Bess The old flintlock musket. Hence, hug Brown Bess=serve as a soldier;
marrried to Brown Bess=enlisted.
cock-eye Bob [Aus] Thunderstorm or cyclone of north-western Australia.
Blind Freddie would see that! [Aus] That is very obvious. (Blind Freddie lived in Sydney.)
everything is George Everything is fine.
let George do it Find someone else to do it; I won’t.
sleep at Mrs Green’s/with Mrs Green [Aus NZ] Spend the night outside, on the grass.
tough as Hancock’s mother [Cor]
thick [intimate—passimi] as Dick and Liddy [Yks]/Liddy [wYks]/Harry and Mary [Cor]
play the Jack Play the knave; play a mean trick.
jack-ass, jack-bowl [the jack in bowls], jack-block [naut], jackdaw, jack-merlin, jack-pike, jack-rabbit, jack-rafter, jack-snipé etc. One smaller than usual of its kind, or smaller than the female (as hawks and falcons often are).
braw as John’s wife [Sc]
John at night, but Jack in the morning [Shr] Of one whose promises of the evening are forgotten next morning.
man of many morns [Bnff] Procrastinator.
a straight Jane from the workhouse [Cor] A sober, serious person with strict principles.

we’re all Jock Tamson’s bairns [Sc] Share a common humanity. (See also Billy Butter-worth’s children, above.)

John Hancock [Amer] Signature. (His, writ large, was one of those on the American Declaration of Independence.)

Old Johnny The ague.


as knowing as Kate Mullet [a C19 idiot, reputedly hanged for a fool]

happy as Larry [either Lazarus or the Australian boxer, Larry Foley (1847–1917)]

gae and tak a seat on Maggie Shaw’s crockie [a flat stone by a cliff near Eyemouth—Sc] Go and hang yourself.

Mary-Janes Low shoes with ankle straps for young girls.

long as Meg of Westminster Of tall, thin people. (She was a lusty bouncing romp and C16 procuress. [See Lyly, Pap with a Hatchet iii.403—1589])

the clean Ned o’ Keswick Straightforward, honest, undeceiving [Cum]. Usually negatived.

sitting by Nellie Learning a job by working with an older worker.

wild as Orson [Stf]

Paddy [nickname for an Irishman] A rage, temper.

silly as Pal Hall [=W. Peak Hall, a Cambridge builder in the late C19 with a reputation for eccentric wit]

Patsy [Amer C20] Dupe, scapegoat, victim of the unscrupulous—always male (probably after someone of that name and character in America around the turn of the century).

come home with Penny Liggan Return penniless.

make a Peter of… Make a fool of, ridicule.

enough to urge the blood of Peter Cockerel [Nhp] Of something exasperating.

a polecat is a polecat, no matter what you call it [Miss]


lazy Susan [Amer] Revolving stand to set on a table to hold muffins, condiments etc.

Tammie Norrie [Sc: 1842] A stupid looking, bashful man; a puffin.

Tammie Norrie o’ the Bass
Canna kiss a bonnie lass.

Tommy Noddy [Nhb Dur] Puffin, person of no consequence. (As/from the above.)

Tom, Dick and Harry Any three (or more) boys or men picked at random without selection or discrimination.

tom-cat, tom-plow [a double-breasted plow], tom-slate [a heavy roofing slate], tom-spade [a large rutting spade], tom-toe [the big toe] etc. One larger than usual of its kind. Also of large bells (Great Tom of Lincoln, Exeter, Christ Church Oxford) and artillery (Long Tom).

as big a liar as Tom Pepper [Leeds, wYks] (Who got kicked out of hell for telling lies.)
lie like Tommy Skeed [a teller of tall stories—nStf]

I.4o Home and neighbours

going home [wYks] Dying.

   nearer home Closer to yourself; of more immediate effect.
   bring/come home to… Make to clearly realise; become fully realised.
   be at home in… Be in one’s element, at ease, familiar with.

   be borne in upon… Be fully recognised, realised and faced up to by… (As when a newly dead corpse, or new-born child belonging to the family is carried perforce into the house so that evasions of disbelief can no longer be sustained.)

   reach him where he lives [Amer 1860] Come home to him; affect him profoundly; strike or touch him forcibly; get through to his essential nature, feelings etc.

   he that has a good neighbour has a good morrow

fine as Phyllyloo/pillilew/lillilow [neighbours’ or family quarrel, jolly row; blaze-up in a fire—Ire Yks Chs Not Dev Cor] (By analogy with fiddler’s foo.)

I.5a Talking

money talks Is persuasive; has influence.

    actions speak louder than words

    out of one side of his mouth he said…and out of the other he said… Contradicted himself.

    not a breath/a whisper! In promise or exhortation to keep a secret.

    whispering campaign [1920] A policy of systematic denigration carried out in underhand ways, and of discrediting with rumours [Amer].

    whispering pudding [Nhp War] One where the plums are close together. (See also K.67b, here-be-l, where-be-you?)

    thrang [=throng, busy—Sc Ire n&midEng] as a woman’s tongue [sLan]

    ask the question [War] Draw a fox covert.

    whither-go-ye? [1678] A wife (from the question she so often has to ask).

    an old wives’ tale [1526] An unreliable anecdote, explanation or piece of folklore that is handed on at gossip-level.

    not say peas Make no remark.

    hand-me-down Second-hand article of clothing (from the words used by the mistress in asking a servant to pass her something suitable for the ill-clad mendicant at her door).

    thank-you, sir [wYks] A second-hand article of clothing.

    pay their respects Of horses, when they kick up their heels [Sur].
wistful Wishing something that has happened had not happened; with sorrowful regret, with that melancholy bred of realising too late something that if known earlier, could have altered events for the better [<had-I-wist= if only I had known, Gower—1390].

I.5b Promises, vows

cheap as promises
a lick and a promise/slake Any work done hastily and perfunctorily.
missed that—as you missed your mother’s blessing! [Sc nIre] Yah, missed!
has too much of his mother’s blessing [1609] Is spoilt; over-scrupulous; prudish.
contesseration A vow of friendship where a square tablet was broken in half, kept, and even handed down in the family as a token of enduring friendship.
draw the nail Release yourself from a vow. (An old Cheshire custom existed, especially round Mobberley and Wilmslow, of registering a vow by driving a nail into a tree and swearing to keep it as long as the nail remained there.)
oath-sicker [sure, dependable—Sc Ire Nhb Cum Yks] As binding as an oath.
put the hard word on…[Aus NZ] Ask for a favour or a loan; ask a woman for her favours.

I.5c Exclamations

not care/give/worth a curse/damn
with a vengeance [curse] Emphatically, vehemently; with force.
lackadaisical [1768] Ineffectual, languishing (like one who keeps exclaiming ‘Lack-a-day’).
ooh-la-la [French exclamation commenting on something exciting, naughty or saucy] Attractive, provocative woman.
oops!/whoops! Jocular and immediate admission or recognition of a gaffe, slip or other thoughtless error. (From ‘Whoops-a-daisy’, the consolation call to a young child who has fallen.)
hey-lads-hey [Lan] The moment of decision in a crisis.
in-your-face [Amer 1970s] Direct, blatant, assertive, defiant, obstreperous and threatening (in one or all or any combination of these meanings, as if confronting someone with ‘I’m giving you this right in your face’).
I.5d Facial expressions, gestures, winking

supercilious [<Lat supercilium=eyebrow] Haughty and contemptuous. (From the attitude of those so inclined in raising their eyebrows in disdain.)
  - raise an eyebrow Register surprise.
  - wink at... Pretend not to notice, connive at.
  - quick/ready as a wink [Not Lei War NH]
  - an old-fashioned look A meaningful glance conveying reproof and disapproval.
  - eyeball-to-eyeball [Amer] In close confrontation.
  - a long time ago, when you were a gleam/ glint/twinkle in your mother’s/father’s eye
  - couldn’t face another.../couldn’t look another...in the face Said when a surfeit results in repugnance.
  - snout (v)/have a snout on...[Aus] Bear a grudge against, rebuff.
  - sniffy Disparaging, disdainful.
  - not to be sneezed at [1813] Of something not to be lightly regarded, not to be despised or ignored.
  - with his/her nose in the air Striking a superior, ‘stand-offish’ attitude.
  - fortune smiles/frowns/is favourable/hostile An ancient personification of Providence.
  - laugh on the other side of your face [1779] Change to the very opposite of amusement.

I.5e Mouth gestures

easy as kiss-my-hand/kiss-my-thumb
  - kiss it goodbye Renounce, abandon.
  - Glasgow kiss A blow in the face.
  - clean/clear/dry as a whistle
  - leave him to whistle on his thumb [Dmb wSc Rxb] Leave him in the lurch, calling in vain; hiding his mortification.
  - umming-and-ahing Expressing doubts, reservations, hesitation, usually from the viewpoint of someone impatient at another’s delay in making a decision. Also, hum and haw [wYks 1828].
  - ho-hum [1924] Boring, hum-drum—of a book or film that should be entertaining, but is not.
  - pooh-pooh (v) Dismiss as not worth considering; reject an idea or suggestion impatiently and intolerantly.
  - tut-tutting [1529] Expressing mild disapproval.
ga-ga In an extreme state of senile dementia (from the only kind of response such patients are capable of).

blow in my lug Cajole; flatter me. A blow-in-my-lug [Sc] is a flatterer.

breathe down my neck [1930] Subject me to a close and unwelcome scrutiny.

who spits against heaven, it falls in his face [1557] Blasphemers are self-destroying.

nail-biter Anxious time, time of mental suspense (when many revert to biting their nails). Also nail-biting

ready to eat the nails from their fingers [Sc] Very annoyed.

bite/chew/nibble [Aus] his ear/lug Borrow money from him. Hence, ear-biter=a cadger,

crush his ear off [Amer] Talk tediously to him.

backbite [C12] Slander, malign someone in their absence.

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I.5f Hand and finger gestures

gesture of good will, disapproval etc. Any action or move designed principally to convey an attitude.

with hand on heart With complete sincerity. (A formula of children and lovers when making a promise or declaration which they mean to emphasise sincerely.)

limp-wrist Feeble, especially homosexual and/ or effeminate man (probably from the handshake).


rub/scratch the elbow Show yourself pleased.

rubbing their hands [1778] Demonstrating a smug satisfaction.

he strokes with one hand and strikes with the other Of a deceitful man.

knee-slapper [Amer] Uproarious joke.

pat on the back [1804] Sign, acknowledgement of approval.

touched Emotionally affected. ‘Her sympathies were touched’, ‘How touching!’

masturbatory Selfish, futile, inward-looking, of a merely private nature. Often in criticism of esoteric works of art.

intellectual masturbation Cerebral activity of such a private or abstruse nature that others cannot share in it.

jerk each other off Flatter each other.

thumb the nose at… Dismiss contemptuously or with insult.

crack a snook at… Spurn disrespectfully.

they can lick thumbs to the elbow [Ire] Are very similar.

lick thumbs upon…[Sc] Make a bargain on. (An old Scottish custom.)

proll thumbs [lick and strike thumbs in striking a bargain—Sc] Come to an agreement.

wet thumbs [Sc] Agree on a bargain.

twiddle your thumbs [1846] Suffer an enforced idleness.

a thumb under the girdle Reserved, unsociable.
over the left (shoulder)! [UK, passim Amer: 1611] Saying this while pointing the right thumb over the left shoulder indicates disbelief in what has just been heard, or imposes the negative on it. [See C.Dickens, *Pickwick Papers* xlii—1836] Hence, indirectly, adversely, deceitfully, not at all [wYks].

get over the left [eSuf] (shoulder [Nhp EA eSus Hmp]) Be unlucky, the loser in a bargain.

snap your fingers at… Defy, show contempt for [1742].
not care/give/worth a snap of the fingers
not care/give/worth a flip/flirt [Lan] (As/from the above.)

snap out of it! Return to normality (from the snapping of hypnotist’s fingers to recall patients from their trance).

I.5g Body gestures

nod (v) Decline from the vertical—of leaning buildings.

give a nod towards… Give a hint, preparatory notice of.
innuendo [<Lat in-nuere=nod towards, intimate]

stand by with folded arms Be inactive when needed.

shrug it aside/off [1909] Cease to care about, dismiss it (as if with a disclaiming shrug of the shoulders).

over the shoulder(s)! Exclaimed when something has been said ironically, for the reverse, or aimed indirectly at someone.

with head under oxter [armpit—Sc Ire nEng: Sc] Downcast.

shuffling the feet Showing signs of irresolution, embarrassment, impatience.

turn your back on…[1440] Put behind you; leave in the past; abandon.

behind his back Furtively, and with intent to do in secret what he could expect to be informed about.

occur [<Lat occurrere=run up to meet]

accost [<Lat ad-costa=(rib) against rib, hence in close confrontation]

grovelling [<ON grufla=go down into the prostrate position of one grieving, praying or penitent] Servile, abject.

I.5h Tickling

tickle in the palm Give a tip, bribe.

tickle the ears/kittle [tickle] the lugs [Sc] Flatter, coax.
tickle his ribs Entertain, amuse him hugely.
tickled with a feather Easily moved to laughter.

use the feather [wYks] Flatter.
I.5i Nudging, prodding, pinching etc.

give a nudge Give a reminder; encouragement; momentum.
- nudging your way into… Enter unofficially and unobtrusively.
- hunch [push, nudge—Amer] Presentiment, hint, idea.
- prod (v and n) Remind(er), incite(ment) to action,
- get/have/make a dig at… Make a nasty, sarcastic or telling remark about/to. (The verbal equivalent of a ‘dig in the ribs’.)
- jog the memory Remind.
- at a pinch [1489] If and when needed. (From the use of pinch=pressure, stress, extremity, critical juncture.)
- tweak (v) Refine a computer program with slight adjustments, improvements.
- cast/fling/throw in the teeth Reproach with…
- smack in the eye/face [1895] Rebuff, rejection, disappointment, hitch in the plans.
- slap in the face Rebuff, insult.
- better than a slap across/in/on the belly/face with a wet fish/lettuce/kipper! An understatement in celebration of something (hardly) enjoyable; a phrase used to encourage or acknowledge appreciation.
- slap on the back [1820] Encouragement, congratulation.
- back-slapping Energetically and overbearingly jovial.
- rap/slap/tap on the wrist Reprimand, mild rebuke.
- circle-jerk [group practising mutual masturbation—Amer] Futile meeting.

I.5j Clothing gestures

doffing [wYks] Humiliation (from the deferential raising of the hat).
- you break my head and syne [then] draw on my hoo [=hood, nightcap—Sc] Follow an unkind act by a kind one.
- pull his coat [black Amer] Give him information, tip him off.
- pull him by the sleeve [Sc] Remind him of past infidelities; attempt to recall his wavering affections.
- pluck by the sleeve Distract; attract the attention of…[G.Chaucer, T&C IV.403–1374].
- sit on his/her skirts [Lin: 1546] Be revenged on him/her; provoke by insult; punish severely; impede; annoy.
- sit on his coat-tail/lap [Sc] Be dependent on him; cause him expense.
- one to show and one to blow (sc. pocket handkerchiefs) All is not as it seems; it does not follow that we will do the obvious.
- for show and not for blow [Aus] For display, not for use (like a breast-pocket handkerchief. As above.)
I.5k Letters

nothing to write home about! [1914] Of no importance, significance; ‘I am not impressed’.

dear John A letter from an unfaithful wife, usually to a husband in prison; also bidding a relieved farewell.

read between the lines [1866] Infer something not explicit in the text. (From the device of writing in invisible ink between the lines of an innocent message.)

do you want an engraved invitation? [Amer] Don’t be so formal and off-putting.

easy as getting money in a letter

I.5l Gifts

free as a gift
everyone rooses [praises—Sc nEng] the gyurd [reward, gift—ShI] as he gets it Judges on their own appreciation or experience, not on hearsay.

happiness is a home-made thing You cannot be given it, you have to create it at home.

say it with flowers [Amer 1925] Give your message in a kind, thoughtful manner; be diplomatic; alleviate upsetting news by telling it sympathetically.

O’Neill’s gift and his two eyes looking after it [Ire] Said when someone reminds you of a favour they have granted you.
I.5m Wrapping up

string (n) of failures/successes A series, long run of them. Similarly, a ‘string’ of horses.

stringy—meat etc. Of the texture of string, when chewed.

tied up Engaged, too busy or involved to be available.

tied up with… Loosely connected with.

tie someone (up) in knots Confuse or confound someone inextricably, usually by argument.

where the knot is loose, the string slippeth Lax relationships are not binding ones.

it is better not to slip one knot till another be tied [Sc] Reject nothing for which you have no replacement.

tightly wrapped/wrapped tight [Amer] Normal, sane, straightforward, sound.

wrapped up in… Engrossed in.

you can’t tell what’s in a package from its wrapper [Ili] Think not to judge the inner reality from the exterior appearance.

keep the wrapping paper on Keep up appearances; maintain an outward show of unanimity.

fold up Fail; give way under the strain (like crumpled paper, or alternatively from the failure of a parachute).

develop [<Lat dis-viluppare=unfold, unwrap]

string-and-sealing-wax inventor One who develops new ideas and inventions with makeshift materials.

fit/stick like wax [sealing-wax]

close [secretive]/neat/pliant [1576]/smooth/thick/tight/tough (ironic)/yielding as wax [sealing-wax]

fit like a ball of wax Of a close-fitting suit of clothes.

soft wax will take any impression [1500] Of impressionable youth.

my lips are sealed I cannot, will not mention or divulge it.

sure as if it were sealed with butter [1546] Ironic.

package Combination of connected or purposely included items, such as the offers and conditions in negotiations (package deal) or all the arrangements for a holiday (package tour).

the best things come in small packages [Can Amer] Commenting on a small person.

they don’t pack diamonds in packing cases [Der] Of a small person.

unpack Of a new idea, proposal or anything that, recently delivered, needs appraisal.

parcel post [Aus] Newly arrived and inexperienced persons.

I.5n Newspapers, magazines

shorthand (v) Explain briefly, describe in outline.
cover the waterfront [Amer] (The waterfront of an American town is where houses, warehouses etc. all face the sea, lake or riverways, and so comprises the area most eventful in a town’s life. A reporter who had covered the waterfront should have obtained as complete a story as possible.) Do a job thoroughly, include all possibilities; menstruate; change nappy.

in the same box In the same unhappy predicament. (From a box in printing where an announcement is enclosed in a ‘box’ of printed lines.)

that’s the bottom line [Amer 1967] The important part; the crunch; the logical conclusion. As in a newspaper article with a telling summary at the end. ‘Give it to me on the bottom line’=‘Tell me what finally happens; what are you leading up to? how is the problem resolved?’ Another possibility is that the bottom line is that on a company’s financial statement revealing what is available to the shareholders as dividend.

couldn’t knock a hole in a wet Echo [Lan]

Brodie [Amer] Failure, fiasco. (Steve Brodie claimed to have jumped off Brooklyn Bridge in 1886, but no one actually saw him do it.)

back number Someone who is so far past his best as to be not worth reckoning with (like a back number or past issue of a periodical).

ture as a corrento [news-sheet] Ironic.

Dragon Lady [a character in the comic strip Terry and the Pirates—1930s] Powerful and intimidating woman [Amer].

fashion-plate [advertising picture showing new designs of clothes, now mostly in fashion magazines] Stylish, well-dressed person.

centrefold Sexually desirable person. (From those pornographic magazines that print a photograph of a nude woman across the two centre pages.)

I.5o Phones

full as a fairy’s [effeminate male homosexual] phone book Drunk.

phoney [Amer 1900] Sham, insincere. (From the recognition that speaking on the phone is not as genuine as face-to-face.)

on your dime [Amer] At your expense; ‘you are the only one who is likely to lose out’.

put in two cents worth [Amer] Interject advice; make a momentous remark.

drop a/the dime [Amer] Turn informer.

speak up, Brown, you’re through In response to a loud fart.

get through to…[1961] Make a deep impression on; penetrate to a person’s inner sensitivity.

on hold [Amer] Postponed, in abeyance. (Some receivers have a ‘hold’ button which temporarily switches off the call.)

talk into the big white telephone Vomit into the WC. (It can sound like trying to convey something over a distance.)

wired into…[Amer] Intimately connected, closely associated with.

get your lines/wires crossed Become confused (like muddled phone conversations).
hang about like a fart in a phone box [Aus]
don’t call us, we’ll call you A hint to someone just interviewed that they need not be too hopeful.

I.6a Dogs

dogs The name given to numerous gripping tools or utensils, notably fire-dogs. In wool-weaving [wYks], when the iron retaining dogs fell out of the warp—‘the dogs began to bark’, and it was a sign that the end of a web was near.

dog-head The part of a gun that bites or holds the flint. (As/from the above.)
fierce/greedy/howerly [dirty—Lin]/hungry [1590]/lame/mad/mucky/sick/stalled [scurfeited—Cum Lin]/tired/true as a dog
sick as a blackfellow’s dog [Aus]
dog-cheap [sSc nEng Nhp Hnt Amer] cur (n) Mean wretch, spiritless, degraded, surly, ill-bred fellow.
cynic [<Gk Κύων =dog] (The Cynic philosophers of Ancient Greece followed Diogenes of Sinope who was nicknamed Κύων because he rejected all conventions, tried to live on nothing and advocated a life without shame.)

Dutch [unintelligible, refined] as a mastiff [wYks] Of one who assumes an air of innocence after having done some mischief.
sure as a dog in Dover [Ken]
foul as Tunor [a dog’s name] ‘Still the broddlin’ [swaggering] fussock [donkey, fool] looked as feaw [=foul, ugly, hasty, hostile] as Tunor’ [Lan 1740].
proud as a gardener’s dog with a nosegay tied to his tail [Dev]
little dogs have long tails [Sc] Small people are capable of good work.
pleased [nLin]/proud [Lin: 1834] as a dog with two tails
look like a dog that has lost its tail [1573]
mim [prim and proper, prudently restrained] as a dog without a tail [Ire]
put on dog Behave pretentiously, pose. Also:
put on the dog that… Proffer a public image of, make a show of (as if someone were to assume the cocky nature of a dog in doing something).
dog’s body Everyone’s servant, factotum; dried pease boiled in a cloth [naut].
dark as a dog’s guts [Cor]
sticks out like a dog’s balls Is very obvious. Also, of protuberant eyes, ‘stick out like a bulldog’s bollacks’.
thick as (two) dogs’ heads [Sc Nhb] Intimate, but probably not for long.
dog-ear (v and n) Turn down the corner of a page to mark the place in a book; the corner thus turned down.
dog-eared [Amer] Outworn, shabby, hackneyed. (From the above.)
cold as a dog’s nose
fit in like dogs’ teeth
dog-leg A bend or angle in something that should be straight; a detour in flying to avoid a forbidden zone.
cammed [crooked—wYks]/crooked/crookled [bent—nLin]/straight (ironic) as a dog's (hind) leg
dog-trot [easy, steady trot—1600] Personal lifestyle, continued merely from force of habit [1690].
dog-loup [nEng] Narrow passage between buildings, the width of two eaves-droppings.
thick as hair on a dog’s back
tousy/towsy [=tousled, shaggy, unkempt, dishevelled] Plaguy, rough, disorderly, in spoiling mood.
a dog of a different hair Something or someone quite different.
blush like a black dog (which could not) Be incapable of shame.
yellow dog Contemptible person.
yellow dog fund [1902] Monies used for bribery. A yellow dog clause in a contract of employment provides that workers lose their right to be trade union members [Amer 1920]; concession to an employer by the union [Amer 1902].
feisty [<Amer sl. ficelfeist=small, badtempered, pugnacious dog, often a terrier—1890]
white as a live terrier
stare like a terrier dog watching a ratton
scraffles [climbs, scrambles with much effort and difficulty—Cum] up the branstest broo [steepest brow/slope] liker a terrier ner owt else [Cum] Of a keen, active horse.
pug-nosed With a short, squashed-flat nose.

I.6b A dog’s life

in the dog-house In disgrace, out of favour.
a dog's life [C16] Hunger and ease; a miserable existence; continual servitude.
every dog has his day [1546] Even the lowliest person has their moment of glory or luck.
die like a dog [1529] Have a shameful, miserable end.
dogs go to church for the sake of the company [Ire] A disparaging comment on someone’s motives; the opinion of others may cause people to do well, when otherwise they would not.
I.6c Dogs and bitches

**sniff around.../out...** Show an unsavoury interest in a woman, pay her assiduous but often unwelcome attentions; discover after investigation, generally.

**snoke/snowk** (v) [sniff about, searching—Sc Nhb Cum Yks Nhp] Pry curiously; act slyly.

**bitch** (n) A spiteful, bad-tempered woman, one capable of acting with hostility.

**bitch** (v) Act or speak unfairly and with malicious spite.

**bitchy** Unfairly prejudiced, positively malevolent.

**chaste—as a dog at bitch-watch!**

**dog-knotted** Inseparable, as sometimes happens to dogs and bitches when coupled.

**get knotted!** Phrase of abusive dismissal or refusal.

**pour/throw cold water on.../over...** Discourage.

I.6d Puppies

**the hasty bitch brings forth blind whelps** [1556] Humorous advice against being premature; a criticism of hurried work.

**whelp** (v) Originate—often of evil schemes.

**bitch-and-pups** Mason’s hammer with two chisels inserted in the face [Nhb].

**every dog thinks her puppies are the cutest** [Ill] On doting parents.

**the night’s a pup** [Aus] It is early yet.

**golt/goult/gult** [sore-eyed—Lan] as a whelp [sLan]

**skens** [squints—NCy midEng] **worse than a wisket** [basket—passim] of whelps [sLan]

**chit** (n) [whelp, puppy, kitten, cub: 1382] Mere child (contemptuously).

**like whelps in a swill** [Nhb] In a mixed-up state.

**dock** (v) Make a deduction from a worker’s pay. (The tails of puppies of certain breeds are regularly cut short.)

**friendly as a puppy** [NC Calif]

**sell a pup** [1902] Defraud by selling a faulty article, or at a price based on its possible future value.

**buy a pup** Be swindled. (As/from the above.)

**hug your whelps** [Cor] Sit with folded arms.

**after** [according to] **the old dog the young whelp barks** Youngsters take after their parents; listen to the children to learn what their parents are saying.

**a whelp of the same hair/litter** [1530] Another of very similar character; someone accepted by the members of a household and acknowledged to belong to it.

**it is bad for puppies to play with cub bears** [Ill] Closely matched associations are best.

**mongrel** Of what has been composed of different elements; a mixture of incongruities.
I.7a Owning a dog

see a man about a dog [1867]/horse Unspecified business; the formula for giving a reason that is not the actual reason for an errand or journey.

for every dog there is a leash [NJ] Some sanction can be found for everyone.

hold in leash Keep under control.

leash (v) [join dogs together with a leash or dog-couple—Sc] Marry.

he vapours [swanks, swaggers—Sc Ire nEng] like a tyke in a teder/tether [Sc]  

have his head/have in a string Control him.

have the world in a string [1580] Have everything going in your favour.

thinks he has the world in a bant [string—Lan] Describing a haughty person.

to a vicious dog a short chain [Ill Flor] Allow a violent person no opportunities for violence.

I wouldn’t lend thee a dog to catch a ratton wi’[Lan] A declaration of mistrust.

dog-dancing Frantic, futile activity (like a dog welcoming its master home).

paw (v) Handle roughly, grossly, impertinently, without invitation.

I would sooner lippen [trust, rely on] t’ dog nor ’im [Cum]

love me, love my dog [1480] If you take me you must accept my disadvantages as well; make friends with my friends.

not have a word to throw at/fling till [Cum] a dog [1598] Be sullen, unsociable, grumpy, reticent.

make a dog your companion and you’ll learn to bite [Ire] Company exerts an influence.

a man may cause even his own dog to bite him [1550] In a serious case even a man’s own family will turn against him.

better the dog you know than the dog you don’t know Everyone has faults—it is better to know what they are than to cope with an unknown quantity.

every dog is a lion at home [1659] Even the humblest has power in their own home.

I.7b Training a dog

rub his nose in it Overstress, labour the point, remind him humiliatingly of his mistake (from house-training a puppy).

you can’t teach an old dog new tricks/make an old dog stoop [1523] Old folk are not adaptable.

dog-collar [C19 joc., now accepted] Ecclesiastical collar.

Dog-Collar Act Transport Workers Act of 1928 [Aus]. (So-called because of the restrictions on dockers’ freedom.)

slip (his neck out of) the collar [1566] Escape from restraint; draw back from a task.

slip the string [Sc 1821] Escape from domestic restraints; make a start in the world.

whistle for… Await, expect in vain, go without.
better a dog that roams than one that sits down Comparing two spouses, one unfaithful, the other idle.

it is an ill/poor dog that is not worth a whistle/whistling for [Ire Not Lei: 1670] A call or an invitation is easily made. Also said by lads reproved for whistling after girls.

can make it sit up and beg Emphasising someone’s mastery over their work, especially metalwork.

lie doggo Go into hiding (like a dog trained to ‘lie’ quietly out of sight).

pat on the head Patronising sign of encouragement, lukewarm congratulation.

dogs always follow their master [Oxf] To one walking behind.

every dog is allowed one bite The first offence may be forgiven. (From the belief that one is not legally obliged to tie up a dog until it has proved itself dangerous by biting someone.)

not sicker [secure, reliable] in the bite [Paston Letter 1463 Nrf] He is not to be trusted, could do harm.

the tail wags the dog [1907] Of minority control, or the assumption of control by subordinates; reversal of usual roles.

the saddest dog sometimes wags his tail A justification for some unaccustomed merriment.

jump at… Take quick advantage of, seize the opportunity to. (See also E.28a, jump/loup at…)

lie as fast as a dog can trot [1530]

running dog [China] A counter-revolutionary; treacherous lackey.

the best dog leap the stile first Let the worthiest take first place.

I.7c Caring for a dog

dog’s helper [OrI] Someone of poor appearance.

help a lame dog over a stile [1546] Do a generous deed; give help at need. ‘You’re a fine one to help a lame dog over a stile!’—to one who is more hindrance than help [Nhp].

give the white foot [EAn] Coax, wheedle.

pat the dog’s head in passing [Wal] Be patronising.

worm a secret out of…[1715] Extract cunningly from (like extracting the ‘worm’ from a dog’s tongue).

to give the dog a swim [Aus SAfr] Just an excuse for getting out of the house.

I.7d Individual dogs

proud as a dog with side-pockets [nEng]
the big dog with the brass collar The big chief; the most important person in the firm etc.

as big an oaf as Bull’s dog which bayed at the moon till his tail froze to the ground

stiff [obstinate—Sc NCy] as Burton dog [wYks]
proud as old Cole’s dog that took the wall of the dung-cart and got crushed by the wheel

Dutch [refined in speech and manners] as Daimport’s bitch [Shr: 1879]

like the dogs of Dunragget, dow [dare] not bark unless you have your arse at char’d [leaning place—Sc] Confident only when supported; dare not complain unless guaranteed immunity.

lazy as Larriman’s dog [Macclesfield, Chs]
lazy as Hall’s [Nrf]/Kittenhallet’s [Shr]/Letherum’s [Stf]/Ludlam’s [Der]/Lumley’s [Sus] dog, that leant its head against a wall to bark (Ray [1670] identifies Ludlam as a witch living in a cave near Farnham [Sur], but the saying is widely scattered throughout England.)
lazy as Ludlam’s dog, that leaned hissen agen a door to bark [Yks Lin]
ilde/lazy as Dain’s [Chs nStf]/Luden’s [Lan] dog, that laid it down to bark

like Hunt’s/Wood’s [Sus: 1666] dog who would neither go to church nor stay at home Of a self-willed person, one who will neither be led nor driven and is unreasonably discontented. (A Shropshire labourer called Hunt had a dog that howled so much when its master was at church that it disturbed the congregation. Next Sunday, however, Hunt having decided to bring it to church, it would not enter.)

all akin, like Mullion’s whelps [Lan]

have the black dog (Pompey) on your back [Cum et al.: 1778] Be fractious, bad-tempered, often of a child.

like Smith’s dog, so well used to the sparks that he’ll no burn [Sc] Of an habitual tippler.

like Tom Trot’s dog, he’d go a bit of the road wid anyone [Ire] Always anxious to please.

I.8a Dogs eating

lean as a dog in Lent

Fancy is a funny dog if you feed him well [Dor] (i.e. humour your fancy)
a dog is made fat in two meals Of an upstart or purse-proud person.
fat as a town dog [Calif]

all in a lump, like a dog’s breakfast [Ant] Of any mélange.

make a dog’s breakfast of... Mismanage, spoil; produce bad work.
dog’s breakfast [Amer] Unfortunate mixture generally.
a dog’s dinner Pointless brawl, unproductive wrangle.
dressed up like a dog’s dinner In best uniform, full fig, flashily dressed.
it would make a dog forget his dinner Of some powerful distraction.
courteous as a dog in a kitchen

Hende [gracious, obliging, well-mannered] as hunde is in kychyne
[W.Langland, Piers the Plowman—1377]

a dog in the kitchen desires no company [Ill] Of a situation where someone wants nothing to interfere with their wicked plan.

sleep like a dog when the wife’s baking Very little.
lay your lugs in/among…[Sc] Eat heartily of.
lick my ear over Relish.
put your nose into every man’s pot [1545] Concern yourself with other folk’s affairs.
lie as fast as a dog can/will lick a dish
lie like a dog licking a plate [eSc] Glibly.
go at it like a dog at broth [nwDur] Hastily and voraciously.
go/throw to the dogs [1619] Deteriorate beyond what is humanly acceptable, especially of those whose characters have become depraved. (As when food that is unfit for human consumption is given to the dogs.)
gentle [well-bred] as the German’s bitch that lap over the ingle and ate the roast [Sc]
snap up… Acquire, purchase, take very promptly and without a moment’s hesitation.
bite the hand that feeds you [1857] Repay kindness with cruelty.
try it on the dog/hound Experiment where failure would be less serious; try something out on spouse or colleague rather than yourself; stage an untried play in a small town.

the dog-house is no place to keep a sausage [Ill] Of someone at risk in bad company.

a mess for a mad dog Unsavoury dish.
mean as a suck-egg dog [one reduced to scavenging for old eggs—Amer]
tired as a tyke o’ lang kail [Sc] The same food every day.
you cannot scare a dog from a greasy hide Bad habits are hard to break.
back—like a dog to his vomit

return to his vomit Backslide, relapse, revert to bad ways [as II Peter ii.22].
dog does not eat dog [1534] There is honour among thieves.
dog-eat-dog Ruthlessly competitive; mutual injury or destruction. (As/from the above.)

like a dog’s turd broken and look in both ends of it [Sc] (but you will see no difference) Of two things equally bad.
I.8b Dogs and butter

like trying to get a lump of butter from a dog’s mouth Of an impossibly difficult task; of a mean donor. ‘Mud you well get butter out of a dog’s mouth as money out of a ‘torney’ [lawyer—wSom].

like butter in the black dog’s hause [=halse, throat—Sc nEng] Irretrievably lost; fit for nothing.

plenty of butter would staw [=stall, sicken, surfeit—Cum] a dog You can have too much of a good thing.

choke-dog [Dor] Hard Dorset cheese.

I.8c Dogs and puddings

fast as a dog will eat whitpot [=white-pot, a rich Devonshire milk pudding—Som]

busy as a dog in duff/dough [Chs Shr]

like dogs in dough Unable to make headway.

lump it—as dogs do dumplings Endure—with relish!

fit [suitable, appropriate] as a pudding for a dog’s mouth

too much pudding will choke a dog [1830] You can have too much of a good thing.

hungry/scornful dogs will eat dirty/sharny [shitty—Nhb] puddings [Sc wYks seWor Glo NY Kenty Tenn: 1538] The lower classes need not be considered, they will be thankful for whatever they can get; don’t be so fussy!

as long as a dog would be bound [stay on trust not to touch] wi’ a bluidy pudding [Sc] A very short time.

I.8d Dogs and bones

grin like a dog at a bone

it is a bad dog that is not worth a bone

keep the bone and the dog will follow you [Ire] Do not part with the incentive too soon.

one dog, one bone Fair play.

roll the bones [Amer] Play dice.

a bone to pick with you [1850] A point of dispute (like a bone between two dogs).

I’ll give you a bone to pick that will stick in your ha’se [=halse, throat—Sc nEng] Say to you what you will not easily accept.

cast a bone between… Cause strife among people.
cast a bane in the deil’s teeth [Sc] Make a concession to an oppressor to save yourself from harm.

bone of contention Casus belli, cause of the dispute.

worry another bone Pursue another line; be diverted.

when a dog has a bone he wants no company When there is no wish to share.

dangerous as a Great Dane behind a meat counter [Calif]

a good dog ne’er barked about a bone Don’t advertise your good luck; do not make a fuss over nothing.

like dogs that snarl about a bone,
and play together when they’ve none

The fate of affluent nations is disintegration.


into the mouth of a bad dog often falls a good bone [1670] There is little correspondence between merit and reward.

the gude dog doesna ay get the best bane [Sc] (As/from the above.)

threw him a word as if a bone to a dog [Sur] Curt and seldom.

a hungry tyke ne’er minds a blaud [=b’lad, blow—Sc Ire] wi’ a rough bane [Sc]

Those in need are not fussy about the way in which they obtain relief.

strike a dog with a bone and he’ll not yowl [Sc: 1659] (As/from the above.)

carry a bone in the mouth/teeth Of ships, when they make the water foam at the bows.

gnawing doubt, suspicion, worry, grief Persistent, continually recurring, unrelieved.

dogs gnaw bones because they cannot swallow them [1640] Implying that someone behaves well only because they cannot do otherwise.

gnaw the bone which has fallen to your lot [III: 1648] Make the best of what you have.

I.9a Dogs sleeping

dog-sleep A pretended or light sleep.

sleep on both ears Without anxiety. (A watchdog is said to sleep with one ear open.)

let sleeping dogs lie Do not disturb what is satisfactory and might become awkward.

It is nought good a sleping hound to wake

[G.Chaucer, T&C III.764—1374]

if you can get over the dog you can get over the tail Once a major difficulty has been overcome, minor ones are easily surmounted.

dog in a blanket [Der Wil] A rolled currant pudding or jam roly-poly.
I.9b Dogs barking

keout [yelp of a dog—Ire Chs Shr War Wal] Mean rascal, cur.
keoup/kyoup [yelp, bark continually—Shr Hrf Glo] Scold, abuse.
snarl (v) Criticise harshly and in a cynical, bad-tempered manner.
bark Harsh shout.

his bark is worse than his bite [1842] His threats are worse than his deeds.
barking dogs seldom bite (As/from the above.)
a cur will bite before he will bark Ill-bred folk are not to be trusted; expect no warning from him, he is treacherous by nature.

it is no good to keep a dog and bark yourself [1583] A comment on someone who does himself what he has employed others to do.
an uncouth [unfamiliar] dog has many barkers at [nYks] Strangers are more likely to be suspected, criticised.

like dogs, if one bark, all bark They all chorus the same complaint, protest.
an old dog does not bark for nothing Warnings from the experienced are well-founded.

watch-dog commission/group/vigilant body One guarding the interests of a group who fear exploitation or loss of rights. Also:
watch-dog (v) Maintain surveillance.
every dog is valiant at his own door [Ire: 1568] Easy to be brave where you are supported.
bark at the moon Criticise authority uselessly, ‘knock’ the establishment.
bay (at) the moon [1520] Ask, try for the impossible; engage in a futile pursuit.

And sell the mighty space of our large Honors
For so much trash, as may be grasped thus?
I had rather be a Dogge, and bay the Moone,
Than such a Roman.

[Shaks, JC IV.iii—1599]

a blind dog won’t bark at the moon [Ire Ind] Expect no response from the insensitive.

bark at th’ heck [lower half of door, inner door—Lakel nwYks Lan Der Lin Nhp EAn Cor: Cum] Be forced to wait outside the door; also of a suitor who has not been accepted.

barking and fleeing [Sc] Spending rashly to the point of bankruptcy.
I.9c Dogs fighting

his birse [bristle—Sc Ire Nhbb] is up He is in a rage.

like those dogs that, meeting with no one else, bite one another Of those poorly integrated societies that, without an external enemy, resort to internal feuds and strife.

dog biting dog One actor criticising another for his/her performance.

all dogs bite the bitten dog [NY Calif] When a person comes under attack, many others soon join in.

dog-fight Duel between fighter planes, as in 1940 in the Battle of Britain.

it looked as if there had been a dog-battle in the house [sLan] Of domestic chaos.

I feel as if I had swallowed a dog-battle Of an upset stomach.

top dog/overdog/underdog The dominant/ suppressed one of a pair or group.


lick his wounds Brood over his injuries, misfortunes; retire after defeat.

bulldog courage Courage that is fierce and persistent even under punishment. Bulldogs are renowned for tenacity.

I.10a Dogs mad, maltreated

a curst cur must be tied short A vicious character must be restricted.

force is the only physic for mad dogs An argument for using harsh rather than therapeutic measures against violent criminals.

rabid Mad and furiously dangerous, like a dog with rabies.

with his tail between his legs [1884] As if beaten or disgraced; dejected by defeat.

get/have your tail down Be dispirited, depressed. (As/from the above.)

drag the tail Mope around looking miserable.

keep your tail up Keep in good spirits. (From the above.)

argue a dog’s tail off Be very argumentative.

lame as a three-legged dog

have a belly like a poisoned pup’s Be potbellied.

nimble as a new-gelt dog

when I let go, it’ll scuttle away like a twitchelled [restrained by a twisted noose—Lan] bandy hewitt [abusive term for a dog—Lan 1857]

tie a can on/to… Get rid of, reject, send away (as you would get rid of a troublesome dog by tying a tin-can to its tail).

rattle-can Noisy child [Cum neLan]; kicking cow.

shot off home as flate [=fleat, quickly] as a shangelt dog [dog with a shangle or cloven stick fastened to its tail—Lakel]

dog-chaser [Amer] Relief crew sent to move a train that its own crew cannot or will not move.
not fit to turn a dog out in! Of foul weather. The retort goes ‘Send father!’
so mean he wouldn’t give a dog a drink at his mirage [Aus]
when a dog is drowning, everyone offers him drink [1611] There is always plenty of what you do not want.
the scalded dog fears cold water [1561] A painful experience can make you over-cautious.
clean—as a dog in manure [Calif]
nervous—as a dog shitting razor blades [Amer]
happy as a dog with fleas
even a starving dog carries fleas However poor you are, there is always someone poorer whom you could help.
mangy Squalid and disreputable, generally.

I.10b Dogs beaten

as willingly as a dog to a whip!
if you want an excuse to whip a dog, it is enough to say he ate up the frying-pan
[III] A vindictive action cannot be justified even by a good reason, so it is often given a ludicrous one.
all on one side, like when the fellow beat the dog [sLan]
when the lady lets a fart, the messan [lapdog—Sc Ire Nhb Cum] gets a knap
[blow—Sc] When one is blamed for another’s fault.
when the dog is beaten out of the room, where will they lay their stink? Keep a scapegoat around.
a sad dog Failure, someone nearly always in trouble.
fell two dogs with one stone [Sc] Obtain two results with one operation.
a foul-tempered dog never wants for sore ears Cross folk must expect criticism or worse.
hang/hing [—hang—Sc Ire n&midEng] the ears/lugs Be abashed, cowed, discouraged.
a hingin’ lug [Sc] A grudge.
enough to ding [knock, thump] dogs in the head with More than enough! Also, ‘Not fit to ding dogs in the teeth with’.

I.10c Dogs hanged

not have a dog’s chance Be doomed, sure to fail from the start.
he that would hang his dog, gives out first that he is mad [1659] To justify a mean act a man will resort to deceit; the dishonesty of ratiocination.
give a dog a bad name—and hang him!  [1730] Goodness is not proof against calumny; a man may suffer no less from a bad reputation than from wrongdoing; damn a man’s reputation and he is anybody’s victim.

there are more ways to kill a dog than to hang him/choke him to death on hot butter/a dumpling/buttermilk [UK Can Amer] There are more ways than one to do a job.

hang a dog on a crab-tree, and he’ll never love verjuice  [1659] The strength of unhappy associations!

Crack was a good dog, but got hung for barking Don’t brag.
as tired as ever a dog was of hanging

end the suspense.
belly-up Dead; bankrupt.

whose dog is hanging?/whose dog is dead? Why all the fuss?

**I.11 Cats**

cat (n) A spiteful, backbiting woman. Hence:
catty/cattish Spiteful, malevolent, especially towards other women.
fierce/lame/litlsh [lithe, loose-moving—Lan]/melancholy/nervous/nimble/sick/waffly= waffy [weak, ailing, shaky, easily blown about—Sc Lan Yks]/whist [silent—nYks]/waukrife [wakeful—Sc] as a cat
common as backfence cats
alley-cat Loose woman.

lean as an alley-cat
katzenjammer [<Ger=caterwauling] Unpleasant reaction, after-effect, clamour.
like a cat on a bin-lid [Lan] Describing a strident singer.
fierce as a cat [tom-cat—Ire]
tom-cat (adj [1899] and n [1942]) Lecherous man.
tom-cat (v) Seek promiscuous sex-adventures (like a tom-cat on the tiles, see I.14c).
tom (v) Ravish a woman.
blind as a white cat with a blue eye
def as a white cat (Said to be genetically deaf and stupid.)
al cats are grey/one colour in the dark Differences in appearance are essentially unimportant (often sexual).
dark as a stack of black cats [wAmer]
mawngy [surly] as an old cat [Yks]
one-old-cat [Amer] Variation in baseball where you run to one base and home again, handing over only to the one who gets you out.
cat’s brains A geological formation of sandstone veined with chalk; mixture of chalk and clay [Stf Shr Sur Sus].
cat-witted Spiteful, wayward; silly and conceited [Cum].
girn [grin] like a cat [IMa]
cat-hearted Cowardly [Rut].
ye hae nae mair heart/pith than a cat [Sc]
short as cat-fat Of a warp that breaks easily and unexpectedly [nLin].
cat’s eyes The reflectors that show up the centre of the road to motorists at night.
cat’s eye A precious stone.
cat-eyed Able to see in the dark.
cat’s hair Down on unfledged chicks [ Fif]; pubescent down on boys [Sc]; the streaky cirrus clouds which resemble hairs in a cat’s tail [Bnff].
cat’s whiskers [1923] Very fine specimen; smartest in the company.
as full of sin as a cat of hairs
you can’t get feathers off the cat When resigning yourself to a failure.
cat’s teeth Very long stitches made in sewing [s Lan].
thin as a cat-lug [Cum]
cat’s head/cat-head Projecting beam for hauling the anchor out of the water; ‘pit-head’ standing on three legs [Shr].
cat-ham (v) [knock the ankles together in walking—Lin Cor] Act clumsily.
cat-hammed [nDev] Awkward, ungracefully. (As/ from the above.)
(long and) slender as a cat’s elbow Of thin folk.
cat’s paw Ripple on the surface of water.
cat-feet Marks remaining on linen after it has been washed and dried [Sheffield, Yks].
frisks aboot like a cat’s tail i’ the sun [Sc]
pleased as a cat with two tails [Cor]
want to know all the ins-and-outs of a cat’s/ duck’s/nag’s arse Be very inquisitive—especially when someone probes deeper into a subject than normal.
cat-arse pit [e Lan] A drift mine.
cat’s arse/miaow [Can]/pyjamas [Amer UK] A fine specimen, great attraction (cf. cat’s whiskers).
cat-burglar One operating, like a cat, by climbing at night, silently.
catcall Whistle or call of disapproval in theatres etc. and in imitation of cats wauling at night.
cat-ice Unsound ice (thick enough to bear only a cat with safety).
like a cat on ice [Shr] Very cautiously and warily.
weather enough to shram [shrivel, shrink with cold—Not War Glo Brks Wil Som Sus Hmp IW Dor] a cat [Som]
cold enough to freeze cats a-running [Calif]
cat-nap/cat-sleep Broken, brief sleep.
like a cat, he’ll lig anywhere [lie, sleep anywhere—Cum]
catwalk Narrow footway or platform; in Flanders, a row of bricks across the mud [WW1]; platform or floor area along which models parade new fashions in clothing.
pussy-foot (v) [Amer 1903] Take weak, ineffectual action; proceed cautiously, concealing your intention (like a cat when stalking).
climb like a cat [n Lan] Of a vehicle on steep ground.
like a cat, he will fall/land on his feet Come out of the trouble unaffected.
he’s let [alighted] on his feet [Lan]/Lit on his legs [Ire 1821] Come out of it luckily.
cat-lick Hasty and inadequate wash [w Yks s Not Wor].
you’ve too much of what the cat licks her arse with! (i.e. tongue)
before the cat can lick her ear Never.
has as many (nine) lives as a cat Of someone who seems to lead a charmed life.

I.12 Kittens

have kittens/cast a kitten Lose composure, panic [Amer], become nervous (from the agitation of a cat when having kittens).

kitten Playful girl.

handy [easily handled—Cum] as a kitten Of a well-mannered horse.

cute [NC Calif sAmer]/playful [1732]/weak as a kitten/kitlin [Yks Shr]

cant (y) [healthy, lively, brisk, merry, pleasant—Sc Ire n&midEng EAn Bdf Sus Hmp]/frisky [Lan] as a kitlin

quiet as two kittens

wet as a drowned kitlin [sLan]

miserable as a half-drowned kitlin [Lan Der Chs]

because kittens may be born in an oven, that does not make them loaves of bread [Miss]

cosy as a sick kitten on a hot brick [Calif]

kit after kind Like mother like daughter.

get a kitlin of a good cat Advice to a young man contemplating marriage.


many a daft kitlin makes a douce cat [respective, modest, quiet cat—Sc Ire nEng]

The child may improve when upgrown.

wanton kittens make douce cats [Sc Mich: 1732] (As above.)

be kittled [brought forth—usually of kittens] Be generated, in the mind or affections etc.

looks as if the cat had kittled on it [had kittens on it—Lan] Of clothes or furnishings badly creased or rumpled.

I feel as if the cat had kittened in my mouth Have a ‘hangover’ mouth.

I.13a Cats hunting

there’s little need to keep a cat when all the mice in the house will die of malnutrition [Ire] Don’t trouble to do what will happen naturally. Of unnecessary precautions.

cat’s away, mice at play! Of any situation where discipline is relaxed when authority is absent.

weel kens the mouse the cat is out the house [Sc: 1628] (As/from the above.)

a blate [shy, timid—Sc Ire nEng] cat makes a proud mouse [Sc: c. 1600] Referring to the situation where one partner takes advantage of the other’s meek nature.
it’s a bold/wily mouse that nestles/can breed in a cat’s ear [1430] Of an unnecessary risk.

watch—as a cat watches a mouse [1534] Without the slightest lapse of concentration.

quiet as a cat watching for a mouse [Calif]

cat-and-mouse life, play etc. Where the stronger delights in tormenting the weaker.

play pussy Keep a victim in suspense; use cloud-cover to shadow your enemy in an air pursuit.

claw-back Quick recovery of something given, as when an allowance is recovered by increased taxation.


a cat in gloves catches no mice You cannot expect results when necessary powers are withheld.

mittened/muffled cats catch no mice [Sc Yks Okl] Of those who are too fastidious to succeed.

did you ever know a kitten/kitlin bring a mouse to the old cat? [wYks Chs Maine] Do not expect to be supported by your children; also of children’s ingratitude.

what would a young cat do but eat mice? [Ire] On the predatory nature of a young woman.

ratter [good catcher of rats—Aus] Thief who goes down another’s mine and steals opal.

put an old cat to an old rat [1668] Counter experience with experience.

something the cat’s brought in (of a wet night)! [1928] Exclaiming on a person’s dishevelled appearance.

cat-steps Projecting stones up the edge of a gable [=corbie-steps—see G.46b].

cat-slide roof One with a slope steep enough for cats to slide down.

nimble as a blind cat in a barn Necessarily so.

twitcher [=ticker—1977+] Bird-watcher whose prime interest is to record sightings of rare species on a list. (From the nervous twitching of a cat’s tail when stalking.)

like a cat chasing its tail Of one engaged on a futile quest or pursuit; never quite able to catch up with the work.

a cat cannot fare well and lane [keep it secret—Sc Nhb Cum Yks Lan] Folk cannot help giving some sign of their prosperity.

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I.13b Cats fighting

agree like two cats in a gutter Not at all.

get/put his back/rig [back—Sc Ire n&midEng EAn] up Put him in a fighting mood (from making a cat arch its back, or a dog’s hackles rise).

anger improves nothing but the arch of a cat’s back [Amer]

stiver up the back [cause the hairs on an animal’s back to stand up—Som Ken Sus IW Dev] Anger, enrage.

fight like an alley-cat Ferociously.
high as the hair on a cat’s back  Very expensive.

fight like Kilkenny cats  [1798]  In mutually destructive combat. (‘They fought so fiercely that only two tails were left’ [Ire]. A comment too on the rival parishes of Kilkenny and Irishtown that ruined each other by litigation. See also K.58c, like cats on a clothes-line.)

make the fur fly  Cause violent disturbance.

biting and scratching gets the cat with kitten  [1546]  Of attitudes that are not properly understood; hostile actions bring future troubles.

has his/her claws out  [Amer]  Is bent on doing damage; is in fighting mood.

sharpen her claws out  [Amer]  Make the fur fly. Cause violent disturbance.

climb her claws out  [Amer]  Of attitudes that are not properly understood; hostile actions bring future troubles.

clip/cut her claws  Reduce her power of doing mischief.

I.14a Cats and dogs

cat-and-dog life  [1560]  One of constant and mutual hostility, continually quarrelsome.

come to the point, as the cat said when she let clot [scratch, claw—Sc nEng] at the dog’s nose  [Sc]

I.14b Cats and people

his race is just run, like Galtee’s cat  [midCor]

like Tantra-bobus’s cat, lived till he died  [Tantra-bobus is a noisy, playful child—wCor; also a name for the devil, a bogie.]

one and all, like Hockin’s cats  [Cor]

very foresightly, like Forsyth’s cat  [Sc]  Sees dangers afar off.

grey as grannum’s cat

crouse  [lively, keen, proud—Sc Ire nEng]  as a cat when the fleas are kamed off her  [Sc]  Smug.

a cat may look at a king  The claim of freedom to stare, usually by someone rebuked for so doing.

nurse the cat  Be idle  [Suf].

he can haud the cat and play with the kitten  [Sc]  Can distract, preoccupy the parent so as to pay attention to the daughter.

have hold of the cat by the tail  [Yks Lin]  Be at home, by your own fireside.

frame  [shape up to a job]/slip about like a cat in pattsens  [wooden under-shoes to raise the wearer out of the wet—Yks Lin]  Very badly, awkwardly.

awkward/busy  [Nhp]/cocklety  [clumsy and noisy, as are girls making cocklety bread]

as a cat in pattsens  [wYks sNot]
no fault but the cat had a clean band, she sets [becomes] a mutch so well [Sc] Of those who affect what does not become them. (A mutch is a women’s linen cap or night-cap [Sc].)

give the cat a penny [Nhp] Take a fall on the ice.

enough to make a cat laugh Incongruously ridiculous.
in the snirt [noise made through the nose when trying to suppress laughter—Sc Ire nEng] of a cat Instantly.
tabby A gossiping old maid. (The name Tabitha was often applied to both, and tabby to a cat with certain wavy markings.)

not have a word for the cat Morose, unsociably silent.

comb the cat Pass the fingers through the cat’s-nine-tails to disentangle the thongs.

would not trust him with our cat! Usually of someone without sexual scruples.
rub (up) the wrong way Annoy with a naturally distressing action. (As in stroking a cat or dog widdershins to the lie of its fur.)

rub the wrong way of the hair Annoy. (As/ from the above.)

he’s played with the cat till it scrat him [Lan] Has done something risky, and suffered for it.

scratchy Snappy, short-tempered, fractious.

they that bourd [jest, play—Sc Nhb] wi’ cats may count upon scarts [Sc]/he that plays with cats must expect to be scratched Must accept the consequences of taking foolish risks.

a cat purrs before it scrapes [Ire] Kind words can be the prelude to a cruel deed.

has the cat got your tongue? Why are you silent?

the cat knoweth whose lips she licketh well enough [1546] Knows where her best interests lie.

mim [prim, prudish] as pussy baudrons [a name for a cat—Sc: Gall]
tame cat Person accommodated for his/her occasional services.
draw a straw before...(the cat) [Sc] Deceive; keep in the dark; amuse in order to gain some object; beguile, make sport of.

I’m too old a cat to draw that straw in front of [c. 1450] An older woman’s reply to an offer of marriage.

I am ower old a cat to draw a straw before my nose [Sc] Am not thus to be tricked or tempted.
ye’ll ne’er turn an auld cat frae ill hants [habits—Sc]

I.14c Cats in houses

house-cat [Dev] Stay-at-home.
on the tiles/pantiling the streets at night [Cor] Celebrating late into the night, spending a night of uninhibited pleasure and revelry (as cats seem to do when chasing each other over the roofs). Also, pantiling [Cor] describes a child’s dragging walk.
cat-geatt [=cat-gate=cat-way—Cum] The narrow space between the buildings of adjoining premises; space at the edge of a barn mow.
piss/shit on your own door-step (Something a cat will not do.) Spoil things for yourself; take a risk where you are likely to be discovered.

coarse as cat’s dirt [Sc] Very disagreeable.

mean as cat-shit

common as cat-shit and twice as nasty [Cockney] Of an inferior person or article.

let every cat cover up her own stink [NC] Do not expect others to do your dirty work for you.

cats are like mothers-in-law, more attached to the house than the people in it

wed women are like cats, they look best on their own hearthstones

you will never find a cat on a cold hearth [Mrld] Some women always manage to provide for their own best interests.

shine like fire in the cat’s eye

like a cat looking in the Bible Of a hypocrite, or someone trying for what is beyond them.

cat on the dresser [Cor] All spick and span.

I.14d Cats and fire

ashes cat [Cor]/ass-cat [Lakel] Someone who contrives to keep warm near the fire.

grey as an ass-cat [=ash-cat, one that gets ashy by shitting in the ash-midden—Lakel]

like a cat on a hot tin roof [1900] Restless and fidgety.

busy as a cat on a tin roof [Tenn Calif]

nimble [Wm wYks]/sharp [quick]/wakken [lively, wide awake—Lan] as a cat on a hot backstone [=bakston=bakestone, the slate or stone on which cakes were baked in the oven—Lan]

like a cat on a hot backstone [War 1839] Treading very cautiously and with evident fear and uneasiness.

like a cat on hot bricks Ill at ease.

like a cat in a bonfire, don’t know which way to turn [Cor]

like the singed cat, better than she looks [1628] To someone making empty threats [Sc].

fast as a scalded cat to the cat-hole [Calif]

the scalded cat fears cold water [1561] An unhappy experience can make you overcautious.

like a scalded cat Going more quickly than usual.

an old cat will not burn himself [Ire] Experience brings caution.
I.15a Cats and meat

cat’s meat A bribe [War].
little by little, as the cat ate the flickle [= flick, bacon flitch—n&midEng] by degrees, as the cat ate the pestle [leg of pork or mutton—Lin]
cannot pull the cat from the bacon Too weak.
as honest as the cat when the meat is on the hook Perforce. catmallison [curse of cats—Cum Wm] Cupboard round chimney for dried beef and provisions; dog persistent in worrying cats.
busy/happy as a cat in a tripe-shop [sLan] take your will of it, as the cat did of the haggis [Sc] Often to those who stubbornly persist in an unreasonable venture.
she’s so mean she’d get the cat to chew her meat in order to save her delph [false teeth—Ire]

I.15b Cats and fish

works like a cat in cockle-shells the cat would eat fish, but would not wet her feet You must accept the disadvantages inseparable from certain benefits. (This is the ‘Cat i’ th’ Addage’ [Shaks, Macbeth I.vii—1606; see also G.Chaucer, H.Fame III.693—1383].)

I.15c Cats and other foods

wo’s them that have the cat’s dish and she ay meuting [miaowing—Sc: 1721] Of those who owe to, or detain from the needy.
cat washing dishes The sunlight reflected from a pail of water on to the wall or ceiling [nwLin].
happy as a cat that sees cream innocent as pussy-baudrons thinking on the cream-jug [Gall]
like the cat that stole the cream Complacent, self-satisfied.
for the same reason that Aberdeenshire cats never drink cream They never get the chance!
an old cat knows fresh milk Experience brings discrimination.
like a cat round hot milk Frustrated by your desire.
eith [easy]/ill to lear(n) the cat to the kirn [milk-churn—Sc: 1721]/show the cat the way to the dairy Teaching those who are eager to know; teaching bad habits to the
young is all too easy at first, but will surely be regretted; start what you will not easily control. ‘Learn the cat to the kirn and she’ll ay be licking’ [Sc].

she’d drink the milk and say her cat was a thief [Ire] Of one whose word is not to be trusted.

fat cat [Amer] Privileged person, someone well looked after.

cat-blash [weak, thin drink—Lin] Poor, feeble argument, talk etc.

lap up Receive news, praise etc. eagerly, unquestioningly.

he’s liked—as well as a cat likes mustard Not at all.

give the cat a canary [Shr] Tell it to the marines; I cannot believe it.

look like the cat that ate the canary [Calif: 1871] Well-satisfied with yourself.

put the cat among the pigeons Cause trouble, fearful confusion; introduce a violent intruder; a man among women.

as true as that the candle ate the cat The very opposite of the truth.

he who will not feed his cat, let him feed mice Where the alternative is worse; if you do not treat your servants or employees fairly, others will exploit you.

every day is no Yule-day, cast the cat a castock [cabbage-stalk—Sc Nhb: 1628] A plea for economy.

it was never for nothing that the cat licked the stone [Sc] An ulterior motive is suspected.

clean gane—as if the cat had licked the place [Sc]

I.16a Cats maltreated

helpless as a cat in a trap

free a cat Steal a muff (implying they were made of catskins).

demure [Sc]/melancholy [Nhb] as a gib-cat [castrated tom-cat—Shaks, Hy IVi I.ii—1597]

run around like a cut cat [Aus] Be and behave in a temper.

cross as a bag of cats

tetchy as a cat with a wet tail Very snappy; in a continual state of nervous irritation.

grease the cat Do something unpleasant in expectation of a great advantage.

tumble the cat-maw [nSc] Fall topsy-turvy.

eyes like a proddled [prodded, poked—Ant Dwn] cat under a bed Large and staring.

kick the cat (round the corner) [Not] Be all of a bustle; protest, make a fuss.

kick the cat [Kenty] Become angry.

a kick-at-the-cat [Amer] Turn, chance variously.

tear a/the cat Rant, bluster, roister.

whip the cat (q.d. that has spilt the milk) Lament over something that is past remedy.

whip the cat [1550] Go from house to house for work (as tailors formerly did); be drunk; blame your faults on another; play a practical joke (see below); live parsimoniously.
**whip the cat for**... Trick him into acting against his own interests, into risking discomfiture or making a fool of himself. (From the old English sport where a group claim that they have a cat capable of pulling a man across the village pond or stream. When the cat and challenger are roped together, the conspirators rush up to the cat, ostensibly to whip it to greater efforts, and tug their victim into the water.) Also known as ‘catting’.

**he cannot whip a cat but I must be at the tail of it** [S.Pepys—14 August 1665] Am indispensable.

**whip/flog the cat** [naut Aus] Bewail an error; vent temper on one who cannot retaliate.

**not room to swing a cat** (The early use of this saying—before 1665—argues against its derivation either from a cat-o’-nine-tails or a cat=a coal-ship.)

**see which way the cat jumps** [1827] Defer a decision until you know the probable outcome. (Either from the old target practice of shooting at a cat in a tree, or else from the game of tip-cat or piggy, where you need to see which way the peg jumps before you can hit it.)

**choose how the cat jumps** [wYks] By hook or by crook; at whatever cost.

**that cat won’t jump** That idea won’t work; that is unbelievable.

**glower like a cat oot o’ a whin-bush** [Sc]

**cat’s chance** Very little chance.

## I.16b Killing cats

**shoot the cat** [Hmp: 1785] Vomit, especially after drinking.

**cat-gallows** [NCy] Game played by children leaping over a cross-bar balanced across two upright sticks.

**I wouldn’t hang a cat on his word** Too untrustworthy.

**there are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with butter/cream** [wYks Can Amer: 1678] There are other ways of doing this job.

**stare like a throttled cat**

**let the old cat die** [eDur NY] Let a swing come to rest.

**there are more ways than one to kill/skin a cat** [1678]

**the dead cat bounces** Of share prices recovering after a severe fall.

**I’m skinning this cat—and you’re not paid to hold the tail** Mind your own business.

**going down the river, like Jimmy Glover’s cat** Fast nearing bankruptcy.
I.17a Mice

burn not your house to fright away the mice To one proposing a great evil to eliminate a lesser one.

it is a sair time when the mouse looks out o’ the meal barrel wi’ a tear in his eye [Sc]

rank [numerous] as mice in a meal-kist [= meal/flour-chest—Cum Lan]
natter/nattle [make a rasping noise, as when mice gnaw wood—Sc nEng] Chatter at length but to little purpose; complain in a halfhearted way.

fast [safe, secure—Lan]/happy [Som]/snug as a mouse in cheese [1610–40]
live as poorly as mice in a hollow cheese [C19] Of those who live frugally in order to maintain a grand establishment.

not heard a squeak out of… Had no call or communication from.

speak like a mouse in cheese/milk [Shr: 1602] Inaudibly, with a muffled voice, indistinctly, faint-heartedly.

you could trot a mouse on it! Of strong tea, thick soup etc.

like a mouse in pitch [1522] In an inextricable mess.

warm as a mouse in a churn Ironic, or else because it would have had to run hard during the churning.

sure as a mouse tied with thread Not at all sure.

the mouse that has only one hole is easily taken [C14] Do not rely on only one defence or resource.

it is a sarry mouse that has only one hole [Sc] (As/from the above.)
don’t make yourself a mouse or the cat will eat you The timid are the most persecuted.

make a man or a mouse [Not Nhp: 1541] Be something, or nothing.

a girl with cotton stockings never sees a mouse [Ont] People do not publicise things likely to draw attention to their own shortcomings.

your mind’s ay chasing mice [Sc] Your attention wanders.

make mice feet of…[Bnff] Defeat, destroy.

I.17b Mousetraps

mousetrap [Amer] Small, inferior theatre.

kittle [tickle, unstable, precarious, nicely poised, precisely set—passim] as a mousetrap Of excitable folk, easily roused and easily upset [Cum].

snappy as a mousetrap [Cor]

nobody tries if a trap’s kittle with their finger Employ another on work that is likely to be dangerous.

tickle/ticklish (adj) [kittle, in a precarious state—of a fine-set trap] Touchy, needing tact and careful treatment.
not have the sense to bait a mousetrap \[wYks nLin\]
every man to his mousetrap \[Nhp\] Everyone to his own business, to his usual job.
you must not let your mousetrap smell of blood \[1802\] Do not draw attention to the disadvantages of your proposal.
the escaped mouse ever feels the taste of the bait \[1640\] Whatever tempts disastrously is remembered with revulsion.

I.17c Rats

vermin Obnoxious and unwanted people, offensive characters.
get/have a rat/rats \[Aus NZ\] Become eccentric, go mad.
have the rats \[Chs\] Have the bailiffs in a house.
smell a rat \[1533\] Suspect foul play or some hidden disadvantage.
rats leave a falling house \[1738\] Of those who desert as soon as they sense the approach of danger, trouble etc.
’t is an old rat that won’t eat cheese One must be very old to give up a favourite indulgence.
eat cheese \[Amer\] Inform (from ‘ratting on…’)
sticks up his riggin \[backbone—NCy\] like a poisoned ratton ‘Stuck up their backs like puzziend rats’ \[Cum\].
mad [infuriated] as a squozzen rotton \[= squeezed rat—sLan Der sChs Lei Shr\]
rat-trap cheese \[Amer\] Very ordinary, yellow, American cheese.
rank as toasted cheese in a rat-trap \[Sc 1823\]
welcome death! quoth the rat when the trap fell down \[1670\] Make the best of what is inevitable; in recognising the true significance of something.
safe as/caught like a rat in a trap
tight as a rat-trap \[Lan\]
as snappy as a ratton-trap \[wYks\]
marrried folk are like rats in a trap, fain to get others in, but fain to get out themselves
ratbag \[Aus NZ\] Nasty, troublesome person; an eccentric fool.
she’d mither \[=moither, weary someone beyond endurance with continuous complaining, grumbling and whining\] a nest of rats \[Lan\]
useless as stopping up a rat-hole with apple dumpling
like a rat up a drain-pipe Of a man in frantic haste to attain sexual consummation; quick to seize an opportunity (especially sexual) \[Aus\].
rat-hole \(n\) Poky, squalid room or building; refuge; a secondary hole drilled at the bottom of the main drilling; a seemingly endless expense \[Can\].
rat-hole \(v\) \[Amer\] Store up food etc.
the rat that has only one hole is soon caught \[NY Mich Colo\]
Johnny at the rat-hole \[Amer\] Punctual.
I.17d Monkeys

a monkey on the chimney A mortgage on the house. (See also I.75c.)
thought a lie, like Solomon’s monkey [Nrf]

I.17e Pet rabbits, squirrels and fish

does your bunny like carrots? (Sexual.)
squirrel (v) Go round and round (like a squirrel in a cage); scurry about.
squirrel-cage (n) Type of rotor in small electric motors (from the resemblance); situation of monotonous repetition.

I.17f Sparrows, pet birds

auld sparrows are ill to tame [Sc] Old people get too set in their ways to alter.
a little bit of sugar (for the bird) [C19] An unexpected bonus, windfall.
the bird that can sing, and will not sing, should be gar’d [forced to] sing [Sc Kenty Tenn: 1678] Rough persuasion is necessary for stubborn folk.
canary (n) Munitions worker (especially with TNT, from the yellow cast acquired by the skin).
mountain/rocky mountain canary [Amer] Donkey.
sing like a canary [1930] Readily inform to the police.
useless/as much use as tits on a canary [Can]
hairy canary Hardly a possibility and so remote as to be not worth considering. Usually of abstruse or unlikely theories about something for which there exists a commonplace and probable explanation.
chippy as a canary [Amer] Lively and brisk.
fly canaries [Aus] Pass off used bus/rail tickets for new.
chirrup like a three-badge budgie [naut] Chatter constantly. (Three-badge refers to RN long-service chevrons.)
I.18a Body

**measure up to...** Reach the standard of; meet the requisite qualifications for.

**from head to foot** Completely, thoroughly, all over.

**long-lady** Farthing candle.

**what she wants in up-and-down, she has in round-about** Of a fat person.

**fall heavy** Die rich.

**attend** [<Lat *ad-tendere*=stretch towards] The sense development from this root meaning goes: stretch faculties towards→listen out for→wait upon or minister to→accompany→be present at, go regularly to.

**stretched** Employed or strained to the limit of your capacity.

**out of flunter (s)** [confusion, disorder, anger—Yks Lan Chs] Gone wrong; out of order; out of health. (The phrase as we have it is a corruption of the form aflunters [in a state of disorder—wYks], and so gives rise to this apparent illogicality.)

**a little body may have a large soul** Quality goes not by size.

**tear soul and body sindry** [ShI] Strain, work very hard.

I.18b Spirit

**embody** Give force, real effect, power, life, authority to something by placing it within a viable framework or working system.

**out of the body** [Dmb] Frantic, anxious.

I.18c Skeleton

**skeleton crew, service, staff** [1802] One reduced to the minimum number capable of carrying on pro tem.

**skeleton key, plan** The irreducible basic design from which others can be developed and amplified.

**rack of bones** [Amer] A mere skeleton, emaciated creature.

**lean as a cradda** [skeleton, gaunt figure—Cum; very thin person or animal—Lan]

**thin as a natamus** [=anatomy, a skeleton with skin on]/rames [skeleton, bones—s&wEng: Wil]

**flesh (out)** Give new life, body and detail.

**put some meat on the bones** Fill in the details; turn ideas into action and reality.

**looks like the rames of death** [Cor]

**rames of a gate** The disjointed parts, mere framework [wSom].
bone-shaker Vehicle without comfort giving a bumpy, shaky ride.
rattles like a pair of skeletons fucking on a tin roof
rattled Shocked into a state of confused panic (as if, so shaken by events, a person’s bones rattled).
(in)articulate [<Lat articulatus=jointed, with the parts separate but connected] (Un)able to express oneself clearly. (From the idea of the elements of thought and speech being logically linked and well-jointed, as are the bones of the body.)
article [<Lat articulus=little joint] (When this meaning was extended to other jointed parts, it soon developed to comprise separate but connected items of—say—a list in the creed, a court indictment, contributions to a paper, and so to distinct items generally, the commonest use today.)

I.18d Spine

backbone/spine Essential, vital strength.
spineless Feeble, irresolute, lacking moral fibre.
to the back [backbone] Thoroughly, all through.
long ago—when you were running up and down your father’s backbone (From the sensation at orgasm.) Before you were even born.

I.18e Bones

ribs Roughly parallel supports with hollows between them—variously, as in: mountain spurs; veins of ore; sand-ripples; the veins in leaves or insect wings; the ridges between plowed furrows; the curved timbers or metal supports in ship-building; bridge beams; ceiling arches in vaults and churches; the raised patterns in knitting; umbrella supporting rods etc.
bone-idle Inherently and profoundly lazy.
the bare bones Mere essentials; irreducible elements.
fall a-bones of...[Chs] Attack.
bring him to his marrow-bones Make him knuckle down.
bone (v) [Amer] Work hard and diligently. Often as ‘bone up on...’=make yourself more conversant with, study carefully, get up to date on (from the phrase ‘work your fingers to the bone’).
marrow Main and vital centre of strength (deriving particularly from the spinal marrow).
marrow(-bones) truth [Der] Central, essential truth; hard facts.
snow-bones [swLin] Remnants of snow in hollows or in the shade of walls or hedges.
I.18f Skin, sweating

lay bare Reveal, open up what had previously been concealed. Of intimate feelings, buried treasure etc.

denuded of... Deprived, stripped of—honours, rights etc.; also of rocks from which the top soil has been eroded.

the naked truth The plain, unadorned truth; naked also describes anything unsupported or exposed to its essentials: a defenceless soul, empty landscape etc.

skin (n) The outer covering of a vehicle, plane, spacecraft etc.

beauty is but skin-deep Merely superficial, an outward impression.

the wrinkled skin easily conceals a scar Older people do not readily betray their emotions.

wrinkle Useful hint, trick, expedient, piece of knowledge or advice such as is acquired in time by experience, as are facial wrinkles.

to a wrinkle Exactly. ‘Favvers his dad to a wrinkle’ [sLan].

hide (n) [Aus WW1] Impudent self-assurance.

thick-skinned Callous, unfeeling, impervious.

thin-skinned Over-sensitive, especially to rebuffs or reproaches.

freckled sky Mackerel sky [Cum].

it is good sleeping in a whole skin [1546] Avoid injury!

loup [jump—passim] out of your skin Be carried away by strong emotion.

fit to leap out of her skin [Sc] Transported with joy.

made me jump out of my skin [1584] Severely startled me.

play/think/work out of his skin Make a superhuman effort; rise to the occasion; excel himself.

change your skin Change your character completely.

prick/sting/twinge of conscience Remorse. (Likening the mental to the physical pain of pricking etc.)

compunction [<Lat com-pungere=prick severely] (As above.)

itch (n) Restless desire, generally.

itching Eager. ‘Itching to tell the news.’

in a cold sweat In a panic dread of something fearful and imminent.

sweat blood Work hard and furiously; be exceedingly fearful.

sweat bullets [Amer] Be very worried.

transpire Emerge, become known [Amer c. 1800]. (This usage originated from the idea that something internal and secret became known via obscure routes, like vapours transpiring through pores.)

exude [<Lat ex sudare=sweat out] Have such abundance that it overflows—like sweat from the pores. ‘He exudes confidence.’

in a lather [Amer] Very agitated.
I.19 Shadows

shadow (n) Inseparable attendant, often a child afraid to let you out of their sight.

shadow (v) [1602] Keep under observation; follow closely (as a shadow follows a body); foreshadow; mark, as a player watches a player in the opposing team; learn a trade by watching a skilled worker [Amer 1975].

shadow ministers The parliamentary counterparts, while in opposition, of their opposite numbers in the government.

flat/friendly/quiet/soft/thin/whist [silent—nYks] as a/your shadow

shadowy Vague, indistinct, inapprehensible.

worn to a shadow Emaciated (—by worry or overwork, perhaps).

the shadow of his old self [1569] Much thinner, weaker than he was before.

keep your face to the sun and the shadows will fall behind [Can Amer]

a little man may cast a long shadow Insignificant people may achieve great things.

cast a long shadow Exert a far-reaching influence.

no one can step over his own shadow Can act against his true nature.

couldn’t keep up with his own shadow [Aus] Is comparatively slow—in learning etc.

run after a shadow Seek a vain reward.

coming events cast their shadow before [1801] There are usually warning signs; what is going to happen may be guessed from premonitory events. Hence:

foreshadow (v) [1577] Give prior indication of what is to come.

it will be a long time before your shadow grows shorter To someone whose child much resembles them.

I.20 Male and female

deeds are men, words are women

male/female screws, ferrules etc. To distinguish between those that fit inside and those that fit outside their partners.

feminine—caesura, rhyme, ending Unstressed, lightly accented.

masculine—rhyme, line ending One where the syllables are stressed.

female sapphire A pale one.


Maffie/Morfradite [EAn]/Morphrey [hermaphrodite—swLin]/Morfrey(dite) [Yks Lin EAn] Cart so adapted as to be neither cart nor wagon.
I.21a Hair

not care/give/worth a hair [1509]
no hair so small but has its shadow [1526] Everything exerts some effect.
to a hair/hair’s breadth Exact, precise, to a nicety.
a hairbreadth escape By a very narrow margin.
fits you to a hair in the water [Uls] Exactly. (Wet hair clings to the body.)
you’ll not believe he’s bald till you see his brains You want more proof than enough.
a person waiting for hair is not bald [Wal] The plea of one unable to pay now, but hoping to do so later.
put hair on…[Amer] Give impact to, make more emphatic.
keep your hair on! Keep calm!
lose your hair Lose your temper.
his hair grows through his hood/head [1450] He is on the road to ruin; has so fallen into poverty that his hood is worn until hair grows through it.
stand upon a hair Be within a very little; be ‘touch-and-go’.
cunt-hair [Amer] A very small distance, amount, a smidge.
get/have him by the short and curlies [pubic hair] Have complete control; have him at a serious disadvantage.
curl your hair/make your hair curl Scold. chastise; horrify, amaze you. ‘Could tell you things that would make your hair curl!’
go out of curl Lose vitality, go limp; be ill at ease, indisposed.
the brown hair is not heavier than the white [Wal] Older people have their troubles no less than the young.

I.21b Beard

beard (n) The tip of metal on the end of a knife haft [Sheffield, Yks]; company ostensibly buying stock on its own behalf, but in reality disguising the identity of the actual purchaser (as a beard can disguise a man); similarly, person acting to conceal another’s identity.
rebarbative [<Fr rebarbatif=with repellent, bristly countenance] Grim, forbidding—of an off-putting style, idiom or personality.
maugre/in spite of his beard In direct opposition to his purpose.
have the beard on the shoulder Look too much behind; dwell in the past; be overconscious of repercussions.
rides with his beard on his shoulder [1706] Is on his guard; very circumspect; proceeds suspiciously.
beaver (n) No score at skittles (because, when the zero was chalked on the score board, wags would sketch in a face and beaver [beard]).
whisker (n) Minute distance or amount. ‘Missed it by a whisker’=very narrowly.
too hard-faced to grow whiskers [Lan] Insensitive.
has whiskers Is quite an age, no longer fresh—of news, food etc.
the crumbs in thy neighbour’s beard are his own [Sc] Do not covet a man’s small perquisites.
dribble-beards [Sc] Long strips of kail boiled in a greasy broth and drawn out from the side of the pan where the fat is floating.

I.21c Head

head (n) Top, leading member, as in: head of state, of the family, of the valley; dalehead; wall-head; bridgehead; head of a ship; fountain-head; headland; head of a tool, of a pin, of a missile etc. etc.
hard-headed Ruthless, without sentiment, especially in business.
hot-headed Impetuous.
soft-headed Mentally feeble, too easily swayed.
cool-headed In control of the crisis, of the situation; unflustered.
bone-headed/thick-skulled Stupid
you have a head—so has a pin!
(talk) off the top of his head [1939] Unpremeditated, spontaneous, impromptu—and so without guarantee of accuracy.
make head or tail of...[1651] Make any sense of; understand at all. (Often as ‘cannot make head or tail of’.)
a head is higher than two shoulders [Wal] Brain is superior to brawn.
head and shoulders above... Considerably, substantially superior to.
turn someone’s head with flattery etc. [1864] Give exalted ideas; cause them to lose their sense of proportion; distract from the path of duty.
man is the head—but woman turns it!
inclined to...[<Lat inclinare=bend, lean towards] Choosing for preference, disposed, directed favourably towards.
hold up his head again [1553] Survive a disgrace; regain his self-respect.
run your head against... Come into conflict, usually with a superior power.
lose his head Panic; cease to be reasonable.
stands on his head Is eccentric.

I.21d Brain, mind

have on the brain Be obsessed by.
pick/suck the brains of... Use, reproduce another’s ideas.
carried away  Rapt, entranced, transported in mind—usually by some powerful influence.

ecstasy  [<Gk ἐκστασίς = standing outside] From the original sense of insanity or bewilderment (where the idea is that the person has taken leave of their senses), the meaning progressed to the idea of religious trance or rapture, and then to the common modern meaning of rapturous delight.

bête noire  [black beast—Fr] Pet abomination (like a nightmare).

mind-bender  Problem or outrageous event that does violence to normal thought and perceptions, e.g. ‘mind-bending drugs’.

go out of your skull  [Amer] Lose composure; become nervous, very tense.

I.22a Brow

brow (n)—of hill  That breadth just below the top.

high-brow  Culturally ambitious; intellectual.

low-brow  Uncultured; with tastes confined to the popular.

true as the skin between your brows

hang/hing by the breeirs/briers o’ the een  [hang by the eyebrows/eyelashes—Sc] Be on the brink of bankruptcy; be in a shaky condition, generally.

by scowl of brow  Of work done by eye without exact measurement.

I.22b Cheek

cheek (n) Impertinence. (See also I.24e, tongue in cheek.)

burning shame  (So described because flagrant, and because it makes the cheeks feel hot with blushes of shame.)

I.22c Face

face (n) of a clock, cliff, building etc.  The front.

faceless  Anonymous, characterless, unidentifiable—often of bureaucratic evasion of personal responsibility.

taken by the face  Put to the blush.

face (up to…)  (v) Confront, meet without shirking, not shrink from.
I.23a Eyes

eye (n) Refers to many dark centres in nature, or markings that resemble eyes—as in butterflies, flowers, eggs, plumage etc.; the entrance to a mine adit where daylight is visible from inside.

eyes (n) Choice deposits of ore left to the last by miners; the best parts of land to be settled [Aus NZ]. (See also E.7a, eye-picking.)

window [ON vindr=wind+auga=eye] (The originating idea was of the eye of a house through which the wind could blow or else be excluded by cloth or glass.)

tender as your eye Very sensitive.

eye of a needle The hole for the thread.

eye of a potato The leaf-bud.
in/into the wind’s eye In the direction of the wind, to windward.
eye of the hurricane/storm The very centre, where it is calm.
blue-eye (v) Try to make a good impression. ‘Kept blue-eyeing round him.’
blue-eyed Sweet and innocent; favourite.
green eye Jealousy.
Pope’s eye [wYks Hnt Nhp War wSom] The fat in the middle of a leg of mutton.

have more white in his eye [wYks] Have more sense.

black’s my eye [1528] I am at fault.
black is the white of my eye [Dmb] There is a slur on my reputation.

black’s his/your eye I accuse him/you.
your een’s no marrows [do not match—Sc] You don’t see clearly, don’t understand.
suspicion has double eyes Sees more than is really there.
eyes on stalks Eyes protruding with amazement.

his eyes are bigger than his belly [1640] Of one who has taken more than he can eat.
it’s neither my eye nor my elbow [sStf] Neither one thing nor the other—of an unsatisfactory answer, promise, arrangement etc.

I.23b Seeing

with eyes open In full awareness, without the excuse of ignorance.

open my eyes to the truth Rouse me to the facts.
an eye-opener An amazing revelation, enlightening occurrence.
eye-popper [Amer] Something that astonishes.

only hindsight has 20–20 vision An outcome can never be precisely foreseen till after the event. (From 20–20 eyesight in optometry, the best assessment.)

malice hath sharp sight and strong memory
nothing sharpens the sight like envy

blurred at the edges Not easily decided upon, open to confusion, indefinite.
in the mind’s eye Mentally envisaged.
retrospective [\textless\text{Lat retrospicere}=look back]
suspect [\textless\text{Lat suspicere}=look up at from below] (The idea of looking up apprehensively at something towering or flying above gives this word its usual sense of suspicion.)

there’s more than meets the eye Something further—not so immediately obvious.
focus attention/thought on... Concentrate on something (as when you bring an object into the focus of eyesight or a lens).

stare someone in the face Couldn’t be more obvious, be imminent.
glower (v) [scowl, stare threateningly, look gloomy] Of weather, look ominous, threatening.

has her north eye [also=squint] on him [Suf] Regards him with suspicion.
gowp [gaup, gape] in the lift [Sc] Squint in the eye. (From the attitude of someone with a squint.) Hence, gaup-a-liftie [Bnff]=someone who holds the head at a high angle.
look cross-eyed at...[Amer] Commit the slightest fault—in his estimation.
look askance at... View with suspicion, apprehension.

there’s a time to gley [=glee, squint, look askance—Sc nEng Nhp EAn Amer] and a time to look even [Sc] At times you should turn a blind eye.

see eye to eye Be in complete agreement.
not care/give/worth an ee mooat [=eye-mote—n&wYks]
you could put it in your eye and see no worse [Yks] Of a very small or insignificant thing.

has no butter in his eyes Is alert, shrewd, keenly perspicacious.
mind your eye Be careful, generally.

see things in their true colours [1797] As they really are, without distortion.
kythe [show up, appear—Sc Nhb Dur Yks] in your ain colours [Sc] Come clean; be seen for what you are.

not bat [=bate, flutter like a hawk] an eyelid Show not the least sign of surprise.
hang on by the eyelids Maintain a precarious hold.
in the twinkling of an eye Instantly.
easy as winking
like winking Very promptly, quickly (i.e. in as short time as it takes to wink).
connive [\textless\text{Lat con-nivere}=blink, shut the eyes]
shut his eyes to... Purposely avoid facing.
with eyes shut With great ease, with the facility of long practice or custom; without being fully aware or informed.
weeper [1946] A bottle of wine which slowly drips out through the cork.
nothing dries sooner than a tear [1560] Grief is short-lived. (A saying of Cicero’s.)

I.23c Ears
ears/lugs The projecting handles on jugs, pitchers etc.

long-lugs [Cai Cld] Eavesdropper.
at the lug of... Near to.
get on his ear Get drunk.
eaar-bender, ear-bending (Something) so unpleasant to hear that you feel you would like to bend your ears away from having to hear it—usually of a harsh tirade, complaint etc. (See also I.35a, give him earache.)
cold as an Eskimo’s ear [Calif]
has a tin ear for… Is unappreciative of.
my ears are burning I suspect that someone is talking about me.

And we shal speke of thee som-what, I trowe,
Whan thou art goon, to do thyne eres glowe!

[G.Chaucer, T&C II.1021–1374]

steam coming out of his ears [Amer] Very angry.
take a stone (up) in the ear Of a woman, lapse from virtue.
it’s bursting out of his ears! Of one prodigiously crammed with brains or knowledge.
have it coming out of my ears [Amer] Have a surfeit of it.
walls have ears In a building, conversations are easily overheard.

I.23d Hearing

in one ear and out of the other Of one who hears, but at once forgets.

Oon ere it herde, at the other out it wente

[G.Chaucer, T&C IV.434–1374]

I.23e Noses

nose/neb (n) Sharp projecting end, nose of an aircraft, of a guide-bar on chain-saws, neb of a cap, and on a scythe one of the two short handles on the shaft [nwLin].

quay-neb [Inv] The jutting-out part of a pier or quay.
nib (n) [=neb] Long prominent headland.
plain as the nose on your face
parson’s nose The back end of a cooked fowl.
hard-nosed [Amer UK] Callous, stubborn; business-like, effective; harshly realistic.
blue-nose [Amer 1800] Prude, prig.
blue-nosed [Amer] Puritanical, of strict morals (after the C18 Puritan settlers whose Spartan life-style was exemplified by the colour of their noses in winter).

brown-nose (v) [Amer] Flatter for advancement, be a toady (implying that their nose has been up someone’s arsehole). ‘I didn’t think that was sun-tan on your nose!’ [Suf].


a man of a keen/long nose Covetous man.

long-nosed Envious, jealous.

he that has a big/muckle [Sc] nose thinks everyone is speaking of it People do become over-sensitive about their peculiarities; the guilty are self-conscious.

don’t cut off your nose to spite your face [1788] Don’t deny yourself some good merely out of petulance or a sense of grievance.

no skin off my nose! [1926] It doesn’t affect me; is none of my business.

nose is closest to eyes [<ON náit er nef augum—Njal’s Saga §12—C13 re events of 23 August 1011] All are involved who are related.

your liberty ends where my nose begins [NC Miss NMex] You are free only to the point where you impinge on another’s freedom.

under his (very) nose Of something done in defiance of him, or without him noticing it.

look down your nose at… Disdain.

snotty Superior, uncooperative, stand-offish, impatient. (Probably by association with both sniffy and snooty.)

didn’t blow it out of his nose [Can] Did not manage it very easily.


I.23f Smelling

smell (n and v) Intangible sense of the real nature of something. ‘You come to recognise the smell of such situations’, ‘Doesn’t somehow smell like… ‘Smells suspicious’.

smell of… Be suggestive, reminiscent of… (As/from the above.)

smells the bottom [Aus] Of a river boat difficult to handle in shallow water.

odour (n) Trace, suggestion, reminder. ‘Not the slightest odour of fraud’.

raise a stink [C19 sl.] Make an outcry, cause trouble.

stink in his nostrils Be offensive and an abomination to him.

rancour [<rancid<Lat rancidus=stinking] redolent of…/with…[<OF redolent< Lat re-olere=give out a smell] Strongly reminiscent of, associated with (because of the unique power of scents to evoke memories).

in bad odour with… Out of favour with.

flair [<Fr flairer=be able to detect and identify a fragrance] Talent, knack, gift.

he’ll not get leave to snook [=snoke, smell, sniff—Sc Ire nEng] where she pisses Of one courting a very refined woman.
money has no smell Is neutral, cannot distinguish good from bad; do not expect moral considerations in financial dealings.

I.24a Mouth

mouth (n) Opening of a hole, tunnel, river where it reaches the sea, harbour etc.

deboutch [<Fr déboucher=issue through a mouth] Emerge through a narrow passage into a wider area.

a short sack has a wide mouth Of a short woman.

has a large mouth but a small girdle Large expenses but small means. (Money was kept in the belt or girdle.)

takes mair in his gab [mouth] than his cheeks can haud [Sc] Has taken on more than he can manage, through greed it is implied.

I.24b Breathing and blowing

aspire, aspirant [<Lat ad-spirare=breathe towards, pant for]

conflate [<Lat conflare=blow together, mingle two breaths]

conspire [<Lat con-spirare=breathe together] (Because conspirators put their heads together so close that their breaths mingle.)

expire [<Lat ex-spirare=breathe out, breathe your last] Reach the end of validity or an expected span.

inspire [<Lat in-spirare=breathe into]

blow white wind in his lug [Cld Rxb] Flatter, wheedle.

come out of my gazb [=gasp, breath—Wxf] Come out of my way.

pant Of a riveted ship, have its plates bulge in and out in response to the waves, like the ribcage of someone breathing heavily.

blow and hold meal in the mouth [Sc] Uphold two irreconcilables.

it is hard to suck/sup and blow with one breath [1721] Of someone who is attempting to do two contradictory things.

drink and whistle [1581] Do two things at the same time.

suck air [Amer] Be afraid (as if gasping in horror).

in the same breath Exclaimed when incompatible, conflicting or outrageous statements are made at nearly the same time.

holding his breath Waiting in anxious suspense.

breathe again Relax after crisis (as if after holding your breath in fear).
I.24c Opening the mouth

hang by the wicks [corners—Sc Ire nEng Lin Not] of the mouth Hang on to the last; just manage to retain.

jaw-bone [Amer Can] Credit, goods on tick (from working the jaw in persuading someone to give credit).

sets up her chaff [=shaft, jaws—wSc] Uses insolent language.

gape/yawn Open wide—of caves, chasms etc.

open-mouthed Astonished (as if gaping with amazement).

open your mouth wider [Amer: 1891] Ask a higher price, salary.

don’t open your mouth so wide [Nhp] Don’t ask so high a price.

a closed mouth catches no flies [1599] If you don’t ask you will get nothing; also recommending silence.

gobemouche [<Fr gober mouches=swallow flies] Over-credulous hearer of news.

I.24d Lips

lip (n) Rim, pouring edge of cups, jugs, craters etc.; small upturn along an edge of such as a metal plate, flat stone or piece of pottery.

lip (n) Cheek, impertinence.

tight-lipped Obstinately reticent; with all emotion suppressed.

fipple (n) [lower lip, usually when protruding in a gesture of sulkiness—Sc Nhb] The bottom of a stook when it splays out through being stacked for too long.

hang the fipple [Sc Nhb] Be downcast, weep.

down in the fipple [Sc Nhb] Despondent, crestfallen.

I.24e Tongue

language [<Lat lingua=tongue, being the most obviously active agent in the formation of human speech]

tongue Ethnic language. (As/from the above.)

tongue (n) of a shoe The leather flap under the laces.

tongue in cheek Insincerely, knowing that what you say is untrue. (Cheeky=insolent is probably connected with this—both originated around 1840.)

a woman’s strength is in her tongue

has a tongue too large for his mouth [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—29 March 1831] Says too much too indiscriminately.
your tongue runs before your wit You speak before you think.
don’t let your tongue run away with your brains To one who talks thoughtlessly.
double-tongued Wilfully deceptive, guilty of duplicity.
split his tongue with a silver sixpence [Martha Wilmot, Letter—10 October 1827] Pay for someone to learn a second language.
you have tied a knot with your tongue you cannot untie with your teeth [wYks sLan Nhp Ont NC: 1580] Have married.
palatable Acceptable, agreeable, suitable to a person’s taste.
unpalatable truths Unwelcome, unpleasant to admit or come to terms with.
smack of…[<smack=taste, experience] Be strongly suggestive, reminiscent of, contain a permeating and recognizable quality of.
austere [<Gk αὐστήρος =making the tongue dry and rough, hence, harsh, rigorous, severe]
salivate at the prospect of… Look forward with relish to.
slaverous Foul-mouthed; obscene [eYks].
slaverment Fulsome flattery [n, e&amp;mid Yks Oxf].
with his tongue hanging out In eager anticipation; parched with thirst.
lambent [<Lat lambere=lick] Often of flames, moving light, reflected ripples etc.

**I.24f Teeth and gums**

teeth (n) of a saw, comb etc. The points that cut the wood etc.
indent [<Lat in-dentare=put teeth on to]
indentures Copies of a legal agreement, often the articles of an apprenticeship (so-called because the edges were made jagged like teeth so as to identify the matching halves of the document).
put teeth into a law, regulation etc. [1920s] Make it effective by providing for penalties, sanctions etc.
my back teeth are floating! Of an urgent need to pass water.
in spite of your teeth [c.1230] In spite of nature, power, inclination.
lucky to get out/away with all my eye-teeth [Amer] Escape unscathed.
has all his eye-teeth about him [wWor] Is shrewd and capable.
never show your teeth unless you can bite [Sc Uls Ohio Calif] Do not make threats you cannot carry out; resentment is useless if you cannot mend the situation.
never bite unless you can make your teeth meet [Sc: 1721] (As/from the above.)
has set his teeth Has made up his mind and will not be moved.
grit your teeth [1797] Prepare to endure (temporarily) something painful or unpleasant.
drop my teeth [Amer] Am astonished, shocked (from gaping in horror).
an auld gum broken out again [Sc] An old grievance revived.
old woman’s tooth A wooden router plane, cabinet-maker’s tool (from a likeness in shape and size).
I.24g Biting and chewing

bite (v) Take effect, become felt—of government measures etc.

biting wind, sarcasm etc. Cruel, painful, penetrating.

corrosive [\<Lat corrodere=gnaw away] Eating away from the outside or underside; wasting or fretting something away.
mordant [\<Fr mordre=bite] Keenly sarcastic, caustic, cruelly sardonic—of remarks, criticism etc.
you take a bite of your own lip [Sc] Speak ill of your own kin.
nag [gnaw, bite, snap; knock chips or notches in—Sc nEng] Annoy with continuous faultfinding or provocation. Hence:
nagging thought, pain, doubt One spasmodically and annoyingly recurrent.
chewed/chewed over Repeated and amply considered.
chig [=chew, gnaw—Lakel Yks Lan] Consider, ruminate, ponder.
chaw high Be genteel, scornful of the commonplace.
can you whistle and chaw meal? To one who boasts of difficult achievements.

I.24h Throat

throat/gullet Opening of jug, cylinder, chimney etc.; fissure, crack in stratified rock [Nhb Dur Nhp].
gargoyle [\<OF gargouille=throat]
gorge Narrow ravine between steep hills or cliffs.
gorged Overfed, stuffed up to the gorge or throat.
a frog in the throat [1909] An impediment causing croaky, husky speech (perhaps originating from the name given to certain diseases or swellings of the throat—the frog).

I.24i Eating

eat away Corrode; consume gradually, as a river at its banks.
eat into Begin seriously to reduce, consume.
eat his words Recant.
eat the wind out of a ship Take another ship’s sailing wind by cutting in to windward of it.
eat her heart out Waste, pine away with grief or longing.
eat dirt Submit to degrading treatment; make a humiliating confession.
we must all eat a peck of dirt before we die Referring to the inevitable imperfection of life; you will suffer humiliations as long as you live.

choked [1612] Blocked, congested—of roads, waterways etc.
choke back/down Suppress with difficulty—tears, emotion etc.
has fasted long and worried [choked] on a fly [Sc] Has married late and badly.

I.24j Belching, hiccuping

belch (n) Discharge of gas in a pit [Nhb Yks Lin].
belch up/out Be forcibly expelled, of smoke etc.
 snapping and galching [the forcing up of food from the stomach with wind—wYks] The quarrelling of two irritated persons.
hiccup (n) [1965] A temporary hitch or breakdown in a machine or system, or in normal working generally.

I.24k Coughing and spitting

cough up [1393] Pay up, produce reluctantly.
get it off your chest [1902] Say something after initial hesitation or difficulty (as if expectorating).
  drivel [dribble, slaver] Nonsense; stupid, meaningless talk.
  all in a flother [froth, especially from the mouth—Hmp] Flustered.
  like to him as if spit out of his mouth [Wm wYks sStf: c.1400] Hence, ‘spit and fetch/image of…’=spitting image (commonly but incorrectly) [UK Amer].
  you spit on your own sleeve [1639] Spoil things for yourself or your family.
  spit against/into the wind Make futile protests which only redound upon yourself.
spit on a stone and it will be wet at last [Sc] Persistence rewarded!
slap[e] [slippery] as snot Of beck stones [nwLan].
green spit Malicious, envious disparagement.
so mean he wouldn’t spit in your mouth if your throat was on fire
not care/give/worth a bucket of warm spit [Amer]
spit feathers Suffer severe thirst.
spit chips [Aus] Suffer from a raging thirst; betray great anger.
spit nails/tacks [Amer] Become angry, mad, upset.
I.25a Neck

neck of land A narrow connecting spit of land.
neck of the woods Corner of the world, country, locality; small isolated community.
stiff-necked Narrowly obstinate, bigoted, intolerant
better bend the neck than bruise the forehead [Ont]
pain-in-the-neck [1924] Tediously vexing person, duty etc.
hang a long crag [neck—Cum Lan] Be despondent.
hot under the collar [1895] Internally agitated, resentful, embarrassed.

I.25b Breast

breast of a hill The upper slopes.
pap (n) A breast-shaped hill seen on the skyline; the swelling on open-grown spruce and fir trees where the branch meets the trunk; government patronage, hand-outs, political ‘plums’, graft [Amer].
breast-hee [=breast-high] The mouth of a hillside tunnel or mine.
as much use as men’s tits
titty-ups [Lan] A pert, forward young woman [Preston, Lan].
like a nigger girl’s left tit, neither right nor fair
he that hath horns in his bosom, let him not put them on his head If a man has a curst wife, it is no reason for thinking himself cuckold.

I.26a Heart

heart (n) Vital centre; essence. ‘Heart of the matter’, ‘heart-wood’, ‘heart of a fruit’.
cold-/hard-/heavy-/light-/soft-/stony-/warmhearted Unfeeling/merciless/despondent/ merry/tender/cruel/generous.
hollow-hearted Insincere.
heart-throb The object of infatuation (expressed in terms of its chief effect).
has a heart of stone Is merciless, unfeeling, unloving.
has a swinging brick (instead of a heart) [NCy]
nearest the heart nearest the mow [= mouth—Sc: 1580]/lips [Ire] Said of those who, intending to name one, by mistake name another (perhaps a sweetheart).
my heart was in my mouth I was very afraid, alarmed.
his heart is in the right place [1809] He has warm, human feelings; intends well.
wears his heart on his sleeve [1603] Freely displays his feelings.
it lies near her heart/is at the heart of... central, integral to her.
never set at your heart what others set at their heel Do not cherish what others despise.
heart-searchings Misgivings.
break the heart of a task Get most or the worst of it finished [wSom].

I.26b Veins

vein Strain, streak, element, tendency towards. A rich vein of humour’, ‘Not in the vein for joking’—and more in the same vein.
veined With a pattern or network of vein-like markings.
arterial Main, central—roads, drains.

I.26c Blood

life-blood Vital motive, force, necessity—variously.
red as blood [c.1205]
his money comes from him like drops of blood [1678] He parts with it just as reluctantly.
’t is a little drop of blood that is not warmer than water [Ire] Even a distant relationship is better than none.
blood is thicker than water [1815] A blood-tie is stronger than other relationships.
leaves me cold Does not affect me favourably, makes no impression.
足够的 to make your blood run cold Of something frightening.
in cold blood [1868] With premeditation, not in the heat of the moment.
in hot blood On impulse and with passion.
blood-curdling [1889] So terrifying as to congeal the blood.
there’s no difference of bloods in a basin [1560] In extremis one man is as good as another.
blood and snot The Spanish flag (being red over yellow over red).

I.27 Nerves and sinews

to the quick [<AS cwic=the living flesh under skin and nails where the nerve-ends are most sensitive] Deeply, intensely. ‘Cut/stung to the quick.’
ganglion [group of nerves] Centre of activity.
gold is the sinews of war [a Ciceronian phrase]

I.28a Lungs

lungs of London The open spaces in the city.

I.28b Liver

lily-/milk-/white-/yellow-livered Cowardly, spiritless (from the old notion, probably deriving from Greek and Roman haruspication, that a pale liver was caused by a lack of bile or choler, and that a person so deficient would be faint-hearted).
  hang your liver on… Desire very earnestly.
  liver-and-lights clock [eYks] One whose pendulum and weights are open to view.

I.28c Gut

gut—issue, question, reaction etc. Basic, irrational, instinctive.
  gut and gaw [=gall—Sc] Everything without exception.
  have neither gut nor gall [wYks] Be heartless, inactive, spiritless.
  blood and guts [naut] The red ensign.

I.28d Kidneys

kidney table, fern etc. (Being shaped like a kidney.)
  all of a kidney Of the same type, temperament. (It was believed, probably via augury, that the shape of the kidneys determined a person’s type and temperament.)
  kidney-pie Flattery, humbug, fraud [Aus NZ].
  kidney-rotter Type of frameless pack carried on the back.
  petrified kidneys [Lewes, Sus] Sea-worn flints used as cobbles.
I.29a Belly

umbilical Vitally linked, of interdependent industries and organisations.

they have tied their navels together [C18] Have become inseparable.

navel-hole [wYks] Hole in the centre of a millstone into which the grain falls from the hopper.

belly out Distend, be filled.

the belly has no ears A man will not listen when he is hungry.

have fire in the belly Have ambitions, a driving force.

a growing youth has a wolf in his belly (Because of his savage appetite.) ‘…having a woolve in her weame feeding’ [Chester-le-Street Parish Register—1630].

could take up the slack of my belly and wipe my eyes with it [naut] Am very hungry.

lisk [groin, hollow between abdomen and thigh—Sc Ire nEng] A hollow or crevice in a hill.

I.29b Bowels

digest [1482] Reduce facts to an assimilable form; arrange in the mind.

undigested [1598] Chaotic, ill-arranged—of facts, ideas etc.

enough to turn your stomach over Nauseating.

belly-ache (v) [1888] Complain, grumble fretfully and in a whimpering, irritable, petulant way [UK Amer orig. wDor].

in/sick of the mulligrubs [colic, bellyache] Low-spirited, sulky, out of temper [Sc Lakel Yks Lin Not Chs Shr War EAn Oxf wMid Brks Wil Som Sus Hmp Dev Cor Penn Ind Vir NC Tenn Geo Ala: 1620].

Jew’s bowels Small pieces of smelted tin [wCor] (Jews are traditionally associated with Cornish tin-mines—see I.35e, stiff as Barker’s knee.)

I.29c Wind

not care/give/worth a fart [S.Pepys—20 June 1664]

get/put the wind up [1918] Take alarm; alarm. (From the observation that a state of terror generates excessive stomach wind.)

Dutchman’s fart A sea-urchin.

like a (wet) fart in a (dry) bottle Vain, futile; uselessly busy.
like a fart in a gale/thunderstorm/windstorm [Can] Useless, unavailing, utterly helpless.

fart against thunder [Aus] Fight circumstances, the authorities, but futilely.

it is not every man that feels the stink of his own fart [Sc] There are many who do not recognise (or admit to) their true feelings.

no farlie [wonder] dirt go dear when a fart cost five shillings [Sc] The comment of superior folk on the pretensions of their inferiors.

let wind [Cum Yks] Let out a secret; give information; divulge something.

unable to blow wind up his arse [wYks] Slow and dilatory.

whistle-belly vengeance [Lan Chs] Poor ale (that causes rumblings in the belly).

I.29d Shit

constipate Restrict generally.

constipation A blockage or cessation of activity—mental, artistic etc.

costive Slow, reluctant, reticent, stingy.

verbal diarrhoea Extreme loquacity, with the implication that the matter, too, is unwholesome.

all to rages [violently erratic] like Shy’s guts [Cor]


shit green [Amer] Be alarmed; be enraged.

shit on… Use shamefully, treat fouly.

shits in the right pot Knows the right people; has influence.

shit—or get off the pot [Amer Can] Get on with the job, or let someone else do it; make up your mind.

gone for a shit with a blanket round him [UK army, WW2] Dead and buried. (On active service soldiers were buried wrapped in a blanket in a grave structurally identical to a slit-trench latrine.)

get it out of your system [1900] Get rid of an obsession etc. by working it off (like voiding a poison from the bowels).

shit a brick/bricks Be badly frightened, fearfully anxious.

it’s shit or bust with him He enjoys bragging.

he has shit his hole full [wYks] Is caught after a long spell of deceit.

would skin a turd [Can] Is very mean. (Probably connected with the English ‘skin a toad’, q.v. G.44d, which has the same meaning.)

have your nose in every man’s turd [Sc] Meddle in everyone’s affairs.

cannot spare the reek off his own shit [nYks] Is very stingy.

thinks his shit doesn’t stink Of one very superior or conceited.

‘cleanly’ quoth Catchpole when he wiped his arse with his elbow Reinforcing the comment on a neatly executed task.

you have bedirten yourself and would have me to dight you [wipe you clean—Sc] When we are asked to help someone out of trouble he has brought on himself.
you need not file the house for want of legs to carry you to the midden [Sc] To a long-legged person.
in the shit In real trouble, serious difficulty.

I.29e Vomit
drunken as cloy [sensation of nausea—Cum Yks]
keep [stop breathing just before vomiting—Nhb] Catch a ball to keep it from falling.
spew/vomit (v) Pour forth, eject—curses, lava, smoke, occupants etc.
spew (n) Surplus plastic etc. that exudes between moulds during manufacture.
regurgitate Reproduce in garbled or less wholesome version; repeat in debased form.
eaten and spewed Of one with an unhealthy, unwholesome appearance.
sick of… Tired of, nauseated by.

I.29f Urine
mild as maiden’s water Often of weak liquor or innocuous talk.
poor as piss (and twice as nasty) [UK Aus]
pissing down! Raining heavily.
piss against the wind/to windward [1642] Act thoughtlessly and stupidly.
piddle down his back [wYks] Flatter.
easy as pissing a bed/holes in snow
piss the bed waking Do something futile that could have been avoided.
piss in his pocket [Aus] Make himself familiar; ingratiating himself.
he pisses by the pot [Wm] Commits adultery.
pee/piss in the same pot/each other’s pockets [Aus] Be very intimate, conspiratorial.
he pisses more than he drinks Is boastful.
hold your water! [Amer] Stop bothering me; restrain yourself.
po-faced [1934] With as much expression as a po=chamber pot (influenced by pokerfaced); narrow-minded, smug.
they all piss in a pot [Wm] Are in league.
either piss or get off the pot! If you cannot do the job yourself, let someone else take over.
jostled about like turds in a piss-pot Of ships at a small anchorage in rough weather [naut].
has more edge [personal animosity, bad temper, acrimony, offensiveness] than a broken piss-pot
has no pot to pee/piss in, or even a window to throw it out of [Amer Can] An example of extreme poverty.

eyes like piss-holes in the snow Of one with dark, hollow eyes in a pale face.

piss on ice [Amer] Live in luxury. (From the provision of ice in the urinals of the best hotels.)

I.29g Vagina

cunt Leather sheath for carrying a whetstone in.

cunt-blows [eEng] Chamomile flowers (from the scent?).

I.29h Testicles

bollack (v) [<ballock <OE bealluc=dim. ball, in this sense since c. 1910] Reprimand.

has his bollacks in the right place Said in approval of a sensible fellow.

put balls on it [Amer] Make it more emphatic; give it impact.

like a wet dream, he makes it up as he goes along Of an over-fanciful talker.

I.29i Body fluids, humours

In medieval times it was believed that a person’s character and state of health were affected by imbalances between the four humours or complexions (blood, phlegm, bile and black bile). The supposed effects of a predominance of any of these are:

sanguine Hopeful, hearty, bold.

phlegmatic Dull, slow, unresponsive.

choleric Bad-tempered, quick-tempered.

melancholy Sad, depressed.

bilious—temperament, outlook etc. Sour, peevish (as evidenced by those suffering from an excess of bile).

vent your spleen on someone Make them the object of your bad temper.
I.30a Back

  have a broad back/shoulders Be capable of sustaining adverse criticism or slander.
  walk down his back [Wxf] Fool, deceive him.
  see the back of… Have a person depart, get rid of them.

I.30b Shoulders

shoulder (n) of hill The place where it becomes less steep as you approach the summit.
  shoulder (n) of road The edge, especially on a motorway, where vehicles can stop in an emergency, on a hard/soft shoulder.
  shoulder-months Those months, not in the school holidays, when travel agents offer lower fares and holiday prices (being thought of as lower than the head or peak months).
  narrow in the shoulders Intolerant of ridicule. (Also, narrow-fisted/-harsed/-nebbled [Penn]/-nippit/-souled=stingy/greedy/cunning and, alternatively, dogmatic/intolerant and easily offended/small-minded [Sc nEng Sus Dev Cor].)
  rain has such narrow shoulders it will get in anywhere
  rub shoulders with… Have daily contact with; be on close social terms with. (See also I.30d, rub elbows with…)
  a shoulder to cry/weep on A sympathetic listener. Hence:
    weep on each other’s shoulders [1935] Mutually sympathise over two similar sufferings or misfortunes.
  an old head on young shoulders [1824] Someone wise beyond their years; more sensible than is usual in the young.

I.30c Arms

arm of the sea A narrow inlet.
  right arm Trusted helper.
  as long as my/your arm Often of written lists of jobs, complaints, shopping etc.
  long in the arm Thieving.
  kings/the law have/has long arms Can arrest the wrongdoer however far away.
  stretch the long arm of coincidence Tax credulity that it really was coincidence.
  come with the crooked oxter [arm-pit—Sc Ire nEng] Carrying gifts; also of a wife with a good dowry.
  the pits! The very worst.
**muscle** (n) Working authority; resources; practical ability variously.
**muscle in on…** Intrude forcibly.
**muscle into…** Thrust your way into.
far-reaching With distant effect, repercussions etc.
**keep at arm’s length** [1580] Discourage familiarity.
**cost an arm and a leg** Be exorbitant, of a crippling expense.

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**I.30d Elbows**

**elbow** (n) A sharp bend in a river, road, pipe etc.

- **rub elbows with…**[Amer] Be on close social terms with; come into contact with. (See also I.30b, **rub shoulders with…**)  
- **elbow-room** Scope to operate or manoeuvre generally.
- **elbow-grease** Energy in the arms. (Probably deriving from the ancient belief that sweat and body grease [the lubricating synovial fluid] were the source of vigour. [See T.B.Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* p. 191])
- **talk of the devil—and he’s at th’ elbow!** [1666] Said when someone who has been the subject of conversation arrives—apparently by coincidence. A west Yorkshire variant goes Talk o’ th’ dule, and he’ll put up his horns’,  
- **elbow your way into…** Thrust your way into (like a man using his elbows to force his way through a crowd).
- **elbow out** Thrust aside, displace. (As/from the above.)

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**I.30e Hands**

**hand/finger of a clock** The pointer.

- **bare/flat as my hand**
- **palm** (n) [Nhp] The hollow side of a spade.
- **itching palm** Covetousness, rapaciousness.
- **plain as the loof** [palm—Sc Ire nEng] **of my hand**
- **aff (his) loof** [Sc] Extemporaneous, without premeditation (=off the cuff).
- **outside (of) the loof** [Sc] Back of the hand, and so rejection, repulse.
- **know him like the back of my hand**
- **doesn’t know his right from his left** [c.1535] Is very ignorant, awkward, puerilely incompetent.

- **don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing** Keep complete secrecy, even between members of the same gang.
- **back-/left-handed** A dubious, ambiguous, contrary—compliment etc.
sharp as a ciotog [left-handed person—Ir-Gael] (The ciotog is thought of as either an awkward or as a cute, guileful person.)
ambidextrous Bisexual; double-dealing.
a surgeon must have an eagle’s eye, a lion’s heart and a lady’s hand [1585]
in hand In reserve, in readiness, surplus. A few pounds in hand.’
in hand In the process of being dealt with. ‘Have the matter in hand.’
put in hand Start a job. (As/from the above.)
hold in the hollow of your hand Have completely under your control.
out of hand Beyond control; peremptorily; at once.
in the turn of a hand Instantly.
with a heavy hand Severely, repressively.
take your courage in both hands Resort to and rely on courage alone. (Both hands because neither had any other weapon.)
have your hands full Have as much (or more) than you can manage.
handful [C20] Much trouble to manage, usually of a naughty child; a small number or amount—‘a mere handful of soldiers’.
grease/oil the palm/creesh his loof [grease his palm—Bch Ags Edb eLth Ayr Dmf Nh] Bribe.

1.30f Fist and grip

fistful (Satisfactorily) large amount.
gowpenful [fistful, handful—Sc Ire nEng] An absurd mixture of a man.
nothing enters into a close hand [Sc Wis Colo Calif: 1641] Mean people receive nothing.
close-fisted/tight-fisted Mean, stingy.
there’s little difference between a closed hand and a fist [Ire] Meanness is little better than hostility.
white knuckle [Amer] Something of doubtful outcome. Hence, white-knuckled—of someone tense with uncertainty.
the fist is stronger than the hand [Dor] Strength in union.
grasp (n and v)—mentally
appetite [<Lat appetere= strive after eagerly, reach for]
prehend [<Lat ad-prehendere= seize forward to, clutch at]
comprehend [<Lat com-prehendere= grip together, pack together for ease of holding]
clutch Mechanism for engaging and disengaging the working parts—usually of a gear.
tine the grip [Sc] Give up in despair.
I.30g Fingers and thumbs

the finger of God Divine agency.

have green fingers/a green thumb [1934] Have a knack of growing plants successfully.

have most fingers Be in greatest need.

every finger has not the same length, nor every son the same nature [Ire]

widna file [=defile, dirty] my fingers wi’ ‘t [Cai Ayr eLth] Would not have anything to do with it; find it abhorrent.

have sticky fingers Be thievishly inclined.

butter-fingers! To someone who drops what they should have held; one unable to hold anything hot [Craven,wYks: now passim].

never lifted (up) a finger Made not the slightest effort; avoided all work.

will not crook [bend—Sc] a finger Will do nothing to help.

she can turn/twine/twist/wind him round her little finger [1680] Exercise absolute command and control.

she has more courage/wit in her little finger than he has in his whole body [1563] Far excels him.

put it on the long finger [Ire] Postpone it.

point (the finger) at/to … Demonstrate, generally. ‘The facts point to…’

sit with finger/thumb up ass [Amer] Refrain from working, refuse to do anything useful.

pull your finger out! (often in scorn or disgust) Start working properly (as if prevented hitherto by having a finger stuck up the arsehole).

from the tender nail From earliest youth.

a nail’s breadth The smallest amount. (Usually with a negative.)

naked as my nail [1533]

nangnail [=agnail, loose skin, sore place at base of nail] Ill-tempered person, tyrant [Lan].

get him on your finger-ends In your power.

I did not suck this out of my finger-ends [Cockney: 1546] I learnt it by hard experience; by some mysterious source of information.

interdigitate Interstratify, interlock, fit so closely together as to interact—of ideas, theories etc.

his fingers are all thumbs/he has ten thumbs He is very clumsy.

he is the finger next my thumb My closest friend.

be finger and thumb [1579] Be close friends, associates.

have the fingers get close to the thumb [Sus] Put members of the family in the father’s employ.

clap/keep/put your thumb on… Keep secret.

fash [trouble, bother—Sc nEng] your thumb [Sc] Worry, concern yourself.

above my thumb [Sc] Beyond my reach, ability.

count/suck her thumbs Sit idle.
I.30h Scratching

he that will not bear the itch must endure the smart (which follows from the scratching) If you want a remedy you must put up with the side- or after-effects.

learn to itch where you can scratch Do not attempt what is beyond your power, renounce those problems you cannot remedy.

scratch him where it itches Humour his foibles.

gar him scar where it is not yuki [make him scratch where it is not itchy]/gar ye claw where ye dinna yuke [Sc Nhb] Beat soundly.

claw/scratch where it does not itch/yuke [nYks sLan: 1546] Be in a difficulty; at a loss what to do.

straik tails with…[=stroke tails—Sc] Make an exchange of goods of equal value.

back-scratching Mutual praise, help; a flogging [naut].

scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours [1706] Exchange favours; indulge in mutual flattery.

claw [scratch] me and I’ll claw thee [Tyndale, Practice of Prelates—1530] (As/from the above.)

scart/scratch my arse/breech and I’ll claw your elbow [Sc: 1611] Don’t suggest anything so unreasonable; of mutual commendation (because no one else would).

claw [Abd eLth: c. 1394]/scratch his back [wSom] Wheedle, flatter, gratify, fawn on him. Hence:

claw-back A toady.

claw an old man’s pow [Sc] Reach old age.

there’s a difference between scratting your head and pulling th’ hair off! [Lan] In rebuking someone for exaggeration.

I.31a Arse

rump Residue, feeble remnant of a formerly numerous and powerful body (from the name given by C.Walker in 1648 to the survivors of the Long Parliament).

rump and rig [back] Through and through, from top to bottom [nYks].

stump and rump [leg and arse—Forfar, Ags Slg nRe Nhb Lakel wYks sLan nLin] Completely, entirely.

up the ass [Amer] Thoroughly. ‘Know it up the ass.’ (See above.)

up to the ass in…[Amer] Deeply involved with; heavily committed to.

hairy-arsed Of older soldiers and sailors, disillusioned and with a rough and ready competence born of hard experience; often, simply older and more mature.

not have a hair on his ass [Amer Forces] Lack courage, especially when dared.

man with a paper ass [Amer] Someone whose opinions are not important.


cold as Kelsey’s ass [Amer]
black as Toby’s arse [Can]
odd as Oliver’s behind [Lin]
like a fat woman—all behind Late.
you’re like my arse, best out of sight!
he doesn’t know which way his arse hangs [Lin Stf War Wor Glo] Of a conceited man; a confused child; someone in a state of helpless indecision.
doesn’t know his arse from his elbow Is foolish, or confused.
better than a kick up the arse (with a frozen foot [Can]) An understatement in celebration of something (hardly) enjoyable.
gar his rumple reek [make his rump steam—Sc] Give him a thrashing.
pain in the arse Annoying, tiresome person etc.
she has a hair across her arse [Can] Of a perpetually bad-tempered woman.
have a bug/hair up the ass [Amer] Be very irritable, peevish, bad-tempered.
she would give away her arse and shit through her ribs [Lan wCor: 1736] Of one over-generous.
cut him a new asshole [Amer] Reprimand severely.
ugly as a hatful of arseholes [Aus]

I.31b Sitting

sit/stand on... Be situated on, as The town sits/stands on a hill.’
the wind sits in—the west etc. Stays settled in that quarter.
subside [<Lat subsidere=sit down]
sit still for...[Amer] Condone, tolerate, accept.
sit heavy/light on... Cause a person more/less care.
sit down hard on...[Amer] Oppose firmly.
land on the doup [arse—Sc Ire nEng] Be brought low, to poverty.
sit on your hands [Amer 1926] Refrain from action, against expectation and even against your own inclination; refuse to applaud.
(down) on his hunkers [haunches—Sc Ire nEng Amer]/in a hunkersdown position
In reduced, even desperate circumstances (because squatting instead of working); cowering, defeated, on his last legs [Sc Ire nEng Suf Amer].
hunker down [Amer 1903] Get into the mood and position for hard work; concentrate resources in hard times.
hunkerslide [Amer, 1914 Dub] Act in a mean underhand way (like sliding in a crouching position instead of standing up).
I.31c Legs

legs of furniture, pylons etc.
right/straight as my leg [1630]
black-leg A man who works when his mates are on strike. (The saying probably derives from when black-leg=swindler, but it is hard to see the sense-continuity. There is also the cattle disease of that name.)
long legs [wAfr] Using corruption and unfair influence to obtain favours or service.
knee-jerk [Amer 1951] Innate reflex, unthinking reaction.
Shropshire sharp-shins Light heels and sharp wits.
on his/its last legs [1599] Near the end of his life/its useful existence.
not have a leg to stand on [1889] Have no case, defence, support left.
show a leg Get out of bed.
shake a loose leg Enjoy unmarried freedom.
cocks up his stumps [Hmp] Is independent; refractory; conceited.
it is hard to get a stocking off a bare leg Hard to get something from someone who has not got it.
pull (your) leg Tease, chaff (you); intrigue, toady, blackmail [Amer].
put legs and arms to a story, plan etc. Give it plausibility, embellish it.

I.31d Standing

substance [<Lat sub-stare=stand under] Hence, the underlying reality, nature, essence, matter.
standing army/colours/dishinvitation One that does not move away and so continuing, permanent, available when required.
stand on one leg Of a fruit bush that grows from one distinct stem; and also of a crop of corn when only one stem grows from each root.
take standing Accept, endure a blow without succumbing or making a fuss (like a stoic who can take bad news without having to sit down with his head in his hands).
a lie stands on one leg, truth on two (So is less easily overturned.)
straddle Stretch, extend across frontiers etc. Of telecommunications, international organisations etc.; in aerial bombing=strike right across the target with a stick of bombs.
I.31e Walking and running

walk on/with two legs [China] Use small and local production units simultaneously with large mass-production factory methods; also of a two-tiered system of education.

cannot walk and chew gum [Amer] Is incompetent, unable to concentrate, useless.

run (in a family) Persist, recur genetically. The metaphorical uses of run are numerous and range from the virtual equivalent of be (a fence runs round the garden) to the sense of powerful movement (the sea is running high). In between are all the stages of movement and occurrence [itself a run-metaphor—see I.5g] (blood runs cold; run a bath; run aground; sands are running out; run short of; run a temperature; nose is running; tune runs in my head; trains are running late; run for president).

current [<Lat currere=run]
cursive writing [<MedLat cursivus<Lat currere=run] Running hand, or ‘joined-up’ writing.

syndrome [<Gk σύνδρομος=running with, accompanying]
concur [<Lat con-currere=run in company with]
discursive [<Lat dis-currere=run to and fro]
incur [<Lat in-currere=run into, against]
recur [<Lat re-currere=run back, run again]
go foot for leg Go at once, very fast.
let feet run faster than shoes [Dmb] Act precipitately.
’t is the man who runs that falls [Ire] Ambition, over-eagerness is likely to end in disaster.

enjoy your trip? When someone stumbles or trips.
my head will never save my legs/feet! Said when a person has to return for something forgotten.

I.31f Feet

foot (n) of hill, bed, page The bottom.
forefoot The foremost part of a ship’s keel.
foot-hills The smaller hills at the edge of a mountain range.
high in the instep [Yks Lan Nhp] Proud and haughty.
have two left feet Be clumsy, awkward.
have a good foot on the floor [Sc] Dance well.
get/know the length of his foot [1580] Get his measure; learn his foibles; get into his favour [Yks EAn]; be able to manage him; completely win his confidence [wYks]. (See also G.2a.)
find your feet [1673] Settle in; adjust to a new situation; develop your potential.
too big for his boots [sChs: 1887] Overweening, presumptuous.
have leaden feet Move slowly.
leaden-footed Sluggishly slow—of musical tempi etc.
God/vengeance comes with leaden feet, but strikes with iron hands [1579] Is slow, but irresistible.
set on foot Set in motion; start something operating.
put my foot down [1886] Am firm, insist.
step (n) Stage in a continuous process or progression; one part of a progressing series.
step by step By gradual stages, steadily, by easily assimilated advances.
step down Retire or resign from (high) office; withdraw from a previously held position.
mind/watch your step Be careful how you proceed, variously.
ease the feet [Cor] Die.
ever speak to the feet while the head is alive [Ire] Do not deal with subordinates when a superior is present.
better the foot slip than the tongue Rather a personal than a social blunder.
come out flat-footed [Amer 1846] State beliefs, position decisively (as though on a firm footing).
flat-footed Blunt, uninspired, ill-prepared.
flat-footed as an Indian [Calif]
flat as a negro’s foot [Calif sAmer]
carry someone off his feet Rouse his enthusiasm.
speaks that slow, you’d think he was drawing it up from his boots [Sc]

I.31g Heels

under the heel of… Dominated by.
the heel—of evening [Nhb]/of the loaf [Sc Ire nEng Shr Wor Oxf Glo Dor]/of a plow [Nhb]/of summer [Sc] The last part, the last crust, latter end.
kebbuck-heel [Dmb Ayr Gall wYks n&eLan Glo Dor] Cheese rind from which the cheese has been eaten.
flat as a nigger’s heel [Calif]
back on my heels Discomfited, stunned.
kick my heels Wait impatiently.
give heels to… Help a curling stone along by sweeping its path [Ayr].
show a clean pair of heels [1546] Run away.
better a clean pair of heels than a halter Better to run and escape hanging.
I.31h Toes

**square-toed/square toes** Person of rigidly proper conduct, views etc. (from the shape of shoes favoured by Puritans).

*claw his toes* Gratify, indulge himself.

I.32a Washing

**soft as soap**

*small as a ha’p’orth of soap on Saturday night* [Ant]

*not know him from a bar of soap* [Aus] Be completely unacquainted with him.

*as scraped as a bath-brick* (which is scraped whenever used)

*take a bath* Lose money, especially on the stock-market. (The same idea as ‘cleaned out’ and ‘taken to the cleaners’.)

*memory like a sponge* One capable of absorbing and retaining much information.

*thirsty as a sponge*

*hold him in hot water* Keep in a state of constant uneasiness.

*het up [=heated up]* Worked up into a nervous, anxious or angry state.

*brainwash* Discredit and scrub out a person’s values and ideas in order to establish new ones.

*wash your face* Declare yourself; justify your actions.

*rub down with a blackthorn* [Nrf]/oak [Cum] *towel* Cudgel.

*towel up* …[Aus] Beat, defeat. (As/from the above.)

*dry as a Pommy’s towel/bathmat* [Aus] Very thirsty.

*aromatised* [1632] Rendered sweeter, more agreeable, acceptable.

I.32b Washing the hands

**revolutions are not made with rose-water** [1830] Violence is necessary for violent ends. ‘He was not made with rose-water’—of a rough character.

*rose-water* Gentle words and actions.

*wash my hands of…* Have nothing to do with; disclaim further responsibility for.

(The action of Pontius Pilate [Matt xxvii.24, also Paston Letter 1465 Nrf].)

*one hand washes the other* [1573] Friends and relations should help each other; in helping another you help yourself at the same time; where an activity benefits both parties equally.
make one hand wash the other [Sc] Subsidise one part of the business with another so as to undercut competitors.

one hand will not wash the other for nothing [Sc: 1721] Some sort of payment is required for every service.

da clean hand needs no washing [Ont NY Miss] Rebuking the blameless is pointless.

with clean/white hands Innocently, honestly, without guilt.

God looks to clean hands, not to full ones Without sin rather than with property.

clean-fingered/with clean fingers Unbribed, unbribable.

I.32c Shaving

shave Graze past, pass by very closely.

by a close/narrow/near shave Very narrowly—often of escape from accidents.

keen/kittle [precarious; needing wary handling—Nhb]/sharp as a razor [c.1370]

razor-thin Very slight—of a narrow majority etc,

razor-faced Sharp-featured; miserly [Nhb].

on a razor-edge [1611] In a critical situation; in great danger; on a thin dividing line; on a narrow mountain ridge.

let every man soap his own beard Attend to his own affairs.

well-lathered is half-shaven Well-prepared work is already half-finished.

clean gone, like Dicky Daniel’s whiskers [Cor]

foul-beard The mop for a blacksmith’s trough.

put it against his beard Taunt him with it.

puts his beard in a blaze Is in a great rage.

learn to shave on a fool’s head [UK NY NJ Ill Calif] Experiment on those too stupid to mind.

her tongue is sharp enough to shave an urchant [hedgehog—Lan]

it is hard to shave an egg [1592] To extract the last farthing; get money where there is none.

I.32d Cleaning the nose

keep your nose clean Keep out of trouble, behave yourself vis-à-vis authority.

wipe his nose of...[1563] Defraud, deprive of.

wipe his nose on his own sleeve [c. 1436] Cheat, trick him; make him resort to a futile consolation.

who tells a lie to save his credit, wipes his nose on his sleeve to save his handkerchief
in a thumb’s snitting [blowing the nose between finger and thumb—Sc Ire nEng Lei Glo] Instantly. will not lose/part with the droppings of his nose [1564] Is very illiberal.

I.32e Cleaning the mouth and teeth


I.32f Cleaning the nails

nice as my nail Trim, elegant. manicure (v) Make a neat, tidy job of. finished to the nail/finger-nail [<Lat ad unguem factus=finished right to the nail—Horace, Satires I. v.2] Perfect in every detail. pick his fingers [Sc] Annoy, punish him. cannot say black’s his nail [wYks Hrf Glo]/eye/ eyebrow Can find no fault in him. he’ll not part with the parings of his nails [1546]/black afore his finger nails [wYks]/the dirt under his fingernails [nStf] Is a miser.

I.32g Hairdressing

wash the head without soap Scold. put your hair up Assume adult responsibilities. tie her hair without a whang [Fif] Deceive her. plait legs [Lan Der] Be drunk and uncoordinated; have sex. unpin/let down your (back) hair Relax, be informal; shed inhibitions and enjoy yourself; become confidential.
backhair [w&sIre] Intimate and (probably) disreputable (from the imagined topics of conversation between two women, one of whom is taking down the backhair of her friend).

get/take…out of my hair [1902] Disentangle, disinvolve me. (Usually said by someone wishing to end too close or too stifling a relationship. See also G.68b.)

snarl(-up) (n and v) [tangle of hair<narea= catch by entangling] Traffic jam, blockage, confusion.

perplex [<Lat perplexus=plaited, interwoven, tangled]

bad-hair-day [1990s] A day when everything goes wrong, starting with unmanageable hair.

hairpin bend One with a very sharp turn.

not care/give/worth a singed hair [Abd]

in curl-paper condition [Ayr] Immediately ready. ( Newly released from its curling papers, a coiffure is at its best.)

spray-on Of culture, transformation, reform etc. Cheaply and easily applied, giving a merely cosmetic improvement.

bushk [dress, prepare—Sc Ire nEng] your cockernonie [the gathering of a young woman’s hair under the snood or fillet—Sc] Put on airs.

a’s no gowd that glitters, nor maidens that wear their hair [Sc: 1721] (It was a Scottish custom that only a maiden might wear her hair in a cockernonie and snood.)

touze [tousle] her cockernonie [Rxb Dmf]/ touze her tap-knots [Sc 1816] Assail, test her virginity. As also in Fielding’s Tom Jones, XVIII, xii: ‘Damn me if he shan’t ha the tousling her’ [1742].

I.32h Combing

comb (v) Search thoroughly, especially open country.

comb out Select, sort out.

comb the tracks Turn a ship into line with torpedo tracks in order to reduce the chance of a hit.

comb/stroke (his hair) the wrong way Outrage his prejudices or habits; irritate him.

with hair kamed to the lift [sky—Sc Ire nEng] On the go.

go through with a fine-tooth comb [1891] Search very thoroughly, with close scrutiny.

scabby heads love not the comb [1592] Those most open to criticism or in need of correction are the least tolerant of it.

kame sindle, kame sair [Sc] The less often you reorganise, clear out, spring-clean etc., the more trouble and the more unpleasant it is.

bring an ill comb to the head [Sc Nhb Som Ken] Do yourself mischief; marry unfortunately; get into trouble.

she combs his head with a three-legged stool Of a violent wife. [See Shaks, Tam Shr I.i—1594]

comb the head with a creepie [three-legged stool—Uls] Chastise.
shame is past the shed [<Sc shade= parting of the hair] of his hair [1578] He is below or beyond all shame.

hair-bag [Amer] Veteran policeman; fussy, selfcentred person (from that sort of person’s likely habit of saving their combings, clippings etc.).

I.32i Wigs

puts a stitch in his wig [wIre] Is partially drunk.

oil the wig [Nhb] Get drunk.

keep your wig cool Stay calm and selfpossessed.

flip your wig/lid [Amer] Become wildly excited; lose your head, go crazy, lose self-control.

wigged out [Amer] Deluded; far from reality. (As above.)

wigs on the green [ShI Ire Nhng Cum sLan: 1856] A violent quarrel; free fight.

(dressed) up to the knocker [a bob or pendant to a wig—c. 1818] Smart, in fine style

I.33a Personal appearance—face

put/set a good face on…[1568] Present favourably, face boldly.

put another/a different/a new face/complexion on… Give a different appearance, character to.

two complexions on one face Double, deceitful meanings.

bear two faces in/under one hood [1425] Pretend to be religious, but live evilly.

carry two faces under one hat [Der] Be deceitful.

be double-faced/two-faced Be a hypocrite, insincere.

barefaced Shameless.

a good face needs no band [1639]/paint [1581] Said in criticism of unnecessary make-up or ornament.

tart up Smarten up in a slap-dash way, merely to present an attractive appearance (as a ‘tart’ or whore might).

cosmetic Designed or intended principally to improve appearances. Of commercial and political exercises directed towards improving public relations and credibility.

face-lift [1939] Renovation, often of old buildings or businesses (from the beauty treatment for rejuvenating the face).

keep a stiff upper lip [1825] Keep up courage, not lose heart; keep silent [Amer].

bald Plain, unadorned—of style, facts etc.

bare/bright as a bald head [nYks]
occasion’s head is bald behind (Once past, there is nothing to catch hold of!)

truth has a good face but bad clothes (It favours an honest appearance, but not prosperity.)

I.33b Personal appearance—accessories

brush-off [Amer 1949] Rejection, usually by former lover (like the action of brushing unwanted particles off clothing, or an insect off the face).

clothed in—smiles, legal terms etc. Covered in; concealed by.

pin-money [1892] A modest allowance for personal spending. (From the time when pins were so expensive, husbands used to make a special allowance for their purchase.)

Queen Anne’s fan Insolent gesture, a cock snooked by spreading the fingers to the nose.

fan out Spread out radially, like an opening fan.

truth’s best ornament is nakedness

sophisticated Complex, advanced—of complicated design in machinery, architecture etc. (From the use of the word to describe a woman of the world who was clever, smart and the opposite of simple and natural.)

I.33c Aprons

apron (n) A platform, strip of lead, or area of stone or concrete to catch the water from a sluice, roof or building. Also, the skin covering the belly of a roast duck or goose which is cut to reach the stuffing.

I should as soon think of wearing a leather apron! [Suf] The reply of a woman to a false accusation.

the cunning wife makes her husband her apron Gets him to do all the dirtier tasks.

apron-husband One who meddles with his wife’s work.

tied to his mother’s apron-strings [1848] Under her close control.

a woman need but look upon her apronstring to find an excuse [1577]

apron-string hold/tenure Tenure of property only during the wife’s lifetime.

tousers [women’s large, coarse aprons—Dev Cor] in one generation, tousers again in the third [Cor] Even though a poor family may prosper for a time, they subsequently relapse into poverty. (See also B.9c, clogs to clogs...)
I.33d Personal colours

black looks Angry looks.
   he/she looks black Appears bad-tempered.
   it looks black Is ominous.
blue Despondent, depressed.
white Decent, honest.
off-white Not standard; not socially acceptable. Of a manner of speaking, or a lifestyle.
green Youthful, gullible, inexperienced, fresh. ‘Do you see any green in my eye?’ = ‘Do I look gullible?’
green old age Old in years, though not in experience.
in the pink In excellent health.
off-colour Less fit than usual; decidedly not ‘in the pink’.
Day-glo [Amer] Gaudy, cheap and flashy. (Dayglo is a brand of paint that glows weirdly in certain light conditions.)

I.33e Mirrors

honest as a mirror/looking-glass [sLan]
bright as a seeing-glass [nYks]
reflect Reproduce, show evidence of (as in a mirror). The result reflected/was a reflection on their efforts.’
reflect on… Cast, bring upon… ‘The deed reflects credit on him.’ (The Latin term reflectere [=bend, turn back] was itself used metaphorically when it first meant to mirror, and the English sense of think or ponder on derives from the idea of bending back thought towards…)
mirror (v) Show the truth, the same truth, the same again.
hold up the mirror to… Show someone their true character, tell home truths.
the best mirror is an old friend [1611] (Because they will tell you the truth about yourself.)
every man’s neighbour is his looking-glass (As/from the above.)
mirror image A process or state that is in reverse or opposition to the one with which it is contrasted. ‘The Black Muslim creed is the mirror image of the white racialist one’ [New Statesman—27 May 1966].
I.34a Disabilities of body

dwarf Undersized specimen of a person, plant etc. Trees and plants deliberately bred or cultivated small are so described.
  dwarfed by… Rendered insignificant by comparison.
  merry as a grig [lively, undersized person: 1566] (See also I.3a.)
  all awry, like Cotton’s neck [Shr] Of anything warped or twisted.
  humpback bridge One rising steeply to the middle.
  a hunchback cannot see his hump [NY III] People disregard their own faults.
  naeve [birthmark, body blemish <Lat naevus =mole] Moral blemish, fault in a person’s character.
  Siamese twins/Siamese twin fashion A pair joined integrally together; an indivisible or indissoluble union.

I.34b Disabilities of mind

moonstruck Dazed, distracted in mind. (Because lunatics react thus to their monthly disturbances.)
  butterfly case Mad person. (From the belief that insane people chase butterflies.)
  laugh like a fool at a bonfire
  skens [looks sideways] at her like a soft lad at a penny [sLan] In bashful admiration.
  goggle for gapes like a pattick [simpleton—Cor 1856] Stare foolishly, look astonished.

I.34c Disabilities of sight

blind (v) Deceive, close the eyes of the understanding.
  blind (adj) forces etc. Uncontrollable, without guidance.
  black as blindness
  inveigle [<Fr aveugler=to blind] (Because of blinding the judgement.)
  they take th’ ees/ ‘e’s [=the eyes] out of their sov’rins i’ Bretherton [Lan] (To prevent them seeing their way out of the village!) Are miserly.
  cannot see through a ladder Cannot see what is obvious or transparent.
  so blind (drunk) he cannot see a hole through a (nine-foot) ladder/stee [=sty, ladder—Cum]
  love is blind (Because it sees no faults.)
hatred is blind as well as love (Because it sees nothing but faults.)

squint (n) Slight difference of alinement between aerial and maximum-radiation axes in radar.

love makes a good eye squint

squint-eyed Malignant.

skelly (v and n) [squint—Sc Ire nEng Amer] Digress, exaggerate, relate incorrectly [Ayr Dmf]; guess [nIre].

cock-eyed [squint-eyed] Topsy-turvy, ridiculous.

off the gley [=glee, squint, sidelong glance—Sc nEng EAn] Wrong, mistaken, wide of the mark.

better eye sore/one eye [1670]/half-blind than all blind/quite blind/both eyes out Better a lesser evil than a great one.

there’s a difference between staring and stark blind/mad [1546] Things are not as extreme as you imagine.

he that has only one eye must look after it well [1639] The fewer your resources, the more valuable they are.

he that has but ae ee maun tent it weel [Sc] [tent=look after, protect—Sc n&midEng Ken]

clean gane, like Coulbourne’s eye

in the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king A difficulty becomes an advantage when compared with worse afflictions.

get on the blind side of… Take unfair advantage of [Cum Yks].

blind-side (v) [Amer] Attack unexpectedly.

it is a blind man’s question to ask why those things are loved that are beautiful The comment on a questioner whose lack of perception prevents him from seeing the answer.

send a blind man to buy paint [Ire]/ask a blind man the way to the city [Ill] Expect too much of someone.

blind man’s holiday Even evening gloom, when it is too dark to work [Eng, passim].

experience is the blind man’s dog [Ill]

all are not blind that wink Do not judge from externals.

cannot see beyond/further than the end of his nose [1659] Is completely without foresight.

blind spot [1907] Area of knowledge or perception of which someone is—though they should not be—unaware. (From the fact that everyone has a blind spot on the retina of each eye.)

blear the eye Blind by flattery [Sc Rnf Lan].

draw the blear/scum over his eyes Cheat, deceive him.

look through rose-coloured spectacles [1861] See everything in a favourable light; be overoptimistic; too idealistic.

it would look all right—to a blind man on a galloping horse! Of something that will not bear close examination.

turn a blind eye Refuse to notice.
I.34d Disabilities of hearing

deaf corn [swLin] Ears with no grain (as also G.3f, a deaf nut).
  turn a deaf ear Reject an appeal.
  none so deaf as those who won’t hear
  he hears not in that ear/on that side [1533] Of one who refuses to hear what is
distasteful, or who is wilfully obtuse.
  read/watch my lips [Amer] Try harder to understand what I mean because I do not
intend to be more explicit.

I.34e Disabilities of speech

dumb barge One without sails and using no other power but the tides.
  tongue-tied Temporarily speechless. (Sometimes a child is born with a shortened
frenum which, unless cut, restricts movement of the tongue and inhibits the development
of speech.)
  slow as a stutterer

I.34f Disabilities of limbs

distort (v) Represent facts, statements etc. deceptively or with false emphasis.
  born with a cramp in his fist Naturally stingy.
  throwing his money about like a man with no hands Behaving like a miser,
spending nothing. Occasionally used in the opposite sense.
  one-armed lady [naut] Pump used on fishing boats.
  walk kim-kam [with a throw of the legs athwart one another—Lan Chs] Bicker, argue
[sChs].
  lame—excuse, explanation etc. Feeble, inadequate.
  punishment is lame, but it comes [1640]
  limp (v) Of ships, aircraft etc. so damaged or impaired that they are unable to maintain
their proper speed.
  weak-kneed Irresolute; feeble generally.
I.35a Aches and pains

growing pains The difficulties and problems attendant on expanding an organisation.
  children are first an arm-ache and after a heart-ache
  a (major) headache (n) [1934] A crisis, difficulty or problem so bad as to give a
  headache to anyone who has to solve it.
  when the head aches, all the body is the worse [1399] Of failings of government etc.
  as much use as a (sick) headache!
  want his company as much as a megrim [headache] wants noise [Ire]
  balls-ache Someone or something very unpleasant, vexatious.
  give him earache Tell him something unwelcome; scold at length, complain
  tediously.

I.35b Sorenesses

a sight for sore eyes [1738] Someone or something to gladden the beholder.
  sore as a boil
  everyone thinks the boil on his own neck is the biggest [Wash]
  sore/tender spot [1690] Particular topic, subject, memory that causes pain or
  embarrassment when touched upon.
  (As/from the above.)
  galling Vexing, irritating, painfully annoying generally.
  like one of the tender Gordons that dow [dare] not be hanged for galling their
  neck [Sc: 1721] Over-sensitive.
  have a gaw [=gall, sore on the skin—Sc Eng] on the back of… Have the power of
  making someone suffer pain or indignity.
  like a bloke with boils on his arse [Aus] Irritable, tetchy.
  ampery [spotty, blotchy <amper=a swelling, pimple—EAn Ken Sus Hmp Dor Som
  Dev] Decayed, rotted, rotten—of wagons, teeth, cheese etc.
  smart under…[1781] Suffer continuing mental pain or emotional distress on
  receiving some injury, insult, rebuke, rebuff etc.
  running sore Continuing source of annoyance; problem that defies solution.
  as useful as a sore tongue
  stick out like a sore finger/thumb [1936] Be painfully obvious.
  hang like sore fingers [wYks] Droop, hang limply.
  sit up like a sore thumb [nIre] Sit with a supercilious, unbending attitude.
  better finger off as ay warking [aching, throbbing painfully—Sc] Better to give up
  something altogether rather than be continually vexed by it; cut your losses.
  deep-seated [1847] Long-lasting and firmly established—habit, prejudice, attitude, emotion.
up on the sore heel On a tender spot (see above), on the raw.
fingers itch to… Said when someone feels a compulsive urge to do or take something.
itching foot The wanderlust.
slow as the seven-year itch [the poison ivy rash, superstitiously credited with returning every year for seven years—Calif: C19]

worse and worse like Povey’s foot [Shr] (William Povey made an injury to his foot the excuse for living in idleness.)

blist er (n) A bulge, variously; the anti-torpedo bulge on a battleship; the streamlined cover for an aircraft’s gun position; an annoying person [Amer].
skin-and-blist er (Little) sister [Cockney rhyming slang, which is not usually as aptly metaphorical as this].
bright/red as a blister

it’s ill to ken whaur a blister may licht (when the sparks are fleein’) [Sc] You cannot easily foretell your troubles. (Blister here is in one of its basic meanings=a burn injury.)

if you get burnt, sit on the blister [Can Amer] Accept the consequences.

I.35c Ailments

what cannot be cured must be endured
qualm [fit of sickness or faintness] Scruple of conscience, misgiving.

wealth is like rheum, it falls on the weakest parts (of society)
have a bad cold [Cockney] Be in debt.
so mean, he wouldn’t give you his cold
love and a cough cannot be hid [1573]
more fun than a nosebleed [Calif]

choked by a hempen quinsy [an inflamed swelling of the throat; the original Greek term was itself a metaphor= throttling a dog] Hanged.

has a two-legged tympany [morbid swelling in the stomach—C16] Is with child.
cancer Bad influence; malignancy; corruption generally.
ulcer Moral blemish; corrupting influence.
go to the bottom of his belly Vex sorely.

troubled with a malt-worm [sLan] Craves liquor.

wriggle like someone with the fert-worms [tape-worms—Cor]
ricket y—furniture With weak, shaky legs (as are those of a child suffering from rickets).

tread on his corns/ toes Offend his feelings, prejudices; impose on him; interfere with his affairs; mention a subject about which he is sensitive.

tramp on his toes [Abd] Take unfair advantage of him.

wen (n) [swelling on the head, goitre] Disfiguring, unhealthy and abnormally large expansion of a city. ‘The Great Wen’=London [1821].
it grows on you Of something that improves on acquaintance.
sare as a kyle [sore as a boil—Cum]  
come to a head Reach crisis point (like a suppurating boil).  
heads on them like boils [Aus] The comment of two-up players after a long run of heads.  
has a clew/clue [swelling, haemorrhoid—Nhb Cum] in the arse Is restless, ill-sitting.  
old as the itch  
rash of...[1820] Sudden eruption of something unwelcome in large numbers.  
spread like a rash Speedily, extensively and distressingly.  
break out in a fresh place Make a new start elsewhere.  
fester Become worse and more dangerous by suppression—of resentment, sedition, foul ideas etc.  
rankle Of an insult, injustice etc.—continue to be resented, prove a continually painful injury (as when a rankling wound becomes poisonous and more painful).

I.35d Diseases

disease (n) Decayed condition of buildings suffering from erosion by weather or fumes. (Because of their unhealthy appearance.)  
come over Affect, afflict (like an illness or incubus). ‘I don’t know what came over me.’  
virus Moral poison.  
computer virus Corruption or pollution of computers via ‘infected’ software. (A very close analogy, being self-replicating and intrusive.)  
catch the infection Succumb, in turn, to what is affecting others.  
infectious—laughter, melody etc. Easily and quickly communicated, variously.  
pest [<Fr peste=disease] Nuisance, plague, annoying creature.  
contagion Corrupting influence. Hence:  
contagious Exercising an all too easily acquired but pernicious influence.  
would catch cold lying in bed barefoot! Of those over-solicitous about their own health; particularly susceptible to infection.  
too slow to catch cold Of someone mentally retarded.  
avoid...like the plague  
plagued by... Tormented, beset by. Often of situations comparable with the plagues of Egypt in Biblical times.  
plague-spot The origin and sign of moral corruption.  
every spot is not the leprosy Don’t infer the worst from insufficient indications.  
taint (n) [spot or mark of disease, decay or corruption] Evidence of a spoiling condition generally; outward sign of inward corruption or, at least, of unhealthy proclivities.  
leper Evil influence, outcast, someone shunned on moral grounds.  
tettered With a crumbling crust, variously. (From tetter, the group of skin ailments like ringworm, eczema etc. that cause a breakdown of the skin.)
recrudescence [fresh eruption of disease, especially skin ailment] New outbreak of the old trouble—despair, rebellion etc.

smittle as the scab/small-pox [Cum] Fertile—of a tup, stallion, boar etc.; this meaning of smittle is local to Cumberland and the Furness district of Lancashire. The usual dialect meaning is ‘contagious’ [Sc Uls Nhb Dur Lakel Yks Lan], but the sense-connection is clear: the tup conveys its seed as effectively as an infection. This sense, of the seed safely taking hold, progresses to the meaning of safe, secure as applied to cover. ‘Yon whin bed’s smittle for hoddin’ a hare’ [Nhb Lakel Yks]. Also, to smittle someone with—an idea, enthusiasm, sexual passion is to infect them, variously [Cum wYks]. (See also E.23f, smit.)

small-poxed Pitted, cratered (as a face after the small-pox).

welcome as the pox [syphilis—Calif]
catching as the measles [nYks Cum]

no matter how important you are, you can still catch the measles [Ohio Miss] Natural occurrences are no respecters of persons.

so mean they’d give you one measle at a time [Ire]

scarlet fever Tendency to fall in love with soldiers, romantic susceptibility to anyone wearing the Queen’s uniform.

jungle fever [1990s] Desire for an interracial love affair.

in a fever,—of excitement, anticipation etc. At a very high pitch, grossly over-stimulated.

jaundiced Gloomy, pessimistic, unable to see good in anything (from the depressing effect jaundice has on the morale). ‘The jaundiced eye sees all things yellow’ [1580].

clapped out Of aircraft and vehicles, worn out, no longer airworthy or roadworthy. (By comparison with a person incapacitated by a dose of the clap [gonorrhoea].)

I.35e Injuries

numb Render incapable of action or thought by the shock of loss or sorrow.

paralysed Brought to a stop; prevented from functioning—of industry, transport etc. when stopped by strikes.

I need/want it like a hole in the head [Amer] Not in the slightest.

have a hole in the head/wig [Amer] Be very stupid.

mark for life [1879] Of traumatic experiences that leave emotional or mental scars.

a poke in the eye with a burnt stick Something by comparison with which anything else would be better.

thumb in my eye [Amer] An annoyance.

hold a stick in the wood [mad, furious—Sc Ire nEng] man’s eye Continue to provoke one already enraged.

like Jan Lobb’s eyes [Cor], hanging in lerrups [tatters, strips—Som Dev Cor]

make his nose swell Make him jealous, mistrustful.

a bone in the thropple [throat, windpipe—Sc Ire nEng] Vexation, constant annoyance.
break a rib Have the banns of marriage read—of a man (perhaps with reference to Eve’s genesis from Adam’s rib).

bust/split/rupture a gut Exert great effort.

stiff as Barker’s knee [Cor] (An injury ascribed to the Knockers, haunters of tin mines. Barker refused to believe in them until he fell among them one day and they threw their mining tools at him, causing this injury. The Knockers were originally the ghosts of those Jews who had crucified Jesus, and who had been sent as slaves by the Roman emperors to work the tin mines. Hence the old smelting sites were known as Jews’ houses, and Marazion= the bitterness of Zion. Their stag-horn picks have been found in old workings, and knockings heard at night. See also I.29b.)

cripple (v) Impair; reduce mobility—of damaged battleships etc.; damage and disable generally. (See also I.34f, limp.)

she has sprained her ankle When an unmarried girl is with child.

I’ll not pull the thorn out of your foot and put it in my own [1633] No point in helping you if I have to suffer.

plant a thorn in the breast Cause someone constant and heartfelt pain.

a thorn in the flesh/side A persistent annoyance. (The Pharisees used to put thorns in their garments to prick their legs while walking [see II Cor vii.7].)

I.35f Dislocations

wrench of parting Painful separation.

out of joint Uncomfortable, not working properly.

disjointed Incoherent, unconnected.

put the shoulder out Give or take offence; get angry [wYks].

words that crack/dislocate the jaw, that break the teeth Awkward, rough, inelegant words, and difficult to pronounce.

I.35g Mental illness

brainstorm (v and n) [Amer 1950s] (Make a) concentrated mental effort—by one or more persons—to muster spontaneous ideas for discussion.

have a worm/maggot(s) in the brain/head [1534] Have a perverse fancy, crazy obsession, whimsy, streak of madness. (From an old idea that maggots were the cause of crotchethiness.)

up the wall Going mad. (The supposed behaviour of one on the verge of insanity.)

foam at the mouth Express uncontrollable fury.

learning in a prince is like a knife in the hand of a madman
all over the place/spread about like a madwoman’s shit [Cum Aus]/custard [Aus]/knit-ting [Aus]/lunch-box [Aus]

sham Abraham [nwLin naut et al.: 1752] Pretend to be ill to avoid work. (Someone in Tudor times, known as Abram-man/Abraham cove, was a wandering beggar who pretended madness.)

I.36a Doctors

doctor (v) Patch up, adulterate, garble, tinker with. ‘Doctored’ dice are ones that have been loaded, and ‘doctored’ accounts have been made to appear healthier than they really are.

doctor (n) The seventh son born in succession without a girl (believed born able to heal—Som Dev).

doctor (n) A cleg [Nhb] (because of bloodletting).

the Albany/Fremantle/Perth doctor [Aus] A life-saving, cooling breeze that blows inland from these seaports.

nature, time and patience are the three great physicians
better pay the butcher than the doctor
after death, the doctor The remedy, but too late.
doctors’ mistakes/physicians’ faults are covered with earth (i.e. buried!)

I.36b Doctors’ assistants

toad-eater [1742]/toady Obsequious parasite. (From the assistant of itinerant quack-doctors who used to eat toads so that their master could demonstrate his poison-dispelling medicines.)

eat (…)s toads Be a toady. (As/from the above.)
dressed up like a pox-doctor’s clerk [Aus] Nattily, but in poor taste.

I.36c Diagnosis

Freudian slip! The excuse, or explanation, when an indiscreet verbal error has betrayed someone’s real but unadmitted sentiments.

diagnose Identify the trouble, or cause of the trouble—variously.
you need to have your bumps felt You are wrong in the head. (After the Viennese craniologist, F.J.Gall [1758–1828].)

touch the spot Locate the trouble.
touch a nerve Make a telling point; do or say something significant.
put his finger on Discover where the trouble is; denounce to the police

have your finger on/feel the pulse of… Be closely aware of public opinion etc. 
[1619]; cautiously sound a person’s feelings or opinions.
pulse (n) The thrill of life at its proper tempo.
temperature The degree of tension or crisis in debate, international relations and other meetings.

fever-chart Account of the trouble in vivid or condensed form.
look to his water [1377] Watch him closely (from medical diagnosis by the analysis of urine).
square up like a bottle of piss [Cor]
a disease known is half-cured Said when the cause of the trouble is in doubt or needs to be found out.

I.36d Ambulances

ambulance-chaser An unscrupulous type of lawyer who goes to the bedside of road accident victims to obtain the case for damages.

I.36e Surgery

sanitise [Amer: 1966] Remove offending or secret material—from a document, film etc.; make socially innocuous.

mesmerised Completely engrossed, with all the attention concentrated, as if under hypnosis (after the method of hypnotic anaesthesia practised by F.A.Mesmer [1733–1815]).

screen (n) Something said or done to divert notice from what is better concealed.
probe (v and n) Investigate, investigation—variously, but always penetratingly.
draw spells [splinters—passim] Confront you with all your faults [Dev].
rip up old sores Awake old griefs; open old wounds.
cut it out! Stop that behaviour at once. (A prohibition implying the finality of a surgical operation.)
amputate Remove a vital or integral part of a plan, work of art, collection etc.
dismember Deprive of, or remove, a valuable part.
revulsion [the medical practice of reducing a condition in one part of the body by operating on another part; <Lat re-vellere=pull back] Strong reaction; reversal of taste or feeling.

inosculate [<Lat inosculare=give a mouth to] Join closely together, blend, unite (as when anastomosing veins).

jugulate Arrest, by strong measures.

cauterise (v) Desensitise, make callous, unfeeling.

sterilise [1930s] Render unproductive, as when taking money out of circulation to manipulate an economy or keeping an area of countryside free from development etc.

castrate Remove the dynamic or driving force, potency, potential generally.

eunuch Man deprived of his vital force; an ineffectual character, as in ‘intellectual’, ‘political’, ‘moral’ or ‘literary eunuch’.

flatline (v) Die. (From the downward collapse of the peaks on a heart monitor screen when the patient’s heart stops.)

I.36f Bleeding

blood-letting Violence in a social or political situation with the intention of ending a crisis by weakening or intimidating the opposition.

bleed (v) Extract money in small amounts, but (in total) seriously.

bleed a wren according to its veins Charge, tax people in proportion to their means.

a scabbed head is easy to bleed A dubious reputation is easily lost.

leech on to [1937] Become a persistent parasite on, variously.

leech Doctor [C10–C17] (Metonymical use.)

suck like a leech Voraciously.

the empty leech sucks sore [1639] The needy are all the more demanding.

while men go after a leech the body is buried [1388] A remedy must be prompt to be effective.

your blood’s worth bottling! [Aus] Congratulations; well done!

I.36g Dentistry

Adam ate the apple and our teeth still ache [Wis] On the lasting effects of wrongdoing.

funny as the toothache! A sarcastic, sardonic dismissal of misdirected amusement.

Irish toothache An erection of the penis.

music helps not the toothache [1640] Do not offer art, or talk of beauty, to one in physical distress.

the tongue ever turns to the aching tooth Of an obsessive worry.

have an aching tooth [Ken] Have a desire or longing for.
better a tooth out than always aching [Okl]
it was like drawing a tooth to get a word out of him
look/swear [Cor] like a tooth-drawer [1678] Lean and hungry.
pull his wisdom teeth [Kcb] Cheat him.
pull teeth through the armpit [Amer] Do something the hard way.

I.36h Apothecaries

proud as an apothecary
talk like an apothecary [1540] At random, ignorantly.
mull over [1880] Debate, ponder at leisure, cogitate on. (From the meaning of grind or mix thoroughly as in a mortar [cognate with mill].)
beat water in a mortar Waste labour.
cut and dried [1710] Inelastic; all prepared; allowing of no alteration of plans etc. (as with herbs prepared ready for use).

I.37a Remedies

vaccine Software designed to check other programs for infection by the computer ‘virus’.
every picture tells a story! [1906] A jocular quotation drawing attention to someone’s deteriorated condition (from early advertisements for Doan’s Backache Kidney Pills depicting one in obvious pain).
slim (down) (v) Reduce to a healthier size—expenditure, plans, procedures, production methods etc.
kill with kindness Be overpoweringly kind.
desperate cuts need desperate cures [1539]
the cure/remedy is worse than the disease [1582] Said whenever the process of improvement seems worse than the original condition.
past cure, past care [1593] No use bothering about what cannot be altered.
incurable romantic, optimist etc. One who retains irrational attitudes in spite of experiences which, it is implied, should have produced an improvement.
doctor’s mandate Emergency powers given to government to take extreme measures in the national interest.
just what the doctor ordered! Exactly what is required, desired (variously).
doctor’s orders Defines a remedy or instruction that cannot be evaded.
go to/hit the spot Prove to be exactly what is needed.
cool hand on fevered brow! A facetious comment on the soothing effect of sympathy.
it is no advantage for a man in a fever to change his bed You cannot escape the cause of your trouble if it lies within yourself,
sweat it out of him [Amer] Extract it by harsh interrogation.
cast the cat ower him [Sc] (A supposed cure for fever, implying that someone is raving as if delirious.)
resuscitate Revive, renew generally.
back on our feet Past the crisis; returning to normal.

I.37b Medicines

he takes physic before he is sick Anticipates trouble.
he who physics himself poisons a fool On amateur doctoring.
the mixture as before An already familiar situation, treatment, well-tried system.
measure [moderation] is medicine (i.e. keeps you healthy)
take your medicine Learn an unpleasant lesson; submit to something disagreeable.
a dose/taste of his own medicine [1865] When someone has to suffer himself what he has made others suffer.
a strong disease needs strong medicine Serious wrongs require strong measures to right them.
good physic, but bad taking Of work that is unpleasant, but keeps you healthy.
sweeten the draught Make an unpleasant thing more acceptable.
sweetener Compensation, bribe, appeasement. (As/from the above.)
cough syrup [Amer] Blackmail, silence money.
nostrum [secret formula to which quack doctors dispensed a medicine] Dubious political remedy, suspect solution.
coagulant Formula or solution for uniting divided people. ‘A purely political coagulant.’
take a powder Depart. (From taking a laxative powder, which often necessitates a sudden departure.)
like a dose of salts Very quick and drastically effective (from the action of those laxative salts taken as an aperient).
mix me a bottle Cause me considerable trouble.
bromide Person or statement of a conventional, soothing type (after the sedative, potassium bromide).
anodyne necklace The hangman’s noose. (Originally an amulet supposed to relieve pain.)
catnip [catmint—Amer] A restorative, favourite, irresistible choice, tonic generally. (Catmint was used to make a healing infusion.)
as many virtues as betony [a herb effective for many ailments] Of someone whose praises are being sung.
wormwood [a very bitter herb, used in medicine as a tonic and vermifuge; the symbol of bitter grief] Bitter mortification.
bitter as wormwood/gall
a tonic A bracing, cheering person or influence.

snake-oil [Amer] A quack, cure-all remedy, widely peddled by ‘snake-oil salesmen’= common swindlers and purveyors of worthless medicines.

Jewish penicillin [Amer] Chicken soup.

hate like poison

I.37c Pills

capsulate Contain the essence of something in miniature; concentrate into a small space or volume. (When this word was first used in medical contexts in C19, it had the neutral meaning of ‘to contain in a small enclosure or cell’, but the more recent figurative usages owe their force to the idea of a potent concentration, as in a pharmacist’s capsule or pill containing medicinal drugs.)

give her a pill/a bitter pill to swallow Tell her something unpleasant.

a bitter pill [1779] Anything grievously unacceptable.

sugar/sweeten the pill [1557] Add something pleasant, a consolation to make an unpleasant thing acceptable.

sugar-coat [Amer] Make acceptable; gloss over.

gild the pill [1557] Add something pleasant to what would otherwise be unacceptable.

if the pills were pleasant they would not want gilding [1616] The comment of a sceptic about specious gratifications.

keep on taking the tablets [1960s] Carry on as before; don’t alter anything at this stage.

that’s a cough lozenge for him He’s been punished, paid out.

cough candy [Amer] An awkward, obnoxious person or thing.

pill-box A small, round, concrete, defensive gun-emplacement with embrasures, [WW2]; carriage; pulpit; hat. (All from the shape.)

I.37d Plasters, crutches, wheelchairs

mud-bath Period of moral depravity.

plaster (v) Cover with excess of praise, abuse etc.

patience is a plaster for all sores [c.1390] A remedy for all ills.

pity’s a poor plaster No help in trouble.

a small sore wants not a great plaster! When the proposed remedy exceeds what is needed.

sweat like a poultice [Cor]

like putting a poultice on a wooden leg [Oxf] When trying to persuade an unco-operating person.
stands out like a mustard plaster on a coalsack
keep ay something for a sair fit [sore foot—Sc]/leg [Sc]/finger Put by something in case of misfortunes, ‘for a rainy day’.
shin-plasters [Amer Aus] Paper tokens given in country stores in lieu of small change.
put a pitch-plaster on your mouth [Stf War Wor Glo] Be silent.
you break my head and then give me a plaster Make small amends for a large injury.
Band-aid [Amer] Merely a temporary remedy (from the name of a brand of sticking plasters).
dolled/done/dressed up like a sore finger/ toe [Aus NZ] Overdressed, wearing an elaborate costume.
 algebra [<Arab al jebr= the reuniting of separated parts (as in both bone-setting and algebraic mathematics)]
a broken leg is not healed by a silk stocking The comment on inadequate compensation or remedy.
have my ass/arse in a sling [Amer Can] Be in bad trouble, rejected, exhausted.
crutch (n) Support, variously.
stiff as a crutch [Aus] Destitute.
funny as a crutch! [Amer] Spoken with heavy sarcasm.
wheel in/out Bring in to a meeting, interview etc.—usually someone pitiable; bring out of retirement, obscurity, seclusion, storage.
he wouldn’t work in an iron lung [that does the breathing for you—Aus] Lazy.

I.37e Ointments

precious ointments come in small boxes [Ohio] Quality compensates for lack of quantity.
unction Soothing thought, words.
sleer [smear with ointment—Der Not] Flatter.
slubber [besmear—Sc n&midEng Suf Cor] Flatter basely.
salve (v) pride, conscience etc. Soothe, restore.
salve (n) Something with a soothing or calming effect.
anoint with a birchen salve [C16–C17] Give a beating. (The remedy for suspected malingering.)
different sores must have different salves You cannot apply the same solution to all problems.
there’s a salve for every sore [1541] Every problem is capable of solution.
you have a/one salve for every sore [Sc: 1509] You always have an excuse/one solution to all problems.
seek your saw [=salve] where you got your sair [Sc] Go for redress to those who have injured you.
foment [1622] Encourage, foster—as in ‘foment a riot’. (From the medical practice of bathing a condition with warm lotions and so causing it to spread and break out.)
balm (n) Healing or soothing influence.

oil of birch/hazel/oak/strap [Sc nEng: nLan] Flogging with a hazel stick etc.

I.37f Eye treatments

eye-wash Nonsense; something done with no better reason than effect.

wipe someone’s eye See what they do not see; shoot a bird that someone else has missed [Nrf w&midEng Suf Brks wSom]; get the better of someone.
glassy stare, look Lifeless, unintelligent (as with a glass eye).

would talk a glass eye to sleep Of a tedious talker.

I.37g Ear treatments

instil [<Lat instillare=drip into]

oil his lug [Edb] Flatter, compliment.

I.37h Massage

massage his ego [Amer] Flatter him; inspire confidence.

I.38a Dying

die down Subside—of fires, emotions etc.
grey hairs are death’s blossoms
he’s nodding at the sexton Is seriously ill.

the sexton’s shaken/thrut [=thrutched= thrust, pushed—Lan] his shool/shovel [Chs]/spade at him [1917] He is very ill, dying.
Bob’s-a-dying [Nhb Yks Ken Dor Dev] Row, racket, boisterous merriment.
dig the grave of… Cause the ruin of.
dug his grave with his teeth/with a knife and fork Died of over-eating.
have one foot in the grave [1509] (and the other on a banana skin!) Be near to
death.
hold on like grim death [1893] (Who does not easily release an intended victim.)
it’s the change before death Said, jokingly, of one who acts out of character.
I’ll die where Bradley died, in the middle of the bed Quietly, at home.
die nesh [wYks] Give up too easily, of various enterprises.
die hard Fall into disuse gradually; get forgotten slowly, if at all. ‘Old habits die
hard.’
pull out the plug [Amer] Terminate, variously. (From switching off a life-support
machine.)

I.38b Death

amortise [<Fr amortiss <Lat ad mortem= bring to death] Convey a property or cancel a
debt by legal manoeuvres.
die a natural death Become defunct by neglect; get forgotten—of burning issues that
are later abandoned.
suicide gene One that programmes a cell to die, manipulated in combating cancer.
sudden death A quick decision in a game (i.e. one throw at dice, or one deciding
game in tennis); a meal of spatchcock (q.v. I.52c); a front room opening directly on to the
street; a quick curtain in the theatre.
dowly [poor, sickly, pale—nYks]/dumb [1377]/ fac [=fact, sure—passim]/mute/pale
[1557]/ quiet/silent [1377]/still/sure as death [1592]
look like death warmed-up [1939] Appear very unhealthy.
in the dead of night/winter In the silent depths of.
go to the wall [Hnt] Die. (See also I.89b.)
lie by the wall [EAn Bdf Hnt] Lie dead, but not yet buried.
widow-maker [Amer] Loose branch caught high up in a tree and liable to fall without
warning.
quiet as an Irish wake [Calif] Ironically.
pitched about like snuff at a wake [Ire]
weep Irish [1577] Feign sorrow (possibly from the keening at an Irish wake).
I.38c Corpses

**post mortem** Discussion of a game (often bridge or chess) after it has finished, to determine what went wrong. (From the name given to the autopsy performed on a corpse to assist the coroner or police.)

- **pale/helpless as a corpse**
- **calm as a leek** [=lyke, corpse—ShI] Of a calm sea.
- **feel like a warmed-up corpse** Feel half-dead.
- **handsome as last year’s corpse**
- **dead men/marines** Empty bottles; loaves paid for but not received.
- **dead man’s eye/dead men’s eyes/dead-eye** Wooden block with three holes used on sailing ships.

- **like taking pennies from a dead man’s eyes** Easy, without hindrance or objection. (It used to be the custom to keep a corpse’s eyes closed with two pennies—which were much heavier coins than they now are.)

- **so mean he would take pennies from a dead man’s eyes** [Neb Calif]
- **dead man’s hand** A lever in the cab of a locomotive that cuts off the power if the driver takes his foot off it.

- **the dead hand of the past** Those restraints of a long-established tradition that inhibit any reform or improvement.

- **wind of the dead men’s feet** [Wal] An east wind. (Burials are alined with feet towards the east.)

- **as soon get a fart off a dead man** No hope at all.

I.38d Grave clothes

**embalm** Preserve precious memories *inter alia* from decay and oblivion.

- **embalming fluid** [Amer] Any strong drink, usually coffee or whiskey.

- **I wouldn’t be seen dead (in a ditch) in it!** [1915] Said of clothing, vehicle etc. considered to be well below the speaker’s standard.

- **shroud of misery, despair** Overhanging atmosphere of gloom.

- **shrouded in mystery etc.** Hidden or obscured by.

- **shroud (n)** [nLin wSom]/**winding sheet(s)** [Nhb e&wYks Lan Lin Nhp War sWor Oxf Wil wSom] The direction taken by a candlewick or melted wax portending early death to that person of the company in whose direction the phenomena point.

- **shroud** Protective cover encircling parts of a windmill, machinery, taps etc.

- **white as a shroud**

- **our last garment is made without pockets** [1853] ‘You can’t take it with you!’

- **lay out in lavender** [Amer] Reprimand unanswerably; kill, knock down in a rage.
I.38e Coffins

coffin (n) The position, on the back with folded arms, adopted by a surfer [Aus] and later by skateboarders.

- a nail in my coffin/a coffin-nail [1888] Another cigarette. Spoken by someone who recognises the health hazard, but does not believe it to be imminent.
- the first nail in his coffin The first misfortune which ultimately results in ruin or death.
- add a nail to/another nail in his coffin [1789] One more trouble that brings his death nearer.
- dead as a coffin-nail
- close [secretive, self-contained—Lakel]/lew [sheltered—Cor]/sollit [quiet, silent in company—Lan] as box [coffin]

- coffin-handle [melted candle-tallow when it sets in the form of a handle, prognosticating death for the one in whose direction it forms. When it sets as a projection, it is called a winding sheet (not as serious!)—wSom]

I.38f Funerals

grave as an undertaker

- pall Something gloomy and overhanging like smoke. (Reminiscent of the dark pall draped over coffins and tombs.)
- dark as a funeral-scarf
- black as mourning weed [Sc 1819]
- crape-hanger [someone who hangs up crape as a sign of mourning—Amer]

Pessimistic kill-joy.

- that’s your funeral! That’s your misfortune, no one else’s.
- go to the funeral—just for the ride Take part, but for selfish reasons only; go to any length to gratify a whim.
- what would shame him would turn back a funeral [Ire] Unshameable.
- funereal Suitable for a funeral—of clothes, music, a person’s manner etc.
- slow as a funeral
- too slow to go to a funeral [NCy]/berrin’ [= burying—Lan] and walk last

too slow to go to a funeral/catch a cold/ catch worms/get out of his own road [Aus]

- bury (v) Immerse completely—head in hands, oneself in a career, in a book.
- burying the baby Deriving profit or advantage from knowledge of a guilty secret.
- bury his (old) wife [Cum wYks Nhp] Give an end-of-apprenticeship party.
I.38g After the funeral

**buried with ham** [C19 Lan] Given the stylish funeral usually followed by a ham tea.

**the burying is gone by and the child’s called Anthony** [Lan Der] Spoken to someone who arrives too late for what they wanted to see. Other variants are:

> Quite correct! the child’s name is Anthony and the woman must get her ducks [Ant].
> All’s over and the child’s name’s Anthony [Cum].
> All’s well that ends well, an’ t’ child’s name is Anthony [wYks].
> The berrin’s gone by [Craven, wYks].

**he’s been to Jerry berrin’** [=burying—Lan] and **helped to hug** [carry—wYks] Once bitten, twice shy; been on a fruitless errand.

**that snuddle’s over** [that fuss, trouble is over—Dor] as **Matthey Rawlinson said when he had buried his wife** [Marshwood, Dor] But note that in northern England snuddle means ‘to cuddle, nestle together’.

**crowd the mourners** Make people hurry; push in an unseemly manner.

**a mahogany berrin’** Crown bowls at a Saddleworth funeral.

**slow walking, spice cake (and ale)** [wYks] A funeral. (This is an example of metonymy.)

**shine like a berrin’ cake** [Lan]

**deep as grief**

**bereft of**… Grievously deprived of.

**widow** [Amer] Short line of type, especially at the top of a page or column; spare hand dealt in certain card games.

**legacy** Something that ensues on a previous event, sometimes by remote connection—‘these frugal habits are a legacy of wartime shortages’.

I.38h Graves

**peg out** Die. (From pegging out the place for a grave to be dug, not usually done until after someone has died.)

**close** [secret]/**damp/hungry/near** [Cor]/**secret/ silent** [1377]/**still as the grave**

**cold/silent as the tomb**

**the white man’s grave** [1873] Africa, especially the Gold Coast (because many Europeans succumb to the unhealthy conditions there).

**sepulchral manner, clothes** Sad, mournful, apt for a tomb.

**never make a toil of pleasure, as the man said when he dug his wife’s grave only three feet deep** [Ire: 1603]

**six feet of earth make all men equal**
exhume Bring to light out of obscurity, especially something long-forgotten or concealed.

I.38i Gravestones

monumental Massive and permanent (like a monument to the dead) and often of large works of literature or scholarship.

lapidary [1730] Of a solemn, serious style, such as would be appropriate for tombstones.

engrave/grave on the memory Make a permanent record in the mind.

tombstone Discoloured and prominent tooth; vote improperly cast for a dead trade union member [Aus].

naked as a gravestone [nYks]/headstone [Cum]

joyful as the back of a gravestone Ironical.

thick as lichens on a marble slab

I will add a stone to his cairn [Sc] Corroborate the dead man’s eulogy; honour his memory. (This was a Celtic proverb recorded by Pennant in 1772.)

I.38j Graveyards

all he needs now is a little parsley He is dead. (From the custom of the Greeks in placing parsley on tombs because it stayed green.)

graveyard shift [WW1] The midnight shift (because of the higher accident rate in factories at that time).

quiet as a graveyard

melancholy as a graveyard on a rainy day

give the grass in a churchyard [Ire] Lie buried.

not till I’m looking up the daisy mores! [roots—Dor] Not till I’m dead.

suck daisy roots [Der] Lie buried.

push up the daisies [W.Owen—1918] Lie dead and buried. (Other variations are ‘under the daisies’ and ‘turn your toes up at the daisies’.)

enough to make him turn in his grave [1864] Said when something happens which would have gravely disturbed him had he been alive.

enough to make my gran turn in her urn A criticism of modern attitudes. (As/from the above).

ye’ve nails ‘at wad scrat your granny out of her grave [wYks]

disinter Produce, reveal, discover what has long been hidden.

Napier’s bones Slips of bone marked to facilitate multiplication and division (by the method invented by John Napier of Merchiston [1550–1617]).
I.39a Houses

long home The grave.
narrow house The grave.
high/tall as a house
fast [secure—Lan]/plain/safe as houses [1859]
big as a house-end/-side/one side of a house Stout.
face like the side of a house Coarse and uninteresting, without expression.
brant [steep NCy] as a house-end/houseside
a Queen Anne front and Mary Ann back [Lan] Of anything that is speciously high-class in appearance, but is commonplace in reality.
bring an old house over your head [Wm Hnt Nhp War: 1566] Get into trouble.
indwelling Inherent; residing in; possessing. Of powers, principles etc.
there’s a hole in the house [Ire] Someone is listening who will tell what should not go out of the house.

Bungalow Bill Man either with nothing on top (i.e. brainless) or too much below.

I.39b Walls

hole-in-the-wall Disreputable, unofficial, unrecognised, underhand, sub-standard. Of backroom industries, sleazy cafés, unauthorised legal enquiries etc.
cat and clay [1756] An in-filling of straw and clay (as if a cat had been dumplinged in clay).
wooden walls The navy as a defence.
façade A special exterior for appearances’ sake; a show giving a better impression than the facts warrant.

I.39c Corners

done in a corner Secretly.
nooked [angular, with corners—Sc] Sharp, short-tempered [Sc sWor].
in the nook [corner-seat, remote access—Sc n&midEng] In child-bed.
the far nook [Sc] The extremity of anything.
do/stand your nook [wYks midLan] Do your fair share.
nook-shotten [put away in a corner (usually of mouldy cheese)—sChs] Rejected, forgotten.
I.39d Decorating

**whitewash** (v) Represent as favourably as possible; disguise faults; attempt to clear a discredited person; defeat in a game [originally baseball when the win was so decisive that the losers failed to score—Amer]. When a debtor who is whitewashed makes a fresh start after passing through the bankruptcy courts.

- look like a whitewashed wall [Cor] Pale-faced.
- fresh as paint
- thick [stupid] as a tin of paint
- Dulux dog Old English sheepdog. (From the advertising mascot for the Dulux brand of paint.)
- paint yourself into a corner Get into an awkward situation by your own efforts (as if someone were to paint backwards down two walls of a room and trap himself in a corner which he could neither complete nor extricate himself from without spoiling some wet paint).

- like watching paint dry Of a tedious experience, boring film etc.
- paint-remover [Amer] Inferior whiskey; strong coffee.
- paper over the cracks [1910] Take measures designed to hide the extent of the damage, but which are inadequate to repair it.
- wallpaper Background, usually of something largely unnoticed, part of the surroundings—as in ‘wallpaper music’.
- fits like paper on the wall
- busy as/like a one-armed paper-hanger/billposter (with crabs [body-lice]/with the itch/ in a gale) [UK Can Amer Aus NZ] Of one moving about restlessly.
- off the wall Spontaneous, intuitive, conventional. (Taking ideas off the wall—patterns, notices etc.—is a similar concept to that of plucking ideas out of the air.)

I.39e Ceilings

**ceiling** (n) Upper limit of wages, prices, mental ability etc. A mathematician knows when he has reached his ceiling’ (i.e. the limit of his powers of comprehension).

- glass ceiling [1980s] The real, though unacknowledged, barrier in a workplace beyond which promotion is denied to certain groups and individuals.
- hit the ceiling Lose temper, lose control, react violently. (See also I.39h, hit the roof.)
I.39f Stairs

**stand on the top step** Qualify, even before the verdict, for maximum sentence.

**easy as falling downstairs**

**upstairs** In the head—often of mental powers.

**kick upstairs** Promote to the House of Lords (out of harm’s way).

**backstairs** Inside, underhand, irregular. Of political influence or intrigue.

**the lift doesn’t go up to the top floor** Incapable of intellectual eminence.

I.39g Lofts and upper storeys

**up in the garret** [Ess] Indignant.

**his cockloft/garret is unfurnished** [1621] Is mentally deficient.

**queer/weak/has rats in the attic/garret/loft/ upper storey** Feeble-minded, eccentric, drunk.

**not rightly garreted** [Ken] Weak in the head. (As/from the above.)

I.39h Roofs

**proclaim from the housetops** [1870] Announce enthusiastically, and to as many as possible.

**at the housetop** [wYks Sus]/atop of the house/up to the top of the house [nYks]/up

**on the house roof** Angry, in a temper; in a state of passion or excitement.

**either up on the roof or down in the well** [Oxf] Of someone liable to extremes of spirit or temperament.

**come off the roof** Stop striking poses; come down to earth (to your proper level).

**fall off the roof** [Amer] Menstruate, start menstruating (because of blood).

**a man may love his house well, though he ride not on the ridge** [1546]/riggin [Glo]

A person need not go to extremes to prove their point or feelings; you cannot judge a man’s inner feelings from his avowed attitude.

**ane may like the kirk weel enough and no ride on the riggin o’t** [Sc Nhb] (As/from the above.)

**ride on the ridge/riggin** [Sc Ire nEng] Talk about one subject continually; overstate the case; put implicit trust in; come to the top, succeed.

**man astride the riggin-tree** [ridge-beam—Sc nEng] One with a mortgage on his house.

**foul his own riggin** [Gall] Spoil his own environment.
raften-ridging [Hmp] Method of plowing that gives the ground an appearance of being raftered, as if for roofing.

the spars [roof-rafters—nEng Nhp] have given way Said when someone is faint with hunger.

a face like two ellins [slates—Cor] clapped together has a slate off/slipped/loose [Yks sLan]/a tile loose/a shingle short [NZ] Is half-witted, mentally lacking.

detect [<Lat de-tegere=take off the roof, uncover]

an empty house needs no roof [NC] (See also E.13c, empty barns…)

tile (n) Hat.

wash a tile [1548] Labour futilely.

there may be snow on the roof, but there’s fire in the furnace White-headed, but still amorous.

hit/raise the roof Lose temper, lose control, react violently. (=hit the ceiling—see I.39e.)

go through the roof Similar to the above, but worse—as when prices, bids etc. go higher than expected.

I.40a Building

build on… Develop out of, have a basis in mutual trust, common interest, false hopes etc.

build up to… Gradually increase to a certain critical or intended point.

needs building up Needs strengthening with good food and healthy living. Of a weakly person or undernourished child.

built-in Purposely included in the manufacture of working machines or other articles.

a man’s tied to lig as he’s bigged [=forced to lie or stop as he’s built—Cum] You have to abide your situation.

I.40b Foundations

on firm/solid ground With well-founded reasons, arguments.

ground in/on…(v) Train in, give basic knowledge of.

ground-work Necessary preliminary work, essential preparations.

would like to know the ground-work of a magpie’s bottom [eSuf] Of someone overinquisitive.

lay the foundations of… Give a good start or grounding in.

lay the first stone Make a small but vital beginning.
hard-core (n and adj) Nucleus of irredeemable criminals, uncompromising fanatics; element beyond hope of altering or improving; of popular music=harsh and fast.

founded on… With the basic principle—of mutual trust, honesty etc.

well-founded Reliably based, deriving from trustworthy grounds or reasons.

ill-founded The opposite of the above.

take a ground-sweat [rising damp] about… Worry to death over [nYks Lin],
on the level Honest, straightforward.

broad-based economy etc. One derived from a large variety of industries, and not dependent on the fluctuations of a few.

I.40c Cement and mortar

go the whole nine yards [Amer RAF] Go to the limit, do one’s utmost; take on everything. (From deciding to take the full contents of a concrete-mixer [=nine cubic yards] at one tip instead of tentatively, a yard at a time.)

set in concrete Finally arranged, fixed, resolved. Of negotiations and various other arrangements. Often as ‘not set in concrete’, meaning that there is still the possibility of change or adjustment.

white as lime

cement (v) Unite; join firmly a friendship etc.

cement-mixer [Amer] Dance involving swivelling of the pelvis.

able to talk under wet cement/under water [Aus] Voluble.

rich mixture makes gude mortar [Sc] Of marriages.

mortarboard Academic cap (from its shape).


have your finger in mortar Dabble in building.

let that fly stick in the wall [Sc Nhb: 1757] Say no more on that subject. (From leaving an insect stuck in the plaster or whitewash ‘When the dirt’s dry it will rub out’.) [See Sir W.Scott, Waverley lxxi etc.]

plaister thick and some will stick [Sc] Teach with much repetition and some will be retained.

daub Bribe [Whitby, nYks C19:1700]; flattery [Holderness, eYks C19].

slow as daub [Der swEng] (Daubing over wattle is slow building work.)

I.40d Bricks

I’d have trod clay for bricks before…[Dor 1873] Of a choice so repugnant as to be beneath contemplation.

dry as a hake [wooden rack for drying bricks and tiles—Nrf Ken]
hard/red/stiff/thick as a brick
swim like a brick Sink immediately.
like a brick/bricks Vigorously, with a vengeance (from the crash of falling bricks).
deaf as bricks
like a ton/hundred of bricks Of an overwhelming blow.
one brick short of a full load Slightly simple, mentally lacking.
a few bricks short of the wall (As above.)
drop a brick [1923] Make a mistake; let out an incautious expression; start an irregular liaison. (A serious cause of accidents on a tall building site.)
have/wear a brick in his hat Be under the influence of alcohol.
hit the bricks [Amer] Go on strike; be released from prison. (The phrase originated in seamen’s slang when they described going on strike as hitting the bricks—instead of hitting the deck—and the same idea was extended to being released from prison.)

I.40e Other materials

putty (n) in someone’s hands Easily persuaded, malleable, too much under the control of another.
soft as putty/putty-headed [Amer] Stupid, soft in the head.
putty-brain [Lan] Dimwit. (As/from the above.)
putty-hearted Feeble, cowardly.
slender/thin as a lath/lat [NCy]
lat-and-plaster [wEng] Long, lanky person.
lattice—of sight-lines etc. Complex of crossings (as in lattice-work).
drain-pipes Tight-fitting trousers.
clean water often comes out of a mucky spout [Lin] Good offspring are often born to bad parents.
spout (v) Speak volubly, declaim. (From the copious outpouring from a water-spout, geyser, whale etc.)

I.40f Building rules

flat (adj) Final, absolute.
four-square Secure, reliable.
plum(b) Vertical, downright, absolute(ly). ‘Plumb-crazy’, ‘plumb nonsense’ [Amer]; sane, honest, straightforward [wYks Wil] (=straight up-and-down).
aplomb [<-Fr à plomb=according to plummet] Cool assurance, self-possession. (From the assurance given by reference to a plumb-line.)
**Lesbian rule** Flexible, accommodating principle (from the flexible rule used by masons in Ancient Greece for measuring carved mouldings).

**straight as string**

**corner-stone** Vital part, basic element.

**coping stone** Finishing touch.

**keystone** Central principle on which all depends, climax. (The keystone in the centre of an arch wedges the other stones in place.)

**beamfilled---child** [Sc] Spoilt, indulged. (Beamfillings are the stone or plaster fillings around the beam-ends in a house wall, an inessential refinement.)

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**I.40g Girders, props**

**girder** (v) Strengthen, support generally.

**prop/stay** Support of person, old age etc.

**stud and support** A reliable, careful person to whom a family or firm has been entrusted. (A stud is a supporting prop [n&midEng EAn Som Ken].)

**uphold** (v) Support, confirm, ratify variously (from uphold (n) [before 1066]=a prop, support of building).

**bolster up**… Give dubious support to an argument etc.

**shore up**… Subsidise, give support which puts off an otherwise imminent collapse.

**underpin** Support, by bank subsidy, the value of a currency under pressure; corroborate generally. (From a way of supporting dangerous buildings with introduced foundations or stronger materials.)

**underprop** Support, maintain. (A building operation to prop upright a leaning edifice.)

**like some helpers, pulling down with a bar ire** [iron bar], and **propping up with a stocking needle** [Cor]

**knock the props from under**…[Amer] Call into question; render invalid.

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**I.40h Thatching**

**thatch** (n) A man’s hair, especially when thick and lank; a woman’s pubic hair [1933].

**thick/wet as thatch/thack** [Cum Yks Lin Chs] (which is wetted before laid on, to make it bed properly)

**theeking** [=thatching] **snow** [NCy] Abundant and sticking fall of snow that appears to be thatching the roofs.

**don’t take the thatch off your house to buy slates for a neighbour’s** [Ire] Don’t act so as to benefit others more than yourself.
put the thatch of the kiln on the mill [Ire] Frustrate your own efforts; work pointlessly.
thatch your roof before the rainy weather [Minn Ill]
hungry as [Lei]/eat like a thacker Voracious(ly).
hollen [shouting—Cor] like a thatcher Of necessity, when working on a roof.
if he were as long as he is lither [lazy—Sc nEng], he might thatch a house without a ladder [Chs: 1678]
the windy day is not the day for thatching [Ire] There are too many difficulties at present; time your efforts appropriately.
a young maid married to an old man is like a new house thatched with old straw
thirk [thatch—Sc]/thatch your house with turds and you’ll have more teachers than reachers [1678] Unpleasant work attracts more advice than help.
like the miser o’ Reston, rather be drowned than pay for a thecker [=thatcher: Bwk] (He reputedly sheltered in his own house under a wecht [winnowing weight] and a griddle.) To those whose stinginess involves serious deprivation.
if you don’t live in the house, you don’t know when it leaks [NY SC] No one fully appreciates another’s plight.
if that’s so, I’ll thatch Groby Pool with pancakes [Lei: 1678] In disbelief.
thack and mortar [wall materials, mud and short straw—Lin Not Lei Nhp] With speed and energy, in good earnest.
off the stob [wYks] Ill, out of work. (The stobs are short thatching pegs, and when the tarred string gets loose on the stobs, the thatch is blown about.)

I.40i Roofing

away for slates Well on with the work. (If builders are ready for slates, the work has progressed so well that the end is in sight.)
imbricated [<Lat imbrex=gutter tile] Overlapping in nature, like birds’ feathers and fish scales.
who repairs not his gutters, repairs his whole house It is worthwhile doing work promptly.
the roof doesn’t need mending when it’s not raining [Miss]
hair-and-lime The fish left over from dinner mashed up with potatoes for supper [farms in nYks]. (A mixture of lime and cow-hair was used to bond the underside of slates on roofs [nwEng]. When wet, the texture is very similar to that of the fish-mash.) In the first half of the C16, R.D.Slaiter was admitted a Burgesse of Preston:

for and upon condicion that hee shall att all tymes needful moss and dresse the Roofe of the hall during his lyffè haveing Slaite mosse lyme and heare found hyme

[Guild Rolls]
let...wn gently [1774] Alleviate a person’s loss, shock or disappointment by breaking the news to them, and treating them with kindness and consideration.

I.41a Doors

side-door dealings, negotiations, arrangements Unofficial, behind-the-scenes, informal proceedings.

come through a side-door Be born out of wedlock.
valve [<Lat valva=one half of a hinged or folding door]
is the wind at that door? [1470] Is that the significance of it?
we a’ come to ae door at nicht [Sc] We all come to death in the end.
most men have a thorn at their door Some trouble at home.
he hangs his fiddle at the door/on the doorsneck [Lan] Said of one who is cheerful abroad, but surly at home; is bad-tempered [nLin].
has hung up his hat Has died.
his hung his hat up at back o’ t’ door [Lan] He is half-way to being wed. (The sign that he has made himself at home.)
he’ll hang up his hat on some ither pin [Sc] Will marry someone else.
would do for a hat-crook [hat-peg—Cum] Of a snub nose.
hang his hat on... Depend on.
hung up on... Stuck, unable to proceed; bewildered, obsessed by something.
keep the wolf from the door [1529] Avert starvation and utter poverty. (A wolf is the type of predator that waits for its victim to become so weak as to be unable to resist. A wolf at the door is, therefore, a constant menace.)
live up to the door Live up to the limit of your income.
at death’s door [1515] Near to death.
taken to the door [sLan] Taken by surprise.
the full of the door Burly, stout.

I.41b Hinges

dead/dunch [deaf—IW]/thick [stupid, dimwitted] as a door-post/dore-tree [1377]
cardinal [<Lat cardo=hinge] Principal, main, on which others depend and take direction—as from the cardinal points of the compass: north, south, east and west.
hinge (n) Central principle on which all the others turn.
hinge on... Turn, depend on. Of an argument or sequence of events.
big doors swing on small hinges Small causes can bring large results.
unhinge Drive mad. Hence:
unhinged Demented.
at/off (at) the hinges/hooks [hinges: 1616] In poor health; out of temper; estranged [Nhp Oxf]; shabby, worn out [wYks neLan nLin Not Lei Nhp Nor]; disordered in mind; fit for nothing [Sheffield, Yks]; dead [wSom+passim].

a creaking door hangs long o’ th’ hinges [Lan Can Amer] Folk who are continually ailing often live longest. (See also E.5b, a creaking cart goes long.)

loose on/in t’ jimmers [hinges—nEng EAn] Easy moving.

hung in t’ jimmers Ready to fall to pieces at any moment.

out of jimmers [eYks] Out of working order.

slip/drop off the hooks Die.

slip off the catch Die.

has no hinge to his back Is independent; free from servility.

the groundsel [threshold, door-sill] speaks not, save what it heard from the hinges [1640] Of repeated gossip. (These hinges were stout pins attached to the door, and which slotted into holes drilled one to two inches into the stone lintel and threshold. The squeaking came from the groundsel, although it was the swinging of the door that caused it.)

I.41c Door-nails, knockers and doorbells

daft [wYks]/dead/dumb [Calif sAmer]/fond [stupid—midYks]/hard [Der] as a door-nail


tight as a clicket-nail [the nail on which a door-knocker strikes—Lin]

an old man’s staff is the rapper at death’s door [1640] Have a knocker on the front door Achieve social status, respectability.

grin like a street-knocker Broadly and cheerfully.

even a tin knocker will shine on a dirty door [Ire] In disparagement of one whose only virtue is that others are worse.

oil the knocker Bribe the porter.

Fortune knocks once at every man’s door Everyone has his chance in life.

he that brings good news knocks hard

…banging/knocking at the door The situation when younger folk or the next generation are seen to be eager to take over positions, responsibilities, property etc. from their elders; a demanding challenge, threat of competition.

push his button [Amer] Annoy, provoke him.

I.41d Latches and bolts

dumb [Calif sAmer]/sharp [bright, intelligent]/ smooth as a doorknob
common as a (door-)sneck [latch—Cum Yks Lan]

sneck posset [still used Broughton-in-Furness, Lan 1982] A cold reception, the door closed in your face.

hang the latch Delay, purposely but needlessly.

it’s easy to hold down the latch when nobody pulls at the string [Chs]/keeping the door shut when nobody lifts the sneck [Clitheroe, Lan] Of unassailed virginity.

sneck-lifter Some lead or invitation intended to elicit information; something to tempt you to open up; just enough money for the first drink [Lan].

latch-lifter The first drink of the evening; a shilling [Sc].

sneck-draw(er) [Sc Nhb Cum nYks] A crafty, furtive or flattering fellow. (To draw a northcountry sneck or latch implies unauthorised entry.)

sneck-drawn [NCy] Narrow-minded, covetous.

he draws a sneck weel [Sc] Takes advantage.

put the peg in [Chs] Give no more credit. (From latching the door and fastening it with a peg.)

put in the pin Check or stop something, especially drinking. (As/from the above.)

steyk [=stick, fastening peg—Sc Ire Eng] him to t’ bonny side o’ t’ door [wYks] Get him where you want him.

slot (n) Vacancy, position to be filled in a list, group, hierarchy or series (like a space in a series of radio or TV programmes). The idea of a slot as a space within a surrounding continuum postulates something to fill it.

slot in…/into… Insert oneself into a space, fit into; choose someone to fill a vacancy. (As/ from the above.)

slot [bolt a door] off Depart.

take your slot [bolt of a door] Depart.

snib a woman Have sex with her. (To snib a door or window is to fasten it by sliding a small bolt into its socket [orig. Sc].)

never bolt your door with a boiled carrot [Ire] Be resolute in refusing.

balk someone Thwart them (as when fixing a balk of wood across the inside of a door).

I.41e Lintels and thresholds


threshold Point of entry [888]; starting point [1586]; limit below which a stimulus is no longer noticeable [1874]; limit below which a dose of radiation is ineffective [1959].

on the threshold of… On the point of starting, at the very beginning of.

the hardest step is over the threshold [1736] The start of any new undertaking is often formidable.

blow the groundsels [thresholds, door-sills] Lie on the floor for sexual intercourse.

preliminary [<Lat prae limen=before the threshold—referring to certain rites or introductions required before you were allowed to cross the threshold]
liminal A word used to describe a nomadic group of people like shamans or gypsies outside of society and operating on its margins by giving intercessory services between this world and the world of spirits, as well as services of divination, magic, conciliation, metalwork, knife-grinding and music.

eliminate [<Lat eliminare=thrust over the threshold, out of doors]
subliminal [<Lat sub-limen=under the threshold, instead of through the door] Subconscious. Of impressions and experiences that are indirectly assimilated.

a whore in a fine dress is like a clean entry to a dirty house/a dirty house with a clean entry [1721]
door-step Thick slice of bread.
the door-step of a great house is slippery [Ire III] The friendship of the great is unreliable.
there is a slippery step at every man’s door [Kenty Tenn] Be cautious about entering another man’s house.
on your door-step Nearer than you imagined; inexcusably close; under your very nose.
got your feet over every door-step [Sc] Have admission to every home.
ye hae ower foul feet to come sae far ben [into the house—Sc] You are venturing out of your proper class.
wipes his shoes Gets a little ale-money [wSom Dev].
make yourself a doormat for…[1861] Abjectly submit to serving.
treat…like a doormat Exploit, victimise.
dead as a doormat [Cor]

I.41f Doors shut

shut the door on/upon…[1570] Make impossible, dismiss finally.
slam the door in his face [1786] Suddenly and peremptorily prevent him from continuing, from going in his intended direction; give a rebuff.
look shut out [Ken] Appear very cold.
behind closed doors Intentionally secret, unpublicised.

it is good to have a hatch before the door [1546] Keep silence. (A hatch is an extra door or half-door for additional weather protection.)
keep the heps [=hasp, half-door or hatch—Cor] before your mouth Say nothing about it.

shut the hatch, the wind’s getting in A schoolchildren’s taunt calling for silence.
ride (on) the haps/heps Be brought before your superiors and reprimanded. (See also J.8d, ride the hatch.)
I.41g Doors open

you’ll have to throw your cap [nStf Cor]/hat [Aus] in first Advice to someone whose wife awaits him with a doubtful reception (to see what happens to his cap before venturing in himself).

close the door to… Make impracticable, impossible.

open the door to… Give opportunity for.

open door The policy of giving all countries the chance to trade with you.

keep/leave the door open/swing the door [wYks] Pay the expenses of a house; retain an opportunity or possibility.

door-stopper Thick slice of bread, cake etc.

back door (n) An indirect, unusual, unrecognised, less obvious route or method; secret entry to a computer program allowing special access [1990s].

back door (adj)/in at the back door In an irregular, secret, underhand, unorthodox way.

the king’s errand may come in at the cadger’s gate [the huckster’s or tradesman’s entrance: Sc] A great man sometimes needs the help of the lowly.

he must stoop that hath a low door [1678] A man’s handicap necessarily restricts his performance.

wide is the door of the little cottage [Ire Miss] The poor have pressing needs.

our fear often meets us at the door by which we think to run from it To try to avoid what we fear is the way to make it worse.

I.41h Doors and windows

when distrust enters in at the fore-gate, love goes out at the postern The two are incompatible.

shut nature out of the door and she’ll come in at the window [1692] Cannot be excluded.

love comes in at the window and out of the door [1611] Goes more readily than it comes.

when poverty comes in at the door, friendship/love flies out at the window [1639] The two cannot co-habit.

don’t throw your property out through the door with a spade while your husband is bringing it in through the window with a spoon Do not spend more than you are getting.

you’d make a better door than a window! I cannot see through you; you are blocking my light.
I.41i Windows

**up to putty** [Aus] Useless, worthless (like a building or glazing job that relies solely on the putty).

- **putty won’t stick!** Said when an attempted deceit is frustrated.
- **it winna potty** [=putty: Sc] Will not answer the purpose.
- **ventilate** (v) **a grievance etc.** Bring it into the open, to public notice.
- **transparent honesty etc.** Completely obvious.

- **smooth as glass**
- **glibby** [Not Hnt EAn Oxf]/slepe [nYks]/slid [Gall]/slipper [wSom]/snod [Yks] **as glass** Slippery.
- **grey as glass**

...even grey as glas

[G.Chaucer, *Reves Tale* ln. 3974—1386]

(This eye-colour would today be described as light blue or steely-grey, but from C11–C14 grey was applied to the sea, glass or even stars. Medieval glass was seldom quite clear, a blue opacity was common and would accord with this simile, especially at a time when grey had a wider range.)

- **as tender as Yebby’s windows, that break and never speak** [Lan] Usually of a bad warp in a loom.

- **window** (n) Opportunity for observing, generally; framed area on a computer screen in which another program can be worked [1980s]; transparent facet so cut as to reveal the interior of a jewel.

- **actions and words are the window through which the heart is seen** [Amer]
- **bow/bay window** Pregnant belly [nLin]; paunch [Amer].
- **he came in at a window** Was born a bastard.
- **come in by the window** Come in stealthily.
- **be thrown/go out of the window** Be dismissed, rejected, discarded, discontinued.
- **be thrown/go out the window** [Amer] (As/ from the above.)
- **put/throw the house out of the windows** [wYks nwDer Nhp War: 1562] Create a great disturbance; make a commotion in the house [nLin].
- **look what the wind’s blown in!** An ungracious greeting.

I.42a Locks

**lock in...** Inextricably involve in, commit inescapably. Often as ‘locked in a situation, embrace etc.’

- **lock on to/with...** [Amer] Associate closely and unremittingly with. (Radar or guided missiles can be programmed to locate and then track a target automatically. This is
known as ‘locking on to...’ A curious event has taken place here; the original sense of
lock [=engage, conjoin closely (one of several related meanings)] was the one adopted for
this technical use. That has in turn metaphorically reverted almost exactly to its original
sense, with the added impetus of the metaphorical association, acquiring ‘hybrid vigour’
in the process.)

lock up in... Store, preserve inaccessibly. ‘Orders locked up in code’, ‘savings locked
up in an annuity’.

unlock mind, heart etc. Disclose secret, feelings etc.
love laughs at locksmiths [1803] Will always find a way in.
no lock will hold against the power of gold [1580] Of bribery.
lock-and-key A description of a chemical action where there is a complementarity or
mutual fitting together, as with a lock and key.
keyhole whistler A night’s lodger in a barn or outhouse.
keyhole surgery Surgery using fibre optics and micro-instruments through a very
small incision.

I.42b Keys

key Solvent, opener, gateway. ‘Key to the problem, code etc.’, ‘Gibraltar, the key to the
Mediterranean’.
key industry, man etc. One essential to the efficiency of others. Key-word-in-context
is an index for referring to various contexts by their main words.
cold as a key Also, key-cold
conclave [<Lat con-clavis=with a key] Hence, a close and private gathering.
kisses are keys
the wife is the key of the house [1616] (Because if you are in her favour, you are
welcome to enter.)
sloth is the key to poverty/idleness is the key to beggary
the used key is always bright [1561] Of an active mind.
leave the key under the door Become bankrupt.
he has left the key in the cat-hole [Sc] Has run off; has fled his creditors.
there is a key for every lock [Ill] Somewhere there will be a solution to this problem,
a way into his/her affections etc.
seek for the key that is in the lock [eSc] Waste time on unnecessary work.
get the key of the street [wYks] Be shut out for the night.
turnkey job One that finishes off the whole operation.
I.42c Refuse

abject [=Lat \textit{ab-iacere}=throw away]

\textit{throw your rubbish where you throw your love} [Dor] Don’t give all the bad to one, and all the good to another.

\textit{takes in rubbish like a dustbin} Of one over-credulous and undiscriminating.

\textit{a dustbin-lid wind} One strong enough to blow the lid off a dustbin.

\textit{go down the chute/tube(s)} [Amer] Be ruined. (Soft, organic garbage can be sent down tubes integral to the plumbing of some housing.)

\textit{he’ll never get a mile from an ess-midden} [ =ash-midden, once found near every house, as are dustbins today] Signifying that he hasn’t the gumption to go far or do much.

\textit{dry [thirsty] as an ass-midden} [=ash-midden—\textit{wYks}]

I.43a Closets and larders

closed together In private; personally and exclusively involved (from the use of a closet =a small room for private devotions, consultations etc.).

\textit{out of the closet} [Amer] No longer secret.

\textit{he has broken his face on the aumrie} [= ambry, a cupboard, pantry] Of a fat-cheeked boy [Sc].

\textit{muckle aumrie} [Abd Bnff] Large, clumsy fellow comprising no more than the food that is in him.

\textit{no larder but has its mice} There is always some drain on your resources.

\textit{kitchen cabinet} [Amer, late C19] Coterie of close presidential advisers.

\textit{too late to spare when the bottom is bare} Economy is useless when the time for economy is past.

\textit{scrape the (bottom of the) barrel} [1942] Be reduced to your last remaining, dwindled resources; resort to what, in better times, you would have scorned.

\textit{the bottom of the bag} Last expedient.

\textit{Winter finds out what Summer lays up} A time of need soon brings out the reserves.

\textit{in store for...} Prepared for, threatening. Trouble in store’.

\textit{store up trouble, happiness etc.} Ensure for the future. ‘Store up in the memory’=retain for future recall.

\textit{on ice} Assured, a certainty (as meat is certain to be fit for the table when kept on ice); kept in reserve, in custody, in prison, put aside until wanted.

\textit{in cold storage/in the icebox} [Amer]/\textit{in the deep freeze} In abeyance, temporarily discontinued—of a process, project etc.; in reserve.
I.43b Cupboards

lew [sheltered—w&sEng] as a cupboard
foul as an empty cupboard [sLan]
cupboard love [1757] Affection for someone as a provider rather than as a person; a pretence of love solely for what can be obtained.
love locks no cupboards If cupboards are locked it is a sign that love is lacking.
my belly cries cupboard [wYks] I am hungry.
skeleton in the cupboard [1855] Shameful family secret; a past disgrace best concealed.

I.43c Shelves

shelve (v) Temporarily discard; put in abeyance plans etc.; make redundant.
on the shelf [1575] Past work or marriage; deferred, not in active use [Amer].
the shelf is high [nLin wSom] They are inhospitable (the food being kept out of reach).

I.43d Hooks, pegs and racks

hook-nosed
on his own hook By his own efforts; on his own account.
pot-hooks and ladies/hangers [Nhp et al.] The loops and curves of handwriting.
ppeg to hang... on Pretext, occasion for discoursing on something.
take rack-stock [the rack was a kitchen frame for plates etc.—Sc nLin] Call someone to rigorous account; claim all that belongs to you [Bnff wSc].
put him in his place Make him realise his proper position within a hierarchy or social system (usually while emphasising your own superiority).

I.44a Flint knives

flay a flint Be mean and extortionate.
skin a flint to save a penny, and spoil a shilling knife doing it Of false economy.
skinflint Stingy, ridiculously economical person. (As/from the above.)

I.44b Knives

cutting Keen, decisive, painful—wind, irony, look etc.
  incisive [Lat incidere=cut into] Keen, penetrating, acute—qualities of mind.
  trenchant [OF trenchier=cut, dice] Incisive, penetrating, effective. Of sayings, comment or criticism.
  knife-edge (adj and n) Keen, immediate; acuity.
  on a knife-edge [1897] In extreme insecurity, uncertainty.
  jack-knife (v) Swivel forward—of the rear part of an articulated lorry when it skids forward to the position of a clasp-knife, nearly closed.
  jack-knife (n) [1958] Method of reducing bias in estimates (because of its rough and ready effectiveness).
  long ago—when your mother was cutting bread on you! (Pregnant women finally resort to this.)
  the same knife cuts bread and fingers [1579] Anything dangerous can be turned against the user; powers and instruments in themselves cannot discriminate.
  you could have cut it with a knife Describing an atmosphere thick with fog or smoke; also, fraught with tension or heavy emotions.
  catch not at falling knife or falling friend [1864] Either will probably injure you, for to side with failure brings disaster on yourself.

I.44c Spoons, cleaning cutlery

tearth [brisk and sprightly, skilled, nimble-fingered, open, clear, straightforward—passim] as a spoon Unusually bright and cheerful.
  nice as a ha’p’orth of silver spoons Overdainty, fastidious.
  make a spoon or spoil a horn [Border counties of Sc+Eng Ont: 1818] Of those who have initiative and confidence, but not experience; who cannot be deterred from their purpose; achieve outright success or downright failure. (It takes skill to make a spoon out of a horn.)
  not care/give/worth a cutty-spoon [Ayr]
  give up his spoon [Lan]/hang up the spoon Die (as if resigned to the fact that there would be no more eating).
  put/stick his spoon in/into/to the wall [Nrf Wor Glo] Die. (As/from the above.)
  made up from the pan and the spoon [Slk Cum Wm] Someone not suckled as a baby; a person of more flesh than brains.
  that’s a spoon ye’ll sup sorrow with yet [Ire] A foreseeable source of grief.
trite [<Lat tritus=rubbed] Worn out by repetition—of remarks, clichés etc.

I.45a Baskets

peeling his wands [the start of basket-making] Starting on a new job [Sc Lakel Yks Lin Nhp Hnt EAn War Oxf Sus Hmp Dor], or a new time of life, as at the birth of his first child [Nhb].

steep the withies [Arg] Prepare, make a start (a necessary preliminary to basket-weaving).

basket-making Sexual intercourse (from weaving in and out, and from the intertwining of limbs).

employ [<Fr employer <Lat implicare= weave, twine into]

implicate, implicit, imply [<Lat im-plicare =involve, entwine, fold in, entangle]

ye’re as sma’ as the twitter [thin part of an unevenly spun thread—Sc Ire nEng] o’ a twined rusky [a seed basket for broadcast sowing, reinforced by thread whippings here and there—Sc] A taunt to a woman affecting to be neat and small.

cammed [crooked, gone awry, worn on one side more than another—sLan]/conceited [sLan]/windy as a wisket [basket—NCy] Said of a forgetful person [Chs].

lecks [=leaks—Cum]/leaks [Cor] like a basket
cratchinly [rickety, feeble—sLan] as a crushed wisket

leaky as a swill [Yks] Of a roof.

open as a skep [shallow basket or scuttle—Cum nYks]
skep-bonnet [midYks] Woman’s scuttle-shaped hat.

I.45b Mugs, tubs and buckets

simple as a ha’p’orth of soap in a washingmug [Chs] Insignificant, unpretentious.

face like a Buckley pan-mug (Buckley, in Flint, produces coarse red earthenware.)

another double-mug broke! [Nhp] Another disaster, a fresh misfortune.

lie pancheon-wise [Der] Of children lying side by side with knees drawn up. (Pancheons were large earthenware milk bowls [n&midEng EAn Cor].)

face as big as a baking-trendle [large oval tub for mixing, scalding etc.—Dor]
tubby Stout and shaped like a tub. (A euphemism for fat, more frequently of men.)

every tub must stand on its own bottom [1564] There are some things that no one else can do for you.

every kettle [Ohio]/pot [NY] must stand on its own bottom (As above.)
on his own bottom On his own initiative, independently; at his own expense. (As/from the above.)
knock the bottom out Render an argument etc. invalid (useless as a bucket with the bottom knocked out).

ding [knock, hammer, thump—Sc nEng] the bottom out of... Make an end of something. (As/from the above.)

the bottom has dropped out of—the market etc. Is completely spoiled, has been rendered ineffective.

knock the end in/off Spoil the whole thing.

the empty pail makes the most noise [Ont]

I.46a Pitchers

urceolate [<Lat urceolus=small pitcher] Pitcher-shaped, i.e. with large body and small mouth.

little pitchers have big/long/wide ears [1546] Be careful what you say in front of the children.

drop by drop and the pitcher is full [NY] By small additions is the full effect attained.

knock (v) Criticise disparagingly, find fault with.

the pitcher/stoup [water-jar—Sc] that goes often to the well comes home broken at last Said when failure or punishment terminates a long spell of taking risks with impunity; also pointing out that long use or familiarity does not reduce a risk.

Zuo longe geþ þet pot to be wetere þet it comþ to-broke hom

[ Ayenbite of Inwit—1340]

the pig [earthenware pitcher—Sc Ire nEng] gangs to the well till ae day [Sc] (As above.)

whether the pitcher strikes the stone or the stone the pitcher, it is bad for the pitcher [1620] Whatever the rights or wrongs of a dispute, the weak suffer most.

she has cracked her pitcher Has lost her virginity. (See also I.46c, cracked her pipkin.)

great talkers are like broken pitchers [Mich Ohio] (Because everything spills out.)

when Tom’s pitcher’s broken, I shall get the shards [1678] There is small kindness in giving away what is useless.

where the pig [earthenware pot, pitcher, crock—Sc Nhb] is broken, let the shards lie [Sc] When a loss is irreparable, forget it.

in a panshard [=potsherd—Wil] In a rage.
I.46b Pots

every pot has two handles There are two sides to every argument or explanation.
most things have two handles, and a wise man takes hold of the better [1657]
Choose the better way or method; look on the better side (when receiving news etc.).
take things always by the smooth handle [Amer c. 1780] Interpret words and actions
as favourably as possible.
the earthen pot must keep clear of the brass kettle [1586] A weak person should
not contend with the strong; preserve social divisions.
as knocked as a workhouse pot Showing signs of ill-usage.
a little pot is soon hot [1546] Used in a sexual sense.
neither pot broken nor water spilt! No harm done.
lose both pot and water [1599] Of an outcome where one loss inevitably involves
another.
shatter—hopes etc. End them irreparably.
cursing and swearing never pieced a broken pot yet [sLan] No remedy.
cracked as a broken (kail) pot [Cum] Of crazy people. Hence:
crack-pot (adj and n) Crazy, useless, careless (person).
the cracked pot lasts the longest [NY] (Because, alike for people as pots, those that
are less in demand are less at risk.)
kail-pot’s callin’ the yetlin smutty! [Dur] Said when someone presumes to criticise
another for what he is himself equally at fault. (The yetlin was a small iron crock [Sc Nhb
Dur Cum Wm Yks].)
would swear a hole in an iron pot [Cor]

I.46c Pipkins

he has dwindled down from a pot to a pipkin Ironically, of one grown fat.
she has cracked her pipkin Lost her maidenhead.
cracked pipkins are discovered by their sound Fools are recognised when they
speak.

I.46d Other vessels

bright as a pewter pot
a bad vessel is seldom broken [NY] The wicked seldom come to grief.
leaky vessel Person who betrays secrets (letting out what should be kept in).
go to pigs [earthenware pots and pitchers; also the broken potsherds from them—Sc Nhb] and whistles/wissels [small change, useless clutter—Sc Nhb] Go to wreck and ruin.
empty vessels make the most noise [1547] The inanity of talkative folk.
hollow laugh, pretence, victory One without proper cause, futile, empty.
keeping the best side out, like the broken bowl on the dresser [Ire] An answer to ‘How are you today?’
jug-head Stubborn horse; stupid person [Amer].
gotch-eyed [Amer] With protuberant eyes. [gotch =pitcher, round jug—Sc Yks EAn Bdf sEng]
all on/to one side like the handle of a jug [Ant Dwn] Prejudiced, partial; leaning—of a badly built hayrick.
jug-handled—arguments, trade etc. [Amer] One-sided, unbalanced.
jug-handle [Amer] Circular section of road, so-shaped for access from or onto a highway.
off—like a jug-handle [War]
better spare at brim than at bottom Thrift comes too late when there is no longer scope for economy. ‘t is late to spare when the bottom is bare’ [1539].
brim-full Full to the top.
a vessel holds only its fill [Uls] A person’s ability to learn is limited by their mental capacity.
do not regard the vessel, but what it contains [Ont Ill] Disregard exteriors when judging a person’s worth.

I.47a Colanders, trivets, ladles

she’s had the brassen skimmer rubbed over her face [War Glo] She is bold, impudent.
(in and out) like a fart in a colander (not knowing which hole to use) Emptily reverberating; frustrated; vacillating; confused to the point of inertia; moving about restlessly but aimlessly.
lemon-squeezer [Aus NZ] Soft army hat, the shape of a lemon-squeezer.
right/safe as a trippet [=trivet—wYks Cor]/ trivet [1835] (Because it always stands firm on its three feet.)
brandis-fashion [EAn Som Dor Dev] In threes. (A brandis is a trivet or three-legged pan-iron for the fire.)
a sceptre is one thing and a ladle another [1640] To someone who has moved out of their proper sphere.
pot-ladle Tadpole [Nhp EAn], (From the shape.)
I.47b Cans and pans

run about moonshine in a can Be employed uselessly.

as simple/soft as a ha’p’orth of treacle in a bant-can [string-can—Lan]/washing-mug [sLan] Half-witted, foolish.

his auld brass will buy a new pan [Sc: 1736] With the money she has inherited a widow will more easily remarry.

panhandle (n) Narrow strip of land intruding between two neighbouring territories, as the Texas Panhandle in America.

panhandle (v) Obtain by begging or larceny (either from the action of a rapacious beggar in grabbing the panhandle and helping himself, or from the action of holding out a pan for tips).

bright as saucepans

pressure cooker [Amer] Stressful situation.

I.47c Lids and stoppers

lid (n) Hat.

there’s a lid for every pot [Ohio Kan Ariz] A suitable partner for everyone.

a He with a lid on and a brass handle to lift it with [NCy] A monstrous and shameless lie.

blow the lid off [1928]/lift the lid on… Reveal the whole truth about an organisation, profession etc.; publish what has hitherto been concealed; expose all horrors to public view.

put the (tin) lid on it [1915] Add a final blow, word or act to complete the outrage.

put a stopper on… Repress, suppress.

I.47d Warming-pans

warming-pan Person, often a clergyman, allowed to hold an office as a stop-gap, until the right person is ready. (Keeping the place warm, as it were, like a bed-warmer.)

Scottish warming-pan A wench.

keep his place warm for him [1845] Perform another’s duties only until he is able to resume them.
I.47e Kettles, teapots

kettle-hole A depression in the ground made when glacial ice melts after being trapped in the debris of a glacier. Where these are large enough and hold water, they are known as kettle-hole lakes. (See also J.62.)

however black the kettle, there is always a lid to fit it [Ohio Kan Utah]
a lid to match the kettle A married pair, well-suited.
simpers like a frummety-/furmity-kettle [1565] (at Christmas [NCy]) [used for cooking frumenty, hulled wheat boiled in milk and seasoned with cinnamon, sugar, etc. See T. Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge §1] Smile, look affable, merry.

when it rains frummety [=furmity, see above], mind ye have not a dish to seek [eSuf] Be prepared for your opportunities.

the pot calls the kettle black [1620] When a critic is open to the same or equal criticism.

black arse quoth the pot to the cauldron [Sc] (As/from the above.)
call each other pot and kettle Abuse each other for similar faults.

the kettle is crocking [<crock=iron cooking pot—Dor] Said when someone finds fault with another, being himself guilty of the same or worse.

you can’t rub on a black pot without getting black on you [Ohio] On the effect of a bad companion.

wash the pot [Dub 1914] Go to confession.
scour [n&nwLin]/scrape [Preston, Lan] the kettle Go to confession. (Clearing away the impurities so as to make a clean start.)
tea-kettle [C19] One of the older steamships; an old leaky railway engine [Can].

loose and careless like the leg of a pot [Ire]
as much use as a chocolate tea-pot
coffee-pot Small railway tank engine (from the shape).

I.48a Trenchers, platters and bowls

trim as a trencher [1542] A new trencher, neatly turned out of sycamore wood, has a clean and wholesome appearance.

hard as a beechen trencher
trencher-friends [1590] ‘Friends’ with an eye mainly on your table.
play a good tune on a trencher [EAn] Have a hearty appetite.

from lug to laggin [the angle between the sides and base of a wooden dish—Sc Lakel] All over, from top to bottom.

as gude a fellow as ever toomed a bicker [emptied a small wooden drinking bowl—Sc Nhb]
he gets his meat in a riven cog [Sc] Gets a regular scolding, especially from his wife.
take a stap [stave—Cum] out of his bicker [nEng]/cog [Sc] Discipline him by reducing his rations or privileges; humble him; stop his mischief, impudence [Cum]. (A bicker was composed of wooden staves, and so to remove one reduced its capacity. See also F.11b.)
go all to staps [Sc Nhb Cum] Become insolvent, go bankrupt; succumb to drink.
binge [soaking a wooden receptacle to stop it leaking—nmid&midEng Bck Bdf Hnt] Heavy drinking spree.

I.48b Dishes

round as a dish
grey as the inside of a pewter dish
dish and spoon [nYks Chs] Everything, the whole lot.
all asiden [aslant—Shr], like Martha Roden’s twopenny dish
simper like a riven dish (in which the crack squeaks in liquids) Make a tight, thin smile with sounds reminiscent of a quiet bubbling.
all is lost that is put in a riven dish [1611] Put no trust in anyone unreliable; also of favours to ungrateful people.
fall in twa [Rnf]/to pieces [wYks Lin Lei Aus]/ sindry [=sundry, asunder, separate—Sc Ire Nhb Cum Wm] Give birth [1642].
pick up the pieces [1912] Start the process of recovery after a disaster or setback; try to return to normal.
light as gay [broken china; child’s toy—Cor]

I.48c Cups and saucers

tight as a/the cup [Nrf] (Without leaks.)
when the coppe is follest, þenne ber hire feyrest [Hendyng—c.1300] The prosperous need to be all the more careful.
it is hard to carry a full cup without spilling Said when letting out a secret; or breaking down under emotion.
the last drop makes the cup run over [1655] The culminating injury or grief is the occasion, though not the sole cause, of an outburst or a breakdown.
overspill (n) The excess population which has to move out of town.
not my cup of tea [1932] Not at all to my taste; not anything I would want.
a different/another cup of tea Something entirely different.
a hot cup of tea [eSuf] A bad bargain; unexpected loss; unruly girl.
saucered and blowed [Amer] Ready for the final stage.
a sore cup of tea [nLin] A sad, disturbing, disgusting event.
easy as drinking tea
a storm in a teacup [1854] Much excitement and fuss over something trivial.
cup of coffee [Amer] A very brief tenure, visit etc.
go together like coffee and cream [Calif] Ideally suited.
such a cup, such a cruse [jar, pot, drinking vessel] Implying similarity between two persons related in some way.
such cup, such cover [1532] Wife no better than husband, or vice versa.
cup and cover hold together Like matches with like.
fair is the weather when cup and cover hold together When husband and wife agree. (A domestic weather sign giving rise to another interpretation.)
eyes open as wide as two tea-cups [Dev]
as shallow as a saucer Devoid of any seriousness or profundity.
saucer eyed/eyes/een (With) large, round, staring eyes.
round as saucers Usually of wide-open eyes.
lives up to her blue china [the best crockery in the house] Lives beyond her means; to the limit of her income.
cheeny-bone [china-bone] Delicately-boned child [wYks neLan].

I.48d Glasses

brittle/brotel [1412–20] as glass
glasses and lasses are brittle ware
cut glass accent/voice One affected by upperclass English women—clipped, clear and piercing; sometimes aggressively upper class, either genuine or affected.

I.49a Wells

dig the well at the river Do a superfluous job.
you cannot dig a well with a needle Of inadequate abilities or resources.
cold as a well-digger’s arse [Amer]/as a well-digger in the Klondikes [Calif]
well (n) Source, supply—of knowledge, love etc.
well up Rise, flow up—of tears or feelings.
deep as a well/draw-well [Yks Chs]
black as a well [Calif]
weak as well-water
when the well is full it will run over [1641] When emotion overflows.
if you want clear water you must go to the head of the well Go to the source of information for the truth.
don’t go early or late to the well [Ire] There is an optimum time for everything.

once you break the ice it won’t be long before you can lift the water [Ire] Establishing a cordial relationship soon brings results.

break the ice Break silence; open a relationship or resume one that has been severed [1678] (As/from the above.)

she disna ay gang the straight way to the well [Sc] Is circumlocutory.

nearest the well, furthest from water Those who can get something easily, often do not bother to do so. As in ‘Nearest to church, furthest from God.’

you never know the worth of water till the well runs dry [1628] Take things for granted—until they cease.

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brain-bucket [Amer] Steel helmet.

drop a bucket into an empty well Perform a futile task.

ye canna tak clean water out o’ a foul well [Sc] Don’t expect good works from a depraved character.

drawn wells have sweetest water [1602] Things are improved by use; also, with a sexual connotation.

drawn wells are seldom dry [1597] (As/from the above.)

put your bucket in the well too often [1590] Create a shortage by extravagance.

a drop in the bucket [1382] An insignificant amount, small contribution.

tip/drop the bucket [Aus]/bucket (v) [Aus] Put the responsibility on another; release embarrassing information.

effusive [<Lat effundere=pour out]

prolix [<Lat pro-liquere=pour forth]

now up, now down, like buckets in a well Of those easily downcast and as easily elated. ‘Now up, now down, as boket in a welle’ [G. Chaucer, Knightes Tale ln. 1533—1386].

never meet together, like buckets in a well (This saying was occasioned by the double bucket pulley well where the raising of a full bucket sends the empty one down, and so the buckets are never together.)

the bucket is in the well When a trader has gone as far as possible in his ventures

throw the rope after the bucket [1620] Risk all that remains; continue regardless of loss; give up to despair. (As also F.30c, throw the handle after the hatchet.)

let the tow gang with the bucket [Sc] Good riddance to both.

many wells, many buckets [1549] Many men, many minds; different people respond to different treatment; there is much talking where there are women; often used as a pickup catch-phrase when someone says ‘Well, well!’

a dog in the well [1641] Something to spoil things; something amiss.

get your tail in the well [Sc] Get involved in some unpleasantness.

put him in the well/garden Defraud him of his share of the property or booty.

you cover the well after the child is drowned Take the necessary action, but too late.

it is too late to close the well after the goat has fallen in [Ont]

cast no dirt in the well that has given you water Be not ungrateful nor act spitefully to parents or benefactor.

do not spit in the well you may have to drink out of [Ariz] Antagonise no one; you may need their help some day.
poison the wells Spoil things at the source, fundamentally; corrupt.
a fool may roll a stone into a well which a hundred wise men cannot pull out [1640] It is easier for an unthinking person to do damage than for wise men to remedy it.
a stone in the well is not lost [1640] (But it might as well be.)
truth lies at the bottom of a well [Democritus : 1578] (Just as hard to come at.)

I.49b Pumps

pump (v) Extract information from; have intercourse with a woman.
pump up—enthusiasm etc. [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—1 May 1813]
brant [steep—Cum]/good-natured/ignorant as a pump
plain as the town pump
town pump [Amer] Promiscuous woman.
parish pump—politics etc. Unimportant, except to the locals; with a narrow, very local outlook.
parochial (As/from the above.)
prime the pump Get things moving.
pump-priming The stimulation of industry with subsidies or investment to get it working again.
your pump is good, but your sucker’s dry Try as you might, you will get no information.
lose/tine [lose—Sc] the fang [clutch, grip, suck of a pump—passim] Miss the aim, fail, be unable to work as before, be disappointed.
off/out of the fang [Sc] Not in the mood or humour for.
pump-handle (v) Shake hands vigorously.
loose as a pump-handle [Cum]
you can’t tell the depth of the well by the length of the handle on the pump [Amer] A person’s inner resources are not to be judged by externals.
a pump without a handle [n&nwLin] An incompetent, person incapable of doing their job.
I’ll have a pash [bang, blow] at the piggin [small wooden pail with upright handle—sLan], if I have to pay for the garthing [for hooping it—sLan]/I’ll have a penk [attempt—Lan] at her piggin, if I have to pay for the garthin’ on it I will do it and risk the consequences.
brazent [bold—Cum]/plain/straight [Yks]/thin [Yks Som] as a yard o’ pump-water Of a tall lanky girl; of straight hair.
like a yard o’ pump-water [sLan] Of a long and lugubrious face; feeble, listless [Nhb].
right up and down like a yard o’ pumpwater [naut] Serious and straightforward.
waish/walsh/welsh [flat, insipid—Cum Yks] as pump-water
painting the pump will not clean out the well A criticism of work done merely for appearances’ sake, and serving no useful purpose.
I.49c Water

fits like cock and pail [spigot and faucet—Sc]
   cock (n) Penis [1618].
   turn on the tap Weep at will.
   narrow/strong as/like a drink of water [Nhb] In derision, of someone very thin and feeble.
   winkle [feeble, unsteady—Yks]/weak as water
   not care/give/worth a cup of cold water
   diffuse [<Lat dis-fundere=pour all around] 
   don’t throw away dirty water till you have got clean Make do with what is unsatisfactory at least until you can replace it; advice to discontented lovers.
   cast not out the foul water till you bring in the clean [Sc] (As/from the above.)
   foul water will quench fire as well as fair Said with a sexual connotation.
   water afar off quenches no fire [1586] A remedy, to be of any use, must be available.
   a western wind carries water in his hand (The rainy wind.)
   a kiss and a drink of water is but a tasteless/wairsh [Sc] breakfast Of those without means who marry for love.
   could drown you in a spoonful of water! [Ant] Of an envious person.

I.50a Food

food for thought Something to think hard about.
   fizzen [nourishment—Sc Yks Suf SCy] Pith, force. The pump has lost its fizzen’. Hence:
   fizzenless [Sc nYks] Ineffectual; without energy.
   she’s meat for his maister [Sc: 1598] Too good for him.
   unsavoury Offensive, unwholesome—often of anecdotes and of a person’s character or behaviour.
   distasteful Disagreeable, repellent variously.
   mouldy Old and stale, generally; dull, gloomy, boring.
   vinny [mouldy, mildewed, musty—Glo Brks Wil Som Hmp IW Dor Dev Cor] Nervous, irritable; affected by outside influences [Wil eSom].
   smott [stain, spreading mould etc.—Sc Wal] Moral pollution; stain on character.
   soured Embittered, disillusioned.
   roughage Less valuable element, filler-in (like items in a programme for the less discriminating).
I.50b Preparing food

**slice-and-dice**  [1990s] Manipulation of electronic data by cutting down material and/or reshaping it.
- **sieve/sift** Sort out evidence etc.
- **look like a strained hair in a can** Look thin, ‘washed-out’.
- **scruff** [scum, dross—Yks] Rabble, refuse of society [Ire Wm nYks swLin Nhp wSom].
- **scum** [1586] A society’s unwholesome elements that need removing (like the scum from jam or the dross from molten metal).
- **the scum rises to the top** The worst characters get the highest places.
- **greasy** Unectuous, usually of persons.
- **broken/crushed** Overcome, defeated—of a people’s spirit, resistance etc.

I.50c Beef

**red as raw beef** [nYks]
- **useful as a shin of beef** [Shr] (It has a big bone for the big dog, a little bone for the little dog, and a sinew for the cat.)
- **one-eyed steak** Yarmouth bloater.
- **sea-beef, forty ribs to the inch** Herring. (Properly=beef pickled for long voyages.)
- **Aberdeen cutlet** Dried haddock.
- **Albany beef** [Amer] Sturgeon (once plentiful in the Hudson River).

I.50d Mutton

**mutton-chop whiskers** Moustaches so shaped.
- **shoulder-/leg-of-mutton sleeve/sail** (From the shape.)
- **mutton-fist/shoulder-of-mutton fist** A large red hand; someone having such hands.

I.50e Bacon

**looks as white as a flick** [=flitch] of new bacon [Stf War 1859]
fat as bacon/brawn [pig’s meat scraps boiled, potted and set conveniently for slicing]
bacon-faced Coarse-featured, full-faced.
save your bacon [1675] Save yourself, avoid injury. (See also J.8d, they may claim the Dunmow flitch.)
ham-fisted/ham-handed Rough, heavy-handed, lacking all finesse and deftness, using force instead of skill. Also, similarly, hamfooted.
a Gourock ham [Sc] A salt herring.
bladder (n) Loquacious person, windbag.
rattle like empty blethers [=bladders—Nhb]
bald as/head like a bladder/blether of lard [Yks Oxf]/saim [lard, fat—Cum] Bald and shiny.
blether-head [Yks] (As above.)
puffed up like a bladder of lard [Cor] Selfimportant, pompous.
fat as a tub of lard [Calif sAmer]

I.50f Offal etc.

one end is sure to be bone! It will not be as good as it appears.
tough as raglad [gristle—Yks] (See also F.10h, hard as Wrag lad.)
cabroch [lean meat, unfit for use—Sc] Someone disagreeable and unmannerly; large, uncouth, greedy person.
ket (n) [offal, carrion—Sc nEng EAn] Worthless fellow.
ketty (adj) [nEng EAn] Worthless. (As/from the above.)
they’re all offal and boiling pieces! Inferior, second-class citizens.
tripe! [1892] Rubbish! Nonsense! A condemnation of foolish talk. (From the misconception that tripe is nearer to offal than red meat.)
like two penn’orth of tripe [nStf] Very knowledgeable, worldly wise.
wacker [wobble, shake—Lan] about like a tripe doll

I.50g Preparing meat

raw (adj) Young and inexperienced, untrained; callow, unpolished [Amer].
you’d spoil a new eighteen-penny knife scraping an ounce of fat off their bones! Of lean or stingy people.
chopped up Artificially divided; reduced to small pieces.
mince words/matters [1599] Present them in a finicky, acceptable, easily digested form.
make mincemeat of . . . [1876] Annihilate a person, or their argument.
mess [originally a made dish] State of confusion or muddle.
make a hash of...[1833] Spoil by bad workmanship (a hash being a dish of already cooked meat chopped up and reheated).

rehash [Amer] Discuss an event in detail, afterwards.

settle his hash [1825] Subdue, silence him; stop his trouble-making.

flag-hash [Manchester, sLan] Nothing to eat (from paving flags).

sweet meat will have sour sauce [c. 1400] On the attraction of opposites; the inevitability of an opposite swing, a bad thing to discount a good—as when pleasure is succeeded by pain, remorse, reaction.

there are many ways of dressing a calf’s head [1902] There are many ways of doing a foolish thing; if one won’t work, try another.

like a sheep’s head, all jaw Of someone who talks too much.

strike bacon/cut rashers [War Oxf] Cut a mark on the ice in sliding.

thin as a rasher of wind

slicket [thin slice, rasher—Glo Brks Wil] Young, underdeveloped person.

lard/interlard [1563] Intersperse; diversify variously your talk or your style (from the method of inserting strips of bacon or fat between layers of lean meat when cooking it).

cratchings [the refuse left after fat has been rendered—Lan Chs] Shrivelled up person.

suet-brained/suet-headed Stupid.

put butter on bacon Try to improve what is already excellent.

liver-sad [NCy]/livery [Lin Chs Wor Suf Bdf Glo Ken eSus] Describing soil caked and matted together.

bull’s liver [sChs] Dense, peaty soil found in boggy ground.

sad as (bull’s) liver [Cum] (From its consistency, being wet, heavy and floppy.) Of doughy bread.

liver-brown A dark, rich, reddish brown.

you come of good blood, like a black pudding

blood without groats is nothing Breeding without money. (Black puddings are made with groats as well as blood.)

haggis (n) A mixture, mess, hotch-potch.

haggis-headed [Edb] Soft in the head.


what’s no in the bag will be in the broo, as the Highlandman said when he dirked the haggis [Sc] If you don’t have it in one way you will get it in another.

like the old woman’s tripe, always ready [War]

first catch your hare Said in recommending adherence to a proper order. (Supposed to be in the instructions in Hannah Glasse’s Art of Cookery, but she actually wrote: ‘Take your hare when it is cased’ [skinned].)

I.51a Fish

white as a fish (Their meat being bloodless.)
fishy Suspicious, dubious (originally of meat with a suspicious redolence of fish).

neither fish nor flesh (nor good red herring) [1528] Of something or someone who does not fit in any of the usual categories.

(Enough) between melts and rounds [=the milts and roes of herrings—Uls] In between one thing and another.

kipper (n) Odd character; stoker [naut] (from being repeatedly cooked); a visitor who is apparently favourably impressed while among the people he is visiting, but on returning home produces nasty complaints and criticisms [Aus] (kippers, also, are two-faced and gutless).

kippers [Lan] Courting couples at a party who, being mutually attached (like a pair of kippers!), contribute little to the general conviviality. In this sense there is also a connection with kipper (adj) [frisky, lively, frolicsome, amorous—Cum Wm Yks Lan].

not as far through as a kipper [Lan] Very thin. Kipper also=a small wood or village.

close as/packed like sardines (in a tin) Very tightly.
safe as a sardine (In a tin, presumably.)
tin-opener vote, bill etc. An enabling measure in Parliament.
they’ve opened another tin Said when reinforcements arrive.
oysters would be profitable food if the servants could eat the orts [Shr] The unlikeliest results could come from unlikely circumstances.

I.51b Preparing fish

affairs, like salt fish, should be a good while a-soaking

make fish of one and flesh of another [wYks: 1639] Be partial, show favouritism; make invidious distinctions.

make not your sauce before you have caught your fish Don’t be premature, or you might be doing things for which there is no need.

dead as a salt pilcher ‘Deader than a pelcher’ [Maine].

money without love is like salt without pilchers [=pilchards—Cor]
cream upon pilchards [Cor] A smart dress upon a slovenly woman.

let every man skin his own eel [Texas Calif] Everyone should contribute to what will be to their own advantage.

skin an eel by the tail Do something the wrong way round.

it is a lucky eel that escapes skinning Misfortune comes to most, sooner or later. (See also George Eliot, Felix Holt §1—1866)

get used to it—like a skinned eel [1829–30] (From the idea that eels suffer only temporary discomfort when skinned alive.)
clean the fish [new arrival in prison; a player who has no chance of winning—Can] Dupe the victim, lead someone on.

beat him like a stock-fish (Which is beaten hard before cooking.)

soft-roed [Cockney C19] Tender-hearted.
come the raw prawn over/with… [Aus] Try to trick, dupe, outwit. (Probably from a confidence trick.)

lady of the lobster [1653] Unflattering description of a seated woman, from the shape of a formation in the stomach of a lobster.

that’s for that as butter’s for fish! [1721] With a retaliatory blow; also when something fits or suits well what it was designed for.

butter the fish Win at cards.

butter the whiting [naut Sc] Do more than is necessary, something excessive.

kens how to butter a whiting [Sc] Is shrewd; knows how to flatter.

I.52a Fowl, capons

tender as a chicken

Glasgow/Kent/Yarmouth capon A red herring.

Severn capon The sole.

Crail’s capon A dried haddock.

it is a sarry collop that’s got off a capon [Sc] You cannot get much where there is but little.

I.52b Turkeys

red as a lubber-cock [Cor]/turkey-cock [1484]/ a turkey-cock’s jowls [wattles] Often of an enraged man.

red as the chollers [jowls, double chin—Cum] of a bubbly-jock [turkey-cock—Cum] Of a face.

turned as red as a turkey-cock snotterbob [the membraneous appendage to the beak—Cum]

Irish turkey [Amer] Corned beef and cabbage.

I.52c Preparing fowl

pluck (v) Cheat.

join giblets [fragments of rags—nIre Yks Lin] Go halves; go into partnership.
spatchcock Interpolate, sandwich in—usually in a rough and ready manner. (From the Irish despatch-cock, a fowl killed, plucked and dressed in hasty and summary fashion, the idea of interpolation probably deriving from the stuffing of such a fowl.)
as big as a Dunstable lark (Renowned for size in the days when larks were eaten.)

I.52d Preparing geese

I have a goose to pluck with you A bone to pick with you.
gooseflesh/gooseskin/goose-pimples Pimply or stippled skin, caused by cold or fear (and resembling the skin of a plucked goose).

I.52e Eggs

not care/give/worth an egg
naked as an egg
as full as an egg is of meat [1575]
as hard as an egg at Easter
it 'ud draw tears from an egg [Shr] Of something very affecting.
alike/as like as two eggs/one egg to another
walsh [tasteless—Yks] as the white of an egg
egg-head Intellectual, highbrow.
bad egg Bad character (as in the saying There’s usually one bad in a basket of eggs’).
tread/walk among/on eggs/egg-shells [1591] Deal with a delicate subject; attempt an impossibly precarious task; be neurotically cautious or circumspect; be excessively nervous about the possible effect of your actions.

I.52f Preparing eggs

there’s an egg in that You will get something out of it, it will be worth your trouble.
you can’t tell whether an egg is good by looking at its shell [Ohio] Cannot judge a person’s character from their appearance.
eggsucker [Amer] One who flatters to obtain promotion.
break/crack an egg In curling, play one stone so as to touch another only just as hard as would crack an egg.
make an omelette Make a *faux pas*, a blunder (like making an omelette out of dropped eggs).

you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs [1859] Be prepared to make some sacrifice, or endure some upset, for what you want.

ne’er tak’ a stane/forehammer [sledge hammer] to break/crack an egg when ye can do ’t wi’ the back o’ yer knife [Sc: 1721] Do not use powers or means greater than are necessary for the job.

break eggs with a stick/sticks [Cum nLan] Get through a lot of work; work like crazy; get busy, as when there is a lot to do and you are really going to get cracking.

a broken egg cannot be put back together [NY] Some things are beyond restoration.

egg-beater [Amer] Helicopter.

scramble a message So mix it up on different radio wavelengths that it can only be read by the intended recipient who knows the system. (From the jumble of ingredients in scrambled eggs.)

scrambled eggs The gold braid on an officer’s uniform.

can you unscramble eggs? The incredulous retort to a proposal to revert from a complicated system to a primitive one.

deceitful as rotten eggs [sLan]

you can’t spoil a rotten egg Go ahead! there is little lost even if you fail.

a rotten egg spoils the pudding [Ark]

the more you stir a rotten egg, the more it stinks [Ohio] To investigate what is unsavoury only makes it worse.

peel eggs with…[Mon] Not stand on ceremony.

easy as peeling a hard-boiled egg

ye hae come to a peeled egg [Sc: 1721] You have arrived to find all is prepared; have acquired a job, fortune, estate all ready for you.

peeled egg [Sc Nhb] Windfall, lucky circumstance. (As/from the above.)

like neither egg nor shell of… Dislike in all respects.

we guess eggs when we see shells [Lan Suf] We can draw reliable conclusions even without all the evidence; draw an obvious conclusion; no smoke without fire.

have egg on your face [1974] Show yourself up as having made a small but discreditable mistake; are caught out doing something wrong; made to look foolish.

be off eggs on potatoes Wander abruptly from one subject to another.

I.53a Milk

mild/white as milk

milk-hearted [Glo] Poor-spirited.

like a chip in (a mess of) milk/porridge [n&wYks nwDer Hnt Nhp War neWor Cor] Of insignificant or useless persons; of no consequence; neither good nor harm; ineffectual. A variant, which may or may not be a corruption of this, is like chicken-porridge, neither good nor harm [Sur].
it curdles your milk  Spoils what would otherwise have been good and wholesome; also of sour-natured folk.

curdles the blood!  Of something horrific. Hence, ‘blood-curdling shriek’ etc.

curded/loppered [curdled, clotted (usually of milk stood so long that it sours and curdles of itself)—Sc Ire nEng EAn]  All in confusion [Nhb]. Also, loppered slut!—lazy slut!

no use crying over spilt milk!  [1659]  It is pointless lamenting the loss of what cannot be restored, or an error that cannot be rectified. [See also Shaks, AWTW IV. iii—1601: ‘weepes like a wench that had shed her milke’]

I.53b Cream

cream (off…)  (v) Select the best.

cream (n)  The pick, the best, the choice.

the cream of the well  [Hrf]  The first pailful of water taken from certain wells on New Year’s Day.

clotted  Dense, concentrated (as in clotted cream)—of poems, style, nonsense.

I.53c Butter

blake [golden yellow—nEng]/slab [smooth, soft—Cum]/yellow as butter/May-butter

blake as May-butter  [Cum]

butter to butter is no kitchen  Said when two girls are together and implying that they would be better with male company.

a hair in the butter  A delicate situation.

lump of butter  [Dmb]  Easy-going, helpless person.

butter up/over  [wSom]  Flatter; soften the resistance.

butter [wYks]/oil  [Cor]  the tongue  Speak gently, kindly. (See also I.56k.)
went through—like a hot knife through butter/margarine  [Amer]

I.53d Whey

pale/white  [Som]  as whey

(h)ask  [sour and capable of drying out the mouth, like sloes—Yks Lin]/sour as whig

[sour whey—Sc Ire nEng Nhp Wil: 1589]  Of ale [nLin].
hasky father Unkind, harsh to his own children [sDon].
whey-faced [wSc Gall Cum Lin Cor] Pale-complexioned.
white as float-whey [the curdled scum of whey when boiled—Lnk]

I.53e Cheese

chuff [proud, but often used meaninglessly—wYks] as (a/the) cheese/apple/blazes/two sticks
bug [fine, gorgeous—Yks Lei] as a/rotten as cheese
you see no green cheese but your teeth water [1546]/ye ne’er see green cheese but your een reel [roll with anticipation—Sc 1737] Are over-eager to gain possession of even worthless things.
mite [C19] Baby or small child, usually in pitiable circumstances.
cheese down [naut] Coil a rope (to the shape of a cheese) for stowing in harbour.
thin as Banbury cheese [a rich milk cheese about an inch thick: 1562]
like a Whillymer cheese, it wants an axe and a saw to cut it [Cum] (Whillimoor was a barren moorland yielding poor dairy produce.)
as different as chalk and cheese Completely different.
he favours [resembles—sLan] the thin end of a penn’orth of cheese Mean and meagrelooking.
simple as a ha’p’orth of cheese
cheese and cheese Two girls together; two women on one horse. (See also I.53c, butter to butter…, and I.63a, bread and bread.)
not say cheese [Abd] Say nothing at all.
you can’t hang soft cheese on a hook You should not bind the young or foolish with rules.
mair crined [shrunk, shrivelled—Sc Ire Nhb Cum] than kebbuck [a whole cheese—Sc nEng] lang upon the bink [shelf—Rxb]
strong as rotten cheese [Cum]
go back in your cheese, they’re a maggot short [Lan]
cheese-cutters Those horse chestnuts with flat sides and sharp edges [children in Whitehaven, Cum]; caps with sharp peaks; a beak of a nose; bandy legs.
ev[ery] cheese maun keep its ain chisset [= cheese-vat—Sc nEng] Everyone mind their own business; stay in their own area.
cheese-paring [1813] Stingy, frugal. (To pare cheese is a mean and petty economy.)
trim the cazzie [cheese; <Du kaas=cheese] Be over-thrifty.
a broken kebbuck gangs quick done Once started, soon finished—because everyone thinks that.
a whang off a new-cut kebbuck is ne’er missed [Sc]
I.54a Peas

can noather poo [=can neither pull=pick peas—Lan] ner scawd [=scald, boil them—Billinge, sLan] Cannot decide what to do.

naebody can tell what’s in the shaup [peapod—Sc Ire Amer] till it’s shelt [=shelled—Sc] We cannot tell the outcome until the event.

not worth a shelled pea-cod [Sc 1821] pod Belly, especially pregnant.

like/alike as two peas (in a pod) [1580] out of the same pod Similar by virtue of being related.

thick as peas in a shell pea-swad days [midLan] The time of youth.

full as a pea-swad [pea-pod—sLan] not care/give/worth a pea/bean pea-brain/pea-head Person of low intelligence.

set at a pease Value at next to nothing.

easy as shelling peas shell out Disburse, pay up.


shucks! [pods, husks (often of corn)—Amer] Rubbish, nonsense. Often as a mild expletive.

gone to shucks [NY] Failed financially, petered out.

pea-splitting [Ayr Dmf] Driving hard bargains; contentious over details.

hop/jump like a parched pea like a pea in a colander/rattle In a state of restless, aimless and nervous movement.

brisk as/pop about like a parched pea on a shovel/gridiron/griddle [Oxf: 1836] hop around like dried peas in a hot skillet [pan with three feet and a frying-pan handle: Calif]

stot [bounce, jump—Sc Nhb Cum] away/up like a birsled [toasted, roasted—Sc Nhb] pea [Ayr Lnk]


I.54b Beans

pretty as beans white as a bean

knows his/her beans/how many beans make five [1628] Is knowing; not easily to be outwitted. (The full question, ‘How many blue beans make five white ones?’, should be answered: ‘Five, if peelle.’)

beanswaup [bean-pod] Useless person [Sc].
every bean has its black Everyone has a share of worse things.

jumpy [nervous, easily startled] as a Mexican bean [the seed of a spurge, native to Mexico, which often harbours the larva of the moth carpocapsa saltitans—the movements of this larva inside the bean make it hop about]

spill the beans [Amer 1919] Reveal the secret; let something confidential slip out indiscreetly; give the show away (possibly from betraying an intended bean-feast by spilling some beans).

put beans up your nose Do something stupid in spite of warnings.

have beans up your nose Act deceptively; have ulterior motives.

be at/on the beans of …[Cum] Scold, find fault with.

better a bean in liberty than a comfit in prison [1670]

I.54c Cabbages etc.

green as a yellow cabbage Of one who assumes innocence or ignorance.

he’ll run all day on a cabbage-leaf [Not] Of a poor runner.

mair strength in a wet cabbage! [Sc]

doesn’t weigh much more than a big cabbage Of one who has lost much weight.

shows the cauliflower Of a horse passing dung when the terminal section of the rectum shows like a cauliflower, a sign of a nervous animal [Cum].

cauliflower ear One swollen by internal accumulation of blood, suffered particularly by pugilists and long-eared dogs.

cauliflower top The top deck of a bus full of passengers.

spring cauliflowers’ style Making much out of little, or a fuss over nothing.

earns salt to his kail [Sc Ohio Ill] Gets more than a subsistence livelihood.

salt his kail [Sc] Scold him; make things unpleasant.


I.54d Salads

salad-days Time of youthful experiment, inexperience. (From the old phrase, ‘pick a salad’ = make a selection, try out various herbs.)

fine as a sallit [nYks] Trimly dressed.

cut like a sallet [=salad—Chs] Be firm and good—of grass.


fresh as a young head of lettuce

crisp as a fresh-pulled lettuce

not care/give/worth a cress
cool as a cucumber Composed and selfpossessed.
extract sunbeams from cucumbers Attempt, achieve the impossible.
green as a gourd [NC Tenn Neb Calif] Inexperienced.

I.54e Onions, garlic

onion Pearl (because of the overlaying skins of nacre).
red onion [Can] A railway eating shop (because rough and smelly).
(shaved as) clean as a sybo [young onion, shallot—Abd]
spruce/strong as an onion
not care/give/worth an onion
made like an onion, thicker than long
more skins than an onion Of an overdressed person.
the peeling of an injan [=onion—Sc Suf] Something very light and easily blown away.
give him onions Strike him. (Something to bring tears to his eyes.)
warm his onion [sLan] Chastise him.
pilgarlic [=peeled garlic] A bald head; poor, mean creature, one who gets all the unpleasant jobs, like peeling onions [Lakel]; the unfortunate recipient of a responsibility likely to prove onerous [Stf].

I.54f Leeks

not care/give/worth a leek [c. 1350]
clean as a leek [Abd Ags]
green as a leek [1366]
ye breed o’ [take after, resemble] the leek, wi’ a white head and a green tail [Sc] Old, but still randy.
have a hoar head and a green tail (As above.)

For in oure wil ther stiketh ever a nayl,
To have an hoor head and a grene tayl,
As hath a leek;

[G.Chaucer, The Prologe of the Reves Tale ln.3877–1386]
I.54g Carrots

carroty Red-haired.
  froff [=frough, brittle, easily broken—Sc Nhb Cum Wm Yks Nhp Mid Brks Wil Hmp]/snapple [brittle—Lin]/smopple [brittle—Yks] as a carrot
  nesh [delicate, easily affected, broken or damaged, tender—Sc Eng NYC sPenn] as a carrot [Wm]
  smart as a carrot wi’ jags on [rootlets—Cum] Of one dressed smartly, but not in very good taste.
  fine [Chs]/smart [wYks Cor] as a new-scraped carrot
  daft [Cor]/smart [Suf] as a carrot half-scraped
  break/snap as clean as a carrot

I.54h Parsnips

pale as a parsnip
  fair/fine/soft words butter no parsnips [1639]/cabbage Achieve nothing definite; leave the facts unchanged; as mere words, they do nothing.
  look parsnips Appear sour and bad-tempered.

I.54i Turnips

soft as a turmet [=turnip—Cum]
  fuzzy [soft, decaying—Wm wYks]/pale [Ire]/round as a turnip
  neep-like [=turnip-like] Stupid [Edb].
  no more brains than a turnip
  turnip-head [Dmf e&wYks] Country bumpkin; stupid person.
  turnip-pate(d) White-headed; fair-haired.
  get blood out of a turnip [Uls Can Amer] Achieve the impossible.
I.54j Radishes

radish [1920] /radish communist/ One who professes communism, but secretly hopes for its downfall (from the notion that they are red outside, but white inside—an idea of Trotsky’s).

frem [=frim, tender, succulent, crisp] as a radish [Lei]

I.54k Wurzels, beetroots

round as a wurzel [Cor]
red as a beetroot

I.54l Potatoes, tomatoes

potato-head [Amer] Stupid person.

potato (n) Young woman [Aus]; large hole in stocking.

not care/give/worth a (rotten) potato

quiet as a ‘tatur [Chs]

wally [=wallow, wallowish=tasteless, insipid, weak and watery—NCy Hrf Glo] as raw tates [=potatoes]

keep your dry rubs [caustic or wounding comments] for your watery pratures [Ant]

Said in reproving such remarks.

small potato Someone or something of no account.

there’s many a big tatie rotten! [NCy] Size is no measure of quality.

be/do the clean potato [Sc Aus] Be/do the right, fair thing.

clean potato [Aus] One of good character; the very best, beyond compare. (As/from the above.)

his hair stood up straight as a potato-crusher [short staff for crushing or mashing potatoes]

tomato [Amer Aus] Plump, luscious young woman.
I.55a Fruit

  bunch [Amer] Gang of men; group, generally. Hence, pick of the bunch=the best in any such group.
  juicy Rich in interest—of anecdotes, scandal etc.
  dripping with—confidence, money etc. Abundantly supplied with, exuding profusely.
  fruit salad Colourful display of medal ribbons.

I.55b Apples

not care/give/worth an apple
  not worth a peeled codling [1821]
  round/sound/trig [smart, full, plump—NCy] as an apple
  sound as a pippin Rosy-cheeked and blooming.
  apple of his eye [c.885] Cherished object (being originally the pupil of the eye, thought to be a sphere like an apple). In this sense, see Deut xxxii.10.
  no more like than an apple to an oyster [1532]/a lobster Quite different.
  alike/like as two halves of an apple
  the mellerest [=mellowest, ripest—passim] apple has a crawk inside [core—eYks nLin] Nothing on earth, however good, is quite perfect; no one is without some fault.
  core The central, main, integral part. ‘A solid core of fact’
  coke [core, pith—nEng] of the eye The pupil.
  rotten/shaken/shocked to the core Profoundly, completely.
  wizened as a winter apple [Sc Wm n, e&mid Yks] Withered, shrivelled, wrinkly.
  apples are gold in the morning, silver in the afternoon and lead at night Referring to the best time for digestion.
  won with an apple and lost with a nut [1546] Describing children and fickle folk. Also vice versa.
  pare (v) Diminish by small amounts which nevertheless leave the original seriously impaired.
  carry your knife even, between the paring and the apple Live moderately, between the two extremes.
  the parings of a pippin are better than the whole crab [1732] A plea for quality without quantity, rather than quantity without quality.
I.55c Oranges and lemons

round as an orange
   basket of oranges An attractive woman. This derives from another metaphor where a basket of oranges refers to a lucky strike of nuggets on a goldfield [Aus].
   orange-peel bucket Mechanical grabbing bucket made up of pointed segments hinged at the top.
   zest [1709] An added relish, enhancement generally. (From the orange or lemon peel, or the juices squeezed from the peel, used to impart piquancy to a dish or drink.)
   until the pips squeak [1918] Up to the point when extortion of money, usually by taxation, elicits sounds of pain or protest. (From squeezing a lemon or an orange.)
   squeezed orange Person or thing from which no more good can be got.
   orange-juice family One extended by divorce and new partners. (Because reconstituted.)
   queer as a clockwork orange Often of homosexual men; hence, a clockwork orange is a male homosexual.
   lemon Someone of a sour or snappy nature; a piece of acid criticism; a simple, easily deluded person, hence ‘hand him a lemon’=defraud, swindle him; something bad, undesirable and failing to come up to expectation [Amer].
   lemony [Aus NZ] Irritated, angry.

I.55d Pears

not care/give/worth a pear
   rotten/roxy [soft, rotten—midEng] as a pear

I.55e Medlars

soft as a medlar
   rotten as an open-arse [medlar, so-called from its aperient effect—Lin Chs Nrf midEng WCy]
I.55f Melons

cut a melon [Amer] Distribute a dividend; share out the proceeds.
cut the melon Decide the question; settle an argument.

I.55g Quinces, peaches

sour/yellow as a quince
get on someone’s quince [Aus] Annoy, greatly exasperate them. (Possibly in connection with the sourness.)
smooth as a perfect peach
a peach! Something superlative; a lusciously attractive young woman.
peaches-and-cream complexion, beauty Having a creamy skin and pink downy cheeks.
everything is not all peaches and cream [Wis] All is not ideal.

I.55h Apricots, figs

Irish apricot The potato.
not care/give/worth a fig [1528]

I.55i Cherries

not care/give/worth a cherry
cherry (n) A virgin of either sex (from the slang: cherry=hymen).
cherry-picker [Amer] One who prefers sex with young girls (see above); railroad switchoperator.
red as a cherry [c.1425]
no cherry without its pip Every good thing has its own particular disadvantage.
a woman and a cherry are painted for their own harm [1659]
I.55j Berries

the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice [Ill Colo Oreg Calif] Commending someone’s maturity.

- Irish grape [Amer] Potato.
- not care/give/worth a gooseberry
- old raspberry Red-nosed character.
- strawberry mark Birth-mark of a soft red colour.

I.55k Nuts

sound/sweet as a nut [1599]

dry as nuts

you are a sweet nut—the devil crack you! [1583] The latter part sotto voce, or in repartee.

the gods send nuts to them that have no teeth Folk often receive what they no longer want.

have neither nut nor gall in you [wYks] Have no spirit, i.e. nothing to make you either sweet or sour of temper. (See also E.30a,…neither knap nor gaw, and I.28c,…gut nor gall.)

by the husk you may guess at the nut May judge by appearances.

a rough husk often covers a sweet kernel/a rough husk and a fair kernel [Gall]/sweet is the nut, but bitter the shell [1566] A comment on someone’s unpromising exterior.

the harder the shell, the sweeter the kernel [Ont III]

husky With a dry, rough, hoarse voice.

hard/tough nut to crack [1745] Hard task; person difficult to agree with; intractable problem.

thou mun crack the nut before thou can eat the krindle [sLan]/he who would eat the nut must first crack the shell/you’ll have to crack the shells before you can count the kernels/he that will eat the kernel must crack the nut [1500] Nothing without trouble; work first, reward after.

crack that nut! Solve that problem. Similarly, crack (v) and get it cracked.

crack nuts [sNot] Stamp one foot on the ice while sliding.

thou can crack that nut—and play with the kernel [sLan] Deal with that unwelcome fact or problem, if you can.

come to the heart of the nut To the point, main item.

kernel (n) Central part or reality; main item; crux of the matter.

sweet as a kern [=kernel—Cum]

almond-eyed With eyes oval and obliquely set, as in Mongolian races.

the milk in the coconut [Amer] Odd fact; puzzling circumstance; crux of the matter.
that explains/accounts for the milk in the coconut [Amer 1840] At last, all is explained.
has no milk in his coconut Is stupid, crazy.
peanut-roaster [Amer] An insignificant but noisy engine, locomotive or motor vehicle.
don’t buy any wooden nutmegs [NY Mich Ill Okl Texas] Take care; there are pitfalls everywhere.

I.55l Bananas, pineapples

banana (n) Foolish, spineless person (from the softness of a ripe banana); jaundice patient [medical sl.]; yellow-skinned person within a white society [Amer].
banana currency Currency that is unstable because it fluctuates in value with changes in the supply, demand and price of a country’s principal crop.
banana republic Backward nation (because of being dependent on primary agricultural produce only).
top banana Leading comedian on an American theatre bill.
pineapple Hand grenade [Forces 1916].
the rough end of the pineapple [Aus] Harsh, unfair treatment; a bad position; the worst of the deal.

I.56a Seasoning and spices

seasoned/spiced with wit etc. Enlivened, enhanced.
variety is the spice of life
if you chop seasoning too fine it will choke you An impossibility; over-elaboration can spoil the effect.
rough as a (nutmeg-)grater
spice (up) (v) Add something lively or interesting to an otherwise commonplace account, performance etc.
spicy Saucy, to be relished though often in bad taste. Of anecdotes etc.
I wouldn’t give a caraway seed to have it one way or the other [nLin] Am indifferent, unaffected.
I.56b Salt

**the salt of the earth** [950] Those whose influence keeps society wholesome; who set a good example to us all.

- **white as salt**
- **salt away** Save; put away for future use.
- **in salt** [ShI] Laid by for future use.
- **with a grain/pinch of salt** [1647] With doubt, critically, with some reserve. (From the former necessity of heavily seasoning meat that was not fresh. A phrase of Pliny’s.)
- **salt** (v) Sprinkle salt, gold-dust or some other mineral in order to deceive a miner into supposing that a claim is valuable.
- **salt the accounts/books** Make entries higher than they actually should be in order to suggest a spuriously high income for a business. (As/from the above.)
- **salt-pie** [salt-box] Building with a sloping roof on one side only [Yks Lan Cor].
- **salt-box** [Amer] Design of house with two storeys in front and one at the back, in shape like the old wooden salt-box which hung near the kitchen fire.
- **salt and pepper** Slow and quick skipping respectively [Arg Lan Amer].
- **salt-and-pepper** A mixture of light and dark colours in, e.g. greyiing hair or a tweed cloth.

I.56c Sugar

**get the sugar** Be prosperous.

- **sugar bag** [Aus] Nest of wild honey in a tree; honey.
- **neither sugar nor salt** [1738] Not worried by wet weather, hardy enough to stand a wetting.
- **sweet as sugar/grout** [the gritty sediment of sugar in the bottom of a cup—Yks]
- **pour short sweetening** [sugar] into long [molasses] Add something superfluously, ‘gild the lily’ [Msri Ark].

I.56d Honey

**a honey** Something excellent of its kind.

- **sweet** (adj) Charming, pleasant, attractive. Of children, personalities etc.
- **sweet as honey** [c.1475] Honeyed words, tones etc. have intentionally been made attractive.
honey-mouthed, honey-tongued Capable of speaking fair, of saying what you want to hear.

a honey tongue, a heart of gall Said when a person’s words belie their true character. ‘Hony þai bede and gif us gall’ [1300].

you’ll never get honey for hurson [whoreson] from me [Sc] If you scold I will not flatter.

he that hath no honey in his pot, let him have it in his mouth It behoves a poor man to make himself agreeable.

honey-pot Something, someone or somewhere that attracts many people woman’s genitals [C18].

more wasps are caught by honey than by vinegar/more flies are taken with a drop of honey than a tun of vinegar Kindness achieves more than the opposite.

honey and nuts [Nhp] Something unexpectedly gratifying.

it is all honey or all turd with them They are either on very good terms or very bad.

all honey and muck [nYks] Pleasant and kind, homely.

I.56e Vinegar and other pickling agents

acerbity [the flavour of sour and bitter combined] Of harsh, bitter actions or words.

acrimonious [<Lat acrimonia=sharpness, pungency of taste]

sour (adj) Of an unpleasant, peevish, morose disposition.

vinegar (n) A peevish nature; a sour-tempered individual.

sour as vinegar (See above.)

sharp as vinegar [1607] Clever, quick-witted [Oxf].

vinegary/a vinegar aspect Of a sour disposition.

eat vinegar with a fork Be sharp-tongued.

acid wit, tongue, remark Biting, sarcastic.

sour as vargis [verjuice—Cum sLan Nhp]/eisell/ eysel [a vinegar made from crab-apple juice—Lan]

bitter/sour as wharre/whir [verjuice—Cum wYks sLan Der Chs] (As above.)

sour as crab-verjuice [Lakel Chs Lin Shr War]

sour as souse [pickling brine—Cum]

I.56f Pickles

pickled/soused [Amer] Completely drunk.

in a pickle [1585] In a predicament, a sorry plight, confusion, disarray.

look as green as West India pickles

wally/wolly [salt pickled cucumber—Cockney] Idiot, moron.
at home, like a sprat in a pickle-jug

I.56g Pepper

peppercorn rent Merely nominal amount, to acknowledge freehold. (Paid until 1940 on Waddington Fell [Yks] with peppercorns, as by tradition.)

pepper (v) Cast very many questions, shots etc. on—as in ‘peppered them with small shot’.

pep/pepper (n) [Amer] Energy, vitality. Hence, pep-talk=hortatory speech designed to inspire or restore enthusiasm.

peppery (adj) Hot-tempered.

pepper-and-salt=salt-and-pepper (see I.56b)

I.56h Mustard

mustard (n) A keen and efficient operator; the person or thing that adds interest or piquancy to a situation. ‘He is mustard at…’.

keen/strong as mustard

the mountain is a good mustard [Ire] Food tastes better after hard work.

cut the mustard [UK, passim Msri Kan] Come up to scratch, expectations, required standard; succeed; have sex (with relish).

peppery as Durham mustard

knock-kneed as a Durham man (Who grinds mustard with his knees.)

wit as thick as Tewkesbury mustard [See Shaks, Hy IVii II.iv—1598]

I.56i Ginger

ginger (n) Mettle, spirit. (Possibly because horses for sale were ‘gingered up’ to give the impression of spirit.)

hot as ginger [fiery-tempered—Sc 1750]

ginger group A body of persons who ‘leaven the lump’ of a larger organisation with the stimulus of their drive and enthusiasm.
I.56j Sauces

**sauce** (n) Zest, piquancy. ‘The sauce of a gamble.’

**sauced** Enlivened. A sermon sauced with wit.’

**sauce** (n) Insolence, cheek. Hence:

**saucy** Insolent, cheeky.

**hunger is the best sauce** [1362]

I.56k Oil

**palm oil** Bribe, money for bribes.

**truth and sweet oil always come to the top** The truth will always come out, in time.

**oil and vinegar/water** Opposites, incompatibles, irreconcilables—of any two incongruous elements.

**oily/unctuous** Having a smooth, ingratiating, greasy type of character—hence, unwholesome.

**oil your tongue** Speak gratifying words, flatter.

**sma rm** [a greasy or oily stuff] (v) Smooth out; reduce to an even standard; flatter, toady.

I.56l Treacle

**slick as molasses** Oily, fawning.

**slick** Smooth-tongued, deceitful, plausible [Sc Shr sWar].

**sweet as molasses**

**slow/thick as molasses in December/January/winter** (Because the colder the weather, the slower it runs.)

**treacle/treacly—music, novels etc.** Lush, sentimental, sickly and cloying.

**stiff and sticky as treacle foot** [the sediment in treacle—Lin]

**if you nobbut say treacle she’ll lick!** Quick on the uptake; needs little telling.
I.57a Preparing bread, pastry, cakes

yeasty Frothy and overblown. Of a style of talking or writing.

barmy Mad, crazy (from the frothing of working barm—yeast).

barm-head [Lan]/barm-stick [a long flattened stick for stirring yeast] Soft, feeble-minded person. (As/from the above.)


barm-head [Lan]/barm-stick [a long flattened stick for stirring yeast] Soft, feeble-minded person. (As/from the above.)

barmy Mad, crazy (from the frothing of working barm—yeast).


tak the bree [juice, liquor, broth, gravy—Sc Yks Lan] wi’ the barm Take the bad with the good, the rough with the smooth.

leaven (n) A small, wholesome, improving and pervading addition to the mass; spreading and transforming influence. [See Matt xiii.33]

rise like plumming [yeast—Cor] (This is perhaps the same as in plum-pudding, which in Cornwall is a light pudding.)

plum [soft and doughy—Cor] as bun-dough Soft in the head, of a simpleton; an easy touch for a loan or hand-out.

sticky as a dough pan [Cor]

down on his dough [War] Unlucky.

sourdough [a lump of leaven used in raising bread baked during the winter—Can nwAmer Alaska Aus] A miner or explorer who has wintered in Alaska. (They carried over a lump from each baking to go sour and start the next batch with, taking it to bed to keep it warm.)

dusty as a flour-poke [nYks]

she has shoved her head in her mother’s bran-bag [Sus] Of a freckled girl.

have bran in the face/be bran-faced [Lin] Be freckle-faced.

muckle elt [dough, oatcake—Sc Yks Lan Lin Nhp] Stout, clumsy woman.

‘t is easy to knead near the meal-sack [Ire Ont NY Mich Miss] Work is no trouble when you are well-off in any case.

makes paste [=pastry: nLin] Of a cat ‘kneading’ with its forefeet before going to sleep.

saffron (v) Give colour, interest, make more palatable. ‘To saffron with my predicacioun’ [G.Chaucer, Prologe of the Pardoners Tale ln. 345—1386].

she’d cut a currant in half [nStf] Parsimonious.

he’s that mean he’d nip a curn in two [wYks] (As above.)

I.57b Preparing puddings

not care/give/worth a pudding-prick [the thin wooden skewer used for testing puddings and cakes, and for fastening the ends of the gut containing a pudding: 1530]

he has thwitten [whittled down—Sc n&wEng] a mill-post to a pudding-prick [1528] Has dissipated his estate.
if ever you make a good pudding, I’ll eat the prick [Sc] I do not expect you will ever do any good thing.

make your pudding according to your plums [Ont Ill] Match your ambitions to your resources; do the best with what you have.

white as a pudding clout [Lan]
pudding-bag [Nhp Bdf] Long-tailed tit (from the style of its nest).
pudding-bag road/street [War sStf] Cul-de-sac.
too much salt in the pudding! You have overdone it (whatever).
know how many eggs are in everyone’s pudding [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—4 November 1830] Be too well acquainted with everyone else’s affairs.
over-egg the pudding [1892] Exaggerate, overstate your case, overdo something and so spoil the result [n&eYks].

I.57c Preparing gruels

stir (v and n)—the blood, imagination etc. Arouse, stimulate, excite.
make a stir Provoke comment, other reactions.
caudle [warm, sweet and nourishing drink, fortified with wine or ale] of hemp-seed Death by hanging. Also, hempen caudle [Shaks, Hy VIIi IV.vii—1592].
caudle together [1790] Mix inextricably.
one ill weed mars a whole pot of pottage [a soup or gruel composed of chopped herbs and vegetables: 1546] Of the contaminating influence in a society of the bad element, however small.
tender as Parnell, that broke her finger in a posset-curd [1678]
Grantham gruel—nine grits and a gallon of water [1624] Applied to those who multiply what is superfluous and diminish what is necessary; who over-elaborate what they say.
thick as todge [=stodge, a thick, semi-liquid food, usually farinacious—Wil]
thick as cummins [water mixed with dried oat husks—Nhb] Of muddy water.
wet as sop [bread soaked or stewed]/drammock [raw oatmeal in water—Sc Nhb Cum]
soft as mush [porridge or mash made with maize-meal boiled in milk or water till it thickens—Not Amer]
mushy—stories, songs etc. Sentimental, slushy, feeble. (As/from the above.)

I.58a Cooks

every cook praises his own broth Everyone praises their own work.
he’s an ill/a sarry [Sc] **cook that cannot lick his own fingers** [1510] Of one who does not use things of his own making; of embezzlement, perks etc.

**cooks are not to be taught in their own kitchen** Of criticism of a person’s special skill.

**starve in a cook’s shop** [1611] He that loves another better than himself starves in a cook’s shop.

a **cook-ruffian, able to scald the devil out of his feathers** Of one perfect in wickedness.

as **honest a woman as ever burnt malt**

### I.58b The dangers of cooking

**scalding tears** Tears of sheer anguish.

**as ill scalded as burnt** [Der] From one evil to another; one just as bad as the other.

**cauld water scalds daws** [silly, chattering, lazy people—Sc Ire Lin War IW Dev: Sc] Implying they would be hurt by merely touching cold water.

**dinna scald yoursel’ wi’ your ain ladle** [Sc] A warning that you are likely to bring harm to yourself.

**steamy—scene, film etc.** Sexually arousing; containing much sexual reference.

**if you can’t stand the heat, get/keep/stay out of the kitchen** A dismissal of those who are flagging or complaining in conditions that are integral to the work or situation, q.d. ‘you must have realised it was going to be like this’. Also, ‘If you can’t stand the smell of the bread, get out of the bakehouse’ [Cor].

### I.58c Cooking

**cookery** The technical skills of painting pictures; mixing, ‘concocting’ colours etc.

**cook up** Fabricate, concoct; contrive; produce out of little or nothing.

**cook the accounts, books** Falsify entries.

**concoct** [Lat *con-coquere=cook, boil together] Fabricate; put together unlikely elements to make a suspicious total (as a cook might ‘concoct’ an unusual dish).

**on the fire** [Amer] Pending, in preparation.

**now you’re cooking with gas** [Amer] Now you’ve got the right idea; are going the right way, are performing well.

**on the back-burner** In the making, in preparation; in full swing; also, (more commonly) temporarily relegated, postponed; ready in reserve for the time being; not at present under consideration [Amer]. (The original idea was that when all the cooking preparations had been done and the pan brought to the boil, it could be transferred to a lower light and left to simmer.)
put it on to the front-burner Make it a priority.

I.59a Pots

put the pot on [Wil] Get angry.
put her pot on Ingratiate yourself with her.
as pleased as if the pot was on
have the saucepan on the fire [wYks] Be ready for a scolding match.
tepid Weak, feeble. Of half-hearted support, lukewarm affections.

I.59b Pot-boiling

a watched pot never boils [1848] Anxiety only makes a waiting time seem even longer.
fair words will not make the pot play [boil—1721]/boil They leave the facts, the actual situation unchanged.
make the pot boil [S Pepys—21 May 1667] Prove remunerative, effective.
money will make the pot boil/play, though the devil piss in the fire [Sc Ont Wis Kenty Tenn: 1699] On the efficacy of bribery.
bring to the boil Bring into prominence.
boiling point High excitement; the crisis after a period of increasing tension. The situation has reached boiling point.’
don’t stick your hand in boiling water to see if it’s hot [RI] It is unnecessary and inadvisable to test some truths by personal experience.
boil the kettle [Sc] Provide for the future.
a kettle rattles most before it boils [NY Colo] The preliminaries are often more striking than the actual event.
boil the pot Furnish a livelihood.
pot-boiler [1864] A work of art inspired only by the need to earn money.
one pot sets another boiling Passions are communicable.
not have to look for the ladle when the pot comes a-boil [nYks] Be prepared; take proper precautions.
on the boil On the loose [wYks Lan].
all in a boil Hurried and excited [Cor].
in a hoo [on the boil, simmering—Ken Hmp] In confusion, disorder.
simper like a pot that’s ready to run over
when the pot’s full it will boil over [1721] The explanation for an emotional outburst or breakdown.
the pot will boil over Things will erupt, come to a head [nwLin].
your saucepan boils over You are saucy, cheeky.
when the pot boils over, it cools itself Of the release of emotion in tears etc.
boil over Make a quarrel, scandal [nLin]; of a stock market, fall back after a good
spell.
boil-over [Aus] Sporting surprise, unexpected result.
ebullient Overflowing with wit, enthusiasm, vitality.
keep the kettle/pot boiling [1825] Keep the game, work, argument going; get a
living.
keep the pudding hot/hold the pudden reeking [Sc] Keep it up, continue—the
dancing, merriment etc.
boil with—rage Reach an extreme state of anger; teem with, variously [Cor].
it makes my blood boil [1675] Makes me furious, indignant.
it boils down to…[1880] Reduces to simple terms (from the way in which a stew
boils down to a concentrated essence). Similarly, to boil down an article or piece of
writing is to condense it.
go off the boil Lose the sexual urge; lose the contractions and labour pains—of a
woman in childbirth.

I.59c Seething

seethe with anger etc. [1874] Continue in a state of barely suppressed anger etc.
simmer with anger, laughter etc. Continue in a hardly controlled state.
simmer down [Amer 1871] Gradually regain equanimity after passion, fury etc.
simmer down on…[Msri Ark] Concentrate on.

your head’s so hot your brains bubble over Of one impetuous with extravagant
ideas.

I.59d Moving pans

carry hot water with you [Not Lei War] Bring ill will, quarrel.
coup the crans [overturn the cooking trivets—Sc] Overthrow, get the upper hand;
ruin, spoil work; misbehave (of women).
coup the ladle(s) [Uls] Turn head over heels.
I.60a Frying

**hot grease** [Amer] Impending trouble.

**out of the frying-pan into the fire** [1528] From a bad situation to a worse.

**sizzle** (v) Generate thrilling heat or speed (like the warmth and excitement of food frying). Often, sizzling=sexually exciting.

**sizzle like bacon in a skillet** [Amer]

**in a fry** [internal parts, usually eaten fried—Sc Yks Shr War Suf Som] In a state of worry or agitation.

**burn the paper he fried in** [Dev] Fall out with his job, family; spoil his environment.

**chafe/fret/fry/melt/stew/sweat in his own grease** [C14] Suffer the consequences of his own policies or actions; be tormented by his own passions.

**he melts his grease** Exhausts himself with violent efforts.

**had but little butter and cast that on the coals** [Sc] Mismanaged even a modest estate.

**the fat is in the fire** [1546] The secret is out; the trouble is on us; it has failed.

**Jack-a-making-pancakes** [IW] Sunlight on a pail of water reflected on the ceiling.

**pancake-turner** [Amer] Disc jockey.

**pancake** (v) [1911] Of aircraft, land as with a belly-flop, by stalling the engine (from the resemblance when a pancake is well tossed in the frying pan).

I.60b Roasting

**hot enough to roast an ox**

**spit** (v) [spike spit through meat for roasting] Run through with a sword, transfix.

**standing there like a j**ack [clockwork turnspit] that is run down! [War 1859] To someone who is standing idle.

**always the same way, like a bottle-jack** [Yks] (Ironic, as it turns both ways.)

**like the wife that ne’er cries for the ladle till the fat runs over** [1862] Of feckless people who never anticipate events.

**latch** (v) [catch what falls, like dripping in the latch-pan—EAn] Catch an infectious or contagious disease [Lan]. Hence, **latching** [nEng]=contagious.

**hang your latchpan** [pan to catch dripping from the roast] Look miserable; pout the lips.

**squeeze fat out of...** Derive or extract profit, advantage from something.

**every man basteth the fat hog (while the lean one burneth)** [1670] Folk are most generous to those who need it least.

**hog-fat** Someone unwanted; of no use to anyone.

**sop** [piece of bread soaked in dripping from the roast] **in the pan** Favour, bribe, sweetener.

**grill** (v) Interrogate harshly, by third degree methods.
thin as a griddle

**gridiron** (n) (—street plan) One where the streets run either at right angles or parallel to each other; also used to describe the naval manoeuvre in which several ships criss-cross their courses.

**gridironer** [Aus NZ] A settler who bought land in strips so that the land in between was of no use to another buyer, and could be bought later, cheaply.

**on the gridiron** In great torment, anxiety.

**you cannot make a pancake on a gridiron** Implying that you have not the right tool or scholar.

**the gridiron grumbles at the frying-pan** Criticism from one equally bad.

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**I.60c Stewing**

**go to (the) pot** [1546] Deteriorate to the point of being useless. (From stewing meat that was unfit for roasting. Another possible origin is the consignment of scrap metal to the melting pot.)

**stew** (n) State of fearful or anxious perplexity. Hence, in a stew=mentally agitated.

**let him stew in his own juice!** [1656] Leave him to suffer the consequences of his own folly, actions.

**hodge-podge/hotch-potch** [stew containing mixed meat and vegetables] Incongruous mixture; medley; confused jumble [Sc Nhb wYks: 1386]; parliamentary act that includes unrelated measures; legal process by which several properties are added together and then divided between heirs and/or heiresses, usually where there is no will.

**gallimaufrey** [<Fr galimafrée=hash made up of odds and ends; dish of minced meats, potatoes etc.—Yks Lan Shr] Confused jumble, ridiculous muddle [1579]; miscellany of people or of qualities within one person; someone wearing an odd mixture of clothes; a woman as sexual object [C19].

**olla podrida** [<Sp olla podrida=putrid pot, a pot au feu where kitchen scraps were stewed] Medley, incongruous mixture.

**throw it in the pot** [nEng] Add it to the other suggestions, possibilities; try it out.

**confound/confuse/confusion** [<Lat confundere=pour and mix all together]

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**I.60d Broths**

**make white broth of...** Boil to death (the old punishment for poisoners).

**ower mickle cookery spills the bruise** [= spoils the broth—Sc] Trying too hard can worsen the result.

**too many cooks spoil the broth** [1575] Work is badly done when there are too many in charge of it.
hazel-broth [wYks] Flogging with a hazel-stick.

stir a kettle of sour broth [War 1859] Introduce a displeasing topic; remind folk of unhappy experiences.

boil stones in butter and you may sup the broth Anything is acceptable if the compensations are good enough; you may educate fools well, but there will be little to show for it.

make pottage of a flint Live frugally

a spoonful of skitter [diarrhoea—Sc] will spoil a potful of skink [strong broth—Sc] A small addition of something bad corrupts much that is good.

good broth may be made in an old pot [1611] Sexual.

heat the broth [Nhp]/warm up old broth Resume a courtship; renew an engagement after a rift [Lin]; renew old quarrels [Nhb].

het/hetted broth [Cor] Cast-off lover taken by another; entertainment heard before.

cold soup warms quickly [IMa] Lovers’ quarrels are soon resolved.

ladle out Distribute, dispense indiscriminately.

the less there is in a jug, the more noise it makes coming out [Ind Kan] Of one who says much but to little effect.

I.60e Porridge

old porridge/pottage is sooner heated than new made [1670] Old loves are more easily reconciled than new loves begun. (See also I.61d, old kail…)

warm up old porridge [Lan] Renew old love.

ye rin for the spurtle [stick for stirring porridge—Sc Ire Cum Wm Yks] when the pot’s boiling ower [Sc] Take precautions too late.

spurtle-legs [Sc] Thin, spindly legs.

give the porridge another stir [Lan] Try again (whatever).

I’ll have a lick of the mundle [stick for stirring porridge—Chs Shr] if I burn my tongue I am prepared to suffer for what I want.

a queer stick (to make a thivel of [stick for stirring porridge—Sc nEng]) An awkward person.

lick a thivel [Cum] Suffer hunger, poverty.

as meet as a treen [wooden] ladle for a porridge pot [Sc]

butter in the gulls [oatmeal porridge or hasty pudding—nEng] Something sure to be discovered (because butter put in a hole in the middle of it will melt and run out).

cook the parritch/porridge [Sc] Manage a piece of business; make the preparations; contrive something.

not worth salt to the poddish [=porridge—nEng] Quite worthless [Wm].

put that in your jug and rumble it! [stir it well—Sc Ire nEng Wil] Give it due consideration [nIre] (=put that in your pipe and smoke it, q.v. K.24).
I.61a Cooking fish

have other fish to fry [C17] Have something else; have more important work to do.
red as a lobster unboiled/raw lobster A policeman or sailor in his blue uniform.
(Uncooked lobsters are blue, only turning red when boiled.)
dead as a red lobster
he has boiled his lobster Has left the church and joined the army (changing colour from black to red).
he won’t make a lobster-kettle of my cunt! Of a soldier with whom the speaker does not intend intercourse.
full as a biled wulk [=boiled whelk—Sc: C19]
stewed to the gills [Amer] Very drunk.
like a herring on a griddle Uneasy, fidgety.
no fit to draw a herring off the brander [griddle, gridiron—Sc nlre] In serious decline.

I.61b Cooking fowl

make squab-pie of...[eDev] Make a fool of, overcome someone completely.
the voice of the pigeon in the pot is not like the voice of the pigeon in the tree [Ill] Take the circumstances into account when interpreting what is said.
too many cocks in the pot to lose [Stf] Too much at stake to risk failure.
cook his goose (for him) [1851] Settle his nonsense; ruin his chances.
drunk as a boiled owl
hotter than/tough as a boiled owl [Ind]
look like a stewed owl [Cor] Red-faced and staring.
schmaltz [dripping, goose or chicken grease—Ger Yiddish] Extreme sentimentality in writing, and especially in music.

I.61c Cooking eggs

coddle [1818] Nurse tenderly, pamper. (From the late C16 use of coddle=lightly boil—eggs or apples—to make them suitable for invalids.)
egg-boiler [Aus] Bowler hat (because, in hot weather, it seems to be cooking your head like an egg in a pan).
fast as egg-boiling [sLan]
hard-boiled [Amer 1886] Insensitive, thick-skinned, callous, shrewd.
hard-boiled egg [Amer] Severe uncompromising person. (From the above.)

there’s wit in poaching/roasting eggs [1659] You should use common sense, however trivial the task.

have eggs on the spit [1601] Have business in hand.

have other eggs to fry [1659] Have other business to attend to.

from fried eggs come no chickens [Oreg] What is consumed can be of no further use.

butter-and-egg man [Amer] Simple, good spender.

they set their neighbour’s house on fire to roast their own eggs Are reckless of the consequences to others in gratifying their own whims.

the eggs are cooked [NZ] That’s done it! He’s done for!

I.61d Cooking vegetables

the whole boiling All the lot [n, mid&sEng Dev Cor Wxf].

I don’t boil my cabbage twice in the same water A retort when asked to repeat something.

colewort twice sodden Unnecessary repetition.

he that lends his pot may seethe his kail in his loof [palm—Sc Ire nEng: 1737] A case of being over-generous.

teem (v) [pour off water from pan or kettle—Sc Ire Eng] Rain heavily; give birth frequently—hence, be very numerous [Sc Cum Yks Der Lin].


old kail are sooner warmed than new ones made [Cum] Old loves sooner reconciled than new loves begun. (See also I.60e, old porridge…)

hold the kail hot [Bwk] Encourage someone to keep going, cheer on.

if you rush the woman, the spuds will be hard [Ire] A hasty courtship will not succeed.

strain the potatoes [Aus] Urinate.

a hot potato [1952] Something to be avoided, treated with caution and got rid of as soon as possible—being awkward to handle.

drop/hold a hot potato Relinquish/be given a task that was too awkward, dangerous, embarrassing for others.

talk does not cook rice [NY SC Ill]

nesh [soft, tender—Lan] as a boiled turnip

soft as a boiled turnip [e&wYks] Easily reduced to tears.

I.62a Ovens

busy as a wife at an oven
silks and satins put out the kitchen fire [1640] A household cannot afford both fuel and fine clothes.

a little wood will heat a little oven [1642] Sexual.

old ovens are soon heated Older people respond quickly.

busy as an (English) oven at Christmas

clean as a Dutch oven (But, in the Army, a ‘Dutch oven’ describes a bed in which someone has been farting.)

quake like an oven

mouth as wide as ony town yubbem [=oven—Cum]

mouth like a parish oven [wmidEng] Dry with thirst.


dry as an oon-shelf [=oven-shelf—sLan]

who has been in the oven knows where to look for his/her son/daughter [1520]

When parents suspect children of their own faults.

the old woman would never have looked in the oven for her daughter if she had not been there herself [Nhp] he who has been in the oven himself knows where to find the pastry (As/from the above.)

eye was set aff frae the oon for nipping [breaking pieces off] the pies [Sc] You dare not return to the scene of your misdoings.

in the same oven In the same plight.

gape against a red-hot oven [Nrf] Act futilely; ask for trouble; expose your failings to the strong.

Ne wit þan ofne me ne 3onie [yawn]

[Nicholas de Guildford, The Owl and the Nightingale—c.1248]

like stopping an oven with butter [Chs] Of a futile attempt.

dry snow in an oven [1736] Attempt the impossible.

split-level Operating in two different ways; with double standards (from those modern cookers that have the hob and oven separated).

I.62b Baking

dry/flat as a backstone [=bakstone= bakestone, the flat oven stone on which loaves etc. were baked]

Rooly Moor, bare as a backstone for five mile round [Lan]

like a worm on a hot backstone [wYks] Writhing, squirming, uncomfortable.

news spread like butter on a hot backstone [w&midYks]

hot off the backstone Outspoken, plain and direct [Stf].

beard like a baker’s shool [=shovel—Sc 1823] A spade beard matted with particles of food.
dry as a bak-spittle/baking spittle [the thin flat wooden spoon used for turning oatcakes on the backstone—Yks Lan]

baking spittle (n) The tongue (from the shape, or even because it ‘cooks things up’).
as you brew (the yeast), so will you bake [wYks 1548: Can Amer] As you begin, so will you continue.
be not a baker if your head be of butter [1670] Adapt your life to your personal limitations.

set not your loaf in till the oven’s hot [1732] Do not make a start until the conditions are right.

she has a bun/pudding in the oven [C19] Is pregnant.

my bread is in the oven [Hrf] I cannot afford to neglect my work at this time; am fully committed.

I ken best how to turn my ain cake! [Sc] I know my own mind, business best.

they never beuk [=baked] a good cake, but may bake an ill [Sc] A preponderance of good work does not preclude the possibility of bad work being done. (Note the force of ‘but’ here=who are not capable of…)

I had rather my bannock should burn than that you should turn it [Sc] I don’t want your help.

flustered [‘caught’ or scorched by the surrounding fire] Usually of turf-cakes [nYks].

scowdered [caught, scorched in the cooking—NCy] Overheated with working.

he went in with the bread/loaves and came out with the cakes [Chs War nWor] Is ‘halfbaked’, simple. Hence:
cake(r) (n) Simpleton.
dough-baked [wSom wDor: 1592]/half-baked [1855] Half-witted.

slack-baked [half-baked—Nrf Nhp War Oxf] Foolish [Dev].
do it up brown [Amer] Do it thoroughly.
done brown Deceived, taken in.
browned off [Forces 1915] Disgruntled, bored and disillusioned.

turn out [1735] Happen, end up in a certain state (as when baking is turned out of the oven).

ye winna believe that a bannock’s hardened unless ye knock on it wi’ yer nail [Sc] You are over-sceptical.

the grace of a grey bannock is in the baking of it [Sc] On showing something to advantage.

scone of the baking [1628] Specimen, sample. ‘Ae scone o’ that baking’s enough’—sc. to know the rest by [Sc].
your bread’s baked, you may hing up your girdle [=griddle, a round iron plate hung over the fire during the baking of bread and cakes—Sc] You are well provided for.

baking in the night makes doafy [=doughy] bread [wYks Lan] Staying up late makes you heavy, sad and pasty—like dough.

feck [=fike, bustle, fidget—Sc Ire Nhb Yks] it away, like old wives baking [Sc]
I.63a Bread

bread and bread Male homosexuals.
…or there’s no bread in nine loaves! [Nhp Dor: 1820] Stressing how impossible or unthinkable something is.

they wad gar ye trow [make you believe—Sc] that ae thing’s twa, and yer lug hauf a bannock They are extremely plausible.

wrong side of the bannock [Sc] An inhospitable reception.

a round gawsy [handsome and jolly—Sc] face like a Selkirk bannie [=bannock—eLth]

bannock-faced [Cum] A flat face and a short nose.

warm as a bap [flat breakfast roll—Sc]

crusty Short-tempered, irritable.

crust Also (by extension) includes any hardening or deposit on something usually less solid, as the crust of the earth, of wine or snow; a hardness of attitude or behaviour.

the upper crust [1843] The aristocratic stratum of society. (It was the custom at one time to offer the upper crust of the loaf to the most honoured guests.)

give a loaf and beg a shive [slice—passim; wYks: 1631] By being too generous, to leave yourself without; part with your property and then have to plead for the return of some of it.

hot as a pone cake [the bread of Native Americans, made of maize into thin cakes and cooked in hot ashes—Amer]

pan-loaf [Sc] Affected, cultured speech; a pretentious person. (A dearer loaf, and so associated with a refined class of people.)

white-bread [Amer 1970s] Member of white middle class of society; bland, conventional.

I.63b Eating bread

companion [<Lat cum+panis=with bread, sharing bread, messmate]

in good bread In a good living or position.

in bad bread [ShI Cai] In a bad state, in danger, difficulties, poverty, disfavour.

in bad bread with…[Cai] At enmity with someone.

get in for/into bad bread [sWor] Get into trouble; meet with an accident.

take bread and salt Curse and swear.

it is good to eat your brown bread first Prosperity is better when older.

are there traitors at the table that the loaf is turned the wrong side upwards? [1678] (A custom dating from Jacobite times.)

bread today is better than cake tomorrow [Ind Oreg]
you have gotten a piece of Kitty Slatchcock’s bannock [Sc: 1721] You flatter me for a purpose. (‘Kitty’ was often used disrespectfully, and a slatch was a sloven, slattern [Slk].)

bite not my bannock! [Sc] Don’t interfere with my property.

a broken bannock is as good as eaten Once the rot starts, destruction follows; a small concession is soon followed by more serious inroads.

blow your moolins [crumbs—Sc] Reach the end of life etc. (From the action of boys at the end of their ‘piece’, of blowing the dust off the fragments of oatmeal cake before eating them.)

a shive [sLan Chs]/slice/whang [thick slice—Sc n Ire Nhb Dur Cum Yks Lin Not War Lei] off a cut loaf is never missed Intercourse with a woman no longer a virgin is less likely to be discovered.

What man, more water glideth by the mill Than wots the Miller of, and easie it is, Of a cut loafe to steale a shive, we know:

[Shaks, T4 II.i—1594]

it’s no use my leaving off eating bread because you were choked with a crust Said by someone who refuses to accept another’s experience as relevant to himself.

hot/warm as toast [c.1430]

toast-rack The Douglas horse-tram [IMa]; open-sided footboard tram used in Sydney [Aus].

have on toast Swindle; have someone at your mercy; keep them worrying; have them just where you want them.

take the bread out of his mouth [1708] Forestall him; take away his livelihood.

lommock [thick lump of food—passim+Amer] Clumsy, awkward person [sNot Nhp War EAn Amer],

make mammocks of…[awkward, messed up lumps of food—Sc Eng (not Dev or Cor) Amer] Make a mess, confusion of…[Yks Not Chs Shr Nhp War Wor Hrf Wil].

a good deal to chew, but little to swallow Insubstantial gossip. (Originally of shop bread.)

eat a melder [the quantity of corn from one grinding, the bread made from this—Sc Ire nEng] Undertake too much; overdo things.

I.63c Bread and butter

always check that there’s bread under the butter [Ire] Do not rely only on appearances.

a bread and butter job Work done solely for the income it provides.

a bread and butter wicket A good batting wicket.

quarrel with your bread and butter [1738] Leave the work you live by.

lick the butter off his bread [Sc] Supplant him—in business etc.
it takes no butter off your bread [Ire] Does not affect you.
no butter will stick to his bread Everything goes wrong with him.
he does not know which side his bread is buttered on [1546] Does not know where he can best obtain his livelihood; does not know when he is well off.
the butter is on your side of the bread [Orl] This is all to your advantage.
butter bread on both sides Be wastefully extravagant; gain advantage from both sides at once.
bread buttered on both sides Stroke of unexpected good luck.
smorgasbord [=Sw smörgåsbord=bread-and-butter table] Mixture, medley, wide range of choices (as in the Swedish buffet of starters consisting of various open sandwiches and delicacies).

I.63d Bread and…

sandwich (v) Place between, usually with little room (as in the case of the filling of a sandwich); a sandwich course is one where periods of practical and theoretical instruction alternate; and a sandwich man is himself the filling between the two advertisement boards he carries.
put on jam [Aus] Speak affectedly.
jam on it/on both sides [1919] Better than is deserved; very easy. ‘They want jam on it’= they want more than they can reasonably expect.
jam tomorrow! [1871] Something attractive, always in prospect, but never materialising.

I.64a Meals

foretaste [1435] Prior experience; small indication of what can be expected later.
for starters Just to begin with; more to follow.
only the first course (As above.)
why worry? it is coming off a broad board [Uls] Someone else is paying.
boarding is the best laithing [putting food on the table is the best invitation—sLan] A firm offer, or making something readily available, or an act of welcome is better than promises.
take pot-luck [1592] Accept whatever happens to be available.
savour of the pan Betray its origin.
take meat before grace Have sex before marriage.
new meat begets new appetite Often with a sexual application.
meat and drink to him [1533] What he thrives on.
one man’s meat is another man’s poison [1576] People differ so much that what is
good for one may be bad for another.

weak food for weak stomachs Those who are weak intellectually must not be asked
to think too hard.

pick up crumbs Be convalescent [e&wYks Chs sStf Nrf Nhp seWor wSom: 1474];
finish work neatly [Wor].

drunk as pickings [scraps of food—wYks]

standing dish Topic that recurs regularly.

dish out Distribute military honours etc. indiscriminately (as a cook dishes out for a
mess or dining hall).

dish it out Be severe in giving reprimands, punishment etc.
dish up… Present in an attractive and acceptable form arguments, proposals etc.
lay it in his dish Accuse him of it.

he has couped [tipped] the mickle dish into the little [Sc] Has wasted his substance.
he who marries a widow will often have a dead man’s head thrown in his dish
[1546] Will suffer by comparison with his predecessor.

folk often get a good meal out of a dirty dish Unclean or immoral persons are
nonetheless capable of good deeds.

make a meal of…[1961] Make the most of; perform especially thoroughly so as to get
maximum effect and satisfaction from.

skeleton at the feast [1839] Thing that detracts from pleasure; intrusive worry;
reminder of trouble; memento mori. (The ancient Egyptians were supposed to have sat a
skeleton in a prominent place at their banquets.)
cater for… Provide, variously; make allowance for; be prepared for.
enough and no more, like Mrs Milton’s feast [Chs] (John Milton’s third wife was
Elizabeth Minshull of Wistanstow near Nantwich. She was poor and proud, and this
saying comments on her enforced frugality.)
soup-and-fish Men’s evening dress, dinner suit (because the class of meal requiring a
dinner suit would include all the courses).
time and tide and buttered eggs wait for no man

that was the day the omelette/shit hit the fan When everything went wrong. (‘When
the shit hits the fan’ [Amer Can]=when the trouble really starts.)
from the soup to the nuts From beginning to end, completely.
from the eggs to the apples (As above.)
wants a boiled halfpenny Of a weak, silly person.

I.64b Breakfast

if you sing before breakfast, you’ll cry before night Too much hilarity cannot last.

eat him alive for breakfast Ruthlessly use and then discard him.

worse than Stiven’s breakfast [Oxf] Of a meal set disorderly.
a nod from a lord is a breakfast for a fool [1732]
Mexican breakfast [Amer] A cigarette and a glass of water.
boring as a bowl of soggy cornflakes [1990s schoolchildren]

I.64c Lunch

out to lunch [Amer] Stupid, gormless, insane, not ‘with it’; crazy, eccentric; unconscious through drink or drugs.

eat his lunch [Amer] Defeat decisively.

I.64d Tea

go (out) for (your) tea Be compelled to leave on a dangerous errand; die.

I.64e Dinner

done like a dinner [Aus] Thoroughly defeated.

dinner-bell Parliamentary speaker, like Burke, whose speeches were so boring they drove the members out to their meals.

slow as a late dinner [Ire]

he that hains [saves, spares, refrains from—Sc] his dinner will have the mair to his supper [Sc: 1616] If you are sparing in youth, you will have sufficient for your old age.

has had more...than has had hot dinners To emphasise an unbelievably large consumption of something.

I.64f Supper

he that sups with the devil needs a long spoon If you associate with bad company, keep them at a distance, don’t get involved.

‘Therfor bihoweth him a ful long spoon That shal ete with a feend,’ thus herde I seye

[G. Chaucer, Squieres Tale ln.602—1386]
set him his supper [n&wYks] Do what he dare not do in his turn.
he who sups late sups well Of one marrying late in life.
 warming her husband's supper Of a woman sitting in front of the fire with her skirts up.

I.65a Eating

it sets you well to slaver, you let such gaudys [hanks] fall [Sc] You are acting too presumptuously.
  enough to make his mouth water Of something he would greatly relish for himself. Hence, ‘mouth-watering’.
  have other things on my plate Have other or different things I must do.
  have/take enough/a lot/too much on your plate/a plateful Have/undertake more than you can well manage to deal with.
  get it off his plate [Amer] Shed the responsibility for it.
  bite off more than you can chew Accept more than you can manage to finish.
  chew the fat/rag Discuss an old grievance, usually in a friendly way; grumble; spin a yarn.
  bite (on) granite Waste pains; persist futilely.
  it is well hained [saved—Sc] that's hained aff the belly [Sc] It is healthy to be sparing with food; also said by or of those who value clothes more than food.
  she clems [starves—Lan] her belly to feed her back Of a proud woman, keeping up appearances by personal sacrifice.
  lay your wame [belly] to your winning [Sc] Adjust spending to income.
  lips however rosy must be fed However exalted love is, it cannot exclude the daily needs of life.
  full or fasting [Sc Yks] Under any circumstances; either way.
  too hasty burnt his lips There are dangers in haste.
  eat out of house and home [1598] Eat excessively.
  don’t open your mouth to fill other folks’ Don’t tell something you should keep to yourself.
  swallow a statement etc. Believe in, accept the impossible. ‘Hard to swallow’=difficult to believe or accept.
  swallow up resources etc. Consume variously.
  swallowed up in…[1581] Absorbed in, obsessed by…
  you have to swallow him whole Accept him without investigation.
  slupper up Swallow, stomach. ‘Looke you not therefore that without large amends I may or will slupper-up such indignities’ [Elizabeth I, Letter—4 January 1597–8].
  flavour (n) Point of view; distinguishing style or pattern of thought.
  catch/get the flavour Have your sexual appetite aroused.
  taste (n) Sample, experience, preliminary trial. ‘A taste of military life’, ‘a taste of the whip’, ‘a taste of heaven’ etc.
  a taste for… An acquired and enduring preference; committal to.
savour (n) Wit, spirit, pluck [Sc Cum]. Often as savourless.
as easy as to lick a dish
licks his knife Is parsimonious.
sticks in my crap [=crop, throat, gizzard—Sc]/gizzern [Sc nEng]/gizzard [wYks War
seWor Brks IW Cor]/throat [nYks] My very nature revolts against it; I cannot accept it;
remember it with bitterness, disgust, regret, sorrow.
sticks in the craw [breast, stomach—mid,—s&wEng] Rankles, of a slight which is
hard to forget.
ram/thrust it down his throat Compel attention; force him to be aware of it.
stomach (v) Tolerate something repulsive.
stomach (n) Inclination, capacity, enthusiasm.
so bad(ly) I can taste it! [Amer] Very urgently. (From the expression, ‘I need a piss
so badly I can taste it’.)
leave a bad/nasty taste in the mouth [1857] Bring disillusion, lingering disgust or
revulsion—usually after a disagreeable experience.

I.65b Eating with a spoon

have a spoon in every man’s dish [1577] Involve yourself in others’ affairs.
fill the spoon [Per] Make a living.
it was put on the spoon for him [Uls] He was given it without effort or worry on his
part.
have the spoon at the mouth [Edb] Be at the point of success.
that’s a spoon in another man’s mouth [Ire] Said when someone dies or leaves a
job.
put a toom [empty] spoon in the mouth [Sc] Preach without edifying.
he who gives fair words feeds you with an empty spoon Cheats with the mere
pretence.
has supped sorrow by spoonfuls Has had a sad life.
sup wi’ your head, your horner’s dead; he’s dead that made the munsies [=muns,
short-handled horn spoons—Sc] Fend for yourself; don’t be so helpless.
better sup with a cutty [small horn spoon—Sc Uls Nhb] than want a spoon [Sc:
1721] Better a small portion than none; better an inadequate husband than none.
don’t put your cutty among our spoons! Don’t interrupt [Uls].
hasn’t a cuttyful of brains [Ant Dwn]
a horn spoon holds no poison [1721] (Because those who own only horn spoons are
not worth poisoning.)
ken a spune frae a stot’s horn [Sc] Recognise very obvious differences.
I.65c Eating sweet and sour

you could put sugar in his mouth—it wouldn’t melt [Killarney, Ker Calif] Of a sweet-natured, guileless character.

short and sweet, like a roast maggot [Northallerton, nYks]
take the sweet with the sour Good mixed with bad.
lick honey with your little finger Treat good fortune, flattery etc. with caution.
come after with salt and spoons Arrive too late to be of use.
salt-and-spoon (v) [Nhp] Go in a jog-trot.
eat a peck of salt with…[Sc] Be familiar with.
long will the bitter morsel be chewed [Wal] What is repugnant is neither easily nor quickly accepted.
eat meat with bitter sauce [Letter to Samuel Pepys—21 April 1681] Have no joy (of work etc.), be ill-recompensed.

I.65d Eating fat bits, butter

a bit of fat Good luck, an opportunity.
you have to take the fat with the lean [Amer] Good and bad together.
leave no clyres [glands in beef or mutton fat—Sc Nhb Dur Cum] in my breast/heart Get to the bottom of a quarrel or grudge; be free from ill-will.
eat a fat bit before him [Shl] Take the words out of his mouth.
lick the fat from his beard [1542] Cheat him of his gains; forestall the results of his enterprise.

the fat flits from his beard He loses what advantage he has gained.
butter wouldn’t melt in his/her mouth [1530] Of one completely guileless, demure.

cheese won’t choke her! [cheese=smeagma] She is very familiar with men.

mim [prim and proper, precise, prudish—Sc sLan EAn] as if butter wadna melt in her mouth [Dmb Rxb nlre NCy Nhb Dur] (As above.)
you don’t have to eat a whole tub of butter to get the taste [Wash] To someone taking too long to make a choice.

streak [stroke, smear, milk the last strippings of a cow (=streakings)] ream [=cream—Sc Ire nEng Dev Cor] in his teeth Flatter him.

he that never eats flesh thinks harigals [lights] a feast [Sc] Used to a little, very content with a little more than a little.
I.65e Drinking

**drink before**…[Sc] Anticipate what they were going to say.

**drink in** Consume eagerly, uncritically.

**there’s many a slip twixt the cup and the lip** [1539] Affairs can miscarry, even at the point of consummation; be certain of nothing until it has happened.

**dash the cup from the lips** Disappoint, frustrate someone just before achieving success.

**bring him to his milk** [Amer] Bring him to his senses; get him to co-operate.

**pure milk** The very essence, finest quality.

**milk and water** [1819] Feeble, weakly amiable and insipid talk, sentiment etc.

**black as the inside of a man who drank a bottle of ink**

I.66a Roast meat

**he cannot fare well but he must cry out roast meat** Of one who must advertise his good fortune.

**cry roast meat** [1611] Brag about good luck or success; imperil your own prosperity by boasting of it.

**you give me roast meat and beat me with the spit** [nYks: 1553] Frustrate a kind act by following it with an unkind one; do a favour, but make the obligation felt.

**he has eaten his roast meat first** Having had the best first, he must now put up with worse.

**rule the roast** [C15] Have the authority in a house.

**cold roast** Something of little account.

I.66b Carving, bones

**carve up** Divide a territory, inheritance etc.

**smell of the knife** [wYks] Be cut into very thin slices.

**cut up fat** Die rich.

**cut it (too) fat** Make a display.

**whichever way you slice it, it is still**… [Amer] However you appraise it, look at it, think of it, it is still…

**find bones in**… Find disadvantages, objections in something.

And fond that tyme no bonys in the matere
make no bones about…[1571] Perform a task without scruple, difficulty or hesitation, although this might have been expected; treat without formality. (From eating a meal without being too particular about the bones in it.)

near the bone/knuckle [1895] Near the limit permitted by decency (as when the carver tries to get as near the bone as possible without blunting the knife on it).

near the bone [Sc] Niggardly.

the nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat [1559] Of a thin woman.

give him the cold shoulder [Sc 1816] Be unresponsive to an admirer; rebuff deliberately. (To offer cold shoulder of mutton to a guest shows disrespect.)

ham-bone (n) [Aus] Nude dance; male striptease.

dressed up like a ham-bone

pick over the bones of… Re-open an investigation already well researched.

suck the marrow out of…[Amer] Get the best out of.

I.66c Beef

liked veal better than beef Preferred to marry one a generation younger [Shr],

eat bull-beef Become fierce, overbearing, presumptuous. (The effect of a diet too rich in meat?)

as big as if he had eaten bull beef [1579]

eat the cow and worry [choke] on the tail [Sc Ohio] Go far with an undertaking and then abandon it just before the end; make large concessions, but object to trivialities.

swallow an ox and be choked with the tail [1659] Manage or believe the impossible, and then fail or demur at the possible.

‘salt!’ quoth the sowter [cobbler], when he had eaten the cow all to the…[Sc] You have nearly finished; don’t flag now.

salt collop [midYks] Something too provoking to be endured.

I.66d Mutton


give him lamb and salad Beat, thrash him. (Possibly a pun on lam=strike.)

mutton dressed as lamb [1937] Older woman masquerading as young one. (See also E.23d.)

be his/her muttons [Aus NZ] Be just what they like best, their special favourite.

one shoulder of mutton drives another down A second grief, misfortune etc. cancels out the earlier one.
I.66e Pork

he has eaten too much pig’s marrow Of an indiscreet person who talks when he should keep silence. (From ‘squealing’?)

   eat/live high off the hog/hog’s back [Amer] Live in luxury (as if off the best cuts of the pork).

   apple-sauce [Amer] Insincere talk, humbug.

   more sauce than pig [1624] More show than substance.

   a bit of crackling [the skin of roast pork, done crisp and brown] Very attractive girl (from the connotations of something delicious and her sexual crack).

   under the coarsest rind the sweetest meat [NY SC] Describing a fine character beneath a rugged exterior.

   burnt to a scratchin [pork rind with the fat frizzled out of it for lard]

I.66f Hare

get the hare’s foot to lick Obtain very little.

   kiss the hare’s foot [1616] Be too late for dinner.

   set the hare’s foot/hare’s head/hare-pie against the goose-giblet(s) [1545] Let one thing offset another; make little distinction between them.

   eat a hare Be cheerful (the supposed effect) [1576]; also, (the opposite!) be melancholy [1558].

   strong meat [1526] Powerful, disturbing literature, unpalatable to delicate or tender tastes.

   ower strong meat for your weak stomachs! [Sc] To old men showing an interest in the lasses.

I.66g Meat dishes

the meat and potatoes/meat-and-potatoes [Amer] The simple fundamentals; logistics.

   meaty (in artistic or intellectual contexts) Substantial, seriously satisfying.

   meat without gravy An attractive woman.

   had meat put in his mouth and wouldn’t chew it Of one who let an opportunity slip.

   ‘every man to his liking, but no more of your stew for me’ as Holloper said when he found the ratton bones in the lobscouse [variant of Irish stew made with vegetables, ship’s biscuits etc.—naut Lan] When declining a second helping.

   give him the gut to gnaw [Abd] Give him nothing (said in contempt).
a dish of tongues A scolding.
pork-pie (hat) A hat, in shape reminiscent of a pork-pie.
big as Ketherick’s pie (The first mayor of Plymouth, who had a fourteen-inch pie made for his inaugural banquet in 1493.)
salami tactics The gradual elimination of opposition (like finishing a salami sausage by eating one small slice after another). A salami fraud is where a dishonest computer operator slices interest due to investors into a false account and thence into his own [Amer 1979].
hot as a black pudding
the first fuff [whiff of an odour—Sc Nhb Lakel Lan Yks] o’ the haggis is ay the bauldest [= boldest, strongest—Sc] On the attractions of novelty.
a man may love a haggis that would not have the bag bladed [struck, slapped—Sc Ire] in his teeth [Sc] A limit to partiality.
I have seen as full a haggis toomed [tipped, emptied] on the midden [Sc] Have seen people bankrupted who had been as rich.
let him cool in the skin he heated in [Uls] Let him suffer the results of the situation he created.
toad-in-the-hole (q.v. G.44d) A sandwichboard and/or the person who carries it.
forcemeat ball [highly seasoned meat ball] Something unpleasant you have to endure (—sense-connection with ‘force’?).

I.66h Mustard, pepper, curry

pity without relief is like mustard without beef
after meat, mustard [1605] Describing something that would have been welcome earlier, but now comes too late.
you shall have moonshine in the mustard pot for it [1639] Nothing.
take pepper in the nose [1377] Take quick offence.
give him curry [Aus] Be angry with him, ‘make it hot for him’.

I.67a Broth

the first drop of the broth is the hottest (but the most wholesome lies below) [wMea]
Of someone’s first sexual experience.
scald not your lips in another man’s pottage Harm yourself in doing for another what he should do for himself. ‘Don’t scad your tongue in other folks’ broth’ [Ant].
blow his broth Scold him [wYks].
files his neighbour’s cog/snites [blows] his nose in his neighbour’s dish to get the brose himself [broth for himself—Sc] Of one who spoils things for others so as to gain a personal advantage; injures another’s character in order to take his place.

tripe-broth is better than no porridge Second-best is better than nothing.

like a dinner of broth [wYks] Ideal; smoothly, successfully.

fit like a dinner of broth [wYks] Exactly.

pat [fit, proper, appropriate, spontaneous, relevant] as a dinner of broth [wYks] (As/from the above.)

ill beef never made good broo [=broth—Sc: 1628] Bad parents don’t beget good children: You can’t make anything good out of poor materials.

give a man broth and then smack him with the mundle [sChs] Offset a kind act with an unkind one immediately afterwards.

there’s ay some clock [beetle] in the broth [Sc] Inevitable snag, disadvantage.

warm and wet like Oldham brewis [a broth of bread or oatcake boiled in a pottage of fat salted meat—sLan]

scarce as drops of fat on Oldham brewis (See above.)

sip by sip is the broth ended [Wal] Each diminution may be small, but the result is total dissipation.

I.67b Soup

soup (n) Medley, mixture of different but compatible items.

in the soup [1889] In trouble (like a fly in hot soup).

soup-strainer Thick moustache growing down over the lip.

thick as loblolly [spoon-meat, soup, thick porridge of flour and/or oatmeal, gruel—Yks Lei War EAn Hrt wSom Dev]/burgoo [= loblolly—Nhb Hrt: C18]

make pea-skill of…[=pea-skill(y) <peaskilligalee=pea-soup—Sc] Squander lavishly.

thick as pea-soup

pea-souper Thick yellow fog.

if it was raining pea-soup, I’d be hit on the head with a fork! [Aus] To illustrate bad luck.

duck soup [Amer] Something requiring no effort; someone easily duped.

there’s no pepper in the soup [Amer] Of children too tired to play.

I.67c Gravy

gravy [theatrical sl.] Easy money, unexpected bonus. Hence:

board/ride the gravy boat/train [Amer] Obtain easy financial success; have an easy wellpaid job in politics or with a large company.
if it was raining gravy, we’d be the ones with only forks So unlucky!

I.68 Porridge

all the world is not oatmeal [C16] You cannot have everything as you would like it.

love is like stirabout; it must be made fresh every day [Ire] (Stirabout is porridge made by stirring oatmeal into boiling milk or water [Anglo-Irish].)
plain as porridge [Sc] Very plain, explicit; ugly.
thick as porridge [wYks]
thick as stirrow [thick oatmeal porridge, hasty pudding—Chs]/stodge [any semi-liquid mass (of a fog)—Cor]/crowdy [meal and water stirred into a thick gruel—Sc nEng]

stodgy Solid, unimaginative, heavy-going, bloated. Of personalities, music, literature etc.
sharp [clever, acute] as bottled porridge (which does become sharp in flavour)—and/or sarcastically.

wad be little parritch in your caup [=cap, wooden soup or drinking bowl—Sc] if he had

the pouring of it Of a mean or ill-disposed character.
give him his oatmeal [C18]/porridge Scold, punish him; keep him in order.
begin on porridge that you may end with chicken [Sc] Spare in youth and you will be well-off in age.
taste your porridge before you crumb in your bread Take necessary precautions, make enquiries before committing yourself.

marigold in the porridge [War 1859] Something extra, but of little consequence. (Marigold flowers were sometimes added to broths and porridge for flavour.)


save your breath to cool your porridge [Sc NhB wYks Hnt Nhp Can Amer: 1576]/wind to cool your crowdy [NhB]/poddish [neLan] Say no more, it is a waste of breath.

poke thi neb into other folk’s porridge Pry. Hence:
neb (v) Show curiosity, be over-inquisitive. ‘What arta nebbin’ at?’ [wYks].

if it should rain pottage/porridge, he would want [lack] his dish [1670] Of one who is incapable of availing himself of good fortune, or too unlucky to do so.

as gradely [fine, of good quality—Lan] a lad as ever scraped a porridge-dish everything tastes of porridge The everyday facts of home life are always there, however we try to escape them.

he’s too greedy to thole the reech [spare the steam] off his porridge [Yks Lan]
dule’s [=devil’s] had all t’ porridge and t’ Lord’s nobbut getten t’ pan to scrape [sLan] Of a death-bed conversion.

he has supped all his porridge [Lin] Is dead.
let him cool and come to himself, like MacKibbon’s crowdy [Sc] Let his anger subside.

goo [=burgoo, a thick seamen’s porridge] Thick, sticky, nauseating substance.

gooey (adj) (From the above.)
as sure as sowens [a dish made by steeping the husks and siftings of oatmeal in water—Sc Ire nEng]

sup sowens/soor-dook [buttermilk—Sc]/sour milk with an els(h)in [cobbler’s awl—Sc Ire nEng Lin] Attempt the impossible; exemplifying the height of folly.

flummery [the coagulation of flour or fine oatmeal into something akin to sowens—Sc Ire nEng sLin Wal Nhp Brks Wil wSom] Nonsense, humbug, flattery.
as likely as cream in skilly [a weak, watery gruel as served in prisons and workhouses] Very unlikely.

weak as gruel
give him gruel [seLin] Chastise him.

get/take your gruel Receive your punishment, deserts; be killed. Hence:
gruelling Severe, punishing.
take gruel together Live as man and wife.

I.69a Eating fish

caviare (n) A passage blocked out (originally by Russian censors) with a black ink stamp which leaves a network on the paper, in appearance like caviare spread on bread and butter.
caviare (v) Censor as above.
caviare to the general Something precious, but wasted on an unappreciative recipient. (The phrase is Shakespeare’s [Hamlet II. ii—1600], and the word ‘Generall’ refers to the general public. Caviare is an acquired taste.)
gives whitings but [without] bones [Sc] Speaks fair words; gives unconditionally.
herring-choker Native of the Maritime Provinces [Can]; Scandinavian [Amer].
going like two at a digby [a small herring caught and cured at Digby, Nova Scotia, sometimes called a Digby chicken] In frantic haste (each diner needing to eat quickly to get their share).
better a small fish than an empty dish [Cor]
mackerel-snapper [Amer 1960] Roman Catholic (from eating fish on Fridays).
two chips short of a chip dinner Mentally lacking.
sauce better than fish Accessories better than the main thing.
serve (with) the same sauce [nwDer: 1523–5] Retaliate, treat in the same manner.
eat carp-pie [Sus] Submit to rebuke, criticism.
find fish on the fingers Make an excuse for staying; stay behind after the meal, ostensibly to clean the hands, but really to be present at something of interest.

Who (as the nature of women is, desirous to see and bee seene) thought she should both heare the parle and view the person of this young
embassadour, and therefore found fish on her fingers, that she might stay
still in the chamber of presence.

[Greene, *Works* iv. 140 (Grosart)—1587]

### I.69b Eating fowl

too much for one and not enough for two, like the Tewkesbury/Walsall man’s goose,
‘a very silly bird’ [Stf: 1880]

- **cagmag** [tough, old goose; unwholesome meat—Sc nEng Lin] Foul hash of rotten
  meat; rubbish; idle gossip; quarrelsome person; meddlesome woman [Lan Chs War Ken];
  loose-liver; disreputable old woman [Yks Chs Suf].
- **tough as an old steg** [nYks]
- **poor man’s goose** [War] Cow’s spleen stuffed and roasted.
- **sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander** [1670] What applies to one applies
equally to the other.
- **a good goose, but she has an ill gansel** [garlic sauce, served with goose—Sc] Offsets
  the effect of a good deed by what is said or done afterwards.
- **goose without gravy** [naut] A bloodless flogging.
- **her tongue goes like the clatter bones** [hip bones rattled between the fingers as
  accompaniment to a clog dance—Cum] of a goose [Sc Cum] Talkative.
- **wishbone** [Amer] Y-formation in a football game.
- **has eaten a hen’s rump** [which in Italy is presented to the most talkative in the
  company: 1642] Is loquacious.
- **tender as a turkey** [Cor]
- **turkey hung with sausages** Mayor or alderman wearing his chain of office.
- **take cold turkey** [Amer 1921] Submit to a sudden and complete withdrawal,
something which most addicts find very difficult and unpleasant because of the painful
withdrawal experience. (From the anti-climax of facing cold left-overs after the
Thanksgiving or Christmas feasting.)
- **close as wheatears in a Tunbridge pie**
- **looks as if he had eaten live birds** Of an unusually animated person.
- **has got a wing o’ Wauchoe’s moorhen** [Sc] Is in a bad mood. (In 1827 the Laird of
  Wauchope sent a moorhen to a friend in Edinburgh, but it was so tough that the guests
  lost their tempers.)
- **Scotch woodcock** Scrambled eggs and anchovies on toast.
I.69c Eating vegetables

a crippled ciarog [beetle—Ir-Gael] could look over the heap of potato skins on the table Of a hungry household.


a feast is not made of mushrooms only Said when requiring more substance.

a good salad may be the prologue to a bad supper [1659] A warning against premature judgement based on a favourable impression.

like lips, like lettuce [1540] Give appropriately (as in serving food that suits the diner).

chew/eat/swallow the leek Pocket an affront; be compelled to eat your own words; submit to misfortune, the inevitable. [See Shaks, Hy V V.i—1599]

common as boiled cabbage

if you have no bacon, be content with cabbage [Amer]

wersh [=walsh, insipid] as a kail custock [= castock, cabbage-stalk] Of a feeble sermon [eLth] etc.

keep/save thy wind to blaw thy kail [Sc Dwn wYks] Your talking is futile.

will not part with the reek [steam, smell] of his kail [Yks] Is stingy.

hag thee [hurry up—sLan] or tha’ll lose thi kail Lose your chance.

he tarrows [refuses food by being peevish or fastidious—ShI OrI Sc] early that tarrows on his kail To those who complain too soon.

get your kail through the reek [Sc: 1757] Get a good scolding, your deserts. (The flavour would be spoilt after going through the smoke.)

he wouldna sup kail with him unless he broke the dish on his head [1721] In scorn of a comparison.

eats his kail in a riven dish [Sc] Of one lowly estimated, or whose wife’s chastity is in doubt.

scald your lips in other folks’ kail [Sc] Meddle with their business; suffer in another’s cause.

penny wheep [weak, small beer] is gude enough for muslin-kail [a poor broth—Sc] Poor work, small reward.

them that likesna water brose will scunner [shudder with repugnance—Sc Ire nEng Amer] at cauld steerie [sourmilk and meal stirred together—Per Fif Lth] To those who complain of plain food.

like water kail and cock lairds, you need mickle service [Sc] To those who call for one thing after another. (Broth without meat needs other ingredients to make it palatable; and Scots lairds holding ward of the king must serve themselves to be heirs to their fathers’ estates.)

put water in his worts [vegetables, greens, pottage] Make things unpleasant for him.

get his/her greens Have sex (regularly).
I.69d Eating fruit

plummy [Amer 1976] Of a voice or style of speaking which is indistinct, but ‘rich and fruity’—as if delivered with a plum in the mouth.

you always have a ready mouth for a ripe cherry [1628] Are ready to seize an opportunity; to those who are quick to take what is ours [Sc].
disgraces are like cherries, one draws another [1640]
life is a bowl of cherries Sweet, but short.
eat not cherries with the great Do not compete with the powerful (—‘For they wyl have the rype and lave them the harde’ [Dialogues of Creatures xx–1530]).
gooseberry eyes Dull, grey eyes, like boiled gooseberries.
put cream and sugar on a fly and it tastes very much like a black raspberry [NY SC] An adequate douceur will make acceptable even what is disagreeable.
green apples are better than none [Miss]
swallow the apple/olive [Amer] Tense up, and so become useless, usually in a sports situation.
kisses are like olives out of a bottle; after the first, the rest come easy [NY Ohio SC]
swallow a watermelon seed [Amer] Become pregnant.
can eat an apple/pumpkin through a knothole/corn-on-the-cob through a picket fence [Amer] Has buck teeth.

I.70a Eating dumplings, spaghetti

dumpling A fat baby; short, fat person.
plump/round as a dumpling
heavy as a boarding-house dumpling
more twists than a bowl of spaghetti Of a winding road [1963] (cf. also ‘Spaghetti Junction’ [1971], the M6 interchange at Birmingham, the complexity of which resembles coils of spaghetti).
limp-noodle [Amer] Feeble, undistinguished.
sharp [bright, intelligent] as a wet noodle [Calif] Ironically.
I.70b Eating puddings

pudding (n) Bulk, substance—referring to bedclothes or padding in a garment.

soft as a pudding

pudding-face A fat, round face.

pudding-head Stupid, stodgy person.

come in pudding time [Yks Lan Der Chs Hnt Nhp War: 1546] In the nick of time; at the right moment, in good time, early. (In the old days the main meal often started with a dish of pudding.)

guess pudding [Yks] Throw away a guess.

run as swift as a pudding would creep Very slowly.

pudding-in-a-poke [Suf] Long-tailed tit (from the style of its nest).

pock-puddin [Sc] Englishman (because of their reputation for gluttony).

more poke/clout than dinner/pudding [Lan+ passim] More show than substance; a long introduction to a small matter.

clawed it as Clayton clawed the pudding when he ate bag and all

a gentleman without estate is a pudding without suet [1602] Both lack substance.

nobility without ability is like a pudding wanting suet [Sc: 1721] Main ingredient lacking.

solid pudding for empty praise The aspirations of those who hope for tangible rewards in exchange for moral support or mere flattery.

praise is not pudding [1750] Words of praise should be, but are not always, followed by more tangible recognition.

ye moorn’t crack [should not brag] sae mich o’ yer own puddin’ [Craven, wYks] Do not blow your own trumpet.

the proof of the pudding is in the eating [1682] The true test of anything comes when it is used or consumed.

he that never ate flesh thinks pudding a dainteth [=a dainty—Sc: 1721]

eat stir-pudding with an awl [Shr] Use unsuitable means.

if it won’t pudding, it must/will froise [pancake—EAn: 1830] It will be useful for one thing if not the other.

have a hot pudding for supper Of a woman, have sex.

couldn’t knock the skin off a rice pudding! [c. 1910] A jeer at a person’s weakness.

stand to your pan-pudding [Stf War Wor Glo] Be firm, hold your ground.

you mean pudding and I mean pork [Stf War Wor Glo] We are not talking about the same thing.

stiff as a stappit [crammed, stuffed—Sc] saster [meal and minced meat pudding—Sc]

big as a Paignton pudding (Paignton was renowned for large puddings.)
I.70c Eating pies

a pie A treat, prize [Amer].

easy (to do)/good/merry/nice [polite, amenable—Lei War]/right [quite correct—wYks Stf War Wor Glo]/safe [ironically—sLan]/sweet as pie

like pie Very warm.

Australian as a meat pie [Aus]

pie and roast [nYks] Success!

Saturday pie [one containing a mix of leftovers—1872] Incongruous mixture, variously.

in the pie [Lnk nYks] In the plot, confederacy.

make a pie of...[nYks] Injure.

next time you make a pie, will you give me a piece? [Can] A sexual overture.

easy [Aus]/proper [Cor] as apple-pie

apple-pie order [1780] Precise, exactly organised. (Either from nappes pliées=folded linen [Fr], or from the domestic efficiency of Hephzibah Merton, a Puritan housewife of America who labelled the week’s supply of apple-pies with the days of the week on which they were to be eaten, the larger pies for the harder work-days.)

apple-pie and motherhood issue etc. [Amer] One appealing to homely and conservative interests.

apple-pie bed A bed made up with one sheet folded in half and so turned down that it appears to be double-sheeted, but where the victim is prevented from stretching more than half-way down the bed. (From the similarity of folding pastry for apple pasties.)

cherry-pie An attractive girl (as in ‘tart’ and ‘cheese-cake’).

clear as the inside of a blackberry pie [Calif]

American as blueberry pie

tasty (bit of) pastry (See cherry-pie, above.)

pie-crust The soil and turf covering on a charcoal stack [Cum nwLan].

plum as a pie-crust, dough-baked [Cor]

promises are pie-crusts—made to be broken [1706]

have a finger in every pie Interfere in everything.

a finger in the pie [1553] An interfering share; officious interest.

have a hand in the pie [nYks] Be concerned in, interfere in the matter.

cut a pie [Amer] Meddle with a matter; get involved in something; share out the proceeds.

set at a pie’s heel Regard, value at next to nothing.

pie in the sky Future reward; a good time coming. (A jocular reference to the promises of reward in the after-life.)

cold pie Accident, an overturned cart holding up the traffic, disappointment, loss [nEng].

give cold pie/pig to...[Der] Rudely awaken either with cold water or by pulling off the bedclothes.


sparrow-bill pie [Cor] Anything unpalatable or unpleasant.

pie-biter [Amer] A practiser of political patronage.
pie-eater [Aus] One of little consequence, a simpleton.

pie-faced Vacant, solemn, stupid (from the type of person who has a face that is round and expressionless, like a pie).

over-day tarts Herrings showing discoloration of the gills, a sign they have been dead more than a day. (From the stain that spreads on stale jam tarts.)

I.70d Eating custards

all of a dither-a-wack, like a new-baked custard [Chs] Violently trembling.

all of a ditherum-shak, like a hot eggpuddin’ [n&nwLin] (As above.)

flat as a flawn [custard—Sc nEng]

cool as custard

I.70e Eating jellies, jams

jell (v) Start to work properly; come up to expectations; take the desired shape; prove compatibility. (If the ingredients of a jelly are incompatible, it will not jell.)

jell together Fit in together.

in aspic Fixed in its final form (as when a cook who has completed the preparation of a dish preserves it in a jelly of aspic).

quiver/shake/tremble/wobble like a jelly

it takes a lot of hard work to turn a bitter damson into a sweet jelly [Ire] Improving someone’s character is not easy.

nail jelly to the wall Attempt the impossible; try to do something that you know cannot last.

you can’t tell the marmalade from the label on the jar Cannot tell from appearances or hearsay.

march in marmalade Work hard, but achieve little; be hampered in your work by interference and obstruction from above.

I.71a Eating pancakes

flat/limber [flexible, springy—sLan] as a pancake
pancaked [Lakel] Caught by a shower with hay all spread out to dry. (Perhaps from the practice of blacking the face of one who has not eaten his pancake before the next is ready.)

I.71b Eating cakes

the (national) cake Proceeds of a country’s economy viewed as something to be shared out.

go like hot cakes [1839] Be in great demand, very popular.
grinning like my granny at a hot puff-cake
bad custom is like good cake, better broken than kept
as fine a lad as ever broke the edge of a cake
murly [crumbly—Cum] as shortcake
thodden [NCy Lan Der Chs] as a tharcake [= tharf-cake, a stodgy, unleavened cake—Nhb Dur Cum Yks Lan Der: Lan] Heavy, lethargic, full of a cold.
cake-eater [Amer] Self-indulgent man; playboy.
cake-hole Mouth.
your cake/meal is (all) dough [Sc midEng: 1559] Your purpose fails; are disappointed.

wish your cake dough [Dor wCor: 1874] Regret it (as if, after a bad outcome, you were wishing yourself back in time and able to make a fresh start).

you cannot have your cake and eat it [1546] You cannot enjoy two incompatible or mutually exclusive benefits.

the devil owed a cake and paid a loaf Said when a great misfortune falls instead of a small one.

every cake hath its make [=mate, fellow—Sc nEng], but a scrape-cake hath two Somewhere there is another, equally good—or bad.
some like cake, some like onions [eCor] It is a matter of taste or opinion.

has got his share of the cake Has succeeded.
cake and pie to them [nYks] Gratifying and profitable for them.
be kept to your cake(s) and milk [sChs War] Be kept within bounds; at a task; be held to your obligations, the rules.

the icing on the cake [1969] The trimmings without the reality, the show without the substance; an optional extra.

ice the cake/put icing on the cake [Amer] Ensure victory.

marzipan layer [1984] Next below the top rank—in a stockbroking firm, in a social hierarchy etc.
doughnut (v) [1989] Cluster round a colleague to prevent the cameras zooming in—of MPs during a televised debate.

concrete doughnut Circular block of concrete used on building sites. (From the shape.)

a running fuck at a rolling doughnut [Amer Forces] A very difficult manoeuvre to perform; an impossible operation. Often used as a curse, ‘Go take a running fuck’.
thread the eye of the golden doughnut [Aus] Achieve sex with her.
don’t look at the hole in the doughnut Be satisfied with what you have; nothing is perfect.

jelly-roll [cylindrical cake containing jelly or jam—Amer] A woman as lover; the sex act; the vagina.
spongy Of mechanical actions that are not as firm and positive as they should be, especially of braking and suspension systems on a vehicle.
the cake is getting thin The money is running out.

I.71c Eating butter- and cheese-cakes, scones

his cake is baked (and buttered on both sides) He is well-off [n&wYks].
if wishes were butter-cakes, beggars might bite [1678] If mere wishing could achieve anything, no one would be in need.

buttered bun A whore who takes several men in quick succession.
scold like a butter-whore/butterwives [1639]
cheese-cake Magazine photographs of attractive women, usually in the nude; pin-ups.
(From the C17 use of ‘cheese-cake’ and ‘tart’ =female society.)
crumpet [1936] A woman thought of as a sex object (hot and buttery).
not care/give/worth a crumpet

crumpet-face One covered with pock-marks.
muffin-face A featureless face, without expression.
muffin-head [Der] Dolt.
scone Head [Aus].
go him scone-hot [Aus] Be furious with, severely rebuke him. (As/from the above.)
sour scone [thin oatmeal cake, soaked in water to turn it sour—Mry Gall] Someone who, without cause, abuses another’s character.
hasn’t the brain God gave a cinnamon bun [Calif]

I.71d Eating gingerbread

gingerbread (n) Money (in plenty); fussy decoration on a house [Amer].
gingerbread person, building etc. Soft, flimsy, delicate [Sc Yks Lin War wSom]; gaudy [Lan].
take the gilt off the gingerbread [1830] Destroy the illusion; remove the attractive and leave only the dull part of something. (By 1748 the painted carving on the stern of a
battleship was called ‘gingerbread’ by sailors and a scrape would damage the gilding. It is possible that the expression originated here.)

**the gilt is off** Disillusion has come.

**weak as gingerbread**

**only going on gingerbread wheels!** Slower than it should go—of a watch or vehicle that is not running at its proper speed. Anything of gingerbread is weak, pithless.

### I.71e Eating biscuits

**thin as a wafer**

**dry as a biscuit** Often of soil.

**cookie** [Amer] A person, always complimentary—tough cookie’, ‘smart cookie’ etc.; small computer program used on the internet which, by keeping a record of an operator’s preferences and interests, can offer suggestions for renewing orders or advertisements [1990s].

**cookie-cutter style, musical composition, copy etc.** Mechanical, automatic, formuladriven, unimaginative; a weak unenterprising person.

**pop your cookies** [Amer] Have an orgasm.

**how the cookie crumbles** [Amer 1957] How the situation is resolved; the way things are; how things work out (and implying that there is nothing you can do about it).

**crooked as/ enough to hide behind a pretzel** [a crisp biscuit baked in the shape of a knot—Amer<Ger]

**big pretzel** [Amer] Philadelphia (because of outline on the map?).

**pretzel-bender** [Amer] French horn player; wrestler.

**not care/give/worth a cracker**

**sharp** [bright, intelligent] as a cracker (and twice as crumby) [Tenn Calif]

**hard as a bannock** [a dry hard biscuit—nwDev]

### I.71f Eating confectionery

**bug** [splendid, gorgeous, proud, conceited—Yks Lin Lei]/**fine as spice** [confectionery, especially gingerbread—n&wYks] Handsomely dressed.

**pick ‘n’ mix** [a facility by which children can make up a personal selection of sweets from different tubs] Of artistic ventures in composition drawing on varied sources.

**dolly mixture** [small coloured sweets of various shapes] A collection of small, easily digested items.

**sweet as a sugar-plum**

**sugar-plum land** [Hrt] Land having a thin, chalky surface.

**eyes as big as bullets** [large sucking sweets, gob-stoppers—Amer]
sour-ball [acid-drop—Amer] A mean-tempered person with a peevish nature.
sharp [bright, intelligent] as a big wet gumdrop [Calif]
candy-assed [=candy-arsed—Amer] Timid, feeble.
candy-stripe [Amer] Secondary road on map.
sugary candy in your boots An explanation for when they creak or squeak.
marshmallow (n and adj [1907]) Of person or thing. Sentimental, flabby, feeble.
soft as marshmallows/peppermint
toffee-nosed [1930s] Stuffy, upper class, with air of superiority (from being ‘stuck up’
and also by sound association with ‘toffs’).
lollipops The name given by Sir Thomas Beecham, that incomparable musician, to the
popular, lighter items in a programme.
lollipop lady/man Traffic warden escorting schoolchildren across the road. (From the
shape of their portable traffic sign.)
drink on a stick An attractive woman.
vanilla/plain vanilla [Amer 1972] Simple, basic; orthodox; sexually normal. (Some
of the colours and flavours are quite ‘kinky’.)
the flavour of the month [1946] The current craze; favourite and fashionable person
or thing—usually derogatory. (From an American campaign advertising ice-cream.)
double-dip [Amer] Collect two incomes (from getting two scoops of ice-cream into
one cone).
get a bar of chocolate [naut] Be praised by your seniors.
chocolate soldier One unwilling to fight.
not many chocolates left in the box [Hmp] Not many years left to live.

I.72a Poker

mute/stiff as a poker [1797]
stiff as if she had swallowed the poker
wouldn’t touch… with a red-hot poker! Expressing extreme distaste and contempt.
red-hot Vivacious, sexy—of a woman.

I.72b Tongs

as cross as the tongs
like a pair of tongs [Nhb Dur] Very thin.
I would not touch her/him/it with a pair of tongs! [1639] When someone or
something is considered too disgusting or dangerous for close association.
send him ben [inside—Sc] to the tongs Settle his business; defeat him in argument.
found it where the Highlandman found the tongs [Sc: 1721] To those who steal something and then pretend they found it. (A certain man, challenged, claimed he had found the tongs. ‘Where did you find them?’ he was asked. ‘Hard by the fireside.’)

why burn your fingers when you have a pair of tongs? [Uls] There is no sense in doing unpleasant work yourself if you can get someone else to do it for you.

poker and tongs [NCy] The noise of a horse’s hind-shoes striking the fore-shoes. (See also A.3d, hammer and pincers.)

I.72c Tinder

dry/rotten as tinder
dry as an old tinder-box
tinder-box Person, thing or state of affairs likely to start heated strife.
like tinder/touchwood Of a character soon aroused or enraged.
useless as damp tinder [nYks]
rotten as touchwood [Dor] Of a poor character.
sharp as touch [=touchwood, tinder] Quicktempered, flaring up [Sc].
smopple [brittle, crumbling—NCy] as touch
knacks [makes a clicking, clacking sound—Nhb Cum Wm Yks neLan] and talks like rotten sticks Minces words; talks affectedly.
make matchwood of… Break up so thoroughly that the fragments are no bigger than matches.

fat as a match with the brimstone off Ironic.
as much chance as of striking a match on wet tripe!
grin/smile like a basket of chips (on a frosty morning) [Shr Cor] Broadly, but without significance.
piss in/on his chips [1925: still in use 2002, Cum nwLan, but associated more with potato chips] Spoil his chances of success.

I.72d Firewood

she’s gone through the wood and sammed up [picked up—Yks Lan] a cross stick at last [Lan] Married late and then badly.
take the bent stick Marry the faithful old suitor after waiting in vain for a younger man.
he’ll go through the wood and take the crummock [a short staff with a crooked head—wYks sLan] at last Of one who chooses badly in spite of long deliberations.
crooked wood makes an even fire [NY Mich] Ultimately the differences between us make no difference.
some go through a forest and see no firewood Some cannot recognise their opportunities.
cross as two sticks
like sticks a-breaking Vigorously.
still as a log
dry as a(n old) stick Witty and humorous in an unaffected way.
he’s too green to burn Referring to someone who escapes being burnt.

I.72e Peat

sick as a peat [Cum Wm] Very sick.
heart as great as a peat [Abd Ags] Ready to break for sorrow (as if saturated with rain, swollen, sad and heavy).
deaf as a peat-stack [Sc C18]
wiggy [light—Ire] turf burns bright but not for long Of young love.

I.72f Gas

lie like a gas-meter [Ess] A rueful reference to the incredible totals proclaimed by these meters, and dating at least from 2 December 1897.

I.73a Sparks and flints

spark (n) Pure, bright, active impulse that originates or inspires a great work.
spunk [spark] Mettle; person of quick temper [ShI].
spark off Start off; inspire; generate. (See also C.7a.)
punk [tinder made from dried fomes fomentarius fungus, the primary tinder that catches the spark from the fire-drill and bursts into flame] Harlot (because, receiving the spark or spunk of passion, she soon brought it to flames); trash, something worthless (from the light insubstantial tinder, fit only for burning).
the coldest flint has fire [1579] There is human warmth in even the hardest character.
strike fire out of a pumice stone Expect, attempt the impossible.
I.73b Kindling fire

**kindle** (v) hopes, passion etc. Arouse, activate them.

**it is easy to light a fire on an old hearth** People who have loved before fall in love again the sooner.

**wood half-burnt is easily kindled** [1557] Recent lovers soon fall in love again.

**a red-hot ember is easily rekindled** [Ire] Of an angry person, or one nursing a grudge.

**two dry sticks will kindle a green one** [1678] An older couple can still have children.

**little sticks kindle the fire, great ones put it out** [1670] Petty minds make trouble, generous ones quell it; be moderate in courtship.

**set fire to a green gorse bush** [IMa] Do something absurd in a fit of temper.

**firebrand** [1382] Kindler of strife.

**two brands burn better than one** [Wal] Two troublemakers together do more harm than when single and apart.

**a brand from the burning** Someone rescued, a convert. (See also J.34v.)

I.73c Coals, blowing coals

**the price of coals at Brentford** [H.H.Asquith, Letter—13 October 1914] Something of little importance, almost irrelevant.

**black as a skep** [wYks]

**fetch fire** [Dev Amer, esp. sAmer] Go into a house and leave very soon (as if only calling for a cinder to make up a fire which had gone out).

**blow a coal** Make mischief between neighbours.

**a cold coal to blow at** Hopeless, unprofitable work; loss; disappointment [Sc].

**blow not on dead embers** [Ire] Do not attempt impossibilities. This proverb was illustrated in Palmer, *The Emblems* [1565].

**blow the coals** Bring latent trouble or hostility into open activity.

**let him that is cold blow the coal** [c. 1380] Let him do the work who will most benefit.

**fan/stir the embers** Renew, revive—an old passion etc.

**fan the flames/fire** [1800] Incite to further anger, passion; increase excitement.

**fanned fires and forced love never yet did well** [Sc] Let him do the work who will most benefit.

**dark as bellows**

**has bellows to mend** Is broken-winded, has impaired lungs—often of a horse.

**give bellows to mend** Make a sharp attack on; beat soundly.

**a fresh hand at the bellows** [naut] A fresh wind after a lull.

**puff like a pair of bellows** [nSom 1907]

**a little wind kindles, much puts out the fire** Over-enthusiasm can have the opposite effect to that intended.
warm as a bat [peat cut for fuel—Lin; slatey lump of coal which, though not burning itself, retains heat well]

I.73d Flames

flamboyant [<Fr flamboyer=flare up, flame] Florid, extravagant in showy, gorgeous style.

flaum (v) [=flame, flare, blaze up—Yks] Show exaggerated affection or attention in order to gain some end.

burn with a low blue flame Be drunk.

flame out/away [1548] Burn with indignation, anger etc.

an old flame Former sweetheart. (Closely associated with ‘fan the flame’=increase the ardour, and also connotated with the attraction of moths to candle-flames.)

add fuel to [1589]/pour oil on the fire/flames Aggravate the trouble; increase passion.

pouring oil on fire is not the way to quench it [1580] (As/from the above.)

play with fire [1582] Take risks; ask for trouble, especially by having a love affair; be cheerfully careless about dangerous matters.

put your finger in the fire [1546] Ask for trouble; meddle with risky things.

burn your fingers [1551] Take a risk and suffer loss; also, to a meddler, suffer for your interference.

I.74a Fire

fire (n) Fervour, spirit.

fire (up) (v) Goad, stimulate, excite, inspire—with energy, enthusiasm etc.

hot/red as fire
drunk as fire [Cor] Mad with drink.
vexed as fire [Cor] Angry.
do it as if there was fire in your skin [Ire] Impulsively, with energy and passion.

fire-scaup [=fire-scalp—nYks] Red-head; hot-tempered person.

face lep [leaped] like a coll [=coal—ShI] Blushed.

hot as coals [1540]
she burnt her coal—and didn’t warm herself [Ire] Helped others with no advantage to herself.

brand-new/bran-new/firebrand-new Absolutely new, fresh, just produced (as if still glowing from the fire; Shakespeare has ‘firenew’).

fiery Quick, hot-tempered, spirited.

blaze of publicity etc. Something showy and attracting attention.
blazing temper, row etc. Fierce, quickly roused and dangerous.
blash [flare up suddenly—wYks] it out Blurt it out, tell the secret.
flare up in anger, renewed activity Burst out violently.
flagrant [<Lat flagrare=blaze]
burning passion, shame, desire Consuming; urgently dangerous; imperious.
burning question One which arouses general interest.
burned up about… Outraged, angry, indignant, upset over something.
ardent [<Lat ardere=blaze]
incend Provoke. ‘Mr H merveslusly incendyth the Kyng ayenst the Scottis’ [Wolsey, Letter to Bishop Richard Fox—30 September 1511].
inflame (v) Incite, arouse generally.
inflammatory speeches Calculated to rouse the hearers to action.
hot air Empty rhetoric; flagrant boasting.

I.74b Fires

draws like a wash-house fire Of a pipe of tobacco. (The fires under the old washing coppers usually drew well.)
thawing like a snowball on a top-bar [the movable hanger hooked in front of a grate—sLan]
a wet rag goes safely by the fire Of one whose proximity is more likely to quench ardour than inspire it.
spit in the fire and it will fizzzer [Wm] Certain results will follow certain actions; rebuke fiery persons and you may expect a hostile response.
better a small fire to warm us than a great one to burn us A good is good only in moderation.
the nearer the fire, the hotter it gets The more involved or the closer related you are, the more you will feel it, for better or worse.

For ay the ner the fyr the hatter is

[G.Chaucer, T&C I. 449—1374]

little kens the wife that sits by the fire
how the wind blows cold in Hurle-burle
swyre [Sc: 1628]

(Hurle-burle-swyre is a mountain pass separating Nithsdale from Twadale and Clydesdale.) Those in shelter know little of others’ troubles.

warm someone up [Amer] Cajole, humour, win their approval.
warm—to subject, theme etc. Commit more energy, enthusiasm to.
(e)ar(th)stone talk [Lan] Promises given at night and broken next day.
hot seat Embarrassing situation.
sit upon coals Be very anxious, restless.

I.74c Maintaining fires

don't poke other folk's fires [wYks NJ Flor] Don't worsen others’ troubles; don’t interfere in their affairs.
you don't look at the mantelpiece when you're poking the fire! Disclaiming that appearances are important; often in a sexual context.
stir coals Excite strife or ill-feeling.
brush up… Revise knowledge of or skill in a subject. (From making up a fire.)
skeer [rake out—Yks Der Chs: 1917] your own fire Mind your own business; do your own dirty work.
beet [repair, rekindle a fire—Sc Lakel] flames of love, passions etc. Arouse generally.
ay reddin [tidying up, setting to rights] the fire [Sc] Always making trouble. (Bad-tempered reactions can be caused by interference with the household fire.)
turn the peats Change the subject. (When you turn the peats they give more heat.)
turn his damper down [Amer] Satisfy an immediate sexual need.
bank up [build up a fire by piling on fuel and ash] Complete, and almost overdo it.
fire that is closest kept burns most of all Passions under restraint break out with greater violence.

And wel the hotter been the gledes rede,
That men hem wryen with asshes pale and dede

[G.Chaucer, T&C II.538—1374]

a smothered fire may rekindle [NJ] Suppressed emotions can soon break out again.
smouldering with—a contained passion of anger, love, frustration, resentment etc. In a suppressed state, but ready to flare up at any moment.
zeal without knowledge is fire without light
have fat i' the fire [nwLin] Get into/make trouble.
there's fat in the fire and rags on the hob [Lan sChs] Trouble, turmoil, ill-feeling, quarrels.
the fat burnt itself out of the fire The crisis passed; the trouble blew over.
take away fuel, take away flame Remove the cause and you will end the trouble.
I.74d Green wood

green wood makes a hot fire [1477] In youth passions run high.
  soon hot, soon cold Of love, like a quick-burning fire.
  love of lads and fire of chats [firewood chips, fir cones—n&wEng] is soon in and
  soon out [Der: 1670]
  lad's love a bushk [bush] of broom, hot awhile and soon done [Chs: 1670]
  cauld cools the love that kindles ower het [Sc: 1587]
  an eye in his head fit to kinnel [=kindle] a whin bush [Cum] Of a full, fine eye in a
  horse.

I.74e Smoke

if you will enjoy the fire you must put up with the smoke Take the bad with the good;
evry benefit has a disadvantage.
  oor ain reek’s better than ither folk’s fire [Sc] On the attraction of possession for its
  own sake.
  nae reek in the laverock’s house [=the lark’s house, i.e. the sky—a kenning,
  probably from the ON: Sc] It is a wild night.
  like smoke Quickly and easily.
  best to sit next the chumley when the lum reeks [chimney flue smokes—Sc: 1729]
  It is often safest nearest the danger.
  sit near the door [Lnk] Of a tailor who makes big stitches to make up for lost time.
  go into smoke [Aus] Go into hiding. (Out of sight in the smoke of a bush-fire.)
  escape the smoke and fall into the fire Encounter a worse while avoiding a lesser
  evil.
  from smoke into smother [smouldering ashes—Shaks, AYLI I.ii—1593] From one
  danger or misery into another (possibly worse).
  end/go up in smoke Have no solid or lasting result; end uselessly, futilely.
  reek of… Be strongly redolent of—bribery etc. (Originally merely smoke, it later
  meant smell.)
  sic reek as is therein comes oot o’ the lum [Sc] You may tell what he is like
  inwardly by what he says.
  it’s a sour reek! [Sc] Of a wife beating her husband.
I.74f Sparks

**spark** (n) Small vestige of various vital qualities. ‘A final spark of compassion’; ‘not a spark of life remained’; ‘not a spark of honesty in him’.

*when the heart is afire, some sparks will fly out of the mouth* You cannot help saying something when your feelings are too strong for you.

*spark out* [wYks Lan: 1880] Lifeless, unconscious, oblivious; forgotten.

I.74g Slaking fire

**nothing is done without trouble, except letting the fire out**

*damp* (v) his ardour etc. Make quiet, cool, inactive (like damping down a fire for the night).

*damp down their fires* Reduce their capacity for making trouble; quench their enthusiasm.

*damper* A depressing person, incident.

*quench* (v) hopes, passion etc. End, destroy them.

*much water cannot squench love* [Nrf] Love is not easily suppressed.

*fair/soft words will not slake wrath* (Like fire it is too fierce to be so easily suppressed.)

*the fire has gone out for*… There is no longer any opportunity, incentive, inclination for something.

*extinguish—a debt, opponent etc.* Terminate, obliterate. Hence, **extinct**.

*money to burn—but only when the fire’s gone out* A comment on what so often happens, that opportunity comes only after the desire for it has gone, like the mutual incompatibility of youth and experience.

I.74h Cinders

**get a coal in your foot/set your foot on a coal** Be placed in an awkward position.

*a cinder in his throat* The Northumbrian burr.

*lose a cinder* [Nhb] Be out in your reckoning. (A traditional way of reckoning dates etc. was to drop a cinder in a basin.)
I.74i Ashes

pale as ashes [1385]
solid as ess [dead ashes—Snr]
learn [teach]/teach your grandmother/granny to lap ashes [sDev Cor] Teach her to ‘suck eggs’ (q.v. I.4g).
teach thi granny to sup milk out o’ t’ assriddle [sieve for ashes—wYks] (As/from the above.)
coarse as an ass-riddle [wYks] Of open weave in cloth—such as hens may pick geese through!
rake over/up…(ashes/old ashes) Renew old disputes; re-examine old differences; revive old grievances.

I.75a Fireplaces, grates

too big for my fireplace [Sur] Beyond my means.
hard as hell’s hobstone/the hobs of hell [Lan]
black as the stock [hob of the fire—Hnt Nhp EAn Oxf Ken Sus]/habern [=hob—Sus]
focus [<Lat focus=hearth] (From the way in which eyes are drawn to a burning fire.)
worth an old grate [nYks] Worth having.

I.75b Racks and hooks

randle-tree [the iron or wooden bar across a chimney to hang pots and pans on—Sc] Tall, thin person.
rack and hook [an iron hook sliding on a hinged bracket in the kitchen chimney, used for hanging a pot or kettle over the fire—sLan] Idler, one over-fond of sitting by the fire.
dry as rack and hook [sLan]
black as the hake [=hook—eSuf] up the chimney
black as the crook [the hook for suspending pots etc. over the fire—Sc rlre]
I.75c Chimneys

black as the aister [chimney-back—NCy Stf Lei Shr Ken]
    soft as a flue
long as the chimney
make the chimney smoke Bring a woman to her climax.
smoke like a chimney Smoke (tobacco) heavily.

it is easier to build two chimneys than to maintain one It is well to count the running and maintenance costs before investing in expansions.

soldiers in peace are like chimneys in summer [1595] (An unnecessary expense for the present, but one that will surely be needed later.)

he would give him/her the top brick off the chimney! [w&midEng] Of a father who spoils his child; the very limits of generosity.

like the bricks in Jack Cade’s chimney All that may be needed. Some form of this saying was known in the C16, occurring in a scene which would have been appreciated by the groundlings:

Sir, he hath made a Chimney in my Fathers house, & the brickes are alive at this day to testifie

[Shaks, Henry VIIi IV.ii—1592

chimney-pot hat Man’s silk hat.

anybody looking out of the chimley? [Cum] Is there a mortgage on the house? (See also I.17d.)

glowering in the lum ne’er filled the pot [ShI] Don’t just sit there, do something!

I.75d Stoves

dry as a stove
    stove-pipes Trousers (especially the narrow style).
    stove-pipe hat Tall top hat.
round as a length of stove-pipe
    a drop of water on a hot stove Something well-intentioned though ineffective, and soon dissipated without noticeable benefit.
I.75e Soot

bitter/black/drunken/dry [thirsty—sLan] as soot

smut Obscene talk or literature.

worse than soot and sour mixed Most disagreeable.

mucky as a wet soot-bag [Lan]

marriage comes unawares, like a soot-drop

I.76a Fire-risk

kindle not a fire that you cannot extinguish [Ont NY Okl Texas] Always keep full control over your undertakings.

a small spark makes a great fire [1530] one spark may raise an awful blaze [Dev] Small events may lead to serious consequences.

I’m that dry that I dare not spit out for fear of setting summat on fire [sLan]

he was like to fire the house Was in a blazing rage.

slow burn [Amer] Slowly mounting anger; a type of humour or comedy to which there is a delayed response.

as much use as a chocolate fireguard
dangerous as a match in a straw factory [Calif]

I.76b Flax and tow

do not put fire to flax/tow Do not bring together the ingredients for violence.

For peril is bothe fyr and tow t’assemble

[G.Chaucer, The Prologe of the Wyves Tale of Bathe ln.89–1386]

it is hard to keep flax from the flame Hard to keep susceptible ones from falling.

fire and flax/tow [1603] Two elements incompatible and explosive; two people harmless apart, but dangerous together.

fire-and-tow [Ayr Chs] Hasty and irascible person.

put fire to flax Instigate trouble; provoke a conflict.

fire cannot be hidden in flax/straw [1557] Of secrets that cannot be concealed.

flare like lunted [lit] tow [nYks] Be very excitable, irascible.

go like fire and tow [Wm] Very quickly.
fire is not to be quenched with tow [Ont] Two angry or passionate people together will not agree.
quench smoking flax Cut short a promising development.

I.76c Clothing on fire

who has skirts of straw needs fear the fire [1670] You should be most on your guard where you are most vulnerable.
well may he smell fire whose gown burns [1640] An understatement commenting on someone’s justifiable suspicions.
money burns a hole in his pocket [1768] He cannot wait to spend it.
I wouldn’t piss on…if he/she was on fire An emphatic disapproval.

I.76d Houses on fire

he would burn his house to warm his hands Of one recklessly improvident.
set not your house on fire to spite the moon Do not make an extravagant sacrifice on the whim of a moment.
set your house on fire and run away by the light [1530]/in order to roast eggs [1612] Incur personal loss for a trivial reason.
when your neighbour’s house burns, look to your own [1519] Take warning from the next person’s misfortune.
like a house on fire [1837] Rapidly; with gusto; with furious energy.
three/two flittings are as bad as one fire [1758] (Because of the articles lost or broken when moving house.)
buy a thing out of the fire [Nhp] Pay an extravagant price.
pull/snatch out of the fire—a situation, game, battle [1855] Turn threatened defeat or failure into success. [See Jude i.23]
the roof falls in A catastrophe occurs; everything starts going wrong.
bring water when the house is burned down [1575] Come with help too late.
it’s no use crabbing at the smoke when the barn’s burning down [Oreg] Disasters put minor annoyances into perspective.
I.76e Fighting fire

**fire wall** [1990s] Combination of computer hardware and software that restricts the movement of electronic data between two or more networks, for security purposes.

**fireproof** Invulnerable generally; imperturbable, especially of the mental state of one who attains an unshakeable frame of mind.

**wet blanket** (often used for quenching fires) [1830] Depressing influence; someone who spoils the fun.

**foul water slockens** [quenches] **fire** [Sc: 1546] A comment on the social rôle of prostitution; even a disreputable person can exercise a good or restraining influence.

**fire-brigade** Political organisation for protecting member states in trouble; any organisation to help those for whom things get too hot.

**visiting firemen** [Amer] Unofficial visitors who are made welcome nonetheless.

**hosepiping** Tendency for amateurs to swing a hand-held movie camera from side to side in a mistaken attempt to comprise as much of the scene as possible.

**buff** Enthusiast; specialist (from the buff uniforms of New York volunteer firemen in the early years of the C20, noted for their devotion to duty).

**all afloat** [Wakefield, wYks] In disorder, disarray (like a flooded house).

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I.77a Candles

**ash-candles** [Dor] The seed vessels of the ash tree.

**dip his wick** Have sex with a woman. (Candle ‘dips’ were made by immersing a wick into melted wax and repeatedly withdrawing it to cool and grow thicker.)

**not care/give/worth a farthing dip** [a thin tallow candle]

**fair as a farthing candle** [Sc 1816] Describing complexion or hair colour.

**fond as a farden candle** [Yks] Foolish.

**straight as a pound of long twelves** Describing hair [Lin].

**hair as lank and straight as a pound of candles** [Northallerton, Yks]

**daft as a naffy candle** [Cor] (Probably a confused corruption of daff [extinguish—nEng] a candle and daffy [soft, imbecile—Lan Der Shr War Wor Hrf].) Also, naffy [midYks]= fool.

**agree like wax and candlewick**

**white as a tallow candle** [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—2 February 1841], hence:

**tallow-faced** With a pale, waxen complexion.

**strike a candle** [Wil] Slide on the heel, leaving a white mark on the ice.
I.77b Candles alight

has a nose to light candles at Is drunk.
man’s best candle is his understanding (His guide when in doubt.)
a great torch may be lit at a little candle A small start may have large consequences.
light his/her candle Inspire, motivate them.
an ill wife and a new-kindled candle should hae their heads hodden doun [Sc: 1736] Should be restrained early.
the darkest place is under the candlestick Guilt is often where you least expect it; the master or mistress may well be ignorant of what everyone else knows.
chandler-chafted [candlestick-jowled] Lantern-jawed [Abd Frf].
is all on chandler-pins [Ayr] Is refined in speech (as if an everyday, working candle were elevated to a candlestick in the best room).
miss his charnle-pins [Gall] Be too drunk to stand up (like a candle that falls over because not set firm on the candlestick).

I.77c Candles wasted

set forth the sun with a candle [1551] Make an unnecessarily or pointlessly slight addition.
the way to see Divine light is to put out your own candle A selfish outlook is finite and cannot illumine the Infinite or Absolute.
burn daylight [Sc wYks nLin Nhp War seWor EAn: 1596] Waste time; burn candles early.
two candles burning and never a wheel turning! (on the spinning wheel) A reproof of extravagance.
waste a candle to find a flea/farthing Make a search that costs more than the object of it is worth.
as you have burned the candle, burn the inch [Don] Complete the job; hang for a sheep as a lamb; carry through a desperate attempt.
burn the candle at both ends [1730] Live extravagantly; spend or work harder than is good for you; exhaust strength or resources through taking on too much.

I.77d Candle-ends

candle-ends Petty economies, trifles, scraps, brevities.
his candle burns within the socket (of the candlestick) He is near his life’s end.
sweet [=sweat, waste away by exudation or unauthorised use] down into the socket [Lan] Abate.

flicker [a fitful, transient, unreliable gleam of light] of hope etc. Slight and erratic sign.

I.77e Snuffing candles

to save a snuff he throws away whole candles Makes such economies as waste more than they save.

snuff it/out… Die; kill; extinguish variously.

quiet as/went off like the snuff/snuft of a candle [Lan Not Chs Lei] Of someone who dies or departs suddenly, unobtrusively.

went out like a light [1934] Fell asleep; died suddenly.

dout [douse, snuff—Som] the sun Grow dispirited, lose heart.

take it in snuff/take snuff in the nose [1560] Be offended, indignant, resentful. (Snuff is the unpleasant smoke from the end of a candle-wick.)

I.78a Rushlights

rushlight Faint glimmer of intelligence, knowledge.

thin as a farthing rushlight [w&midEng] eye twinkling like a farthing rushlight

I.78b Lamps and lanterns

slape [slippery, greasy—Cum Lan]/smooth as oil [1579]

slape (adj) Deceitful, smooth-spoken, untrustworthy [Cum Wm eYks nLin].

oil in/out Move unobtrusively, inconspicuously, smoothly; ‘slip’ in or out.

if you wish to see my light, give oil to my lamp I need some incentive before I respond.

if there is no oil in the lamp, the wick is wasted [III] Don’t equip someone for a task they are incapable of performing.

raise the wick before darkness falls [Ire] Don’t leave a necessary action till the last possible moment.

little’s the light will be seen far in a mirk night [Sc] Someone in bad company only needs to do a little good to have a good effect.
look at the light, not at the lantern At the living essence, not the physical container; judge by deeds, not appearances.

lean as a lantern

lantern jaws Long thin jaws, making the cheeks look hollow.

thin as lantern lights [transparent wafers of horn serving as windows in a lamp—Lakel]

Macfarlane’s/parish lantern [Wor+passim] The moon.
down-lanterns [Wil] Cairns of chalk on the downs to show the way by night.

show the sun with a lantern Give superfluous or fulsome praise.
bear the lantern Show the way as a leader.

hand on the lamp [1887] Keep enlightenment from perishing.

anger blows out the lamp of the mind [NY Oreg]

I.78c Torches

I know him as well as if I had gone through him with a lighted link [torch: 1732] the more light a torch gives, the less while it lasts [1732] Said when someone seems to be spending vitality etc. too quickly to last.
carry/hold a torch for…[1927] Retain a passion, admiration for someone. (From keeping the flame of love alight; or from taking part in a torchlight procession in someone’s honour.)
torch-song [Amer] One whose theme is unrequited love. Also, torchy (as/from the above).

I.78d Light

enlighten Make to understand, realise.

illumination [<Lat illuminatio=lighting up, throwing light upon] Sudden realisation, access of knowledge.
elucidate [<Lat elucidare=light, enlighten] Clarify, explain, make something clearly understood that was not previously clear.
cast/shed/throw light on…[1855] Explain, elucidate.
place in a good light Represent favourably.
cast/shed/throw fresh/new light on…/put in a new light Reveal new facts; give fresh meaning, different emphasis to. Thence, see/view in a new light.
glaring [of light and colours=dazzling, vivid] Very obvious and obtrusive—‘a glaring mistake’.
glowing—description, praise etc. Rich warm, highly coloured.
cast a lurid light on… Give a grim, tragic account of events.
stand in his light Be the cause of him missing something; prejudice his chances.
sit/stand in your own light [1522] Be wilfully blind, be the cause of your own trouble; worsen your prospects.
shining light [1563] Exemplary person.
light up [1766] Of a face or eyes animated by joy, wonder etc.
white light Freedom from prejudice (from the way in which a white light shows things in their true colours, without any preconceived hue).
let the dry light into him [Lei War] Astonish him unpleasantly.

I.78e Electric light

switch on Cause to work, respond; bring into action.
switched on [1964] Fully alive; emotionally responsive; aware of what is happening; sexually stimulated; under the influence of drugs; au fait with the fashions, events of the day. (Like an electrical appliance that only works when switched on.)
turn-on [1969] Event, person or situation that has the effect of generating interest and excitement, often sexual. (As/from the above.)
dim bulb [Amer] Stupid person.
not have all his/her switches on [Amer] Be mentally retarded.
the lights are on but there’s no one at home Of someone so far gone in senile dementia or personality-loss, they do not seem to be ‘there’ at all.
switch off [1921] Discontinue, discourage; cease to pay attention, lose concentration.
turn off Put off, cause to lose interest (the reaction after being ‘switched on’). Hence, offed=murdered, ‘eliminated’.
have the porch light out Be mentally lacking.

I.79a Beds

bed (n) of a lake, river etc. The base, bottom, support; place where something comes to rest.
embed [1990s] Insert a graph, picture etc. into a computer document.
embedded Snugly enclosed, stuck in.
as big as the great bed of Ware [eleven feet square, it held twelve persons, dates from the C16 (see Shaks, Twelfth Night III. ii—1600) and is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum]
canopy [<Gk κανωπέιον=bed covered by mosquito-net] Now extended to mean overall covering, as in tree-canopy.
in the twinkling of a bed-post/bed-staff [1660] Instantly.
an old man is a bed full of bones
I.79b Bedding straw

not care/give/worth a straw [before 1300]/two straws
called to straw [Msri Ark] Pregnant (see below).
lay in her nest Take to childbed. The m[ist] of the house lookest every hower to be layd in her nest’ [Knyvett Letter—11 November 1637].
in/on (the) straw [1602] In childbed. (When blankets were more difficult to wash and dry, women in childbirth would confine themselves to the more disposable parts of the bedding. See also F.4c.)
out of the straw Recovered from childbirth.
fire in the bedstraw Mischief brewing.
hay Bed. ‘Hit the hay’=go to bed; ‘roll in the hay’=make love. (See also E.32e.)
hay-bag Woman of that shape.

I.79c Pillows and mattresses

white as a pillow
pillow lava, pillow structure The shape taken by lava in certain cooling conditions where its shape resembles that of soft pillows or sacks piled together.
soft as a goose-down pillow [nYks]
no pillow so soft as God’s promise The faithful sleep soundly.
a clear conscience is a good pillow [Okl]
sew pillows under their elbows [Wyclif—1382, from Ezekiel xiii.18] Give them a false sense of security.
feather-bedded [1921] Extravagantly spoilt; luxuriously treated; favourably employed.
good night, Nicholas, the moon is in the flock-bed [J.Howell Pt II of the Lexicon,—1659] A greeting to a suspected thief (one of St Nicholas’s clerks) congratulating him on a suitable night for burglary, the moon being obscured by clouds.
neither bed nor bolster Without any part in it.
neither pillow nor bolster [sStf] Not in the secret.

I.79d Blankets

blanket (v) Stifle a scandal, enquiry etc.; take the wind from the sails of another ship by passing to windward.
**blanket** (adj)—law, statement, pardon All-inclusive.

**blue blanket** [Amer] A personal possession that imparts a sense of security.

**put a knot in bluey** [blue blanket used for wrapping up swag—Aus] Be ready to travel.

**security blanket** [Amer] Someone or something that reassures with a comforting presence.

**as braid as it’s lang, like Paddy’s blanket** [Uls] When it matters not which way something is done.

**eyes like two burnt holes in a blanket** [nIre] Dark and without expression.

**spits on his ain blanket** [Sc] Spoils his own environment.


**stick together like shit to a blanket**

**stretch your legs according to the length of your blanket** Be economical, don’t overspend. (See also F.4c.)

**on both sides the blanket** [midEng] By both mother and father.

**a blanket is the warmer for being doubled** [Uls] Said when relations marry.

**put the daisy-quilt over**… Bury.

**eiderdown sauce** [1949] A light, pale-coloured sauce which covers the pudding.

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**I.79e Sheets**

**pale/white as a sheet** Usually of faces turned unusually pallid.

**wheat always lies best in wet sheets** Thrives after a wet winter.

**lavender** [1921] Homosexual effeminacy of a genteel, refined type.

**put away/lay up in lavender** [Nhp Brks: 1592] Carefully put away for future use; pawn; imprison (out of harm’s way).

**lie in lavender** [sIre] Reside in comfort.

**better wear out shoes than sheets** The expenses of industry are preferable to those of idleness.

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**I.79f Going to bed**

**go up the ladder to bed** Be hanged.

**as you make your bed, so you must lie on it** [c.1590] Take the consequences of your behaviour.

**divest yourself of**… Shed, abandon, lay aside your responsibilities, fears etc.

**he’ll not put off his doublet before he goes to bed** Will not part with his property before death. Also, **take not off your clothes before going to bed** [Glo].
put your leg to bed [sw&mid Lan] Link arms.
doffed his shoon [=shoes—Lan] before he went to bed [1662] Of one who lives to regret parting with his possessions.
I don’t go to bed with my boots on! I do not intend to wear a condom.
truckle to… Cede to, take an inferior position (from sleeping in a truckle bed underneath someone in a better bed).
stumble at the truckle-bed Sleep with the maid instead of the mistress.
get into bed with… Merge with, affiliate to, become a partner with. Of business or other ventures.
curtain lecture [1632] Private rebuke at bedtime, usually from the wife and originally within the curtains of a four-poster bed.
drunk [=thrunk]/thick [conspiratorial—Uls nLin Der Oxf]/thrang [Cum wYks]/throng/thrunk [crowded—Sc Ire n&midEng] as three/two in a bed
in a crowded bed it’s better to wait to turn till father turns [Ire] Authority is all the more necessary for large numbers.
put/see (a newspaper) to bed Set the presses rolling.
bed down Settle—of roads, foundations etc.
pull the bed-clothes over your head Avoid facing an unpleasant reality.
when wheat lies long in bed, it rises with a heavy head Yields well after a late germination.
so crooked, he couldn’t lie straight in bed [Aus] A liar and a cheat.

I.79g Sleeping

set your mind at rest Stop worrying; get peace of mind.
go to sleep [Cor] Of linen, get mildewed after washing.
sleep in your shoes [Lnk] Die a violent death.
a top sleeps Spins so steadily as to appear still. (See K.70.)
sleeping partner One who contributes only money to the business, taking no active part.
heeds [heads—Cum] and throws [=throws, turns, turns awry, twists—Sc] like Jock and his mother Is in disorder, in a confused, shapeless heap. (To ‘heed and throw’ is to lie alternately with the head of one thing or person on a level with the feet of the other. In Scotland, children who slept with their mother traditionally slept thus.)
tifle (v) [toss restlessly in bed—nYks] Be changeable in mind, inconstant in purpose.
tête bêche [<Fr tête bêcheve=double bed-head] Printed upside up and upside down alternately, of postage stamps on a sheet.
would not dream of doing it! Of what is so alien to someone’s character that it would not arise even in their subconscious.
it is a true dream that is seen waking [1736] It is easy to come at the truth when all is explained.
pass away like a dream
fadeaway [Amer] A pitch that moves away from the batter so that he has to stretch out to it.

I’ve had a sleep since then A light-hearted explanation for a change of mind or lapse of memory; also implying that circumstances have changed due to a considerable lapse of time.

I.79h Waking

stir (v) (in the mind or memory) The original meaning [=start to move after being at rest] is here transferred to what seems like a similar arousal in the mind.

awake/wake—suspicions, love etc. Arouse, make active.

he has slept on a bag of saffron Of a merry soul (saffron having the reputation of possessing exhilarative properties).

I.79i Rising

you must rise early if you want to—do something difficult, or to have any chance against a formidable opponent.

rising earlier does not make it daylight [NY] There are things which your actions will not affect.

he that riseth first is first dressed If you wish to finish first, you must start first.

when your name is up, you may lie abed Once you have acquired the reputation for rising early, you need not do so.

get out of bed on the wrong side Start the day in a bad mood.

change is lightsome [welcome, cheerful, active—Cum], if it’s nobbut out of bed intill beck [ =into the beck]

I.80a Furniture

part of the furniture Someone so unobtrusive and unassuming as to be taken for granted and unacknowledged—as is an over-familiar piece of furniture. (See also I.39d, wallpaper)

apposite [<Lat ad ponere=place up against] Hence, well-put.

it’s a fine thing, learning; it takes no room up and the bailies cannot fet it away [ = fetch, take it away—sLan]
open-ended Indeterminate; without a predetermined limit, in space or time. Of debates, symposia etc.

wide open Unlimited, unrestricted, undecided, unprejudiced. Of issues, debates, court cases, anything to which a decision or conclusion is nowhere in prospect.

out of the top drawer [1860] In high society.
takes your eye like a new tin under a dresser [Ant]

sharp as the corner of a round table Very stupid.
under-the-table [1949] Secret, especially of unofficial deals or payments.
get your feet under the table [RN 1925] Be accepted as a favoured guest.

have your legs under a good table [nLin] Be well off, in happy circumstances.
have your legs under a good table [1949] Secret, especially of unofficial deals or payments.

the mahogany Lavatory seat; dinner table. ‘With my knees under his mahogany’=dining with him.

varnish (v) faults, false arguments etc. Gloss over, overlay with specious deceptions.
unvarnished truth, account etc. Plain, une mbellished.

has its legs on [nwLin] Is of top quality.

beat/knock all to sticks Overcome, surpass completely.
ding to sticks and staves [Cai] Knock to pieces, variously.
go to sticks (and staves) Be ruined.

worm-eaten Antiquated, decrepit, decayed.

wormhole [1957] A concept of something like a tube providing a short cut across time, as required by time machines.

L.80b Chairs

he has got all his chairs at home [Lan early 1960s] Is fully alert mentally.
take in his chair and sit down [Sc] Settle without work or provision—in trade, marriage etc.
laid-back [1973] Relaxed, unhurried, assuming the attitude of those who no longer need to crusade or be strenuous, but can rest on their laurels.

chair-warmer [Amer] Idle person.
rocking-chair policies etc. Those formulated in home surroundings without first-hand experience of the issues involved or the on-the-spot conditions.

rocking-chair money Pensions, dole money.

off his rocker Crazy, mad (like a chair that has parted from its rocker wood).
he who wants content cannot find an easy chair The body cannot relax if the mind is under tension.

well-upholstered Well-covered, stout—usually of women.

no more wit than a stool [1581]
draw in his stool [Sc] Marry a widow or woman owning a furnished house (suggesting that all he has to do towards his new home is to carry in one stool).
don’t be after breaking your shin on a stool that is not in your way [Uls Miss] To someone who is worrying about something that has not yet happened.
I.80c Cushions, curtains

sick as a cushion
  *cushion (n) [Amer] Safeguard against hard times, like a reserve bank account.
  *cushion (v) Soften, alleviate, mitigate the effects of something—as in ‘cushion the impact’.

  *an idle person is the devil’s cushion/pillow [1577]  
  *beside the cushion Beside the point, irrelevant. (From sitting beside the cushion instead of on it. Used in 1684 by the ruthless Judge Jeffreys rejecting evidence for the defence.)

  *miss the cushion [1525] Be mistaken. (As/from the above.)
  *set beside the cushion [Abd] Set aside from active service; suppress.

  *all curtains and kippers Describing a household that sacrifices its standard of living to maintain appearances.

I.80d Rugs and mats

pull the rug out/from under…/on…[1946] Remove the support someone has relied on so that it results in their downfall; leave without support, justification or defence; alter the status quo.

  *powfagged [=head-wearied, worn, dirty, exhausted—sLan] as a rabbas [coarse cloth used in packing wool and used as floor-coverings and door-mats by the mill-workers—Yks Lan]

  *dry as bass [dried rushes, used for making mats and chair-seats—Cum]

  *rain stair-rods Rain very heavily.

I.80e Carpets

*carpet (n and v) Extensive(ly) cover. ‘Carpet of daisies.’

  *smooth as a carpet

  *figure in the carpet Pattern or meaning not immediately obvious.

  *carpet-way [EAn Ken] Path of smooth grass.

  *wall-to-wall [1967] Continuous, inescapable, unrelieved, all-pervading.

  *carpet-bagger [Amer] Newcomer (after those northerners who went south after the Civil War); opportunist; cheap-jack; non-local candidate in election; off-comer.

  *carpet-bag (v) [Amer] Try to make a good impression (as someone hoping to sell out of a bag would have to do).
**carpet-knight** [1576] One whose prowess was in carpeted rooms rather than on the field of action.

### I.80f Table linen

**upon the tapis** [=tapestry, table-cloth: 1690] Under consideration; in the open.

**spoilt as a lace table-cloth** (Because it will be carefully kept and only brought out on special occasions.)

*if I can’t be a tablecloth, I won’t be a dishrag* [Ind III] Unless you feed me I shall not work.

### I.81a The calendar

**make (both) ends meet** [1662] Remain solvent, keep out of debt. (From the idea of the end of one year reaching the beginning of the next without a debit gap.)

*men are April when they woo, December when they wed* [see Shaks, *AYLI* IV.i–1593]

### I.81b Days of the week

**Sunday heart** [Dev] The best side of a person’s nature.

*born in the middle of the week, he looks both ways for Sunday* Of someone who squints.

*look seven ways for Sunday* [Cum] Be confused, astonished.

*looks both ways for Sunday* [naut] Squints.

*make him look twenty ways for Sunday, and then find it in the middle of the week* [sLan] Confuse him, bring him to his wit’s end.

*some Sunday in the middle of the week* Never.

*not up to Monday/won’t get further than Wednesday* Is deficient in intellect.

*look as black as a wet Friday* Very angry.

*a Friday face/look* A gloomy, solemn expression (because Fridays were fast-days).

*red-letter day* Special day, to be well-noted. (Saints’ and holy days are marked in red on the calendar.)

*you cannot have two mornings in one day* Cannot be young again.

*acting like there’s no tomorrow* Recklessly, without regard to the future.
I.81c Sundials

as true as the dial to the sun [1663]
    a sundial is of no use in the shade [1633] Public figures must have publicity; deploy knowledge, skill etc. where they can be appreciated; do not hide your talents.
    gnomon Nose (especially one that sticks out from the ‘dial’).

I.81d Hour-glasses

hour-glass figure, fashions With a very slender waist.
    careful as an hour-glass/sand-glass [Y’ks]—that never wastes a grain.
    like an hour-glass, she uses the same thing over and over again [nYks]
    the sands are running out Time is getting short.
    his glass is run [1590] He is near to death.

I.81e Clocks

calm/quiet/right as a clock
    a face to stop a clock Very ugly, ill-natured.
    quiet as a stopped clock [sLan]
    regular as the clock ticks [Oxf]
    busy as a ticking clock
    reet [right—Lan] as a wooden clock Sound and strong.
    wouldn’t...(marry him etc.) for a large clock!

the swing of the pendulum/pendulum swing [1694] The inevitable oscillation between extremes; natural reaction; change in policy, public opinion.

find/know what o’clock it is/the time of day Discover/know the real state of affairs; have worldly sagacity.
    like one o’clock Vigorously, very well, readily, eagerly
    like one o’clock half-struck With hesitation; listless [Nhb].
    it’s one/two/three o’clock at the waterworks A warning hint that someone has one, two or three fly buttons undone.
    five o’clock [Glo] The end (not merely of the working day), of life etc.
    it’s half-past five [Glo]/welly [nearly—passim Eng] six o’clock with him He is failing in health.
    when your clock strikes When your hour (for dying) comes.
    two-faced, like Buck’s clock [nStf]
like Colne clock, always at one [Lan] Of a steady character. they agree—like the clocks of London Not at all. as great a liar as the clock of Strabane [Ire] put/turn back the clock [1867] Revert to an outdated practice. I’ll wind your watch for you [sChs] A vague threat. throw mud at the clock Give yourself up to despair (as if unable to cope with living in time).

I.82a Housework

housekeeping Those necessary operations of maintenance, keeping records and systematic storage in a large organisation.

Dilly-dally brings night as soon as Hurryscurry lose an hour in the morning and you’ll spend all day looking for it hang by the same nail [1872] Be associated, share the same conditions. hang up on the nail Postpone a decision. redd [tidy up] aft, redd saft: redd seenil [seldom—Sc], redd sair [Sc] The longer you postpone work, the worse it is to do.

throng as Beck wife [Wm] Very busy.

throng [busy, overworked—Sc Ire n&midEng] as Throp’s wife, when she hanged herself in her garter/the dishcloth [nEng]/throng as Throp’s wife (who brewed, washed and baked on the same day, then hanged herself wi’ t’ dish-clout)[Yks] (She was the archetype of a housewife always busy over trifles, but whose house is nevertheless in a mess.)

throng [Nhb]/throng [nwLin] as Throp’s wife when she hanged herself wi’ the dish-cloot (As above.)

I.82b Brushes and brooms

daft/mazed [dazed, silly—Dev Cor] as a brush

besom (n) Woman of loose habits; kicking cow [Sheffield, Yks].

brant [stiff, stuck-up—NCy: Cum]/drunk [wYks]/fond [foolish—Nhb Yks Lin] as a besom/brush

daft as besoms [Cum]

besom-head [eYks nwLin] Fool.

like a birch broom in a fit Of wild, untidy hair.

just a wisp in place of a brush [Ire] In disparagement of someone or something not up to standard.
have a broom up the ass [=arse—Amer] Work conscientiously, with great efficiency (as if thus sweeping the floor at the same time).

would charm the heart of a broomstick Is very attractive, appealing.

bestow gifts as a broom yields honey Meanly; not at all. (J. Withals in 1586 understood broom in this saying to be the *genista* and while it is true that honey bees obtain principally pollen from broom flowers, they do also collect nectar.)

mazed as a broomstick/scrubber [Dev Cor]

wet as scrubbers Feeble [Cor].

wet as a scrubber [naut] Of a stupid, ineffectual rating.

a new broom/besom [Sc] sweeps clean [1542] Expect changes and greater efficiency from a newly appointed overseer.

a new broom sweeps clean, but the old brush knows the corners [Farney, Tip] (As/ from the above, but with the qualification that the person with experience will know the intricacies and irregularities of the job.)

the dust before the broom! To someone walking in front.

there is little for the rake after the besom [Sc: 1628] Said when there is little provision for a successor.

the North wind is a broom for the Channel (It clears it of shipping.)

hang out the besom/hang the broom out of the window [1773] Invite friends in, have a good time while the wife is away [Brks]; say no more (—have said enough) [sLan].

hang out the broom Be very careful about character before employing.

hang out the broomstick [Oxf] Angle for a husband.

shine like the bristles of a blacking brush

I.82c Sweeping

sweep (v) Search premises thoroughly, not with a broom, but with electronic equipment, tracker dogs etc.

sweep away Abolish completely; make a swift and ruthless clearance, usually of something long-established.

sweep before your own door [sLan Can Amer]/ sweep your own door-step Look to your own faults.

clean around your own back door/porch before you clean around someone else’s [Kenty Iowa] (As above.)

sweeping changes, statements Drastic, effective, far-reaching.

sweepings Rubbish, worst, unwanted element. ‘Sweepings of the prisons.’

riff-raff [sweepings, refuse, offal] The rabble, worthless crowd.

make a clean sweep Clear away completely, ready for a new start; win all the prizes.

brush aside Dismiss peremptorily, casually; choose to ignore.

brush/sweep under the carpet/rug [1955] Put unwelcome facts or acts out of sight, out of mind; conceal something embarrassing in the hope that it will not come to light.
they have need of a besom that sweep the house with a turf [Yks: 1678] Of those who go to ridiculous lengths to get their own way or to gratify a whim.

swept by… Overrun, pervaded, afflicted—often by an epidemic, hysteria etc.

windswept Looking as if it had been swept by the wind, much blown.

fall/slip between/through the cracks [Amer] Be overlooked, ignored, bungled.

I.83a Mops and dusters

**mop up** Drink up thirstily; absorb, collect up generally; clear up pockets of resistance and isolated enemy troops from an area of recently occupied territory.

**a mop of hair** An overgrown, untidy head of hair. Hence, mop-head

**drunk as a mop**

**look like death on a mopstick** [War] Most miserable.

**be/feel all mops and brooms** [Dor Dev] Bewildered; out of sorts; drunk.

**Dame Partington and her mop** One who hopelessly tries to withstand change. (In 1824 Mrs Partington of Sidmouth, Devon, tried to mop up the waves of the sea flooding into her cottage.)

**quiet as the lighting of a fly on a feather duster**

**taken down, dusted, and put back on the shelf** Vouchsafed a cursory consideration before being relegated to the former state of neglect.

**be allowed/consigned/left to gather dust** Suffer total neglect.

**dust off**…escue from neglect; bring out of obscurity, variously.

I.83b Washing the floor

**lay the stool’s foot in water** [sLan ECy: 1830] Prepare for visitors.

**sweep/wipe the deck/floor with**…[Don] Reduce to helpless shame, overwhelm, humili ate.

**absorbing** Compelling the interest.

**absorbed in**… Preoccupied with, to the exclusion of all else. These meanings derive from the original one of absorb=swallow up, comprise something so completely as to incorporate the other identity in itself, as seems to take place when people ‘lose’ themselves in a compelling interest.

**dry as a sponge**

**sponge on**… Batten on someone (absorbing your host’s goods as a sponge does liquid).

**strew green rushes for this stranger** [1546] Give this person a special welcome. (The old floor covering.)

**every house has its dirty corner** [NJ] Something disreputable in everyone’s life.
I.83c Cloths and soap

pale/white as a clout [Sc Cum wYks Lan: 1489]
   dead as a rag [wSom] Of game.
   rubbing rag Worthless individual, not fit for proper work [wYks].
   soft as wash-leather
   soft-soap (v) Flatter. (A liquid or jell soap used for washing delicate articles.) Hence:
   soft-soap (n) Flattery.
   soapy Unctuous.
   caustic Cruelly sarcastic, painful, biting. (Caustic soda is a harsh alkali used in cleaning.)

I.83d Washing the wall

smear (v) Spread derogatory rumours about; discredit. Hence:
   smear campaign Organised policy of character-assassination.
   wipe out Erase, obliterate, annihilate an insult, memory, army etc.; cancel out a disgrace by some redeeming act.
   wash a wall of loam Labour in vain.
   wash a brick Do useless work.

I.83e Dishcloths

limp [Cum]/linnow [supple—Shr Rdn]/wet as a dishclout
   limp dishrag [Amer] Ineffectual, incompetent person.
   face like a dishclout Pale and frightened.
   weak as a wet dishclout [NhB sLan]
   like the old woman’s dishcloth, looks better dry than wet
   make a napkin of your dishclout Marry out of your class; make a mésalliance; marry your cook.
   as braw [smart, handsome—Sc Ire NhB Cum IMa Yks] as Bink’s wife when she becket [nodded in greeting] to the minister wi’ the dishclout on her head [Sc: 1721]
   do not go to the devil with a dishclout in your hand [1721] If you will sin, you may as well do so substantially.
‘ahem!’ as Dick Smith said when he swallowed the dishclout [Shr] Bear your troubles bravely.
‘there’s something in it’ as the fellow said who drank dishclout and all [1639] Of an understatement.

slare/sleer [smear, leave with greasy smears—nEng EAn] Flatter [Der].
slary [careless, sluttish, untidy] Dishonest, sly, sneaking [nYks Cmb].

I.83f Washing dishes

scour Clear away unwanted elements—‘... ships for the scowring of the narowe see’ [Bishop Richard Fox, Letter to Wolsey—19 May 1513].
scour the pewter Do the work.
rub up remembrance etc. Revive, renew.
washing-up Tidying up and sorting out details after a meeting.
have more than a dish to wash [Don] Have a hard task.
squeaky clean [1975] Blameless, irreproachable—especially of characters or institutions under unwarranted suspicion. (From the squeak made by rubbing a finger across clean china or glass.)
he speaks as if every word would lift a dish [Sc: 1721] Deliberately and with unnecessary emphasis.
offscouring(s) of humanity, society etc. The worst part, scum, refuse.
off-scum of the country [Cum nYks wSom] Rabble; unwanted, troublesome element.
flat [sLin]/weak as dish-water [Cum] Of tea, soup etc.

I.83g Other housework

stout I and thou stout,
who shall bear the ashes out? [1549]

It is no use both of us being too stubborn or particular to do the necessary work.
he that seeks motes gets motes He that pays too much attention to trifles will never achieve much.
rank as motes i’ t’ sun [wYks: c. 1375] has her hands in her huzzey-skep [work-box—Sc] Is busy in the house.
put/set your own house in order [1923] Improve, reform your own affairs (before criticising others is the implication). [See II Kings xx.l]
sorted [1990s] Well organised and equipped (sometimes with drugs); able to cope with any eventuality.
there have been worse stirs than that at Lathom [Lan] Said in apology or consolation for a domestic disturbance, probably dating from 1645 when Parliamentary forces captured it.

I.84a Laundry gear

washboard—land patterns, road surfaces Having alternate hills and hollows; corrugated, furrowed.

- flat as a batterill [flat piece of wood used by a laundress—Lan]
- dirty as Thump-o’-Dolly [dolly peg], that deed o’ bein’ wesht [sLan]
- badly used as a dolly-tub bottom [Cum]/ peggy-tub bottom [nYks] (Because it would get many thumps from the posser.)
- his een stood out like swiller feet [wYks] (The swiller or washing dolly had five feet set to stick out of a circular block, and they churned the clothes.)
- dull as a dolly-stick [posser—Cum]
- wet as poss [the dolly used to poss or churn clothes in the washing—Cum]
- light-given [simple-minded] as a posser-head [Yks]
- foul [ugly—sLan] as a dolly-tub

I.84b Washing clothes

laundry [1965]/launder (v) [1961] Place where they/make dishonest or, at best, dubious alterations to accounts etc. to present a more acceptable appearance.

launder ‘hot money’ [1973] Transfer it to a foreign country and then recover it from an ostensibly ‘clean’ [=legitimate] source.

stain on character Blemish, stigma, personal disgrace.

lay in water/a-water Put on one side (as clothes are put to soak for washing later).

steeped in… Permeated through long immersion, as ‘steeped in prejudice’, ‘steeped in French literature’ etc.

steep your brains [Sc] Start thinking hard.

leave in the suds [c.1560] Leave in trouble.

in hot water [1765] In trouble, disgrace.

get on with the washing! Get on with your work, you are wasting time.

the laundress washes her own smock first [Ont] Of those who give preference to their own interests.

up to the elbows in…[1883] Engrossed in, busy with.

wash dirty linen in public [1867]/at home Publish/conceal private, personal or domestic quarrels, misdoings. (Occurs in a speech by Napoleon.)

catch it in the rinse if you can’t in the wash [NC III] Do it at one stage or another.
washed in the frying pan and dried on the gridiron [Nhb] Noticeably, no cleaner.
come out in the wash [1903] Come to light when full enquiry is made; turn out satisfactorily in the end.
wash whiter than white Make someone out to be incredibly pure and innocent; exaggerate their virtues. (Influenced by soap powder advertisements.)
washed up [Amer] Finished off; defeated; sacked.

he that has more smocks than shirts at the bucking
needs to be a man of good forelooking
[1678]

(Because of the cost of keeping and marrying off daughters, he must make provision. [Buck-ing=washing—Sc Lan Chs mid&wmidEng Brks Wil Ken Sus])
it’s a lonely washing that hasn’t a man’s shirt in it [Ire Miss]

I.84c Wringing

what won’t wash won’t wring [ShI nYks] What is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh.
wet as wring Wringing wet, so wet that water can be wrung out [1500]. (This could also derive from wring=press for cheese/cider/wine.)
put through the wringer Treat cruelly [Amer]; interrogate harshly (as if squeezing out the information like water from clothes in a wringer); rob, defraud, deprive of money.
catch her tit in a wringer [Amer] Get into a painful, perilous plight.
mangle (n) [Aus] Bicycle (jocularly).

I.84d Starching

starch (n) Stiffness of manner, character. Hence:
starchy Prim and proper.
take the starch out of… Ridicule, deflate, shatter someone’s formality, pomposity; take away their energy, confidence, resilience, pith; dissolve a man’s libido through intercourse (no longer stiff without starch).
I.84e Drying

pleasant as a wet washday Ironic.

hang/be hung in/on the hedge Be discarded, put on one side; of a lawsuit, remain undecided.

tight as a damp clothes-line
so tired I could sleep on a clothes-line—well-pegged!

hang the dirty washing out [War] Reveal murky secrets; publish unwholesome facts.

some hang out more than they wash [Vmt] Lay claim to more than they should; tell lies.

let it all hang out [Amer] Be uninhibited; candidly truthful, reveal everything.

hang out the washing [mid C19] Set sail.

hang out the laundry [Amer] Drop paratroops from an aircraft.

hung out to dry Of persons in high office who are exposed for having acted improperly or criminally; publicly disgraced.

not care/give/worth a peg [Cum wYks]

that’s the sort of clothes-pin I am That is my nature, character.

don’t spread your clothing near the quiet brook [NY] Quiet folk are less predictable and so less trustworthy.

I.84f Ironing

explain [<Lat explanare=flatten, spread out]

has no more feeling than a smoothing iron! [sLan]

box-hetter [=box-heater, triangular iron—Cor] Triangular, of fields.

iron/smooth out,—difficulties etc. Smooth away (as an iron does creases).

iron out the wrinkles Smooth over any remaining difficulties or irregularities. (As/from the above.)

scorch [Amer] Travel at high speed.

I.84g Airing

air a grievance, views etc. Pronounce; bring into the open (as clothes into the air).

clothes horse Someone who does little else but show off different clothes.
I.84h Cleaners

take/send to the cleaners [1932] Defraud someone of all his money (connected with ‘cleaning him out’); criticise strongly (connected with ‘clearing the matter up’).

wrap it up in clean linen [1678] Speak decently or delicately about something sordid.

no tickee, no washee [=no ticket, no washing—Chinese laundry] That (whatever) is an essential prerequisite.

‘clean linen’s comfortable’ as the old woman said when she turned her smock the fourth time [sLan]/her sark after a month [Sc: 1832]/as t’lass said when she turned her shift t’ first time i’ twelve months [wYks]

I.85a Town houses

paint the town red [Amer 1884] Celebrate wildly.

his nose has cost as much brass for to paint as a row of good-sized houses would [sLan] Of a heavy drinker.

out of the parlour into the kitchen A change for the worse; come down in the world.

she lies backwards and lets out her forerooms [1611] Of a prostitute.

back-room Retreat where secret research or experiments can be carried out.

back-room boys/boys in the back-room Research scientists, technicians developing an invention under conditions of urgency; inner clique, controlling group [Amer].

smoke-filled room Power-base behind the scenes.

tradesmen’s entrance The narrow passage to Scapa Flow used by smaller ships [RN WW2]; anal as distinct from vaginal intercourse [1980s].

at the back of my mind Of relegated knowledge, information, past memories etc., not now readily accessible, though at one time fresh and strong.

clean your own backyard first [Vmt Geo Ala Oreg] Correct your own faults before criticising others’.

in my backyard Uncomfortably, unacceptably close.

hang out (sc. your sign) Reside.

next door to… Almost the same as.

throw a stone at the door [Cum] Be neglectful in paying calls. (Instead of knocking and waiting, throw a stone and hurry on.) ‘You’ve thrown a stone at my door, anyway; when are you coming to pick it up?’ [Brampton,Cum].

provoke [<Lat provocare=call forth, summon out from their home]

ring a loud bell [Lnk] Boast.

go (all) round the houses to… Take a long time in reaching the point, be circumlocutious.
I.85b Town streets

hard as a cobble(-stone) [nEng]
a face like the corner of a street [w&midEng] Ugly and angular.
trivial [=<Lat trivium=street corner] Commonplace, unimportant (like what you might find on any street corner).
up another street [wYks sChs] Quite another thing.
(right) up my alley/street Ideally suited, acceptable to me, my speciality.
down his alley [Amer] What he prefers or is best at.
streets ahead of… Well in front of, with a good lead over. (Several ideas have coalesced here: one is that of a race or pursuit through a town, hence ‘win by a street’; another of progression to a better part of town; and another of competition in trade where deliveries are made or customers obtained in other areas.)
not in the same street as… Not to be compared with, greatly superior/inferior to.
man in the street Ordinary, average citizen.
he likes to let the streets get aired [Yks] Of one who does not go out early
we can’t all live in Fore Street [Dor] There are different levels of society and we cannot all be in the top one.
on the wrong side of the rails/tracks [1929] In the poorer part of town [Amer]; disadvantaged, generally. (The railway tracks often divide American towns like Chicago into two cultures, hence to ‘cross the tracks’ means to move up or down in the social scale.)
in Queer street [1811] In financial trouble. (Tradesmen used to mark Quaere [=<Lat quaere=make enquiry] against the name of a customer whose credit was suspect.)
get your work into Friday street [houses usually apart from the village—Suf] Get behindhand with it.
play/work both sides of the street [Amer] Be an opportunist and keep in with both sides; take up two contrary positions. (Beggars sometimes agree to work one side of a street each.)
up and down like Tower Bridge [a bascule-bridge which could be raised to allow tall ships to sail beneath it]

I.85c Town services—lavatories, sewage, garbage

reservoir Large fund, reserve supply—of facts, skills, remembered traditions etc.
pipe-laying [Amer 1841]/lay pipes for…[Amer 1860] Bring in extra voters to swing an election (as with a large gang of temporary workers on a pipeline).
cut/turn off his water [Amer] Deal him a decisive and damaging blow.
**built like a brick-built shit-house** [Can] Well-made; sometimes of a large, awkward girl.

**floats like a brick-built shit-house** [naut] Of an ill-designed ship.

**all/out on its own, like a country shit-house** [Aus NZ]

**couldn’t train a choko vine over a country dunny** [=dunnakin, a necessary, outside privy—Aus: 1790] Incompetent. (Choko= *chocho* [Brazil], a vigorous scrambling plant with gourd-like fruits.)

**stands out like a shit-house in the fog** [Can]

**a true friend is like a privy, open in necessity** [1670]

**shining like a shit-house door on a frosty night**

**bang** [have vigorous sex—Aus] **like a shithouse/dunny door**

**useful as a glass door on a dunny** [Aus]

**up and down like a shit-house seat**

**the name is Twyford** It is best to say nothing; not to appear too knowing. (From J.Twyford [1640–1729], who by acting gormless acquired the secret glazing process which enabled him to set up the firm of sanitary potters that is still in business.)

**tear up for arse-paper** Humiliate, reprimand severely.

**backhouse flush** [Amer Can] A poor hand (in poker), fit only for flushing down the lavatory.

**bog-blocker** Something disgusting, gross, unmentionable.

**circling the drain** [Amer] Nearly dead (about to go down).

**down the gurgler** [Aus 1981] Ruined, lost.

**down the toilet** Spoilt, lost beyond recovery—of plans that have to be abandoned etc.

**go down the drain** Be completely wasted, lost.

**plug-holed** Worthless, rejected (as if tipped down the sink).

**bog** [lavatory] **brush upside down** [RN] A short, official haircut.

**round the bend** Far gone in madness. (As far as the WC cleaner that, it is claimed, cleans even ‘round the bend’.)

**mind like a sink** [soakaway hole for sewage, cess-pool] One predisposed to corrupt and put a filthy construction on whatever drains into it.

**sink of iniquity** Place of rampant vice where corrupt and evil-livers gather. (As/from the above.)

**cess-pool** Resort, centre of corruption and iniquity.

**stink worse ner a sawr hoil** [=saur-hole, cess-pit, slurry-pit—wYks]

**drop someone in the shit** Let them in for serious trouble.

**common as a town sewer**

**sewer-rats** Bricklayers in the sewers [wYks].

**cunning as/eyes like a shit-house rat** Shifty and perceptive.

**after the Lord Mayor’s show**…(sc. comes the cart for the horse-dung) Referring to the necessary clearing-up after an event.

**like a sailor on a water-cart** Quite useless.

**bin** (v) Discard, generally (as when consigning to the dustbin).

**the house is like a tip** [town refuse tip: 1983] Very untidy.

**in the dumper** [garbage tipper truck—Amer]/**tub** [Amer] Bankrupt, ruined.

make a mullock [wYks Tenn] Spoil the work; make a mess.
trash/recycle bin [Amer 1990s] Computer facility enabling the operators to clear out unwanted documents from their current working organisation, while retaining the ability to recall them if necessary.
recycle Bring round to be used or treated for a second time, very variously. (From the salvage and reprocessing of the useful elements in town garbage.)

I.85d Town buildings

at kirk and market [Sc] Publicly, at all times, everywhere.

make a kirk and/or a mill of…[Sc: 1721] Do what you like with; do the best you can, whatever the circumstances; make the best of what is available.

I.85e Town life

Bronx cheer [Amer] ‘Raspberry’.
ragged and fat, like Ratchda folk [=Rochdale]

umbrella Formula or compromise enabling persons of divergent views to co-operate; screen of fighter aircraft or artillery barrage covering the movements of your own troops.

have been measured for a new umbrella [Amer] Wear new but ill-fitting clothes; follow dubious pursuits, policies.

under the umbrella of… Covered, cared for by a person or organisation.

it’s no use carrying an umbrella if your shoes are leaking [Ire] Of inappropriate precautions.

escalate Deteriorate ever more quickly (like a traveller going down an escalator at extra speed by walking down as well).
close Peppergate (when your daughter is stolen) [1662] Act too late. (The mayor of Chester ordered this gate to be closed after his daughter, who had been playing ball in Pepper Street, had been abducted through it.)
she has given Lawton Gate a clap [1678] Has had to leave through misconduct; is with child. (Lawton Gate is the boundary between Cheshire and Staffordshire.)
bench-warmer [Amer] Sleeping partner; reserve who is seldom called.
whistle-binkie [Amer]/bench-whistler Idler (like one who sits whistling on a bench).
keep off the grass Keep where you belong; behave yourself; don’t take liberties; pay less attention to that girl, she’s mine!
come off it! [Amer] (i.e. the grass) Don’t exaggerate; don’t tell lies (as if someone who is on the grass when there is a Keep Off notice is trespassing—on my credulity).
town bull Promiscuous man.
then the town bull is a bachelor! [1591] A register of incredulity, usually on the subject of someone’s chastity.

trust as far as the town bull Not at all.

lawless as the town bull

roar like the town bull [Cum]

lionise/see the lions [originally the Tower of London lions: 1590] See the sights.

look at riders till foot-folk go by [Wgt Cum] Be over-particular about whom to marry.

black as snow—in London

show/turn the best side to London Display your goods, or yourself, to the best advantage.

I.85f Barbers

slim as a barber’s pole

common as a barber’s chair/cittern [= cithern, an instrument commonly available to barbers’ customers in the C16 and C17 to entertain themselves withal] A barber’s chair often=a prostitute.

barber-shop harmony! A caustic dismissal of men singing.

barber’s cat Weak and cadaverous person.

all dolled up like a barber’s cat [Can] Resplendently dressed.

all wind and piss, like a barber’s/tanyard [Ire] cat More talk than action.

couldn’t cook hot water for a barber Of a poor cook.


shave his beard Discomfort him.

easy over the pimples! Take more care.


make a man’s beard without a razor Behead him.

the beard won’t pay for the shaving [Suf] The result is not worth the trouble. Of a job that does not produce enough to pay for the labour.

shave at a shop Change sides on slight grounds.

a bald head is soon shaven [Cor Ont NY Miss] Those who have little are easily ruined.

trim (v) Cheat (the same sense as fleece); reduce to a more manageable size—of an organisation, expenditure, profits etc.

will not give his head for the polling/washing Will not easily yield; will not part with something until fully paid for [Sc].

every barber knows that! It is common gossip.
I.85g Other occupations

up to the knocker [the knocker-up who wakes the town-folk early in the morning] In good health; excellent. (See also I.32i.)

fat as Big Ben [a large bellman of Leeds]
quick as/like a lamplighter [Cum wYks] With speed.
lamp-post navigation [naut] Sailing cautiously from one buoy to the next (like a drunk from lamp-post to lamp-post).

fell out with each other like two barmwomen [sellers of yeast, probably from door to door; the barm-man drove round a district selling brewers’ yeast to women who met him with jugs—Lan]

smart as a master-sweep!
shine like a shilling up a sweep’s arse
deaf as a trunkmaker (Because of the loud noise he made when hammering in the nails.)

like a trunkmaker [C18–C19] With more noise than actual work.

all round St Paul’s, not forgetting the trunkmaker’s daughter Of unsaleable books, which at one time could be found in the many bookshops and bookstalls round St Paul’s. Trunkmakers had used discarded sheets as trunk-linings since the beginning of C18.

hangs out his shingle [the tile or plate outside a building to give notice of what business was conducted there] Starts out on a profession in earnest.

I.86a To market

go to market Make an attempt at something; become angry, behave angrily [Aus NZ].

agoraphobia [<Gk ἀγορά =fear of the market-place]

no man makes haste to market when there’s nothing to be bought but blows [1614] The reply of one reproved for being slow to go where he is not welcome.

mark(et)-trot Slow trot, slightly quicker than walking.

when the going gets rough, big potatoes come to the top [Oreg] In times of stress the better ones show their worth; the strong will survive an upset.

forestall Intercept, anticipate. (It was an offence against C14 guild law privately to buy or sell goods on their way to market in order to force up their price.) Still used in its original sense C15 [Stonor Letter—7 July 1478].

pre-empt (v) Claim a prior right or status; seize goods or weapons suspected of being contraband or hostiley intended; replace one thing with another; prevent or forestall a threatening situation. (The early use of preemption was the exclusive right of the sovereign to buy provisions etc. preferentially.)
I.86b At market

three women and a goose make a market [1581] (A cynical view of the purpose of a market.)

as tight as tuppence in a market-woman’s trashbag [Ire]

all in a charm [confused singing of birds—mid&Eng] like a butter-market Of a noisy, confused chattering, gossiping.

forsake not the market for the toll [1605] Do not miss your chances merely to avoid a small expense.

you must sell after the rates of the market [1584] Do what you can when you can.

in/on the market Available, variously.

be sold on… Be enthusiastic about something. (From the American usage when convincing a possible buyer of the worth of a deal, ‘to sell him on—its attractions etc.’)

sell (yourself) short Underrate, disparage (yourself); diminish, devalue something.

sit the market [Edb Nhb] Expect too much and so lose an opportunity.

it’ll cost as much to get shut on [rid oi] as Nanny’s steean did [Hawkshead, Lan] (In 1789, when the old Market Shambles was replaced by a new Market House, it was found necessary to remove a large stone whereon Nanny, from Sawrey, had been accustomed to sell cakes and confectionery cooked by her numerous unmarried daughters. She protested, and was offered sixpence a week by Mr Rigge, a slate merchant, in compensation; ‘But what about my daughters?’ Nanny asked. ‘No,’ he said, ‘the offer is for your lifetime only’ She accepted and outlived Mr Rigge, living to be ninety-five and necessitating the continued payment of 26— p.a. out of his estate. [See W.Wordsworth, The Prelude II.33–47—1805; also T.W.Thompson, Wordsworth’s Hawkshead, p. 253])

set his/her stall out/up to… Make designs, arrangements with a definite purpose in mind; settle down to doing a good job, often of batsmen in cricket.

mark-ripe [ready for market—Ayr] Old enough for marriage.

bad and good together, as countryfolk bring fruit to market shake the barrel and the big apples will come to the top [Kenty Tenn] In times of stress the better ones show their worth; the strong will survive an upset.

there is small choice in rotten apples The comment on a poor selection overall [see Shaks, Tam Shr I. i—1594].

apple-wife/apple-woman Woman who nags and argues over trifles.

cry carrots and turnips Be whipped at carttail.

I.86c Market baskets

basket (n) [1962] Assorted selection; associated items (groceries, currencies etc.) grouped together for comparison or for reference to, say, a cost-of-living index.
pin the basket Conclude the matter (as when the buyer or seller fastens up the basket after a sale has been agreed, or even merely when it has been filled). Hence, pin-basket is the youngest child in a family where no others are expected [Der Nhp],

pick of the basket The best of any group (= pick of the bunch, I.55a).

left in the basket Left to the last; unchosen (like the worst apples in a basket).

I.86d Markets

Billingsgate Violent abuse (from the speech of the fishwomen on Billingsgate Market).

no better than a Billingsgate fish-fag [fishmarket woman, notorious for bad manners and language]

Billingsgate pheasant Bloater.

up-market [the expensive end of a market where better quality goods are sold] Generally high-class, high-brow, élite.

Monmouth Street finery [Lon] All tawdriness and show. (There was a large second-hand market there.)

I.87a Shopping

shopping list Catalogue of objects for consideration or action; list of various requirements.

shop around Make wide-reaching enquiries in order to find just what (or whom) you want.

a veranda over the toy shop [Aus] A paunch, pot-belly.

closed shop [1904] Workplace where all workers must belong to a union.

love is the true price of love

Me sulleþ wel luve vor luve

[Ancrene Wisse—c.1250]

fair/soft words cost nothing

sell him/her a penn’orth [War] Tell a tale with intent to deceive.

a pennyworth of poker is worth two of coals

touch pot, touch penny No credit given.

has one eye going to the shop and the other coming back for change [Ayr] Has a squint.

short-change [give less change than is due] In a wider context=cheat, disappoint expectations, deny a rightful share, withhold entitlement.

not have his/her change Be mentally deficient.
lift off the hook [Lnk] Marry.
pop like a paper bag [Aus] Of a woman, be vigorous in sexual intercourse.
wrap up Conclude, finalise, settle the deal.
wrap it up Break news gently and diplomatically by not giving it too bluntly.
crib Pilfer, plagiarise. (The original meaning of a manger for fodder devolved to several related uses, one of which was of a basket, and this probably gave the C18 thieves’ slang for purloin, slip in the basket—an old version of shop-lifting.)
the boy has gone by with the cows You have missed your chance (originally of buying some cheap or early milk).
he that has patience has fat thrushes for a farthing A rare acquisition.
buy the rabbit(s) [Aus] Get the worst of a bargain; deal badly.

I.87b Shopping at the baker’s, canteen, restaurant

in backhouse [=bakehouse] dike Behindhand, in difficulties [wYks nLin].
warm as a penny pie/pie [Sc Cor] Comfortably warm.
piping-hot Hot from the oven. (It was an old village custom for the baker to blow on a pipe to let everyone know that the bread was ready.)

And wafres, pyping hote out of the glede
[G.Chaucer, Milleres Tale ln.3379–1386]

his wife cries five loaves a penny [1678—C18] Is in labour. (A compulsive cry for release from her pains, like a baker’s wife selling cheap to be the sooner rid of her burden.)

come back and pay the bap ye eat [Uls] Do not hurry away.
in the halfpenny place [Ant] Inferior.
you want both the halfpenny and the gingerbread You want to have your cake and eat it; two incompatibles; you want the reward without the labour or the payment.
dragged screaming from the tart-shop [Aus] Of politicians suddenly faced with an election.

cookie-pusher [confectioner’s counter attendant—Amer] A weak, unenterprising person. The term also refers to a man passing round the biscuits at tea parties; thence to a diplomat who spends more time on his social engagements than on his proper work [Amer]. The application from these is to an effeminate and/or sycophantic man; one who leads a futile social life.
baker-kneed Knock-kneed [Chs]. (Reputedly through standing kneading for long periods.)

hang the baker [Cum] Go bankrupt; have no more materials for work.
coffee-house (v) Gossip (originally of foxhunters while waiting for the hounds to find a fox).
that’s the ticket for soup! Now go; you’ve got what you came for; the very thing, the right thing [seLin].
give him the ticket for soup Defeat him in an election etc.
meal-ticket [often issued as part of wages for midday meal at canteen or specified restaurant] Relationship, institution or person that pays for food.
menu [1990s] The options available on a computer program, shown as a list on the screen.
on the menu Available, permitted.
pick up the tab/check [bill—Amer] for… Assume responsibility, liability for.
I can’t take him anywhere! The expostulation when someone in the company disgraces himself by a social gaffe or by doing something awkward or messy.
yesterday’s fish and chips Past and gone and no longer worth considering.

I.87c Shopping at the grocer’s

get eggs for money [1571] Be swindled, get poor value; bear insults.
sitting there like cheese at fourpence! Without likelihood of movement (and with the suggestion that she has too high an opinion of herself, like overpriced cheese).
brotherly love for brotherly love, but cheese for money [Kan] Everything has an appropriate price.
butter-box Coasting brig; ungainly ship.
fast as a grocer cutting butter [Cum]
bacon-slicer Flywheel fitted to the outside of certain makes of motor cycle. The bacon-slicers had large slicing wheels.
split-fig [sLan Wil Cor] Mean grocer; stingy person, generally.
wrinkled as a prune [NC Calif]
pruneface [Amer] Someone with a sad, unprepossessing appearance.
given away with a pound of tea! Cheap and worthless.
he’s so lucky, if he felt off the Coop he’d land on the divi [Lan]
Heinz 57 variety [Amer] Mongrel. (After the advertisement for Heinz canned foods offering fifty-seven varieties.)
that doesn’t buy groceries [Amer] Is of no practical use.
soap-box orator [1907] One who harangues the public at random on some trivial or controversial subject. (Such speakers often stood for the purpose on soap-packing-boxes in Hyde Park.)
I.88a Weighing

**weigh** (v) the consequences, pros and cons etc. Compare, judge, evaluate.

**feel the weight of**—my hand, the law’s power etc. Suffer under, be afflicted with.

**weighty** Momentous; worthy of, or having been given, earnest consideration.

**deliberate** [<Lat de-librare=weigh thoroughly]

**ponder** [1380] Weigh mentally, consider carefully.

**imponderable** Not capable of being weighed mentally; hard to estimate or appreciate; mystical.

**dust in the balance/feather in the scale** Something of no moment, a trifle that will make no appreciable difference.

**lightweight character** Someone of small worth.

**in the weigh-bauks** [scales—Sc nYks] In a state of indecision.

**in the balance** Still undecided.

**tremble in the balance** [1862] Be in a critical condition, extreme danger; at a point where the outcome could just as easily go one way as the other.

**unbalanced** Disordered in mind; unsettled.

**tip/tturn the balance/scale(s)** Be the deciding factor.

**strike a balance between**...[1638] Find a suitable compromise, a fair arrangement between two parties, policies etc.

**hold the scales even** Dispense justice fairly.

**examine** [<Lat examen=the tongue of a balance which is ‘driven out’ (<Lat exagere =drive out) when the weight is ‘exact’] Weigh or test precisely.

**kick the beam** (sc. of a balance) Prove the lighter.

**cast o’ the bauk** [=balk, beam of scales : Sc] Generous measure, gesture, good value.

**full weight without the wrapper** [Cor] Pompous, self-opinionated.

**make-weight** Small compensatory addition generally (and often, originally, by a small candle to make up the pound), hence a small, thin man.

**counterbalance** (v) Balance or neutralise an effect by a contrary power or influence.

**counterbalance** (n) A power or influence that offsets the effect of a contrary one.

**weigh against** Count against, counterbalance.

**outweigh** Predominate, override—of arguments, considerations etc.

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I.88b Pounds and ounces

**mischief comes by the pound and goes away by the ounce** [1573]

in a thousand pounds of law there’s not an ounce of love

a pennyweight of love is worth a pound of law

an ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow

it takes fourteen ounces of muscle to frown, but only eight to smile
an ounce of mother-wit is worth a pound of clergy [learning]
a hundred pounds of sorrow/one pound of care will not pay one ounce of debt

I.88c Other measures

a peck of troubles etc. A lot, very many [Cai Slk Nhb Wm Lin Not Rut Nhp War Oxf Som Hmp] (A peck=two dry gallons—of meal etc.)
them that canna get a peck maun put up wi’ a stimpard [a quarter-peck—Sc] If you cannot have luxuries you must be content with necessities.
a peck of apples [Lin] A fall on the ice.
you’d sell more if you filled ‘em! [Lan] A teasing grumble that a cup or glass could have held more drink.
you can’t get a quart out of a thimble [Ont NY] Don’t expect much from a small-minded person.
put a quart into a pint pot [1896] Attempt the impossible. Often of an inadequate container or someone of limited understanding.
pint-sized Undersized—of babies.
half-pint [Amer] Short person.
inch towards/along Move or encroach gradually.
at inches with…[Dev] Very near to.
within an inch of—death, a decision Extremely near.
il comes in by ells and goes out by inches [1640]
you will not give an inch of your will for a span of your thrift [Sc] Are too ready to sacrifice your property to whims.
dree [endure—Sc nEng] oot the inch when ye hae tholed [endured, suffered—Sc Ire nEng] the span [Sc: 1589] Endure this last little bit when you have suffered so much.
an inch of good fortune is worth a fathom of forecast [Sc] Good luck in the present is better than future expectations.
the mercury is rising The excitement increases; things are improving.
barometer/weather-glass [1654] Indicator—of public opinion, confidence etc. (just as a barometer indicates the likely trend of the weather).

I.89a City streets

she thinks the lights of Piccadilly Circus shine out of his arsehole Uncritically partial.
walk in Pim(b)lico [a fashionable resort for Londoners—c.1600] Be handsomely dressed. ‘Was it for this I dressed you in Pimlico, to have you come home like one broken out of Bedlam?’ [The King and the Cobbler, an old chapbook].
in Pimlico order [NH Mass Conn] Smart, neat, in good order. (As/from the above.)
am in Pimlico with my feet Am poorly shod. (Ironical?)
Sloane-ranger/Sloane [Aus] An amalgam of Lone Ranger [hero of Western films] and Sloane Square [better class district in London] to denote the classy type of young woman secretary who would live in such an area and who had ambition and social pretensions. The Lone Ranger element connoted an independent woman, possibly predatory, and well able to look after herself.
take a house in Turnagain Lane [a cul-de-sac in the parish of St Sepulchre, London: 1531] Reform.
Wardour Street Pseudo-archaic (because it was a street in London mainly occupied by dealers in antique and imitation-antique furniture).
long as Deansgate [Manchester, sLan] paved with… With a continuous series of—flowers, good resolutions etc.
the road to hell is paved with good intentions There is no merit in meaning well unless you act accordingly.
pave the way for… Prepare for, variously.
the other side of the street always looks cleanest The perennial desire for something better.
cul-de-sac An argument that leads nowhere. (Note that it was itself originally a metaphor in French [<Fr cul de sac=bottom of the bag].)
blind alley/dead-end street [Can] Woman’s vagina.
blind alley/dead-end job One without prospects, that leads nowhere.
every alley has its own tin-can [NJ]

I.89b Crowded streets
give/take the wall Yield/arrogate to yourself the better place in the street, away from the traffic. (Note that this meaning is opposite to those below.)
the weakest go to the wall [1500] Said when the strong ruthlessly eliminate or thrust aside the weak. (In the streets of medieval cities weaker wayfarers ‘went to the wall’ by being pushed from the crown of the road to the wallside and gutters, full of filth. See also I.38b.)
go-by-the-wall [Lan] A creeping, slow, helpless kind of person.
thrown to the wall [Sc] Worsted.
squeeze him to the wall [Glo] Drive a hard bargain with him.
squeeze (n and v) Reduction of money, supplies etc.; restrict(ion) generally; situation of pressure and peril [Amer].
time presses We have little time; there is urgency.
lazy wind [Nhb Cum nLan] One that does not bother to go round, but blows right through you.
knock sideways Flabbergast, amaze; so astound someone as to temporarily knock them off course.

kick a man when he’s down [1551] Treat harshly one who is already suffering a misfortune.

tread on the heels of… Come immediately after.

where there’s least room there’s most thrutching [jostling—nEng] Usually said in reference to people who have much to say about others, yet are open to criticism themselves [wYks Lan].

there’s as much room behint as before [Lan] To someone pressing forward too eagerly or too hastily.

crowd/throng (v) Occur in profusion, succeed each other continuously. (As when memories, realisations, recriminations enter the mind in abundance.)

all of a dring [crush, crowded togetherness—Dev Cor] In confusion.

I.90a Gardens

at the gate again Recovered from sickness.

hold the gate Prosper; be in good health; hold your ground in sickness.

lead him up the garden path [1925] Deceive him with false hopes (from leading an unwanted guest into the garden instead of into the house).

everything in the garden’s lovely! [1910] Nothing amiss to report; all’s well.

has been sitting in the garden with the gate unlocked Of a girl who has become pregnant irregularly. There is a probable connection with:

garden (n) A woman’s vagina, and thence:
garden-hedge Her pubic hair.

back garden Advertisements and ‘spill-over’ relegated to the back pages of a magazine.

as the gardener is, so is the garden Someone’s character is reflected in their work.

Tuggie Carnation (after Mistress Tuggie of Westminster who grew many varieties of carnation).

I.90b Weeds

come up again like weeds after a shower [Som] Of old sins.

common as weeds

weed in the garden [underworld sl.] Trespasser on a gang’s territory.

weed out faults, failures etc. Remove the unwanted element.

weed your own garden first [Ont] Attend first to your own faults.
stink like a twitch-fire (Couch or twitch grass was regularly burnt in clearing the land.)

many things grow in the garden that were never sown there [1853] Character is affected by environment; things do not go exactly to plan.

no garden without its weeds [1579] Disadvantages mar even the happiest state.
a man of words and not of deeds is like a garden full of weeds [1659]
Herefordshire/Sussex weeds [1869] Oak trees.
Warwickshire weed [War] The elm.

I.90c Care of plants

ttrue as plantage [vegetation generally] to the moon [see Shaks, T&C II.ii—1602] (From the ancient observation that the moon affects plant growth and that the best time for planting is when the moon is waxing.)
greenhouse effect [1937] Condition where the surface and lower atmosphere of a planet remain at a relatively high temperature because the atmosphere allows more of the sun’s radiation to enter than it permits the planet’s infra-red radiation to escape.
hot-house Artificially stimulated environment.
hot-bed A place that favours the rapid growth of a condition, usually bad, as in ‘hot-bed of infection’, ‘hot-bed of crime’ etc. (From a forcing bed in a garden.)
happy as a nun weeding the asparagus [Can] Very happy.
seed-bed Place of origin, fostering, starting point.
tender plant Person or institution requiring care and protection if it is to survive, let alone thrive.
pulling up the roots to see how the plant is growing Neurotic preoccupation with unnecessary investigations.
pot-hat One the shape of a flower-pot.
potted history, account etc. Abridged, abbreviated (like a plant or bonsai tree grown as a miniature by being cramped in a pot).

I.90d Watering

water a stake [1636] Waste effort.
water your plants Weep.
although it rain, throw not away thy watering pot Do not abandon all precautions merely because there is no immediate need.
shake the dew off the lily [Ire] Complete the act of urination.
I.90e Flowers

white flowers on the fisherman’s garden [Ire] White breakers at sea.
flowers of speech Ornamental phrases, embellishments, decorative figures of speech.
Hence:
flowery talk, speech, language Enriched as above.
a woman without religion is a flower without perfume [III]
Patience is a flower that grows not in every garden [1644]
garden variety [Amer UK] Ordinary, commonplace.
anthology [<Gk θηλογία=flower-gathering] Selection of poems by various writers.
poetical as a bunch of flowers
love is like sun to a flower, invigorates the strong but wilts the weak [Ire]
full-blown Fully developed; at the peak of competence and ability.
deflower Rob a virgin of her maidenhead.
daisy-cutter A low skimming ball in cricket; a horse that will not lift its feet.

I.90f Seeds

go/run to seed Of a person in decline. Deteriorate; grow old; lose personal pride; become pregnant. Hence:
seedy Run down, past your best.

I.90g Roses

red as a rose [1260]/rose-red
rare as a blue rose
rosy Favourable, fortunate.
bed of roses [1593] Position, circumstances of ease and delight.
rose garden strategy [Amer 1977] A refusal to debate internal problems during an international crisis. (As if the President refused to come out of the White House garden.)
smell like a rose [Amer] Be pure and innocent.
come out of it smelling of roses [1968] Emerge from an unsavoury business, but with undamaged reputation.
pick a rose [1593] Go aside to urinate.
gather (life’s) roses Seek pleasure.
under the rose [1546] In secret.
I took her for a rose, but she proved a bur/nettle [1546] A disappointment in marriage.

no rose without a thorn [1430–40] Some pain will impinge on even supreme bliss.
a rose without a thorn An impossible happiness.
lie young on roses, old on thorns [1635] Luxury in youth brings penury in age.
bed of thorns Situation of acute anxiety.
crumpled rose leaf Slight vexation in the midst of felicity.
it is good to nip the brier in the bud [Sc] Prevent future trouble.

I.90h Wallflowers

wallflower A girl at a dance who remains by the wall all evening because she is not asked to dance; prisoner obsessed with escaping.

he will faint at the smell of a wallflower Of one over-sensitive or faint-hearted; has been imprisoned at Newgate (from the wallflowers planted there in 1787).

I.90i Other kinds of flowers

Canterbury Bell(e) An ‘unmarried wife’ receiving an army allowance. When men were conscripted in 1939, the War Office made this concession to the partners of such unions, but the Archbishop of Canterbury objected to the term ‘unmarried wife’ and it was changed to ‘unmarried dependant living as wife’. They were then known (by this felicitously multiple pun) as Canterbury Bells.

blue dahlia An unheard-of occurrence. (No such bloom exists.)

jilliver [=gillyflower, a pink, carnation] A light-heeled woman [Der]; a wanton woman, past her best [n&wYks]; termagant [Lan]; a Jezebel [Almondbury, wYks].
lily Feeble, effeminate man.

white as a lily

lily-white [Amer] Innocent, immaculate.

like a lily on a dirt-tin [dustbin—Aus] Conspicuous and incongruous.
lilies don’t spring from thistles [Ohio] Nothing develops contrary to inheritance.

clean [Cum sChs]/near [too mean, greedy to be honest—nYks]/nice [=just what’s wanted, completely, easily—n&midEng]/tight [expressive of superior quality or suitability—eYks]/ white [Lan Chs EAn] as nep/nip [=nepeta, catmint, a plant white with down]

pansy [1929] Effeminate, weak man; homosexual.

blush like/face as red as a pianet/pynat [= peony—Lakel nYks]/piney [Yks]
red [Som]/smart as a peenie [=peony—Glo]/ piney [Som]
all to a flitterment [nervously excited] and so red as a piney [Som]
tall poppy [Aus] Senior official, prominent citizen. (From a forecast by J.Lang in the early 1930s that heavy taxation would ‘cut off the heads of the tall poppies’.)
rue and thyme grow both in one garden [1641] It is possible, and advisable, to repent in time. (By a punning allusion to rue [= repentance] and to time.) Cf. ‘Rue in thyme should be a maiden’s posie’ [Sc: 1721].
girasole [<It girasole=sunflower] An opal that glows red in a strong light.
brassant [brazen] as a sunflower
happy as a big sunflower
sunflower wheel [wYks] Endless rope suspended from the roof of a coal-mine.
gaudy as a tulip

I.91a Town parks and gardens

bandstand A round gun-platform on a battleship (from its shape).
on the wrong side of the park Disadvantaged, generally. (When Paddington Station was built it became fashionable to live on the other side of Hyde Park.)
Hyde Park railings A breast of mutton (from its rib system).

I.91b Zoos

could lead the blind monkeys to evacuate! Is all but unemployable (dating from c.1840, when London’s Zoological Gardens were first opened).
has more arse/cheek/hide than Jessie [an elephant at Sydney Zoo—Aus, died 1939] Is very bold and impudent.
AT SCHOOL

J.1a Myths, primeval

once in a blue moon [1823] Very seldom, almost never. (The second full moon in a calendar month is (uncommonly) known as the blue moon, but this must occur less rarely than the use of the phrase would suggest.)

  dragon Duenna, vigilant or ferocious woman; a shooting star with luminous tail [C14–C16].

  like a dragon Fiercely, violently [C18–C19].

  chase the dragon Catch the smoke from heated heroin.

  dragon-killer Publication that explains and simplifies formidable ideas and inventions for consumption by the general public.

  breathing fire Fiercely angry.

  spitfire Fiercely hostile animal or woman.

  bunyip [monster from aboriginal legends that haunts water-holes—Aus] Freak, impostor, humbug generally.

J.1b Myths, Jewish

apple of Sodom/Dead Sea apple [1400] Delusive success; fair-seeming reward or result, soon proving a disappointment. (Josephus reports this fruit as being described in travellers’ tales as attractive in appearance, but turning to smoke and ashes when bitten.)

  turn to ashes in your mouth Prove a disappointment after long desire. (As/from the above.)

  dust and ashes An acute disappointment.

  Leviathan [the sea monster of Jewish myth] Anything enormous of its kind.
J.1c Myths, Greek

Achilles’ heel [1810] The one vulnerable spot, a sole weakness. (Achilles could be wounded only on one heel.)

mad as Ajax (Because he stabbed himself in a jealous fury when Hector’s armour was awarded to Ulysses.) [See Shaks, LLL IV.iii–1595]

Althaea’s brand A dark force which will ultimately take effect. (She believed her baby son would die when the brand on the fire was burnt away, so she snatched it from the fire and locked it away. But in a later act of revenge she threw it back on the fire.)

Amazon Masculine, strong, dominant, formidable woman. (The Amazons were warriorwomen of fabulous Scythian race.)

apple of discord Cause of dissension. (From the golden apple contended for by Hera, Athene and Aphrodite as the prize for beauty)

the golden ball rolls to everyone’s feet once in a lifetime [Oxf]/the golden ball never turns up but once Everyone gets their big chance, their stroke of luck, sometime in their lives.

Argus-eyed Jealously watchful. (Hera set Argus with his hundred eyes to watch over Io, of whom she was jealous.)

your fader is in sleght as Argus eyed [G.Chaucer, T&C IV.1459–1374]

atlas Book of maps ‘holding the world’ like Atlas in the Greek myth. (First used in this sense by Mercator, the C16 Flemish cartographer.)

Augean Filthy and difficult (like the stables of Augeas which Hercules had to muck out).

Cadmean victory One bought with great loss. (Referring to the armed men who sprang up from the dragon teeth sown by Cadmus. They started to fight each other and only five survived.)

sow dragon’s teeth Stir up strife, especially for the future. (As/from the above.)

dragon’s teeth Concrete pyramids set as obstacles to tanks [WW2].

Cassandra [daughter of Priam and Hecuba, condemned by Apollo never to be believed, although forecasting the truth] Prophetess, usually of doom.

sop to Cerberus [1513] Bribe offered to pacify, propitiate someone. (Cerberus was the fierce dog guarding the entrance to Hades, and for whom a cake was placed in the hands of the dead person. Vergil depicts him drugged with a soporific—Aeneid VI.420.)

chimera Wild fancy, incongruous figment of the imagination; a fearsome monster, bogy. [The or she-goat of myth, was a fire-breathing monster having a lion’s head, a goat’s body and a serpent’s tail.] Hence:

chimerical Fantastically conceived, full of idle fancies.

halcyon days [1540] Calm period, carefree days—usually in youth—before, in fact, experience banishes youth; the magic interim between complete innocence and the realisation of corruption, between eating the apple and going out into a fallen world; that age when children go scrumping. (The Greeks believed that the kingfisher or halcyon...
nested in midwinter on floating nests far out to sea, where the gods had promised Halcyone and Keux, her husband, that they would charm the wind and waves to preserve a calm during their nesting season.)

The eden of John Clare, the Helpstone of his childhood with Mary his true first love, is the vision to which he was always true even in the face of later realities contradicting that vision, and even at the cost of his sanity. He kept that inviolate, undefiled as we all must our own halcyon days. We might suppose the eden elegised by John Clare, William Wordsworth and Ralph Vaughan Williams was their own age, but to them it was their childhood. Always the halcyon days are in childhood—but only a childhood that is past. They can describe any calm, carefree time, but should properly refer to childhood as the only truly carefree time, when we are not wishing our time gone, and before the storms have broken in the blood. After that, the only way to recapture those halcyon days is by returning, not to a second childhood, but to the Christian childhood of being born again and becoming as little children in innocence of spirit.

Nowadays, however, of many corruptions in our society, the saddest has robbed many children directly, and most others indirectly, of their halcyon birthright. Actual violence and the fear and forewarnings of it have done their worst, and it is no longer a matter of debate but rather of timing before the full rigour of the law protects what has become, to our shame, a persecuted minority.

harpy Grasping person. (From the contaminating monsters of Greek myth.)
hector (v) Bully verbally (a later accretion to the character of the Trojan hero); blusteringly intimidate men to enlist [Wm 1693].
brassant [brazen] as Hector [wYks] (Another modern calumny.)
Herculean Suited only to the great strength of a Hercules.
labour of Hercules So great and daunting that only someone with strength and stamina comparable with those of Hercules could be expected to perform it.
hydra Something hard to extirpate. (Hydra was a sea-serpent on which two heads grew for every one cut off.) Hence:
hydra-headed Capable of continuous renewal or transformation.
the many-headed beast The multitude. (Probably from the above.)
flew too near the sun The verdict on one whose downfall was caused by ambition. (From the fate of Icarus whose escape by flight from Crete was frustrated when the warmth of the sun melted the wax in his wings.)
ichneumon fly (Because of its breeding method, which is to lay its eggs inside the body of a caterpillar for the young to hatch there and feed on the grub from inside, it was named after the ichneumon, a small mammal which in ancient times was reputed to run into the mouth of a sleeping crocodile and kill it by devouring its bowels.)
Ixion's wheel A recurring torment. (The wheel on which he revolved eternally in Hades.)
Medusa/Gorgon Repulsive woman. (She had snakes for hair and any beholders were turned to stone.) Hence:
Medusa's head [1900] News etc. that petrifies the recipient.
gorgonize (v) Petrify with a fearful, paralysing stare.
Merops' son Reformer, one who thinks he can set the world to rights. (From Phaeton, son of Merops, who, in attempting to drive Phoebus' chariot, nearly set the world on fire.)
all he touches turns to gold! Of a successful trader. (After the story of Midas whose thoughtless request that whatever he touched should turn to gold was granted by Dionysus.)

the Midas touch The talent of a successful businessman; flair for making money. (As/from the above.)

in the arms of Morpheus [the god of dreams and personification of sleep] Asleep.
in the arms of Murphy [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—18 October 1830] As above,Irished.

Oedipus complex An emotional disturbance where the son is jealous of his father because of an—often unrecognised—sexual desire for his mother. (Oedipus unwittingly killed his father and married his mother.)

Pandora’s box [1579] Something which, like nuclear energy, seems at first to hold the promise of great benefits to all, but is later seen as the source of unmanageable problems; a valuable gift that eventually becomes a curse. (There are two versions. In (1) the box contained all the blessings conferred by the gods on humankind, but Epimetheus rashly opened it and they all flew out and were lost -except for Hope which, being at the bottom, was retained; and (2) the box contained all the ills for humankind which were let loose when the box was opened.)

pile Pelion on Ossa/Ossa on Pelion [1584] Add to the difficulties; create an irresistible accumulation; add one embarrassment to another. (The giants, in their war with the gods, attempted to reach the top of Olympus by piling these two mountains together.)

rise from the ashes Revive, return to normal after a disaster; find renewal in destruction (as does the phoenix which, every 500 years, hatches out of the fire it was burnt in).

rare as a phoenix [1568]

Procrustean Imposing a brutal uniformity. (Procrustes was a robber who made his victims fit his bed either by cutting them shorter or by stretching them.)

stretch on the bed of Procrustes Ruthlessly fit or accommodate something or someone. (As/from the above.)

Procrustean bed [1769] Accepted standard which must be adhered to.
cut down to size Deflate a pompous person; reduce them to a proper level of importance.

Promethean man One who arrogates the creative function of God in order to give men independence and technical skills. The opposite of Pontifical man, who is God’s viceroy on earth, he is defiant even under severe punishment and refuses to be consumed. (Prometheus was a demi-god who made men from clay and then stole fire for them from Olympus. For this Zeus chained him to a rock in the Caucasus and caused a vulture to feed daily on his liver.)

proteus A variable person or thing. (Proteus was the prophetic old man of the sea who eluded enquirers by assuming many different shapes.)

protean Rapidly changing, ever-changing. (See above.)

Rhadamanthine judge Stern judge. (Rhadamanthus, for his justice in life, became one of the judges of the underworld.)
salamander (v and n) [a lizard able to live in fire without being burnt] (Use a) cooking utensil that browns or crisps food by radiation when made red-hot; poker used for fire-lighting [Lan]; cinder [Saddleworth, seLan].

siren Dangerously fascinating woman or pursuit; works hooter sounded to summon or dismiss workers. (From the beautiful sea-nymphs who lured passing sailors to their island with songs [see Homer, *Odyssey* xi].)

labour of Sisyphus/Sisyphean labour Heartbreaking, unending toil. (His punishment in Hades was to roll a huge stone to the top of a hill from which it never failed to roll down again.)

sphinx [winged Theban monster whose riddle no one was able to solve until Oedipus did so] Enigmatic, mysterious, inscrutable person.

tantalize [1597] Torment by keeping desirable object(ive)s just out of reach. (Tantalus’s punishment in Hades was to reach out for food and drink which always receded from his grasp.)

cue Small hint or item of fact that leads you to the solution (just as the clew of thread led Theseus out of the Cretan labyrinth).

lose the thread of an argument or narrative Miss the connection, continuity. (As/from the above.)

labyrinth [1548] Tortuous, inextricable tangle of ideas, events etc. (From the name of the Cretan maze where Theseus slew the Minotaur.)

labyrinthine Complicated, involved. (From the above.)

titanic Gigantic. (The titans were giants of Greek myth.)

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J.1d Myths, Germanic

dragon’s blood A powder used in printing which prevents the etching of those parts of the block covered by it. (From the myth of Siegfried who bathed in dragon’s blood to gain invulnerability, but a leaf that had fallen on his body prevented him from getting complete protection.)

vamp (n) Woman who exploits men (like a vampire).

vamp (v) Act as a vamp. (See above.)

vampire One who voraciously preys on others. (From the Hungarian story of a ghost that sucks the blood of sleeping victims.)

vampire [1881] Trap-door for quick exit from the stage (being a double-leaved, springloaded device reminiscent of a trap for vampire-bats).

suck the blood of... Use up someone’s resources; drain the life out of them.

wooden-stake (v) [Amer] Finish off for good; file and forget; postpone indefinitely. (The only way to finally dispose of a Dracula corpse is to drive a stake through its heart.)
J.1e Myths, Celtic

belve [bellow] howl/roar like Tregeagle [the giant of Dozmary Pool who tries to bale it out with a limpet shell; he sold his body and soul to the devil who hunts him over the moors with a pack of hell-hounds—Cor] They say, when the wind is howling, that the giant is roaring. Tregeagle was also the name of a harsh steward during the reign of James II.

thanks to Goll, he has killed his mother Said when a nuisance is got rid of by the action of the person responsible for it. (A very old Gaelic proverb. Goll was a one-eyed hero who killed his mother by mistake with a bone.)

if it be not Bran [Fugal’s dog], it is Bran’s brother [Sc] Is as near as makes no difference.

marrow [mate] for/to Bran [sDur Lakel Yks] Similar, equal.

J.2a Fables of men

narcissus Self-admirer. (From the fable of the Greek youth, Narcissus, who fell in love with his reflection in a stream and was turned into the flower.)

narcissism [1905] Morbid self-love. (As from the above.)

blow hot and cold Vacillate. (Aesop’s fable of the traveller and the satyr records the satyr’s indignation with his guest who blew on his fingers to warm them and on his broth to cool it, and thus blew hot and cold with the same breath.)

washing the blackamoor/Ethiop (white) [Sc Som Sus IW Cor: 1543] Working on a useless, pointless and hopeless task. (From one of Aesop’s fables.)

old man of the sea Burden only discarded with great difficulty; daunting precedent or example. (From the tale of the Old Man of the Sea who clung to Sinbad the Sailor’s shoulders for many days and nights, and from whom Sinbad only escaped by making him drunk.)

Aladdin’s cave Storehouse, accumulation of material or artistic wealth, often unsuspected. (From the treasure cave in Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp.)

finish Aladdin’s window Try to complete a work started, but left unfinished, by a greater genius. (Aladdin built twenty-three richly jewelled window frames in his palace, leaving the twenty-fourth for the sultan to finish, but the sultan, after exhausting his resources, abandoned the work.)

open sesame A necessary preliminary to action; something which remarkably obtains a favour, recognition, admittance etc. (From the tale of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, whose cave door flew open when these words were spoken.)

Barmecide One who offers illusory benefits or imaginary food. (From the tale in the Arabian Nights of one of the rulers of old Baghdad—whose family name this is—who set empty dishes before a beggar pretending they contained a sumptuous meal.) Hence, ‘enjoy a Barmecide’s feast’=go hungry.
the emperor has no clothes! When a belated recognition of the obvious takes place in defiance of the illusions of the majority. (The story is of the child who exclaims the truth that others have been pretending not to notice about the emperor’s new clothes.)

barn-burner Destroyer (like the Dutchman in the story who burnt his barns to get rid of the rats); anything sensational and exciting [Amer].

thinks the sun shines out of his/her arse! Thinks he/she is perfect; can do no wrong; is incomparable. (Influenced by the conceit that the world revolves round him.)

J.2b Fables of lions

lion’s share [1790] The largest share. (From the Aesop’s fable where the lion claimed the largest share of the spoil, and none of his fellow hunters dared to dispute it.)

leonine—contract, partnership etc. Unfair or one-sided arrangement. (As/from the above.)

a lion may be beholden to a mouse [1484] (From the Aesop’s fable of a mouse who released a lion from the net that trapped him by gnawing through the cords.)

his teeth are drawn His power of doing mischief is removed. (From the fable of the lion in love who consented to have his teeth drawn and claws cut so as to marry a fair damsels. Thereupon the girl’s father slew him.)

hares may pull dead lions by the beard [1580] There is no valour where there is no danger.

pull a dead lion’s beard off Exhibit false valour.

J.2c Fables of bears

lick into shape Train to a useful or presentable standard. (From the belief that only after their mothers had licked them did new-born bear-cubs take proper shape.)

Beres ben brought forthe al fowle and transformyd and after that by lyckinge of the fader and moder they ben brought in to theyr kyndely shap

[The Pylgremage of the Sowle, transl. Guilleville—c.1400]

unlicked cub An uncouth, ill-mannered youngster. (As/from the above.) J.Austen in 1839 referred to riotous and unmanageable children as cubs.

like the bear and the kettle Of one who injures himself by foolish rage. (The story is of a bear who entered a hut in Kamchatka and burnt his nose on the kettle. In annoyance he seized it in a bear-hug and scalded himself badly.)
bear’s service Trying to help, but actually doing more harm than good. (From the Russian fable of a bear trying to keep the flies from disturbing his sleeping friend, a man, but who crushed his skull with a blow from a stone intended for the fly.)

J.2d Fables of beasts of burden

it’s the last straw that breaks the camel’s back [1848] The culmination of a series, intolerable for what has gone before as much as for itself; the limit of controllable vexation.

like the camel that lost its ears seeking a set of horns [originally a Hebrew proverb about Balaam—Sanhedrin 106a] Of one who jeopardises his possessions by indulging in foolish ambitions.

find a mare’s nest [1576] Make a fancied or trifling discovery that you imagine to be important. A ‘mare’s nest’ is a foolish illusion.


find a horse-nest [Sc] Laugh without reason.

an ass in a lion’s skin A hectoring coward. (From the fable of the ass that put on a lion’s hide, but betrayed itself when it began to bray.)

‘never’ went out an ass and came home horse As could ‘never’ happen.

Buridan’s ass Victim of indecision. (From the prediction of Jean Buridan [c. 1295–c. 1358], a French philosopher, that an ass exactly midway between two stacks of hay would starve. See also E.17a.)

J.2e Fables of dogs

dog in the manger [c.1390] A type of selfishness where someone prevents another having what he needs, although he does not want it himself. (From Lucian’s fable of the dog who kept an ox away from the manger of hay, although he would not eat it himself.)

the dog and his shadow One who gives up the substance for the illusion (like the dog who dropped his bone into a stream when he opened his mouth to seize the bone’s reflection).
J.2f Fables of wolves

**wolf! wolf!/cry wolf** [1740] Forfeit your own credibility by false alarms. (From the fable of the bored shepherd boy who shouted ‘Wolf’ merely for the excitement and company of villagers coming to help, and who afterwards was not believed when he shouted for a real wolf.)

**wolf in sheep’s clothing** [1460] Malevolent person pretending to be friendly; someone who appears harmless, but is in fact very dangerous. (From the Aesop’s fable of the wolf who dressed thus in order to catch the young lambs. [See also Matt vii.15.])

**he put his head in a wolf’s mouth** Took an unnecessary risk (like the stork in Aesop’s fable who put her head in a wolf’s mouth to take out a bone).

J.2g Fables of foxes

**sour grapes!/a case of the fox and grapes!** [1580] Said of someone who, though badly wanting something, when he finds that he cannot have it, denies having desired it in the first place, and turns to disparagement. (The fox in Aesop’s fable consoled himself with the thought that the grapes that he had failed to reach were probably sour.)

**the whole bag of tricks** Everything, every expedient. (From the fable of the fox and cat on pilgrimage, the fox boasting that he had a hundred tricks in his bag. She said ‘I have only one.’ That one was, when the hunt arrived, to climb a high tree out of danger, but the fox, having tried his whole bag of tricks in vain, was caught by the hounds [La Fontaine’s Fables IX.xiv].)

J.2h Fables of monkeys

**keep the oyster** Retain the best part. (From the fable of the monkey as judge who retained the oyster and gave a shell to each of the disputants.)

**pull/take the chestnuts out of the fire with the cat’s paw** [1586] Get someone else to do your unpleasant work. (From the C15 Italian fable of the monkey who used a cat thus.)

**cat’s paw** The tool of another. (As/from the above.)

**neat but not gaudy as the monkey said when he painted his tail blue**
J.2i Fables of mice

the mountain was in labour and produced a mouse After great expectations, a poor outcome. (The fable dates back to a Greek proverb recorded by Athenaeus [C3], and also by Horace [Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus—Ars Poetica 139].)

country mouse/town mouse Typically rustic/urban character. (From one of Aesop’s fables.)

bell the cat/who will bell the cat? Undertake an admirable, necessary but dangerous mission. (W. Langland tells the tale in Piers the Plowman of a wise suggestion in a mice’s council to hang a bell round the cat’s neck to give warning of her approach. All thought this a good idea—until the question was asked: ‘Who will bell the cat?’)

J.2j Fables of birds

borrowed plumes Second-hand knowledge or opinions which someone displays as their own. (The fable is about a jackdaw who paraded in peacock’s feathers.)

cock and bull story [1608] A wild improbable tale (probably deriving from old fables where animals discoursed together in human language).

‘let’s not step on each other’ said the cock to the horse Said to illustrate two widely different capacities for doing damage.

the raven said to the rook ‘stand away, black coat!’ Rebupe from one who merits the same.

swan-song [c.1382] Final performance, poem, composition, work of art. (The swan is fabled to sing while dying.)

misers, like swans, sing sweetest before death [1736] When they make their wills.

the loan of the oyster catcher to the seagull [Ire] The loan never repaid. (The seagull was originally without web-feet, and she asked the oyster catcher for the loan of her webs for one day, but having got them she never returned them.)

King Log, King Stork Types of laissez-faire and tyrannical rule respectively. (From Aesop’s fable of the frogs who chose for their king first a log and second, which they soon regretted, a stork.)

true as a turtle(-dove) [c. 1380] (Symbols of married fidelity.)

‘all ekes’ [helps] as the Jenni Wren said when she pissed in the sea [1670]

mugwump [1884] Someone unable to make up their mind (from the imaginary bird which sits on the fence with its mug on one side and its wump on the other).
J.2k Fables of reptiles

crocodile tears [1548] Mere show of grief; hypocritical sympathy or contrition. (Crocodiles were reputed to weep noisily in order to lure people to the rescue of what they imagined was a child.)

cockatrice egg [from which will hatch the basilisk or cockatrice snake which can kill with a look: 1st half C17] Starting point of deadly danger.

the hare and the tortoise A situation or a pair of characters where the slow and steady one gains the ultimate advantage over a quicker, but erratic and over-confident opponent (as happened in Aesop’s fable of the race between the hare and the tortoise).

set the tortoise to catch the hare Attempt the impossible.

the viper and the file A case of the biter bit (from Aesop’s fable of the viper that attacked a file).

bite the file Intentionally injure yourself; consciously seek a painful experience.

cherish/nourish a serpent/snake/viper in your bosom Have a dangerous and ungrateful traitor in your confidence. (A man was fabled to have found a snake half-dead with cold; he put it next to his skin to warm it. When it revived it bit him.)

Lyk to the naddre in bosom sly untrewe

[G. Chaucer, Marchantes Tale ln.1786–1386

viper (n) [1591] Contemptible but dangerous and treacherous person.

it may be fun for you, but it’s death to the frogs Do not derive pleasure from another’s pain. (In the Aesop’s fable, a boy stones frogs for sport.)

when the frog and the mouse would take up the quarrel, the kite decided it Avoid the law.

J.2l Fables of insects

fly on the wheel One who claims credit for what he has not done. (The fly in Aesop’s fable claimed the credit for raising all the dust.)

J.3a Legends from the Greek

rich as Croesus [King of Lydia (560–546 BC): 1577]

he may bear a bull that hath borne a calf Small sorrows prepare for tragedy; he who can manage small works should progress to greater. (From the story of Milo of Crotona,
the C6 BC athlete who carried a heifer on his shoulders through the stadium at Olympia, and ate it in one day.)

**leave no stone unturned** Make a thorough search; try every means to achieve your object. (Polycrates, after the battle of Plataea in 477 BC, found no treasure in the Persian general’s tent. The oracle at Delphi advised him to leave no stone unturned, and thus it was found.)

**if I had not lifted up the stone, you had not found the jewel** He who makes the first move plays a vital part.

**sword of Damocles** [1747] An impending disaster; ever-present threat. (Dionysius I of Syracuse gave a feast for Damocles, but hung a sword over his head by one horsehair to impress on him the insecurity of a tyrant’s life.)

**hang by a hair/thread** [1528] Maintain a precarious connection or balance—often of a life in danger. (As/from the above.)

**hanging over his head** Of an ever-present menace, an imminent misfortune. (From the above.)

**decide** [<Lat decidere=cut down through, as if dividing a carcase, or cutting through a knot] Hence, make a judgement, decide generally.

**cut the knot/Gordian knot** [1579] Impose an arbitrary solution on an otherwise insoluble problem. (Alexander the Great cut the knot with his sword when told that whoever loosed it would be the ruler of all Asia.)

**appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober** Wait for a return to normality; imply that someone’s opinion is only temporary, and influenced by passing circumstances. (When a wife petitioned Philip of Macedon on behalf of her husband, he happened to be in his cups and dismissed her. ‘I shall appeal’ she told him. ‘To whom?’ he asked, confident that there was no higher authority than himself. ‘From Philip drunk to Philip sober’ she replied, and in due course her appeal succeeded.)

**Parthian shot/shaft** Parting and telling remark, glance etc. (The Parthian mounted archers used the tactics of pretended flight and then fired on their pursuers.)

**wrangle for an ass’s shadow** Contend about trifles. (The story goes that a man who had hired an ass sat down at noon in its shadow, but when the owner arrived, he claimed the right of sitting in the shade, maintaining that he had let out for hire the ass only, and not its shadow. During the dispute the ass ran away, leaving them both in the heat.)

**hair by hair you will pull out the horse’s tail** Slow and sure succeeds best. (Plutarch tells the story of a race to pull out the horse’s tail between a strong man using brute force and a weak man using his wits.)

**J.3b Legends from medieval times**

**mount a white charger** Set out on a mission of mercy, chivalry or charity; undertake such a mission. (This is how the Arthurian knights or crusaders would set out on a quest for the Holy Grail or other such errands.)

**Scanderbeg’s sword must have Scanderbeg’s arm** [1655–62] Machinery etc. is useless without a competent operator. (The Turkish emperor, Mohammed I, asked to see
Scanderbeg’s famous scimitar and it was duly sent, but no one could draw it; it was ungraciously returned, and Scanderbeg’s comment was that he had sent his sword, not the arm that drew it. Scanderbeg was the Albanian patriot, George Castriota [1403–68].

a Roland for an Oliver [1548] Tit for tat; one little different from the other. The expression usually refers to one incredible lie matched by another, equally incredible, so extravagantly were their deeds chronicled by the old romancers. (They were two paladins of Charlemagne with very similar exploits and achievements.)

time and tide wait for no man [c.1440] (This probably refers to the occasion when King Canute, to confound his flatterers, set his throne at low tide and forbade the sea to come in.) Time passes as surely as the rhythms of nature.

golem Automaton, robot; unthinking tool of another. (From the Jewish legend in which Reb Löw of Prague created figures roughly shaped like men, and then endowed them with life.)
as crooked as Robin Hood’s bow
many talk of Robin Hood that never shot in his bow First-hand experience is not essential to knowledge.

Many men speken of Robyn Hood And shette nevere in his bowe

Robin Hood’s choice This—or nothing.
Robin Hood’s miles Longer than usual.
Robin Hood’s pennyworths Of what is sold cheap because cheaply or dishonestly acquired.
go round by Robin Hood’s barn [Cum wMid Dev Maine NY WVir calif] Go roundabout, indirectly.
a Robin Hood wind [1855] A thaw wind. (Robin Hood could stand any weather but a thaw wind.)

ostrich (n) One who wilfully avoids facing the facts, reality. (From the anecdote that ostriches ran a short way from their hunters and then stuck their heads down in the desert sand thinking that if they could not see, then they could not be seen.)
bury your head in the sand Shrink from facing the facts. (As/from the above.)
an ostrich policy, belief etc. [1579] One produced by the above mentality.

had more…than the dun cow had ribs [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—21 March 1831] (The dun cow was a magical cow living in the Whittingham-Chipping-Longridge district of Lancashire and is remembered for having left behind it several very large ribs, one of which gave a farmhouse its name: ‘The Old Rib’.)

going on like Sokespitch’s can [Topsham, Dev] Proceeding excellently. (The Sokespitch family had in their cellar, for several generations, a cask of ale that never ran dry. It had been the gift of the pixies in return for some past kindness and the supply only ceased when an inquisitive maidservant removed the bung and looked inside.)

Don Juan Lady-killer, seducer of many women. (A character in Spanish legend, possibly deriving from Don Juan Tenorio, an aristocrat of C14 Seville.)

Bluebeard [a merciless tyrant and wife-killer in the story for which many originals have been proposed] Husband of many successive wives.
Bluebeard’s key The symbol of opposite reaction, as when over-fond friends become enemies, or the reformed spendthrift turns miser. (In the story, when the bloodstain on one side was rubbed off, it reappeared on the other.)

for want of a nail…[1640] Attention to detail is important. (For want of a nail, horse, rider, battle, war and kingdom were successively lost.)

Columbus’s egg Feat seemingly impossible—until the knack is shown. (From Christopher Columbus’s trick of tapping one end of a hard-boiled egg in order to stand it on its end—to show that things are possible when someone shows the way…as he had in discovering America.)

J.3c Legends from recent times

Hobson’s choice In the event, no real choice. (From the Cambridge character [1544–1631] who hired out horses from a well-stocked stable, but all customers were obliged to take the horse standing next to the door.)

Darby and Joan [supposedly John Darby (died 1730) and his wife] Devoted old couple. (See the ballad by Henry Woodfall.)

thick [intimate—passim] as Darby and Joan [Lan] (As/from the above.)

there are more that know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows [1723] The effect of notoriety.

loose and rampant as Doll Common
false/ill as/waur than Waghorn, and he was nineteen times falser than the devil [Sc]

fine as Forty Poke’s wife who dressed herself with primroses [Newcastle, Nhb]
kick one in Slaidburn and they all limp in Newton Of any inbred district—mutato nomine.

put your finger in the dike Use little means, plus faith and perseverance, to achieve great ends. (From the story of the Dutch boy who, noticing a small leak starting in the bank, blocked it with his finger until help came.)

plug gaps Bridge gaps; fill in vacant periods, breaks in production etc.; make good blanks or deficiencies.

Pied Piper Someone who exercises an uncanny charm to lure people away from where they should be.

J.4a Fairy stories

fairy story! An account or excuse, fanciful but harmless, recognised and denounced as implausible.

what a story!—suggesting that what has been said contains more fiction than fact.
tale in/of a tub [wYks] Idle talk, senseless fiction; old wives’ tale.
Cinderella Deprived and despised colleague, institution, service, branch etc.; item in a collection, but not strictly part of it.
fairy godmother Anonymous or unexpected benefactress.
fairy godfather [Amer] Sponsor, backer generally.
red shoes syndrome The compulsion to continue with a dancing career in spite of health and age problems. (After Hans Andersen’s story of a girl whose red shoes made her dance herself to death. A film on this theme, called The Red Shoes, was made in 1948.)
giant-killer Someone who, against likelihood, overcomes another, more powerful person; individual who challenges a large organisation.
a tale out of fruit-cake land An account or explanation so unreal as to be more credible in a fairy-tale.
you have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find a prince The principle by which advertisers send out a lot of junk mail.
story-book ending, solution, character etc. An ideal, idealised one, often romantically happy.
end of story! Really, that is all there is to be said about it. Usually pronounced with an air of finality subsequent upon information that needs no further explanation.
cloudland Utopia, place of dreams.
kill the goose that lays the golden eggs [1484] Foolishly cut off the source of wealth, income, benefits etc.; sacrifice future advantage to the greed of the moment.
it is quite another story now Things are vastly altered from how you understood them.
spell-bound (Of an audience captivated, as if by a magic spell, and listening with undiverted attention.)
enchant [1377] Captivate by beauty or wonder; put in a state of magical euphoria.
disenchant Disillusion; compel a person, by subsequent facts or discoveries, to realise that something or someone is not as marvellous as they appeared to be at first.
ugly duckling One who unexpectedly turns out to be the beauty or the brains of a family. (From the story of the ugly duckling who grew up to be a swan.)
babe in the wood A man fastened in the stocks or pillory.
babes in the wood Those who are excusable because of their inexperience.
serendipity A faculty for making happy but accidental discoveries. (A word formed by Horace Walpole from Serendip, the old name for Ceylon, after a fairy-tale called The Three Princes of Serendip.)

J.4b Nursery rhymes and songs

Cock-Robin [nYks] Reflections of sunlight on a pail of water.
Mother Hubbard [Amer] Locomotive with its cab over the middle of the boiler (giving it the appearance of wearing an old-fashioned women’s bonnet—frequent in illustrations of old Mother Hubbard).
that’s old Mother Hubbard! That’s incredible!
bare as old Mother Hubbard’s cupboard [Calif]
Humpty-Dumpty [Amer] Something irreparably damaged; someone who, once ousted, cannot be restored.
a good Jill may mend the bad Jack Marriage of a bad man to a good woman may improve him.
man in the moon [1548] Remote, otherworldly figure. ‘Has no more idea than the man in the moon!’
play pat-a-cake/patty-cake [Amer] with… Either direct or submit to a co-operative relationship with someone (as do mother and baby playing ‘Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man’).
teddy bears’ picnic [a song for children by Kennedy and Bratton—c. 1932] Innocent merry-making; time of ingenuous enjoyment.

J.5a Fairies

that cold it would skin a fairy [Uls]
go like a banshee [fairy spirit believed by the Scots and Irish to wail and shriek under the windows of a house where someone is doomed shortly to die] Disappear quickly [Cor].

there are fairies at the bottom of the garden Something unusual, inexplicable, marvellous is happening hereabouts.
away with the fairies Out of this world, out of touch with reality, often of sufferers from senile dementia.
merry as a grig [fairy dressed in green with a red cap, less often seen than heard…laughing—wEng] (See also I.3a.)

J.5b Dwarfs and pixies

hop o’ my thumb A dwarf.
laugh like a pisky [＝pixie—Dev Cor]/pixie/Robin Goodfellow Loud and hearty, a horselaugh.
skice about [frisk, frolic about—Lan WCy Sus Hmp IW] like a pisky
impish Mischievously merry (as is the nature of an imp).
J.5c Gnomes and goblins

gnome International banker or financier, especially Swiss—‘gnomes of Zurich’ (because of the wealth that they control, hoarding it in underground vaults).

nightmare [the ‘mare’ element was a goblin that sat on your chest when asleep and so caused bad dreams, then, by transference, to the dream itself] Now often used, by extension, to situations such as one might encounter in a bad dream. ‘Enough to give you nightmares’=horrifying.

play/raise hob [Robin Goodfellow, Puck, a hobgoblin] Upset, play havoc with, raise a commotion [freq. Amer].

puckish Impish, mischievous (the reputed character of Puck).

has seen redcap [a goblin believed capable of persuading folk to run away from their work—Rochdale, eLen] Has left his work.

J.5d Monsters and giants

troll [Amer] Stupid person (after the mythical Norwegian monster).

bugbear [1580] Needless fear; disadvantage; continuing source of annoyance. (Originally an imaginary monster invoked to frighten children.)

roar like a bar-ghest [=bear-ghost, a bogle like a bear or large dog with round staring eyes, teeth and claws but apprehensible only by its sound—Dur Lakel Der] Object of terror.

knows no more of music than the giant o’ Cernel [=Cerne Abbas Giant:Dor 1894] Savage, barbarous person.

red-etin/eitin/aitin [name of a giant or monster—Sc Ire] Be inquisitive. (It was a huge misshapen hairy monster, invoked in order to subdue children.)

an artful maid is stronger than Bolster [a Cornish giant—Cor]

there were giants in those days The men of old were better, mightier than modern men.

J.6a Witches

witch (n) Young woman exerting a strong fascination; old hag.

black/cross/fou’ [of someone drunk—Gall]/ill [evil—sChs]/nervous [of one very restless—nwEng]/pale/sinful/straight [ironic]/ugly/white [ironic] as a witch

hex [Amer] Jinx, curse [<Ger hexe=witch].
sail like a witch [naut C19] Of sailing ships that go better by night than by day, and thus are suspected of having been built of stolen timber.

ingratitude is worse than witchcraft

the witching hour Midnight, when witches are active. ‘Tis now the very witching time of night’ [Shaks, Hamlet III.i–1600].

bewitch (v) Fascinate, as if under a spell—especially of a man by a woman.

whammy [Amer 1940s] Baneful influence, stunning blow (from the original meaning of a spell cast by someone’s evil eye).

fly-by-night [NCy eSuf] Unreliable, because likely to disappear overnight. Of firms, unstable characters and defaulters on debts.


cold as/colder than a witch’s tit [Can Tenn Calif] Very unfriendly; bitterly cold—of weather.

thin as a witch’s tit [Aus] Of a bowl given insufficient bias to get near the jack.

tighter than a witch’s cunt [Can] Often of over-tightened nuts, bolts or screw-tops.

like a witch, you say your prayers backwards [nEng] You have a queer way of asking for something.

wicked as the witch of Wokey [Som]

fause [shrewd, cunning, deceitful—sLan] as a witch/the witches of Pendle

have a needle into...[Cum] Bear a grudge, spite against. (From the practice of witches who made small wax images or dolls of their ill-wishers and stuck pins or needles into them.)

cross the old witch out [wYks] Perform the superstitious act of ‘crossing’ a vat of ale in the brewing, and throwing hot cinders in it.

rain cats and dogs [1738]/dogs and polecats [1653] Rain very heavily. (Cats and dogs, as familiars, are associated with witches as rainmakers.)

zombie [a soulless corpse resuscitated by witchcraft—wAfr WInd sAmer] A ghoulish, spiritless, comatose character who moves about sluggishly with hollow staring eyes; Canadian Home Guard not allowed to serve outside North America.

wizard [1990s] Computer program enabling the user to perform a complex sequence of actions by choosing options logically presented on the screen.

J.6b Hags, demons

hag-knots Tangles in horses’ manes, made by witches for stirrups.

hag-ridden Harassed, oppressed in mind (as if ridden by a witch in a nightmare).

hag’s teeth [naut] Protruding lumps of matting.

a name to conjure with A powerful and effective name (as were the names of those spirits and devils by which their owners could be invoked for help or summoned into the material world).
J.7 Superstitions

jinx [<Gk ιωγξ—the wryneck, an old charm—see Theocritus, Idyll II] Someone or something with an evil influence; bringer of bad luck.

monkey-paw (v) Handle with uncanny skill and diplomacy. (The preserved paw of a monkey was believed to have magical properties.)

like a charm Miraculously effective. ‘Worked like a charm.’

amethyst [<Gk αμέθυστος—not drunken] The stone was believed to prevent intoxication.

kiss the Blarney Stone [in Ireland] Become very persuasive (from the belief that you thereby obtain the power of smooth and flattering speech). Hence:

blarney Specious, high-flown rhetoric.

the swine has run through it Of a marriage gone wrong. (From the northern belief that it was unlucky for swine to cross the path in front of a wedding party. See also F.13c.)

please the pigs If all is well; if the fates or circumstances permit. (As/from the above.)

incubus An oppressive thing or person, weight on the mind. (A medieval superstition of an evil spirit that comes on women in their sleep, the male counterpart of a succubus.)

moon-calf [Sc Der] Born fool, congenital idiot (from the old idea that certain false conceptions and misshapen births were caused by a baneful influence of the moon). Also used of a singing style where the notes are sung without expressing the meaning.

half-rocked Half-witted (from a belief that to rock a baby lying upside-down in its cradle causes stupidity [nEng EAn swEng: C19]. See also I.2g, rocked in a stone cradle)

we see not what sits on our shoulder The obvious is often overlooked; you cannot foretell how your fate will befall you. (From the spirits of doom, fury, vengeance etc., imagined in the form of predatory birds.)

will-o’-the-wisp/Peggy with her lantern Elusive person; imaginary objective; delusive hope. (From the superstitious personification of the ignis fatuus.)

bad as follerin’ Billy wi’ t’ wisp [wYks] (As/ from the above.)

send her down, Hughie! [the mythical god of surfers—Aus 1966] An appeal for rain or surfing waves.

chase the rainbow Pursue an ideal, illusion. (From the saying that a crock of gold lies buried at the rainbow’s end.)

the end of the rainbow Time or place when hopes and dreams come true.

lead apes in hell [1560] Die unmarried (from a notion that women who die unmarried lead apes in hell).

I must have killed a Chinaman [Aus] To explain a run of bad luck.
J.8a Old customs

stale as custom

between Bel’s two fires [Lan] In great difficulties; not knowing how to extricate yourself. (The Beltane fires were lit in honour of Baal [=Beal, the sun-god] on May Day, Midsummer Day and All Saints’ Day. Those animals and men chosen for sacrifice passed between the two fires [see J. Harland and T.T. Wilkinson, Lancs Folk-lore—1882]. This may well have been an early origin of the phrase ‘caught between two fires’. The Scots also refer to it in their saying ‘you may get waur bode [worse offers] ere Beltan’ [May Day].)

blue as wad [Cum Wm EAn] (Woad was the dye with which the ancient British tribes painted their bodies.)

an old Spanish custom! [1932] A jocular term for a long-standing but irregular practice, especially in industry.

take the breeks off a Highlander Do something superfluous and unnecessary (because, kilted, he will be wearing none).

knee-buckles to a Highlander [s&wIre] Useless gift or possession.

make cockle/cocklety bread [wCor] Roll head over heels. Originally a practice of young women who kneaded bread by sitting on the dough with the purpose of giving it aphrodisiac properties. This survived as a singing game among hoydenish girls who sat on the ground clasping their knees and used a motion as if kneading dough, while singing:

My granny is sick and now is dead,
And we’ll go mould some cocklety bread
Up with the heels and down with the head
And that is the way to make cocklety bread.

[Probably derives from a Norman word cockle =arse, as in hot cockles (see also K.67b), < Fr hautes coquilles=bottoms up!]

look/stand like an image of rye-dough [1686] (In ancient times the little images on altars were made of rye-dough.) Unmoving and expressionless.

drunk as blazes [=blaizers, woolcombers who, every seventh year, on Bishop Blaize’s Day (February 3) went in procession—Lan]

J.8b Rags and bushes

have a rag on every bush [Ire] Court many women. (This is a relic of the pagan practice of hanging shreds of clothing on a bush near a well at which the rag-hanger has obtained
a cure, either as a gift to the spirit of the waters or as an offering to the patron-saint of the well.

Near Newcastle, on the road to Benton, in my younger years, I have often observed a well with rags and tattered pieces of cloth hung upon the bushes round it. It is still known, I presume, by the name of the Rag Well. [Gent. Mag.—1794]

...; from which we learned that she was going to dip the child in a part of the stream called Kevin’s pool, to cure its lameness. She had already come four long miles to do this; a trouble she had taken three times already, and said her prayers nine times, kneeling on four corners of the rocks in the bed of the river in succession. Afterwards I went to see this pool. Near it stands a sacred thorn, which I found covered with innumerable little rags of linen cloth, small slips, hung there to wear away in the weather, from a belief that as the rags consume, the disease will abate also. [W. Wordsworth, Letter to CW, Wexford, Ire—5 September 1829]

Rags from the clothes of those who received benefit were wontedly hung up in honour of, or in gratitude to the patron saint of the well. [nYks]

If the shirt or the shift thrown into the water happened to float, it indicated recovery, but if otherwise, it was a sign of death. [nYks]

How widespread and enduring this custom is can be appreciated from its continuance to 1989 in the mountains of Mongun-Taiga in the Russian republic of Tuva, where the two elements of immersion and rag- or ribbon-hanging were still being observed at certain springs with a reputation for healing.)

dipped in the Shannon [immersion therein was believed to be a cure for shyness—Ire C18–C19] Not in the least bashful.

take the rag off the bush [Msri Ark] Surpass everything or everyone.

take the rag off the hedge [Lan] Surpass, rouse admiration. (This and the above are clearly the same saying, retained in the original form by the Americans, but modified to the changing landscape of C17 and C18 England.)

wear the (green) willow [UK Geo: c.1550] Repine, usually from unrequited love; mourn the loss of a loved one. (A garland of willow leaves was worn in mourning.)

in dock, out nettle A comment on inconstancy From a charm where you rubbed a dock leaf on the nettle sting with the words:

Nettle in, dock out,
Dock in, nettle out,
Nettle in, dock out.
Dock rub nettle out.

As also:

But canstow pleyen raket, to and fro, Netle in, dokke out, now this, now that, Pandare?

[G.Chaucer T&C IV.461—1374]

**J.8c Jumping the besom**

**jump (over) the besom/broomstick** [nLin wSom Mrld Vir Kenty Msri Ark] Jump to conclusions; cohabit; be unofficially married. (From a form of marriage where the parties jump over a broomstick.)

- **broomstick match** (As/from the above.)
- **hop-pole marriage** [EAn] One held just before the baby is born.
- **be married/wed over the besom-stick** [Wm]/**brush-stale** [wYks] Live together though unwed.
- **live over the brush** [Lakel]/**under the broom/ brush** [wYks] (As/from the above.)

**J.8d Later customs**

**Jack-a-Lent** A butt; someone under fire. (From the practice of throwing at a puppet so-named. In Dorset a ‘thinly lean and ragged figure’ went in procession at the beginning of Lent. A scarecrow was also called Jack-a-Lent in Dorset. In Cornwall, figures representing Judas Iscariot, and called Jack o’ Lent, were paraded round towns and villages on Ash Wednesday, and later burnt on bonfires.) [See Shaks, *MW* V.v–1597]

- **dance worse than a drunken pace-egger** [sLan] (Pace-egging is still a custom in Preston parks and other Lancashire towns, and consists in rolling eggs on Easter morning.)

- **tall as a maypole**
- **fine as a maypole on Mayday/a Mayday queen**
- **merry as a maypole dance** [Yks]
- **look like Flora in distress** [Cor] With dishevelled hair. (From one of the flower festivals or floral dances.)

- **the fairest flower of our garland** [coronal, Paston Letter 1472 Nrf] Our prize possession.

- **tuzzy-muzzy** [posy, nosegay of flowers—C18] Woman’s genitals.
leap/loup [leap—Sc] at the half-loaf Be content with an inferior position; snatch at small boons. (From the custom of throwing the fragments of half a loaf among the male and the other half among the female reapers to be scrambled for during harvest.)

that caps [surpasses, beats—nEng] rush-cartin’ [Lan]

grand as Thornham rush-cart [sLan] (These were highly decorated carts used for the rush-bearing ceremonies [in wYks Lan nwDer Chs] when flowers and rushes were carted for the church floor. In Lancashire they were pulled by gaily dressed young men called ‘waguers’ [the wague is the pole attached to the rush-cart], and pushed by others called ‘thrutchers’, in Cheshire by four grey horses.)

Christmas tree [Amer] Bill in Congress at the end of a session, to which various extra clauses get added; the paraphernalia of valves etc. controlling the output of an oil well [Amer].

I didn’t fall off a Christmas tree! I have more sense than that; that doesn’t fool me.

Christmas tree order Soldiers’ term for full marching order (because of the quantity of equipment hanging round them).

lit up like a Christmas tree [Amer] Drunk.

they may claim the Dunmow flitch [1362] They are happily married. (A traditional prize for married fidelity and agreement.)

The bacoun was not fet for hem, I trowe,
That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.

[G.Chaucer, The Prologe of the Wyves Tale of Bathe ln. 217—1386]

One origin for the phrase ‘save your bacon’ may have been the idea of stopping just short of a quarrel or matrimonial rift, and so still qualifying for the flitch.

lie for/deserve the whetstone [nEng Lei wSom Dev: 1364] Be an outrageous liar. (A former punishment for lying was to hang a whetstone pillory round the neck.)

spit on the same stone [Nhb: 1777] Belong to the same party; have the same ideals, principles. (From the custom of boys, fellow workers etc. of spitting on a stone in pledging confederacy.)

spit for the white horse [swLin] Trust to luck that we shall be given some (thing). (From the custom of children who spit on the ground and cross their feet over it when a white horse passes, in the belief that thereby a present will be forthcoming.)

I wish I had Kemp’s shoes to throw after you I wish I could bring you luck. (Probably W.Kemp, an actor and dancer of about 1600.)

ride the hatch [Cor] Be censured. (This was a custom around Land’s End where one suspected of immorality was mounted on the half-door and violently rocked until they fell—if into the house, innocent; into the street, guilty. See also l.41f, ride the haps.)

mount the ass Go bankrupt. (From the French custom of advertising a man’s insolvency by leading him through the town seated backwards on an ass.)
J.8e Jewish customs

olive branch [1330] Offer of peace or reconciliation, an ancient symbol of peace (probably connected with the story of Noah [Gen viii.11]).

J.8f Greek customs

look to our laurels [1882] Remember our reputation; stay pre-eminent (the laurels being the wreaths of laurel won at the Olympic or other games).

wreathed in… Surrounded closely by; bedecked, adorned with—generally.

rest on our laurels [1859] Retire, content with present fame.

bear the palm [1386] Be acknowledged victor. (Another prize for athletic success.)

palmy days Triumphant, flourishing times (because worthy to bear the palm); the time of youth and vigour (the only time when you are likely to win the races).

J.8g Roman customs

a whip and a bell Something that detracts from comfort or pleasure. (From the Roman custom of attaching a whip and a bell to the chariot of a triumphing general to drive away evil.)

Roman holiday An occasion at which profit or entertainment is a by-product of suffering (after the gladiatorial games).

J.8h Native American customs

eat dog for another Oblige someone. (Native Americans ate dog at important councils, but it became accepted for palefaces who did not relish dog to leave a silver dollar and pass the dish to the next man who took the dollar and ate his share of the dog.)
J.9a Religion—primitive; Jewish, the Jews

victim [＜Lat *victim*a=living animal or human being killed in fulfilment of religious rites] Generally, and loosely, one who suffers injury or loss either by their own or another’s action.

tin god Ludicrous object of veneration.

is nothing sacred? Good-humoured protest at the violation, appropriation or lack of consideration for something that the speaker values.

beyond the veil In the after-world. (By analogy with the veil dividing the sanctuary from the body of a Jewish temple.) Tyndale’s phrase was ‘within the veil’.

in more strife than a pork chop in a synagogue In an embarrassing predicament.

find…a false prophet Be sadly disappointed, disillusioned by…

(the whole) Megillah [＜Heb *megillah*=scroll] A long, tedious, exhaustive account or explanation; an involved story. (The complete Book of Esther is read aloud at Purim celebrations.)

seventh heaven [1893] Highest bliss; supreme exaltation. (Jews and Muslims recognise seven heavens, the highest or outermost of which is nearest to God and furthest from earth.)

on cloud seven/nine [Amer] In a strange otherworldly state of bliss.

Jew (v) Cheat, swindle (from the Jewish reputation for astute business deals).

false as a Jew ‘…falsier than a Jewe or Sarasyon…’[Jack Cade 1450].

worth a Jew’s eye [Nhp War: 1593] Very valuable. (The medieval threat of putting out an eye if the payment demanded was not made, usually ensured prompt payment in full.)

wander like a lost Jew [sChs] Aimlessly.

look like a Jew [1611] Either weather-beaten and wasp-faced, or lunatic and discontented.

thick as two Jews on a pay-day [Cockney] Conspiratorial; in close collaboration.

cold/cool enough to shave a Jew/make a Jew drop his bundle

some of my best friends are Jews An excuse for an attitude of racial bigotry.

J.9b Religion—Greek

sure as fate bound to… Fated to, certain to do something. (This derives from the ancient Greek view of =Necessity, binding men to their fates by powers like cords or restraining ropes. [See R.B.Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* p. 333—1951])

Olympian Inaccessible and authoritative, as if by divine right.

lies on the knees/in the lap of the gods [1900] is still undetermined; beyond human control. (From the Greek [Homer, *Iliad* xvii. 514 et
al.] where the image is of the goddesses, Moirai, spinning the lifespan of each man, whose allotted thread, as yet uncut and unbroken, lies across the knees of Klotho and Atropos. The spinning was done with the unspun wool in a basket to the left, some of which would be taken by the left hand and with the spindle attached would be spun by the right hand either over the knees or hanging down past the right knee. [See R.B. Onians, The Origins of European Thought p. 306—1951]

**bolt from the blue** [1837] Unexpected shock; shattering news (like a thunderbolt hurled by Zeus out of a clear sky).

**out of the blue/a clear sky** Completely unexpected. (As/from the above.)

**under the aegis of**... Under the leadership, protection of. (From the Greek word for a shield, particularly Zeus’s.)

**remember, recollect** Reassemble in the mind, bring into fresh consciousness something that has been or might have been forgotten, so giving it new life (as if remembering the dismembered god—Dionysus, or another—and re-collecting the scattered parts ready for his new life-cycle).

**Apollonian** Of music and poetry composed by skill—the opposite of vatic, q.v. 112.

**Maenadism** [1909] Wild, frenzied behaviour (after the Maenads’ ecstatic celebration of the rites of Dionysus).

**Corybantic** Wild and frenzied. (The Corybantes, priests of Cybele, were renowned for their wild dancing.)

**iris** [the goddess of the rainbow who acted as the messenger of the gods] That coloured area between the pupil and the white of the eye, named after the colours of the rainbow.

**iridescent** Containing all the colours of the rainbow. (As/from the above.)

**invoke** Call upon the law, precedents, a code etc. for justification, authority and help.

**Triton among the minnows** Person whose eminence only derives from the insignificance of those around. (In Greek theology Triton was a demi-god of ocean, represented as a man with a fish’s tail carrying trident and conch.) [See Shaks, Cor III.i—1609]

**satyr** [woodland deity with horse’s ears and tail] Man with an excess of the animal lusts. Hence, satyriasis.

**wander about like a lost soul** (Vergil tells us that the souls of the dead must flit about on the shore of Acheron for 100 years before Charon will ferry them over [Aeneid VI.329].)

**take the ferry/cross the Styx** [the river crossed by the dead en route for the underworld] Die.

**pay the ferryman** Pay the ultimate price, settle the final reckoning.

**Stygian** Dark as hell. ‘Stygian gloom’.

**the waters of Lethe** The process of oblivion. (Those who crossed the river Lethe forgot all their former life.)

**mausoleum** Museum or other repository of great riches. (After the tomb of Mausolus of Halicarnassus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.)

**the whiter the cow, the surer it is to go to the altar** The richer prizes are seized earliest.
anathema [<Gk ανάθεμα—an offering devoted to evil, and so rejected from the temple offerings] Something rejected because either odious or entirely opposed to the personality.

J.9c Religion—Roman

oscillate [<Lat oscillare=swing <early Lat os-cillum=a little face, originally the mask of a god, often of Bacchus, hung in a tree and left there to swing in the wind]

consort [<Lat con sors=sharing the same fate]

invita Minerva [<Lat=against the will of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom] Contrary to a person’s genius or inclination.

send a sow to Minerva/a swine to teach Minerva [1542] Teach someone more learned than yourself. The Roman proverb was sus Minervam docet=a sow teaches Minerva.

panic [1603] Sudden contagious fear—such as was ascribed to the alarming powers of the god Pan.

fanatic [<Lat fanum=temple; one who in the temple fell into a religious ecstasy]

profane [<Lat profanus=in front of, outside the temple]

Janus-faced Treacherous, two-faced. (The main symbol of the god Janus was a gate, but the double-headed image was appropriate both to doors and to his month of January, which looks backwards to the old year and forwards to the new.)

J.9d Religion—Islamic

if the mountain will not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain [1625] You must adapt yourself to circumstances; accept the inevitable. (From an incident when the Arabs asked Mohammed to cause Mount Safa to come to him. When it moved not, Mohammed said ‘Allah is merciful; if it had come, it would have crushed us all. I will therefore go to the mountain.’)

jihad [holy war; struggle for good] Campaign, variously—often doctrinal.

like Mohammed’s tomb/coffin [hanging between earth and paradise] In suspense, generally.

Mecca Aim, goal—variously. (The hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca, is one of the most important acts of a Muslim’s religious life, and the fulfilment of a lifetime’s ambition.)

go the whole hog [orig. Amer 1828] Do something completely, without reserve or reservation. (From the casuistry of a debate about which joint of the pig Mohammed meant to prohibit—obviously he would not wish to forbid his followers all of such a wholesome food!—and in the end, being unable to resolve the question, they were
reconciled to eating the whole hog. Another, even less likely explanation, is that it derives from hog=shilling [C17], and so meant ‘spend it all’.

talks to her mommets [=maumets, idols—MedEng—by a mistaken idea that Muslims prayed to Mohammed as to an idol] Speaks in a low voice with herself. Of those who become introspective, withdraw from society, and take to mumbling and chunnering under their breath.

howling/wirling like a dervish [Muslim friar, noted for devotional dancing and whirling; the howling dervishes are of a different order and country, and are so-called because of their religious chanting]

bed of nails Distressing experience; painful ordeal. (From the practice of fakirs who mortify the flesh by sleeping thus.)

Taj Mahal [built in Agra by Shah Jahan as a memorial to his wife Mumtaz Mahal who died 1631] The last word in excellence; surpassing work of creation.

J.9e Religion—African

lift the veil of Isis Penetrate to the heart of a great mystery. (An ancient statue of her was supposed to bear the words ‘My veil no one has lifted’.)

draw aside/lift the veil/curtain Reveal, explain what has hitherto been a mystery.

mumbo jumbo [1896] Unnecessarily specialist or technical jargon used to impress the uninitiated—‘legal mumbo jumbo’. (Originally an African idol or bogy which uttered frightening but meaningless noises contrived by the Mandingo men to keep their wives in awe.)

rain-maker [Amer] Exceptionally successful representative for a firm.

rain dance [Amer] Impressive political event, reception etc.

J.9f Religion—Indian

mantra [sacred passage or text] Widely accepted social formula [1970s]; personal belief or philosophy.

avatar [earthly manifestation of Hindu deity] Form, manifestation variously.

contemplate the navel/gaze at your own navel Meditate inwardly and intensely; be narrow and parochial, self-centred, introspective. (From Buddha’s contemplation of his navel, and then from the yoga exercise.)

sacred cow [1910] Ideal, principle (often political) treated with unwarranted veneration; an institution unreasonably held to be above criticism.

juggernaut [1854] Superstition, principle or institution to which people sacrifice themselves—or others; overwhelming force; very large road vehicle [1969]. (From the
image of Krishna dragged yearly in procession on a car under whose wheels devotees, it is said, would immolate themselves.)

naught-girl [an Indian temple-dancer] Merely a decorative, alluring adjunct, not basic. ‘Music would have remained a naught-girl of the soul’ [Stockhausen].

**J.9g Religion—Chinese**

kow-tow to... Servilely admit and submit to an authority. (From the emperor-worship of the old Chinese who prostrated themselves before him, touching the floor with their foreheads.)

**J.10 Augury**

it augurs well for... Is a good indication of; promises well for a future event.

inaugurate [Lat inaugurare=take omens from the flight of birds before consecrating or installing a priest or official]

conjecture (n and v) Forecast. (From divination by augury when the signs and omens were ‘thrown together’. Compare also the throwing of tarot sticks.)

cut blocks with a razor [1774] Do something great with small means; waste talents; act more eccentrically than usefully. (In a dispute between Tarquin and an augur, Tarquin asked him if he could do what he was thinking of. ‘Undoubtedly’ replied the augur and Tarquin with a laugh said that he had been wondering whether he could cut a whetstone with a razor. ‘Cut boldly’ he was told, and doing so, cut it in two.)

**J.11 Omens**

ominous Threatening; likely to turn out ill or bring misfortune.

abominable [Lat abominari=use a back-curse to cancel out the effect of an evil omen; execrate]

a bird of ill omen Person with the reputation of bringing bad luck. (In ancient augury, birds like owls and ravens were thought ominous.)

obscene [Lat obscenus=ill-omened, abominable]

sinister [Lat sinister=left] Underhand, harmful, malicious, menacing. (Because omens appearing on the left were interpreted as unfavourable.)

dismal [Lat dies mali=evil, unhappy days]
whitestone days/days marked by a white stone [1540] To be remembered with pleasure, as being specially fortunate. (From the Roman practice of marking lucky days on the calendar with chalk, and unlucky ones with charcoal.)

stranger Floating tea leaf in a cup; irregular protrusion from a burning candle wick; a film of blue flame flickering in a fire; a moth flying towards you. (Any of these phenomena may be interpreted as foretelling an unexpected arrival.)

J.12 Oracles

speak like an oracle [1563] With authority, but obscurely and ambiguously.

work the oracle [1863] Obtain a favourable result, albeit by dubious or mysterious means; obtain the cash.

Delphic Ambiguous (as were the answers of the oracle there).

vatic [Lat vates=prophet] Of music and poetry inspired by the muse—the opposite of Apollonian. (Oracles and prophets were thought of as being the mouthpieces of the gods.)

J.13 Alchemy

content/thrift is the philosopher’s stone (More effective in transmuting a base metal into gold than any magical stone.)

no alchemy like saving [Ill: 1670] (As above.)

gibberish [the obscure mystical jargon of Geber, the C11 Arab alchemist] Unintelligible nonsense.

adamant [<Gk ἀδόμαξτος=invincible=a very hard metal, variously identified; a fabulous stone having the properties of both diamond and magnet] Unyielding; immovable; impervious to requests.

hard as adamant [1200]

quicksilver [mercury, having the same alchemical sign as the planet Mercury] The propensity to rapid changes of mood and temperament. (See also J.14c, mercurial)

hermetically sealed Sealed so as to be airtight; esoteric; recondite. (The seal of Hermes was believed by medieval alchemists to render treasure and vessels inaccessible.)

sealed off Of an area containing criminals or some other quarry being impenetrably surrounded, as if a glass vessel were to be sealed up, as above.

in the wrong box [1546] Mistaken; in an awkward position. (Probably referring to an apothecary’s box of substances. The first usages, in the C16, date from the time of the poisonings of Cesar Borgia.)
J.14a Astrology

flat-earther [1905] One who refuses to accept the evidence; champion of unlikely causes.

set/sit high on the wheel (sc. of fortune) Make/be very fortunate.

the wheel has come full circle A complete reversal of fortune has occurred. (From the Wheel of Fortune [see Shaks, Lear V.iii—1605].)

coincide [<Lat co-incidere=together fall into (the same space)]

J.14b Astrology—stars

consider [<Lat considerare=study the stars (for astrological purposes)]

he/his star is in the ascendant He is enjoying a time of improving luck or prosperity; he is rising in power or popularity. (From the astrological term for when someone’s planet is going up in the zodiac.)

his star is setting His influence declines; his greatness is past.

ill-starred [born under or influenced by an evil star] Ill-fated, tragic, unfortunate.

J.14c Astrology—planets

he that is born under a threepenny planet will never be worth a groat [sLan] You cannot go beyond your destiny.

it rains by planets [Dur Cum wYks Lin Der Nhp EAn Ken: 1662] Said when it rains, not generally, but in small areas; irregularly; unpredictably.

planet-struck Confounded, bewildered, panicstricken (as if under the devastating influence of a malign planet).

jovial Cheerful, jolly, benign. (The influence of Jupiter was a happy one.)

mercurial Merry, lively, witty, volatile (from the influence of Mercury). From this the old chemical theory derives that postulated five elementary ‘principles’ of which Mercury was one.

mercury Liveliness, wit, inconstancy. (As/from the above.)

saturnine Gloomy, brooding. (Such was the influence upon the natures of those born under the planet Saturn.)
J.15 Fortune-telling

in his buttons [1597] Destined. (From the game, like cherrystones, where boys count their buttons to know their future careers.)

in/on the cards [1849] Possible, likely. (From the practice of foretelling the future from playing cards.)

look into the crystal ball [1902] Foresee events. (A crystal ball has long been an important part of a diviner’s or fortune-teller’s stock.)

J.16 Going to school

eat well of the cresses Be sure to remember. (Cress was supposed to help the memory.)

so mean he still has his lunch money from school [Aus]

drag your feet/heels Delay deliberately.

as American as the school bell

blush like a schoolgirl

J.17 School

school (v) your temper, yourself to patience etc. Train bring under control.

above my head Beyond my comprehension. (The lessons for older children were set higher up on the wall or board.)

make him sit up [1886] Compel him to take better notice, to be more alert.

put your hand up Confess, own up.

teach...a lesson [1586] Make him learn (through punishment or an unpleasant experience) that he has done wrong.

on a learning curve [progress illustrated by a curve on a graph] Trying to master an unfamiliar skill.

monitor (v) Keep a continual watch or check on some person or situation so as to be warned as soon as anything goes wrong. (From the form prefects/monitors appointed to help the teacher with discipline and administration.)

blurry [error—Yks] Premature birth.

has a chip on his shoulder [Amer 1887] Is annoyed about something and is looking for trouble—of folk who are pugnacious over a grievance they are nursing. (A schoolboy’s ‘dare’, when someone looking for a fight would put a chip of wood on his shoulder and dare anyone to knock it off.)
spit on [wSc]/rub his buttons [Nhp] Proclaim him a coward; challenge him to a fight. (The custom was to spit on your hand and then rub it on the other’s coat buttons.)

get a hair in his neck [Sc: 1450] Pay off old scores; get the better of him for once. (A hair in the neck is a source of trouble and annoyance.)

he has studied at Whittington college [1592] Has been imprisoned at Newgate [rebuilt in 1483, according to the will of Sir Richard Whittington, by his executors].

know all the answers Be worldly wise, hard to outwit.

every schoolboy knows that! The scornful comment on an inexcusable gap in someone’s knowledge.

with as good a will as ever I came from school [1670] Very gladly. [See Shaks, Tam Shr III.iii–1597]

empty as a schoolroom in July [Tenn Calif]

J.18a Teachers

schoolmaster A reliable horse used for training other horses and riders at a riding school.

schoolma’am/schoolmarm(ish) A prim and conventional woman commanding authority.

time is a great teacher [Can Amer]

polish the apple Curry favour. (A shiny apple for the teacher!)

apple-polishing [Amer Can] Toady; trying to win favour by gifts or flattery. (As/from the above.)

at the feet of… His/her disciple or pupil. (The traditional place for students in the east is sitting at the feet of their teacher.)

understand (From listening to a teacher above you, a position from which their character can be fully assessed and their matter comprehended.)

draw a picture [Amer] Explain in simple, easy terms.

experience is the schoolmistress of fools [1568]

experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other [1758]

give full/top marks for…[1934] Give due credit or praise for work done, recommend highly.

J.18b Scouts and guides

has balls on him like a scoutmaster (from a suggestive and vulgar slander that scoutmasters had homosexual tendencies)

brownie points Recognition, albeit jocular, of someone’s achievement or virtuous behaviour.
**J.19 Punishments**

tell tales out of school  [1530] Maliciously report damaging secrets; betray secrets best kept where they belong; discuss private matters with the wrong people.

go to the back of the class! That was a daft thing to do/say!

comeuppance  [wCor Maine NY WVir Ind] Just deserts; final retribution (from being summoned up to the teacher for a caning).

slate  (v) Rebuke severely. (The names of boys to be punished were listed on a slate.) From this the meaning became intensified to slate= beat severely [Ire], slate=punish enemy forces [Services], slate=criticise [political and literary].

have a rod in pickles  Make ready, be prepared for the worst. (Birch twigs were kept pliable in brine.)

rod(s) in pickle/piss/soak  (for you at home!)  [Hnt Nhp War: 1553] Punishment awaiting you.

a rod in pickle  A racehorse held in reserve for a certain win [Aus]; a permanent reproach, to be produced as required [Oxf].

plug/lug  [pull hair]  uppards/upperparts  [Chs] Apply a severe measure.

toord [<AS upbregdan=brandish, shake to and fro]  bang/knock their heads together  Get them to see sense by mutual confrontation.

so sour it twists your ears back  cuff ears  Restore order; act the policeman in international conflicts.

gobsmacked  [nEng 1985] Astounded, flabbergasted; brought up short by the realisation that you have been mistaken.

never use the taws  [short strap divided into thongs at one end, for chastising children—Sc nEng] when a gloom  [scowl—Cum] will do as well  [1721]/never take the whip when a word will do the turn  [NY]

tough as a burnt whang/whong  [Lin Lei War Suf] To make the taws more painful some sadists used to singe the ends of the thongs. ‘Tougher than whang’  [Ohio].

hit over the thumbs  [1540]/rap over the knuckles  (v and n) Reprove/reproof. Hence, rap=punishment, criminal charge  [Amer UK]; take the rap=accept blame, responsibility and consequent punishment.

kick in the pants  Rebuff, severe criticism.

it is time enough to skreigh  [=skrike, shriek—Sc Ire Nhb Cum] when you Ve strucken  [Sc] Do not complain of what has not yet happened.

face like a smacked arse!  Looking cross, disgruntled, sorry for oneself.

have over a barrel  Get someone into an awkward position; compromise someone (from the position for chastisement).

on a hiding to nothing  Confronted with a hurtful situation without any hope of benefit or chance of evading it.

kiss the rod  Submit to correction.

whacked  Worn out, exhausted (as if beaten into submission).

whipping boy  [orig. the boy educated with a young prince and punished for the prince’s faults] Scapegoat, generally.
J.20a Reading

**lip-mover** [Amer] Person of low intellect (from the efforts of those who move their lips while reading).

**a backward child** won’t learn anything by starting at the end of the book [Ire] Take things in their due order.

**read into it** Infer, deduce something not explicitly stated.

you can read his mind like an open book He is easily understood, naïvely simple.

**know/read him like a book** [1874] Understand/be thoroughly familiar with him.

**chat/speak/talk like a (halfpenny/penny) book** [1821] Speak academically, unnecessarily pedantically, affectedly; foolishly [Lan Cor].

J.20b Slates

cheap as chalk [Cor]

**your slate wants cleaning** [Sur] You need to reform; there is room for improvement.

**sponge** (v) Erase the record, memory of…

**pass a/the (wet) sponge over…** Obliterate the memory of; agree to forget. (As/from the above.)

**tabula rasa** [scraped tablet—Lat] Something completely and uncritically receptive—like a baby’s mind or material left to another’s discretion to fashion.

J.20c Letters of the alphabet

**plain as the (Christ-)cross-row** [alphabet—Nhp C19+earlier]/**Christ-cross line** [Dor]/**ABC** (The alphabet was plainly written for teaching purposes, and marked with a cross for quick finding.)

**not know/tell an… /A from a gable-end/ windmill** Be illiterate, simple.

**not know/tell a B from a bull-foot** [wYks: 1401]/**bull’s foot**! [Ind III] (As above.)

**not know his B/ABC from a battledore** [nwLin: 1563–87] Be illiterate. (The battledore was a learn-to-read card, so-called from the shape. There is an illustration of a child learning from a battledore or hornbook in a German book of 1580.)

**wouldn’t say B/bo/boo to a battledore** Is very shy and timid (like a schoolchild, afraid to speak even while learning the letters).

**like Henny Penny in the horn-book, with finger in mouth** [Gall]

**crooked/plain as the letter S**

**to a T** Exactly. (Because of completing the letter by crossing it. See also A.4a.)
cross as an X [Lan]
crooked as an izzard/huzzet [=Z—Yks Lan Chs]
croot as uzzit [=crooked as a Z—sLan] Bad-tempered.

**J.20d Handwriting**

**pencil in** Tentatively designate; make provisional suggestion or list (pencil being erasable and not as final as ink).

**make your mark** [q.d. on the page of history] Become noteworthy, memorable.

**dot the i’s (and cross the t’s)** [1528] Go into detail; be fully explicit.

**go back and cross the t’s** [naut] Implying that a learner helmsman has written his name in the ship’s wake.

**to a dot** Precisely. ‘That’s him to a dot.’

**to a tittle** [a dot or small pen mark] To a precise exactness; a true likeness.

**clear as copperplate** [printed writing, a model of evenness]

**run the ruler over**… Check cursorily whether work is correct, satisfactory or tidy

**copybook** Orthodox; as expected by society. (Like the moral maxims and proverbs in children’s copybooks.)

**blot/blotch** [Yks] your copybook Spoil your good record.

**handwriting** (n) Evidence of technique in a crime or work done, making it possible to identify the author. ‘Has his handwriting all over it.’

**just my handwriting!** Right up my street; Easy!

**carbon-copy** Tedious, servile imitation.

**J.20e Blotting out**

**blot out** Annihilate, destroy, efface (as writing is obscured by a blot of ink).

**obliterate** Blot out, destroy. (From effacing a letter by blocking it over or writing over it.)

**J.20f Spelling and punctuation**

**spell** Signify. ‘This spells ruin for us all.’
**spell baker** [UK Amer: C18–C19] Try something more difficult (‘baker’ being the first word of two syllables in early spelling books).

**spell it out** Take pains to make it absolutely clear; state precisely without hints or circumlocution.

**bracket** (v) Find range of target by overshooting and undershooting alternately, halving the difference each time; seek a word in a dictionary by the same method.

**punctuate** Intersperse, generally.

**comma-counter** [Amer] Stickler for minor details; perfectionist.

**question mark** Unresolved problem, decision; unknown factor. ‘A question mark hangs over…’.

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**J.20g Pen and ink**

**steel-pen coat** A man’s dress coat (from the similar split in both nib and coat-tail).

**pens may blot but cannot blush**/pen and ink don’t blush [1577] You cannot necessarily tell people’s feelings from their writings.

**has ink in his pen** Is sexually vigorous.

**tent** (n) [enough ink to fill a nib—nIre] A small drink [sDon sIre].

**has no ink in his pen** Is destitute, brainless.

**dips his pen in gall** Writes with caustic rancour.

**sling ink** Write controversially.

**black as ink**

**dark as the inside of an inkwell** [Calif]

**inkhorn words, terms, phrases** [1543] Pedantic, studious language; new-fangled neologisms and contrived derivations for words etc. already established in the language.

**ink in/into/over** Impress indelibly; emphasise strongly. ‘Inked into his memory.’

**indelible—thoughts, feelings, impressions** Deeply infused, not to be erased.

**before the ink is dry** Without delay, almost immediately.

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**J.20h Paper and pencil**

**dry as paper**

**paper-hearted** Feeble.

**paper-thin** Insubstantial; inadequate.

**pale as parchment**

**unfold** (v, tr. and intr.)—a plan, narrative etc. Reveal, explain, relate—part by part and in sequence. (Originally from the process of unwrapping and opening out the folds of a manuscript on parchment, and later reinforced by the image of displaying cloth by unfolding it to view.)
youth and white paper take any impression [1670]

the paper never refuses the ink Spoken when someone is receptive to any and every suggestion, or is so gullible as to believe anything; also as a warning against allowing unsuitable instruction for the young.

the fairer the paper the fouler the blot [1732] A fault in a virtuous person is all the worse and is more noticeable.

fly-specker Pedantic critic, one who looks for flaws in the writing instead of making constructive criticism of the thought or meaning. (Fly-speck is a mould on paper that spoils its appearance.)

reams of... Large quantities of—usually writing (from the area measurement for paper).

crispore [swCum nwLan] Haematite ore containing rods or spikes of pencil-shaped metal which can be tapped or pulled out of their beds.

that will put some lead in your pencil Will give you strength, spunk or sperm; will restore your sexual condition—now used of both sexes.

sharp your pencil Prepare to work; improve efficiency.

don’t write before your pencil is sharpened [Ont] Prepare everything before you start work.

J.20i Writing

writ large An old truth expressed with new emphasis by a kind of euphemism. ‘New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large’ [J. Milton—1645].

you may write on it [Lan] May rest assured on it.

injuries we write in marble, kindnesses in dust We longer remember the evil done to us than the good.

write in/on the dust/sand/water/wind Fail to leave anything abiding; send a message soon lost or forgotten. writing in the dust/sand= a transient message.

it is written on his heart (A quaint belief that if someone had an obsessive enthusiasm or idée fixe, the word or words of it would be found engraved on their heart.)

written all over his face [1604] Obvious from his expression, countenance etc.—betraying guilt, greed, joy etc.

everyone’s faults are not written on their foreheads [1609] You cannot tell everybody’s character from their appearance. (From the time when the letter of a man’s crime was branded on his forehead.)
J.21a Words

God is better pleased with adverbs than with nouns [1607] With how you act rather than with what you do or who you are.

sleeping dictionary [1928] Person from whom you learn a foreign language while enjoying a sexual relationship.

swallow the dictionary Use unnecessarily long or unusual words.

word-splitting Subtle verbal distinctions.

she’s been to London to call a streea a straw [Chs: 1670] Of one who has gone far, but learnt little.

all right/sound on the goose Politically orthodox. (An American shibboleth by which, in Kansas, any suspect who did not interpret the phrase ‘all right on the goose’ with an acceptable definition of ‘right’ was threatened with death.)

J.21b Speeches

off the cuff [Amer 1938] Spontaneously, extempore, unprompted. (Like the man who makes a speech using no more notes than the word or two he has jotted on the cuff of his sleeve.)

tub-thumper Ranting preacher; vehement demagogue; the Hyde Park Corner type of speaker.

J.22a Books

write the book [Amer] Be the principal authority.

years know more than books Experience is better than learning.


like a prent [printed—Sc]/printed book Straight off, without hesitation, clearly.

wrong fount! A printer’s comment on an ugly face. (Different types of print are kept in separate founts.)

make wavy rule [=the printers’ line] Be rolling drunk [1880].

plain/true as print

imprint—on the memory Fix to endure. Imprinting is the biological term, first proposed by K.Lorenz in 1937, for the fixation in the minds of some species of new-born animals and new-hatched birds of their mother’s appearance. In nature the process takes about one minute and is then irreversible.
**stereotype** [method of printing by dry plate] Ux航海 reproduce of a set type or pattern—of personality, system etc.

**cliché** [Fr *cliché*=print wood engravings from a metal stereotype block] A common and hackneyed phrase, an expression whose force has been blunted by much repetition.

**not worthy to carry books** [1616] (Let alone learn from them.)

**speak volumes** Convey much—unsaid.

**go/speak by the book/card** [see Shaks, *Hamlet* V. i—1600] With care as to the facts, accurately; strictly (if unimaginatively) according to rules and regulations. (The card could also be the card of a compass.)

**a man of one book** A specialist, learned in one field but ignorant of all others.

**out o’ Davy Lindsay into Wallace** [authors of two school texts—Sc] Of a notable move forwards.

**he is in the book all right, but he doesn’t know what page he’s on** [Aus] He is right, but cannot give his reasons or calculations.

**bookworm** Avid reader, studious person—who, like a bookworm, obtains all he needs from books.

**protocol** [Gk *πρωτόκολλον*=first glue, (referring to) the table of contents stuck on the outside of a MS or diplomatic document]

**bear the imprint of…** Show its origins, have the recognizable characteristics of. (From the publishers’ imprint in a book, giving details of its provenance, production, date and copyright.)

**blurb** [=Miss Blinda Blurb, whose picture appeared on the dust-cover of a book in America written by Gelett Burgess in 1907] The publisher’s advertisement on the cover of a book.

**judge not a book by its cover** Do not judge by externals.

**why buy a book when you can join a library?** Cynical comment on marriage.

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**J.22b Chapters and pages**

**chapter of accidents** [1773] Series of unforeseen events (as in a novel).

**to the end of the chapter** Continuously to the very end; till death.

**page** (n) Phase, episode. ‘So ended another page of our history, his story’ etc.

**page-turner** Riveting account, succession of events etc. (as if a reader could not wait to turn the page and read what happened next).

**take a leaf/page out of…’s book** [1809] Emulate them.

**turn over a new leaf** [1540] Make a completely new start for the better; be reformed.

**read on one side of the leaf** See only one side of the question.

**bookmark** Word processor facility for finding a pre-set place in a document.

**turn down a leaf** Cease for a time.

**a leaf out** [Cor] Somewhat mad.
J.23 Scholarship

with a wet finger [Sc: 1519] Easily—as easily as a wetted finger will turn a page, or spin yarn, or even write a lover’s name in wine spilt on the table.

lay a straw Make a stop; mark a stopping place, severally. (As if laying a straw at the line to which you had read.)

make a (mental) note of… Make a special effort to remember.

underline/underscore Emphasise, stress.

red-line Mark out a certain person on a list, or area on a map for discrimination or attention.

red-circle (v) Isolate into a category, often for a pay-freeze or redundancy purposes. (The marking with red ink of features on a list or plan gives emphasis to those items that are for inclusion or exception.)

you can put a ring round that one! [NZ] You can be sure of that.

rule out the possibility etc. Exclude the rejected alternative.

gloss over Obscure the true—but unpalatable—meaning with specious comment or misinterpretation (as was done by scholars who added marginalia and interlinear commentaries [called glosses] to manuscript texts).

do your homework [1934] Prepare for an interview, meeting, debate, questioning; find out all the facts you will need.

smell of oil/the lamp [C17] Be over-laboured, over-learned, showing signs of care and nightwork; of a style that shows excesses of elaboration.

a Crichton/an admirable Crichton [James Crichton of Clunie was a very accomplished scholar and embodiment of the knightly virtues—1560–85] Someone who excels in many fields, a fine all-rounder.

J.24 Literature

saga An ever-continuing narrative or chain of events told or recorded. (From the popular conception of Old Norse sagas.)

thrasonical Braggart, boastful (like Thrason in Terence’s Eunuchus).

Dantesque With life-like and detailed representation of horrors (after the style of the torments described in the Inferno of Dante [born 1265]).

pander to… Indulge, gratify, minister to—usually with evil intent towards someone. (From Pandarus, the character of medieval legend who procured Cressida’s love for Troilus [see G. Chaucer, T&C—1374].)

Machiavellian Unscrupulous, perfidious, regardless of right. (The Italian writer, Niccolò Machiavelli [1469–1527], in his book The Prince, advises a sovereign to use all means, right or wrong, to maintain power.)

rodomontade Vain boasting (like that of Rodomonte in Orlando Furioso by Ariosto [born 1474]).
Rabelaisian—humour, anecdote etc. Coarse, salacious, extravagant in humour and style (as were the tales of Rabelais [1490–1553]).

gargantuan Gigantic. (Gargantua was a giant portrayed by Rabelais.)

quixotic Of a visionary character, neglecting worldly interests in pursuit of honour or devotion. (After the Cervantes character, Don Quixote.)

tilt at windmills Attack imaginary or unworthy foes, grievances. (From an incident in Don Quixote by Cervantes [born 1547].)

euphuistic High-flown, extravagant in style (after the style of Euphues in The Anatomy of Wit by J.Lyly [born 1554]).

drunk as Barnaby (The ‘hero’ of Barnabee’s Journal, in which the poet Richard Braithwaite [1588–1673] recounts the exploits of a hard-drinking itinerant horse-coper.)

Ithuriel’s spear An infallible test of genuineness [see J.Milton, Paradise Lost iv. 810—1667].

Amphitryon [=Amphitryon, play by Molière—fl. 1660] One who throws a dinner party.

gay Lothario Seducer, debauchee (from the character in Rowe’s tragedy The Fair Penitent, 1703).

you’re not Robinson Crusoe You’re not alone; we all suffer similarly.

girl/man Friday Resourceful young female/ male assistant. (After Crusoe’s servant, Man Friday in D.Defoe’s novel, Robinson Crusoe, 1719.)

bred in the bone Immutably inherent. ‘What is bred in the bone will not go out of the flesh’ (Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe.)

Lilliputian Small, petty; an undersized person, dwarf (from the diminutive characters in Dean Swift’s satire Gulliver’s Travels, 1726).

namby pamby Feeble, soppy. (After Ambrose Philips [1674–1749], the author of a type of pastoral poetry ridiculed by A.Pope.)

Lovelace Seducer. (Robert Lovelace was one such character in Richardson’s Clarissa Harlowe, 1747.)

Goody Two-shoes [Amer] Manifestly virtuous young woman. (From the main character of the child’s story of that title, 1766.)

Casanova Amorous adventurer (after the memoirs of Giovanni Casanova de Seingalt [1725–98]).

tam o’ shanter [1840–50, remembered in use] Woollen bonnet as worn by Scottish plowmen, named after the hero of R.Burns’ poem of 1790.

man from Porlock Someone who, by interrupting, spoils a great work. (After the man on business from Porlock who arrived when Coleridge was writing Kubla Khan in 1797 and quite put out of his mind both the vision and the poem he was writing about it.)

albatross round the neck Constant reminder of past error; enduring sense of guilt (from S.T.Coleridge’s Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 1798).

Mrs Grundy Personification of propriety, even prudery [see T.Morton, Speed the Plow—1798].

Collins Bread-and-butter letter. (William Collins in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, 1813, promised one such letter.)

bowdlerize Expurgate. (From the mutilated edition of Shakespeare’s plays published by T.Bowdler in 1818.)
*peau de chagrin* [Balzac—1831] Magic skin emblematic of the withering away of man’s life-span, powers etc.

**the plot begins to thicken** [Martha Wilmot, Letter—10 June 1820] Things are becoming more complicated; there is more to this than at first appeared.

**Pickwickian sense/language** One intentionally evasive, unstraightforward, political or more complicated than the usual, common meaning (from an exchange between the Chairman and Mr Blotton in §1 of *Pickwick Papers*, 1836, by C.Dickens).

**Pickwickian syndrome** A medical condition characterised by obesity, sleep irregularities and breathing abnormalities (after the fat boy, Joe, in *Pickwick Papers*).

**Bumbledom** Pompous, dogmatic and insensitive officialdom. (After Mr Bumble, the beadle in Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*, 1837.)

**Fagin** Thief and trainer of thieves (after the character in Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*).

**all gas and gaiters!** Pomposity; everything quite all right again. (A jocular expression first recorded in Dickens’ *Nicholas Nickleby*, 1839.)

**Scrooge** Miser and killjoy (after the character in Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, 1843).

**Pecksniff** A greasy hypocrite (after the character of that name in Dickens’ *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 1844).

**gamp** An umbrella. (Mrs Gamp regularly carried one in Dickens’ *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

**King Charles’s head** Idée fixe, obsession. (See Dickens’ *David Copperfield* xiv, 1850, where Mr Dick has a lunatic preoccupation with that king’s decapitation.)

**Micawber** Feckless optimist, someone in constant expectation of something turning up (after the character in Dickens’ *David Copperfield*).

**Gummidge** Peevish, complaining person (after the Widow Gummidge in Dickens’ *David Copperfield*).

**boffin** [RAF 1940] Research scientist (from Mr Boffin in Dickens’ *Our Mutual Friend*, 1864, whose name was used as a nickname for a certain scientist by one of his fellow ‘backroom boys’).

**Podsnap** Smug, complacent type of person who refuses to face up to unpleasant facts (from the character in Dickens’ *Our Mutual Friend*). Hence also, **Podsnappery**=selfsatisfaction.

**look like the wreck of the Hesperus** In utter ruin and disarray. (Longfellow’s poem of 1840 commemorates the wrecking of the schooner Hesperus near Gloucester, Mass, in 1839.)

**Moby** [Amer] Large, complicated computer (likely to prove as much an obsession as the great white whale was to Captain Ahab in H. Melville’s novel *Moby Dick*, 1851).

**Simon Legree** [Amer] Cruel, unsympathetic foreman, ‘slave-driver’ (from the character in H.Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1852, who was not, however, as bad as his reputation).

**a lady-or-tiger situation** A dilemma where the choice leads either to bliss or mortal danger [Amer C19]. (From F.Stockton’s story of a suitor who had to choose which of two doors to open—his lady-love behind one, a raving tiger behind the other.)

**when the kissing has to stop** When you are forced to face the facts, harsh realities. (From R.Browning’s poem, *A Toccata of Galuppi’s*, 1855.)

**do right by our Nell** Honour your obligations, however irresponsibly incurred. (From those romantic novels where the wicked squire [Sir Jasper?] is compelled to act honourably by the simple maid he has seduced.)
mad-hatter (From Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865.) Eccentric, crazy person.

the Red Queen syndrome [Amer 1999] That predicament of modern societies when, in spite of ‘improvements’ costing both money and effort, the next alteration arrives before the previous one has been assimilated and no actual progress is achieved. ‘Now here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place’ [L.Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, 1872].

ships that pass in the night (From H.W. Longfellow, *Tales of Wayside Inn*, 1874.) People whose meeting is brief but significant.

from log cabin to White House Describing a success story, a rags-to-riches situation. (After the biography of President James Garfield by W.M.Thayer, *From Log Cabin to White House*, 1881.)

Jekyll and Hyde Double character; person with two very different sides to their personality, alternating between good and evil. (From the story by R.L.Stevenson, 1886.)

Bunbury (v) Use a spurious alibi (as in O. Wilde’s *Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895).

do it by penny numbers [novels published by instalments at a penny an issue] Only work sporadically; do a job in small disjointed amounts.

land of green ginger (From B.Potter’s *Tale of Tuppenny*, 1903.) Imaginary land, realm of fantasy [Oxf].

Peter Pan (of J.M.Barrie’s play, *Peter Pan*, 1904.) Immature man; one who is not likely ever to grow up completely.

Tinker Bell Effeminate man (from the fairy in *Peter Pan*).

do a Pollyanna [Amer] Delude yourself into thinking things are better than they really are; make the best of a bad job; find reasons for gladness even in a disastrous situation. (From the Pollyanna stories by E.H.Porter, 1913.)

Babbit [the hero of the C.S.Lewis novel, 1922] Type of smug, conservative businessman.

pushmi-pullyu [a fabulous two-headed animal created by H.Lofting in *Dr Dolittle*—1922] The type of indecision or contradiction in attitudes or politics; muddled incompatibility.

Shangri-La [the remote, unspoilt and ideal retreat in J.Hilton’s *Lost Horizon*—1933] A type of earthly paradise, secluded Utopia.


triffid Large rampant weed (after the sciencefiction novel *The Day of the Triffids* by J.Wyndham, 1951).

the wilder shores of… Those fringe areas where unusual, extreme and unrestrained manifestations occur. (After the novel by L. Blanch, *The Wilder Shores of Love*, 1954.)

catch-22 requirement etc. [Amer] One impossible to fulfil; insoluble dilemma (from J. Heller’s novel, *Catch-22*, 1955, in which American flying regulations stated that a pilot could not be relieved of flying duties unless certified insane—and elsewhere the regulations directed that no one who refused to fly could be considered mad as he was obviously thinking too clearly).
**Lake Wobegon effect** [Amer] Tendency to overestimate quality (from G. Keillor’s *Lake Wobegon Days* of 1985, where ‘the women are strong, the men good looking and all the children above average’).

### J.25a Shakespearean quotations

**sermons in stones** *AYLI* II.i–1593 Wisdom, lessons drawn from pure nature.

**another Richmond in the field** *Rich III* V.iv–1593 Someone else engaged on the same work or in a similar enterprise. ‘I thynke there be sixe Richmonds in the field.’

**a Shylock** A heartless money-lender *Merchant*—1596.

**all that glisters is not gold** *Merchant* II.vii– 1596 Usually applied to an estimate based on appearance only. (See also E.4d, all is not gold…) An early version is:

> Nis hit nower neh gold al þat ter schineþ—[1200]

**a Daniel come to judgement** *Merchant* IV.i– 1596 An epitome of wisdom and justice.

**pound of flesh** Legitimate due, albeit exorbitant; what is owed, down to the last item, without mitigation or relenting. (Shylock was owed, and demanded, a pound of Antonio’s flesh *Merchant* IV.i–1596.)

**shine like a good deed in a naughty world** Commending what is all the more welcome by contrast with an unpropitious background. ‘So shines a good deede in a naughty world’ *Merchant* V.i–1596.

**a plague o’ both your houses** I approve of neither—both are equally bad. (Mercutio’s dying curse *R&J* III.i–1596.)

**out of this nettle, danger, pluck the flower, safety** It is only by taking risks that we can ensure our survival; success; freedom.‘…out of this Nettle, Danger; we plucke this Flower, Safety’ *HyIVi* II.iii–1597.

**men in buckram** Non-existent persons, figments of imagination, as were Falstaff’s ‘Four Rogues in Buckram’ *HyIVi* II.iv–1597.

**Benedict** *Much Ado*—1598 A man newly married after a long bachelorhood.

**Macedon and Monmouth** *HyV* V.vii–1599 Two things or places entirely different (despite what Fluellen said).

**meet at Philippi** *JC* IV.iii–1599 Keep an important appointment without fail (as Caesar’s ghost did with Brutus).

**Hyperion to a satyr** *Hamlet* I.ii–1600 Illustrating a wide disparity; extremes of contrast.

**Hamlet** [G.B. Shaw 1903] Indecisive, neurotic character.

**Polonian** [1956] Sententious (after the character of Polonius in *Hamlet*).

**the primrose path—of dalliance** *Hamlet* I.iii– 1600; *Macbeth* II.iii–1606 The easy and pleasant life.

**many who wear rapiers are afraid of goosequills** *Hamlet* II.ii–1600
our withers are unwrung [Hamlet III.i–1600] I am unaffected; the imputation does not touch me.

very like a whale [Hamlet III.i–1600] Said of something wildly improbable or very different; an ironical assent to an absurd statement.

like Patience on a monument [a phrase used to emphasise the protest—Lan] Left foolishly and unnecessarily waiting, shamefully abandoned. (Probably deriving from a similar source to the image ‘She sate like Patience on a Monument, Smiling at greefe’ [Twelfth Night II.iv–1600]—such as the Ikonologia of 1593 which depicted Patience sitting on a stone with her feet among thorns. The figure of a woman representing Patience was often placed on funeral monuments.)

bright particular star [AWTEW I.i–1601] Incomparable object of devotion, too far superior to be attainable.

chronicle small beer [Oth II.i–1603] Analyse the unimportant.

even-handed justice [Macbeth I.vii–1606] (From the figure of Justice as a goddess holding sword and scales in her hands and symbolising impartial judgement). Hence, even-handed = fair, impartial.

Lady Macbeth A type of hard and ambitious woman, usually manipulating a weaker husband.

the sear and yellow leaf [Macbeth V.iii–1606] The time of age and waning powers.


sea-change Unexpected and elemental transformation (from the song ‘Full fathom five’ [Tempest I.ii–1611]).

Caliban [Tempest—1611] Brutal and degraded man (after the monster of that name).

lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds [Sonnet 94—1597; quotation from The Reign of King Edward III II.i.451–1596, author unknown] Corruptio optimi pessima.

J.25b Other quotations

milli-Helen That measure of feminine beauty required to launch one ship—after the speech of Dr Faustus,

Is this the face that lancht a thousand shippes? And burnt the topless Towres of Ilium?

[C.Marlowe, Dr Faustus V.i–1589]
Lady Mondegreen A misunderstanding caused by a misreading or by something heard amiss—from the ballad, The Bonny Earl of Murray, who was killed on 7 February 1592.

They hae slaine the Earl of Murray And hae laid him on the green.

gather ye rosebuds (while ye may) [R.Herrick, To Virgins—1648] Grasp your pleasures and opportunities before time removes either them or you (the moral of the poem).

only pretty Fanny’s way [from a poem, T.Parnell (1697–1717)] A characteristic and harmless trait that we need not take seriously. Used dismissively.

praise from Sir Hubert Praise indeed! Thanks for your encouragement! (From T.Morton’s play, A Cure for the Heartache, 1717.)

stuffed owlish Of a poetic style that takes commonplace themes, treating them in a too-serious and even pompous manner.

The presence even of a stuffed Owl for her Can cheat the time; sending her fancy out To ivied castles and to moonlight skies...

[W.Wordsworth, Misc. Sonnet III.xiii]

on the pulse Deriving from a person’s own experience, and all the more vivid for that:

…not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses

[J.Keats, Letter—3 May 1818]

take the cash in hand and let the credit go [Ind Minn] Prefer immediate material benefits to possible future gains like honour, prestige, well-being etc. (From E. Fitzgerald’s translation of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyám, 1859.)

the further off from England…the nearer ’t is to France [L.Carroll, Alice in Wonderland—1865] Of a situation where to miss one alternative is to gain another.

God-wottery [T.E.Browne, My Garden—1876] Over-elaborate gardening; whimsical garden furniture like pot or plastic gnomes, toadstools, miniature bridges etc.

movement at the station [from the first line of A.B.Paterson’s The Man from Snowy River—Aus, 1895] Hurried activity.

under the skin In reality, on a deeper level; when superficialities are discounted:

For the Colonel’s lady an’ Judy O’Grady Are sisters under their skins!

[R.Kipling, The Ladies—1896]

things fall apart, the centre cannot hold [W.B.Yeats, The Second Coming—1921] Said when a society, firm or organisation is disintegrating because of a failure of central control.

Prufrockian [1977] Timid, conventional, and hence ineffective (after the character of J. Alfred Prufrock in T.S.Eliot’s poem [1917]).
not with a bang, but a whimper [T.S.Eliot, *The Hollow Men*—1925] Not, as you might expect, in a spectacular, terrifying manner, but insignificantly.

not waving, but drowning [Stevie Smith—1957] Of an ostensibly normal situation which, when sensitively investigated, turns out to be full of trouble, distress and failure.

**J.26a The Classics—Homer**

**epic** A series or account of heroic deeds—often jocular.

**Homerian laughter** Loud and long (such as Homer describes when the gods laugh at Hephaestus’ trick in catching Ares and Aphrodite in adultery [*Odyssey* viii.326]).

**even Homer nods** [1530] All workmen and artists, however good, occasionally lapse from their best.

**Myrmidon** [the people whom Achilles led to Troy] Faithful but unscrupulous servant, hired ruffian.

**Trojan house** Person or device insinuated into a system in order to undermine it (just as the introduction of the hollow horse—full of Greek soldiers—into the beleaguered city of Troy was instrumental in its downfall); computer software into which virus-type material has been insidiously loaded and which will subsequently corrupt any system into which it has been introduced.

**Nestor** Wise but tedious old man. (A character in *The Iliad*.)

**Stentorian** Very loud. (Stentor was a herald of the Greeks with a voice as loud as fifty other men’s combined [*Iliad* v.785].)

**Diomedean exchange** One-sided transaction. (The two heroes exchanged arms and armour on the field, but Glauclus’ armour was gold and Diomedes’ bronze.)

**Odyssey** Journey, long in distance and time, ending after many dangers and adventures in a safe return to home and family. (From the name of Homer’s epic recounting the adventures of Odysseus.)

**Mentor** Trusted adviser [the character in *The Odyssey*].

**Web of Penelope** [1580] Wasted labour; a work never completed. (She was the wife of Odysseus and had promised to wed one of her suitors as soon as her weaving was complete, but she undid the day’s work every evening, hoping for Odysseus’ return.)

**Penelopeize** [1841] Procrastinate, play for time, employ a delaying diplomacy. (As/from the above.)

**Chaste as Penelope**

**Lotus-eater** One who dwells in indolent luxury (from the legendary Lotophagi [*Odyssey* ix.92+]).
Cyclopean walls, masonry  Made of enormous, rough-hewn blocks, as were the megalithic forts of Mycenae and Tiryns, reputedly built by a race of giants called the Cyclopes.

Cyclops minnow A one-eyed freak, caused by being raised in water containing too much magnesium sulphate. (After the one-eyed giant Polyphemus \(\text{[Odyssey ix.106+]}.\))

between Scylla and Charybdis [1547] With a choice between fearsome alternatives; between two dreadful evils. (From the story of Odysseus and his men who chose to sail nearer to the monster Scylla and lose six comrades rather than risk the whole crew to the all-devouring whirlpool, Charybdis.)

bend the bow of Ulysses [=Odysseus] Emulate a great man’s achievement [\(\text{Odyssey xxii}.\)]

J.26b The Classics—Greek

greek to me Foreign to, not understood by me.
delta The fanning out of a river at its estuary (from the shape of the Greek letter \(\Delta\)).
deltoid muscle The triangular one in the shoulder. (As above.)
iota/jot [1526] Very small amount. ‘Not one iota of difference.’ (From the small size of the iota subscript.)

the Greek kalends Never. (They had no such date.)

Attic—style of writing, wit etc. Refined, pointed, polished, sophisticated. (The Athenians had the reputation of being the most urbane and intellectual of the Greeks. Hence, Attic salt=sophisticated wit, keen and telling.)

soleciism \[<\text{Gk }\sigma\omega\lambda\omega\iota\kappa\iota\sigma\omicron\omicron\omicron\sigma\omicron\zeta]=\text{speaking incorrectly} \] Grammatical or academic fault; hence a breach of etiquette and good manners. (At Soloi, a city of Cilicia, the colonists spoke a very corrupt form of Attic.)

Anacreontic Convivial and erotic (after the poetry of Anacreon, fl. 540 BC).

Cloud-cuckoo-land [a translation of Aristophanes’ word \(\text{Νεφέλοκοκκυγία}\) in \(\text{Birds}\)] A fanciful and unattainable Utopia.

J.26c The Classics—Latin

evolution Creation thought of as a continual development like the unrolling or unfolding of a scroll.
cicerone [1726] Guide, knowledgeable in local antiquities. (From the erudition of the Roman author and orator, Cicero [died 43 BC].)

the arrow of Acestes Rhetoric of fiery vehemence. (Acestes shot his arrow so hard that it caught fire [Vergil, \textit{Aeneid} v.525].)
**J.27a Mathematics—arithmetic**

*add up to*… Mean in plain terms, in the final and simple analysis. ‘It all adds up to the fact that…’.

*sum him up* Give the brief but telling answer or clue to his character. Of a situation, evaluate it succinctly but adequately.

*put two and two together* [1849] Reach a logical conclusion; make a reasonable inference.

*too-too will in two* Friends who are too intimate are sure to quarrel.

*bean-counter* [1975] Person obsessively concerned with compiling (often futile) statistical records.

*certain as the multiplication table*  
*thou’rt reckoning without thi slate* [Lan] Are jumping to conclusions; guessing without having the facts.

*according to Gunter* [Edmund Gunter (1581–1626), eminent mathematician] Strictly correct.

*according to Cocker* [Edward Cocker (1631–75), published a popular arithmetic] Strictly correct.

*cool as Dilworth’s* [Dilworth was the author of a maths textbook which advocated ‘cool’ arithmetic, referring to deliberate and calm reckoning]

*like a nine with the tail cut off* Good for nothing.

*up to the nines* To perfection. (Three times three make nine, a very powerful member.) ‘Dressed up to the nines.’

*astronomical amounts, numbers etc.* Incomprehensibly large, as are most astronomical distances and sizes.

*harder than Chinese arithmetic* [Amer] Usually of a penile erection.

*a piece-of-string question* One to which no proper answer can be given. (‘How long is a piece of string?’)

*a hundred per cent* Entirely, completely—variously.
argue in a (vicious) circle Perpetrate a logical fallacy (like the one of proving one thing by the aid of another which itself depends for proof on the first).

come full circle Return to the starting point—of any recurring series.

fly/go off at a tangent [1771] Be diverted from the original, normal course; abruptly abandon one thing for another.

cusp [point where two curves meet at a common tangent where a moving point following the curve reverses its direction] Place or time of change—‘cusp between primary and secondary education’.

square the circle Attempt the impossible (referring to the inaccuracy of expressing the value of π as a decimal).

square (v) Correspond; be reconciled with. ‘He cannot square his conduct with his principles.’

four-square/square (adj) Honest, fair—‘a square deal’, ‘square play’.

break squares with…[Wxf] Upset a scheme; disturb an arrangement.

break no square(s) Do no harm; make no difference; leave the regularity uninterrupted.

an inch breaks no squares [1555] A little difference ought not to make trouble between good neighbours.

there’s neither end nor side to it/without end or side Abundantly, without limit; much out of shape.

make neither end nor side of…[Cum ne&eYks eLan Lei] Fail to comprehend or make any sense of something.

all ends and sides [nLin] Out of shape; incoherent and ignorant.

draw a parallel between… Compare for similarity.

angle Point of view, personal position. ‘Look at it from this angle!’

ex pede Herculem Inferring the whole from a small part or insignificant clue (as Pythagoras calculated the height of Hercules from an estimate of the size of his foot).

harder than Chinese geometry [Amer] (See also J.27a, harder than Chinese arithmetic.)

sure as eggs is eggs [=‘x=x’, part of the proof in algebraic equations: 1680]

unknown quantity [1676] Person or power whose potential, influence etc., being as yet untested, cannot be assessed.

J.28a Ancient history—Egyptian, Greek

old as history

Pharaonic Tyrannical, high-handed, resulting from absolute power.

hardened as Pharaoh [Cor] Stubborn, inflexible.

…didn’t reign long Of someone soon super-seded, a favourite or a lover.
laconic Terse (from the Spartan [=Laconic] reputation for brevity).

spartan Tough, hardy, without any concessions to easy living. (The Spartan life and regime were organised with the sole aim of producing good soldiers.)

helotism A symbiotic situation where one species serves another (as was the relationship between the Spartans and their helot serfs).

draconian/draconic Harsh, severe, cruel (after the rigorous Athenian code of laws attributed to Draco, archon in 621 BC).

pigmy/pygmy Diminutive, below normal size; a dwarf (recorded by Herodotus and more recently used in reference to tribes of unusually small stature in central Africa).

wise as Solon Athenian poet and statesman (c. 640–560 BC) who introduced masterly reforms to the city’s constitution.

lash the waves Engage in a futile protest. (Xerxes, in frustrated rage that a storm had wrecked his first bridge across the Hellespont, ordered that the sea near Abydos should be punished with 300 lashes [Herodotus vii.35–C5 BC].)

mithridate A medicine or antidote designed to give immunity against possible disease or poisonings. (From King Mithridates VI of Pontus [died c. 63 BC] who made himself immune by a series of small prophylactic doses of poison.) Hence also mithridatize and mithridatism.

philippic Speech consisting of a bitter attack on or denunciation of an opponent. (From the speeches of Demosthenes against King Philip of Macedon when he was threatening the liberty of Athens in the mid-C4 BC.)

J.28b History—Roman

we need no Romulus to account for Rome No dubious legend or concocted reasons are required to explain a straightforward fact.

Rome was not built in a day [1546] A large work takes time to complete. (Often the plea of a slow worker.)

Pyrrhic victory [1602] One where the losses are so heavy as to be tantamount to defeat. (From the exclamation of Pyrrhus after the battle of Aesculon in 279 BC when he defeated the Romans at too high a cost: ‘One more such victory and we are lost’.)

Punic faith [1631] Treachery (the Roman calumny—themselves no better).

expunge [<Lat ex-pungere=prick off/out] (From marking with a prick names for deletion from a list.)

candidate [<Lat candidatus=clothed in a white toga, the traditional robe of those standing for high office in ancient Rome]

Cleopatra’s nose Effect of women on world events (from the saying of Blaise Pascal [1623–66] that if the nose of Cleopatra had been shorter, the whole face of the world would have changed).

Pharsalian [1605] Resulting in a resounding defeat (after the battle of Pharsalus in 48 BC where Caesar defeated Pompey).

dead as Julius Caesar
Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion [1740] Those in high places must be meticulous in behaviour.

cross/pass his/the Rubicon [1626] Make the irrevocable decision (as Julius Caesar did in 49 BC when he invaded the Republic by crossing with his army over the River Rubicon).

give the thumbs-up/-down Indicate whether the outcome is good or bad. (From the signal for mercy or despatch given by the emperor at the end of a contest in the gladiatorial games.)

vandal Destroyer of beauty or of anything valued by others. (From the Germanic tribe of the Vandals who destroyed the beauties of Rome in 455 AD.)

like a beer bottle on the Coliseum [Aus] Out of place, incongruous.

J.28c History—medieval

brave as Fionn MacCumhaill [the leader of an army of Irish warriors—C4]

Byzantine Complex, unforeseeable, complicated and inflexible (from the nature of the politics of the Byzantine Empire).

came in/over with the conqueror [=William I—1066] Of something sadly out of fashion, long outmoded. (Current in 1598.)

go to Canossa Submit after recalcitrance (as did the German king and emperor, Henry IV, to Pope Gregory in 1074).

as daft as Belasye when he swapped Belasye for Henknoll

Johnny tuth’ Bellas daft was thy poll
when thou changed Bellas for Henknoll

[Dur]

Bellasis! Bellasis! daft was thy knowle [=knoll, head]
When thoo swapt Bellasis for Henknoll

[eYks]

(The actual estates have not been traced. There are a few place-names Bellasis or Bellasize in Durham and Northumberland, and it may have been one of them. Halliwell in Popular Rhymes [1849] supposed that Bellasyse had been exchanged for lands but not the manor of Henknoll. J.Wright in the English Dialect Dictionary states that it was an unequal exchange of estates in C15. It could have been earlier.)

Tottenham is turned French [1531] A great change has occurred (from the influx of French labourers into London resulting in race riots on May Day 1517). However, by
1546 the phrase is used in a letter from Norfolk to Cromwell as an example of a very unlikely event.

**study the history of the four kings** Play at cards.

**Sebastianist** Optimist in spite of the evidence (after King Sebastian of Portugal who disappeared after being defeated in Morocco in 1578, but whose subjects retained the belief that he would one day return and lead them to victory).

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**J.28d History—modern**

**cavalier treatment etc.** Free and easy; supercilious; unceremonious, peremptory. (From the reputed character of the C17 Cavaliers.)

- **that caps** [surpasses, beats—nEng] **old Oliver** [Cromwell] **and he capped Long Crown** [Cavaliers, after the height of their hats: Lin] It beats everything. (See also J.63h.)
  - **Bolton quarter** Death without mercy (from the slaughter of 2 May 1644 [Lan]).
  - **one of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about a bit!** A jocular comment on the appearance of an elderly person suggesting a life of hard knocks.
  - **Cromwellian solutions** Drastic and overriding actions that flout accepted procedures, as when Oliver Cromwell forcibly dissolved Parliament on 20 April 1653 and had the mace removed with the command ‘Take away that bauble’.
  - **long o’ coming, like Royal Charlie** [the Pretender: nIre]
  - **Wellington roundheads** Violent fanatics. (Nonconformists from this village near Taunton, Somerset, supported Monmouth in 1685.)
  - **Queen Anne is dead** [1714] That is old news [1722].
  - **cherry-trees/cherry-tree class** HMS *Rodney* and *Nelson* [1930+], so-called because their tonnage was reputed to have been ‘cut down’ by (the Treaty of) Washington. (Young George Washington, legendary teller of the truth, owned up to felling a cherry-tree—around 1748.)
  - **après nous le déluge** [Mme de Pompadour, Letter—5 November 1757] It is no use bothering about future generations who must cope with the results of our actions.
  - **Grangerize a book** Add to it with illustrations, cuttings etc. (In 1769 James Granger published a book of English history interleaved with pages left blank for pictures etc.)
  - **Madame Defarge** Type of ticket inspector, often a West Indian on the London Underground, notorious for detecting ticket irregularities. (The name of one of the hard-hearted old women who sat at the foot of the guillotine, knitting.)
  - **chauvinism** Uncritical, enthusiastic patriotism. (In the days of the First Republic and Empire, Nicolas Chauvin was a veteran soldier and infatuated admirer of Napoleon.)
  - **marra/marrow** [mate, match—Lakel Yks] to Bonny A match for Bonaparte, one equally bad.
  - **dictate** Make inevitable, determine. ‘The shape of the plot dictated the plan of the building.’ (From the use of dictate as in dictator [= command with absolute authority].)
  - **living 100 years before we were born** [Ire: Martha Wilmot, Letter—19 July 1827] Living in old-fashioned, primitive conditions.
J.29 Geography

at the Antipodes to... Directly opposite to, quite different from.

meander Wander about (like the river of that name in Asia Minor, a very serpentine stream).

map out Set down in order, for instruction. ‘I have mapped out the order of service for you.’

off the map Of no account or significance; obsolete.

on the map Up to date; of some importance; to be reckoned with.

put on the map Bring into public notice, give publicity to.

bench-mark (n) Criterion, authority. Of books, established facts etc. A standard from which other calculations may be made (the benchmark being the ordnance surveyor’s altitude mark chiselled on a rock or building stone, from which other levels could be reliably calculated).

bench-mark (v) [Amer] Monitor a rival’s product so as to keep yours better.

a figure like Mercator’s projection An unflattering comparison.

map of Tasmania [Aus] A woman’s pubic area (from a similarity of outline).

gerrymander Wilfully rearrange electoral districts so as to give your party disproportionate representation in an election. (From Governor Gerry of Massachusetts who did this in 1812. The map of his reorganised districts hung in the editorial office of the Boston Continent and when an artist saw it he added head, wings and claws, saying ‘That will do for a salamander.’ ‘Gerrymander!’ replied the editor.)

throw a map [Aus] Spew up (from the apparent jumble of colours).

J.30a Science—biology

use someone as a guinea-pig Try out something new on him (as medical researchers try out new drugs etc. on guinea-pigs and other animals).

split hairs [1692] Be over-finical, fussy, draw over-subtle or hypercritical distinctions. Hence:

hair-splitting Over-subtlety.

examine under a powerful lens Subject to close scrutiny.

fame is a magnifying glass (It makes things seem bigger than they are.)

burning-glass Intensifier, concentrator.

the birds and bees Euphemism for the facts of life, especially of sex.

chemistry Inexplicable element of sexual attraction, analogous to the power of pheromones in bringing certain insects together for mating.

botanical excursion [Aus 1810–70] Transportation to Botany Bay [convict settlement].
J.30b Science—physics and astronomy

telescope (v) Become/make shorter—often of crashed railway carriages; also of the contraction of time in cinematic or dramatic techniques.

find an elephant on the moon Attach importance to a discovery that turns out to be foolish. (From a story about Sir Paul Neal [C16], who thought that the mouse in his telescope was an elephant on the moon.)

Old Newton got him [1925+RAF] Was killed in a plane crash. [Sir Isaac Newton, 1642–1717, formulated a theory of gravity]

centre of gravity Object or area of greatest influence. ‘At the centre of political gravity.’

frame of reference Set of basic beliefs or assumptions to which new experiences and evidence can be referred.

generate more heat than light Inflame tempers rather than give information.

J.30c Science—chemistry

crystallize Of ideas etc. that assume a definite, concrete form after being inchoate, undefined, floating or vague.

white as arsenic

spin off into/to... Be diverted to further, higher or related subjects through the impetus imparted by the first one, as if by centrifugal force.

spin-off Something additional that derives from another action; indirect benefit. (As from separating chemicals by centrifugal force when some further product is obtained as a by-product of the process.)

filter (v) [1990s] Select or display particular records of a computer record-set according to specified criteria.

infiltrate Surreptitiously and insidiously penetrate an opponent’s (military, political etc.) position with small numbers of your own forces.

litmus-test Indication, crucial decider.

catalyst Person or event whose arrival, presence or occurrence automatically initiates a change or creative process.

J.30d Science—archaeology and anthropology

old as man/the age of stone
caveman Crude, primitive, sexually masterful and rough-mannered man; the type of Stone Age man caricatured by cartoonists as dragging along their womenfolk by the hair.

troglodyte \(<\text{Gk } \tau\rho\omicron\varphi\gamma\omicron\lambda\nu\tau\omicron\nu\beta\iota\omicron\nu\alpha\nu{\text{= hole}}+\delta\omicron\omicron\epsilon\omicron\nu{\text{= go into}}\)\) Hermit, solitary; slum-dweller.

come to light Be discovered; come to public notice after being hidden or unnoticed.

dry as a mummy

Rosetta stone A revelation, discovery, major breakthrough in some recalcitrant field of research (as was the decipherment by Cham pollion in 1822 of the two stubborn thirds of its inscription).

**J.30e Science—museums**

museum piece Someone or something suitable for exhibition as an example of an outstanding quality or defect. Often in derogatory reference to their antiquity.

showcase (n and v) Place or occasion used for the prime purpose of displaying goods or services to advantage.

**J.31 Philosophy**

stoical Tolerant of pain and/or harsh conditions; enduring such with fortitude (as was the reputation of the ancient Greek philosophers, the Stoics).

lantern of Diogenes Futile and infuriating investigation; sarcastic enquiry. (He was reputed to have walked the streets of Athens with a lantern in broad daylight in his search for an honest man.)

epicurean Devoted to good food and drink (after the philosopher, Epicurus).

utopian Visionary, perfect, but in the future. (After Sir Thomas More’s book, *Utopia* [1516] describing a social and political paradise.)

free/quick/rapid/swift as thought [1225] It is interesting that Roget rejected this simile as incorrect on the grounds that all movement, whether slow or swift, must pass through all intermediate points and remain strictly successive. So far so good, but we are so used to describing our thought processes metaphorically as in ‘Her thoughts reverted to, passed over, flew to, dwelt on, concentrated on, flitted over etc.’, that this phrase is no more than an extension of the way in which we are accustomed to think of thought.

in the last analysis When the final reckoning or reasoning is made.

good/straight as truth

c conscience \(<\text{Lat } con-scientia}=knowledge with, sharing of knowledge\)
J.32 At university

on short commons Only getting meagre meals (as served to college students at the common table).

pay your dues [either college or union fees] Fulfil your obligations, variously; deserve good fortune for past service [Amer].

nonplussed Unable to proceed. (In medieval debates, a disputant with no further argument had to say ‘non plus’ [<Lat non plus=no more].)

knock/knuckle/strike [Edb] under Admit defeat. (From the old custom of admitting defeat in verbal dispute by rapping underneath the table.)

screwed up Defeated utterly. (From the C19C20 practice among undergraduates of screwing up a fellow student’s door as a gesture of disapproval.)

wooden spoon The lowest place in a competition. (From the spoon presented by custom to the last of the Junior Optimes at Cambridge.)

tuft-hunter One who seeks aristocratic society. (With reference to the tuft that formerly distinguished titled undergraduates.)

read a lecture to… Admonish, reprove,

J.33 God

as false as God is true

as true as God is in heaven [1475]

as sure/true as God is in Glostershire [1655]/ in the orchard (There were many monks in Gloucestshire.)

as sure as God made little apples/rain [Lin]

older than God [Amer]

not God above gets all men’s love [1616] No one can expect unanimous support; no one can expect to be without some enemies.

he has a gift that God never gave him He is a liar.

Godsend Most valuable, timely gift; piece of good fortune (as if sent straight from God).

like the wrath of God Fearfully, powerfully. ‘Look like the wrath of God’=look ill (as if struck down by God’s anger).

J.34a The Bible

bible (n) The accepted authority in any field.
bible (n) [naut] Small holystone for cleaning decks (because the sailors knelt while using them).

I’d rather be your bible than your horse [Ariz] (Because I should have a quieter life.)

bible-tripe The third stomach of a ruminating animal (from the parallel layers like pages in a book).

Tijuana bible [Amer] A pornographic book. (Tijuana, on the Mexican side of the border, was notorious for sexual licence.)

chapter and verse The precise reference for a statement or quotation.

bible-banger/-pounder/-pusher/-thumper Clergyman or religious fanatic with ranting style of delivery.

biblical neckline [Aus] Décolleté fashion (from the biblical phrase ‘lo(w) and behold’).

J.34b Genesis

take place Materialise, happen—usually now of events and occurrences. (From the way in which at their creation all beings occupied their own place and space in the universe.)

as old as Adam [Gen ii]/Creation/Eve/the serpent
rib [Gen ii.22] Wife [Sc nEng].
first lady [Amer] Lunch order for spare ribs.
the Old Serpent/Dragon/Great Dragon Satan, sin.
Adam’s apple [Gen iii] Lump in the throat; the thyroid cartilage.
not know him from Adam [1844] Be completely unacquainted with him.
the old Adam The sinful part of human nature.
Adamless Eden [1883] Ideal society from which men are excluded.
fig-leaf [Gen iii.7] Device for concealing what is indecorous; flimsy disguise.
Adam and Eve on a raft Two fried eggs on toast.
false as mankind [Cor]
the mark of Cain [Gen iv.15:1924] Sign or visible evidence of our inherited sin; stigma of murder. (And yet the mark that God set on Cain was to prevent anyone finding him from killing him. God had already given, and Cain had accepted, his punishment of vagabondage.)

as old as Methuselah [1620]/Methusalem (a common corruption) According to the Bible, Methuselah lived for 969 years [Gen v.27].
methuselah A large wine bottle (which could be expected to outlast lesser vessels).
antediluvian Antiquated, primitive, from the extremely remote past.
Noah’s ark [Nhp] A certain shape of cloud, ‘long and dark, broad in the centre and tapering at both ends…’, and supposed to portend great floods’ [J.Clare, The Woodman—1819].

as old as the ark [Gen vi]/the flood [1586]
in the ark In ancient times. ‘This must have come out of the ark!’ Of stale food.
corbie [raven] messenger [Gen viii.7: c.1300] One who does not perform their errand.  
old as Abraham’s mother [1450]  
salt as Lot’s wife’s backbone [Gen xix.26]  
a place for Abraham to bury his wife [Gen xxiii] A small cavity [Dev].  
mess of pottage [Esau gave Jacob his birthright in exchange for a stew of red pottage of lentils when faint with hunger—Gen xxv.29; the phrase occurred as a chapter heading in a bible of 1537] Material gain for which something higher is sacrificed. (Nowadays our birthright is whatever measure of freedom we can exercise in the country of our birth, and this is what drug-addicts sacrifice when we make ourselves slaves to a drug, be it hard, soft, alcohol, tobacco or whatever. We sell our birthright for a mess of pot—for the gratification of the senses, and are free no longer.)  
Esau One who prefers present advantage to future and permanent rights. (From the above.)  
Jacob’s ladder [Gen xxviii] Plant with blue or white flowers and leaves suggesting a ladder; a defect in knitting due to a dropped stitch; a rent in stockings or (especially ballet-)tights that leaves only woof threads; a shaft of the sun’s rays through a cloud-rift; a rope ladder with wooden rungs, especially one swung from a ship’s boom to the water.  
onanism Male self-masturbation. (From the action of Onan who ’spilled his seed on the ground” [Gen xxxviii.9].)  
corn in Egypt [Gen xlii.1–2] Something in short supply, but still available; an isolated pocket of plenty; a good supply if you only knew where to obtain it.  
Benjamin’s mess [Gen xliii] An excess, the lion’s share. (Joseph sent his brother a generous share, five times more than the others.)

J.34c Exodus

as sure as God made Moses [Exod ii]  
like the story of Pharaoh’s daughter [who found Moses in the basket of rushes—Exod ii] Casting doubt on an explanation that is difficult to believe and which—it is suggested—has a likelier but less acceptable alternative [Aus].  
Moses basket Basket for carrying a baby.  
make bricks without straw [Exod v.7:1658] Produce something without having the materials; attempt a hopeless task.  
Aaron’s serpent [Exod vii.10–12] A force so powerful as to eliminate minor powers.  
manna (in the wilderness) [Exod xvi.14] Merciful, marvellous source of sustenance and maintenance; spiritual sustenance; unexpected windfall; stroke of luck.  
not carved in stone Not a permanent authority; capable of adjustment.  
worship the golden calf [Exod xxxii] Value money above everything.  
go a-whoring after strange gods [Exod xxxiv.15] Commit idolatry [=infidelity to God]. (From one of the favourite images of the gloomiest of OT prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.)
J.34d Leviticus

scapegoat [Lev xvi.20–22] Victim who receives the blame for others’ guilt (a concept of the ancient Jews). scapegoating is now used to describe the persecution of weaker people or groups under the compulsion of psychological illness.

Molech/Moloch [the god of the Ammonites to whom children were burnt in sacrifice—Lev xviii.21] Any force that requires the sacrifice of what we hold most dear. [See also I Kings xi.7, II Kings xxiii.10 and Jeremiah xxxii.35]

J.34e Numbers

meek as Moses [Num xii: Dor]

Balaam’s ass Someone whose warnings go unheeded. (From the account in Numbers xxii about how his ass could see—what Balaam could not—the avenging angel waiting to kill him and, refusing to pass, was beaten for her pains.)

J.34f Deuteronomy

Pisgah [the mountain from whose summit Moses was permitted to overlook the promised land without being allowed to cross Jordan into it—Deut iii.27:1650] Point or stage from which you can first descry the possibility of realising the future for which you have been working; distant vision of promise. Pisgah sight [1646]=distant glimpse with no prospect of closer approach.

J.34g Joshua

old as Jericho [Joshua ii.1]

go/send/wish to Jericho [1635] Go off/dismiss to a distant place where you will not be in our way!

at Jericho [nwLin] A long way off (the further the better!).

milk and honey [Joshua v.6] Abundance of the good things of life—‘…a land that floweth with milke and honie.’
J.34h Judges

the stars in their courses [Judges v.20] Fate, destiny.

shibboleth [Judges xii: 1930] Watchword of a party, now in the pejorative sense of being outdated and superstitious (from the account of how Jephtha used it as a test-word by which his own Gileadites could be distinguished from the fleeing Ephraimites who could not pronounce the ‘sh’).

there is more of Samson than Solomon in him [Judges xiv: 1830] His strength lies in brawn more than brain.

plow with another’s heifer [Judges xiv.18:1560] Achieve something only through his help.

smite hip and thigh [Judges xv.8] Unsparingly, overwhelmingly.


there’s no leaping from Delilah’s lap into Abraham’s bosom [Wis]

from Dan to Beersheba [Judges xx.1] From one end (of the land) to the other; over the whole extent.

J.34i Samuel

David and Jonathan [I Samuel xx.17; II Samuel i.26] Inseparable friends.

Saul among the prophets [I Samuel xx.24] Person in an unexpected character.

cave of Adullam [I Samuel xxii.1–2] Refuge for malcontents, debtors and other persecuted people. Hence, Adullamite=a political dissident; cave (n)=a dissident political group.

abigail Serving woman, lady’s maid (after the character in Beaumont and Fletcher’s The Scornful Lady [c.1609], and originally deriving from the biblical scene where Abigail introduces herself to David with ‘heare the words of thy handmayden’ [I Samuel xxv.24].

tell it not in Gath [II Samuel i.20] Don’t let ill-wishers hear it; this must go no further.

mighty in Gath [chief city of the Philistines] An uncultured person, lower than low-brow.

prevail against Gath Make a gain for culture against philistinism. (As/from the above.)

fair as Absolon [1200: see II Samuel xiv.25]
J.34j Kings

wise as Solomon [I Kings iii.9]

a judgement of Solomon [I Kings iii.16–28] A verdict that is both shrewd and just, may be unconventional but makes the punishment fit the crime.

sit under my vine and fig-tree [I Kings iv.25] Be safe at home, after the years of wandering, a settled home.

proud as the Queen of Sheba [I Kings x; II Chron ix]

jeroboam [a mighty man of valour—I Kings xi.28] A wine bottle, up to twelve times the usual size.

rehoboam [the son of Solomon—I Kings xi.43] A large wine bottle (=twice a jeroboam).

a lash/scourge of scorpions [I Kings xii.11] An exceptionally severe punishment.

widow’s cruse [I Kings xvii.12] Supply that continues long after it could have been reasonably supposed to be exhausted.

a cloud no bigger than a man’s hand [I Kings xviii.44] Small foreboding of great trouble.

Naboth’s vineyard [I Kings xxi; II Kings ix: 1679] Coveted possession of another.

Jezebel [I Kings xxi; II Kings ix] Bold, immoral, painted woman; treacherously instigating; painted.

his mantle has fallen on…[II Kings ii.13:1789] His task and powers have devolved upon…(as when Elisha received Elijah’s mantle and was acknowledged his successor).

bow down in the house of Rimmon [minor Damascan deity—II Kings v.18] Compromise your convictions.

turn your face to the wall [II Kings xx.2; Isa xxxviii.2] Resign yourself to death.

proud as Hezekiah [who displayed all his possessions—II Kings xx.13: Sc]

J.34k Nehemiah

it’s as hard reading as the names in the tenth chapter of Nehemiah, and they gave many a body a sweat [sLan]

J.34l Esther

sackcloth and ashes [Esther iv.1] The assumed and outward signs of inward grief and penitence.

hang as high as Haman [Esther vii.9] Fifty cubits high.
J.34m Job

as poor as Job [Job i: c. 1390]
the patience of Job [1509] A superhuman patience and endurance of personal tragedy. ‘It would try the patience of Job!’
a Job’s comforter [Job ii] One whose consolations increase distress.
as the sparks fly upwards [Job v.7] With the certainty of a natural law (sc. man is born to trouble).
by the skin of your teeth Only just, barely. ‘…only there is left me the skynne about my teth’ [Job xix.20–1535].
avove rubies [wisdom so described—Job xxviii.18; Proverbs xxxi.10] Of incalculable value.

J.34n Psalms

flourish like a green bay-tree [Psalm xxxvii.35] Prosper exceedingly, beyond what is deserved. ‘I my self have sene the ungodly…florishinge like a grene baye tre’ [Coverdale 1535].
deaf as an adder ‘…even like the deaf adder that stoppeth her eares’ [Psalm lviii.4–1535].
hang harps on willows [1431] When sorrow eclipses any merriment. ‘We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof’ [Psalm cxxxvii.2].

J.34o Proverbs

lion in the way/path [1543] Terrifying obstacle [Proverbs xxvi.13].
daughter of the horse-leech [1560] A very greedy, importunate person. As in Proverbs xxx.15, ‘This generacion (which is like an horsleche) hath two doughters: ye one is called, fetch hither: the other, brynge hither’ [1535].
J.34p Ecclesiastes

better a living/quick dog than a dead lion [Eccles ix.4: C16]

a fly in the ointment [1833] Annoyance, disadvantage which, though trivial, nevertheless spoils the enjoyment of the whole [Eccles x.1].

cast your bread upon the waters [Eccles xi.1] Do something of no immediate advantage in the hope of a possible benefit in the future; retain hope in the future in the face of present indications to the contrary. (Probably referring to the sowing of rice on the flood waters of the Nile, and seeing it grow after many days.)

J.34q Isaiah

beat your swords into plowshares Turn from destruction to construction, renounce war, put all hostilities behind you [Isa ii.4; Micah iv.3].

grind the faces of the poor Oppress them [Isa iii.15].

seraphic [Isa vi] Angelic; ecstatic in adoration.

give Jesse Beat severely [Amer] (probably a jocular reference to the ‘rod out of the stem of Jesse’ [Isa xi.1]).

smoky as Tophet [Dor] Place in Hebrew mythology, the type of hell, where humans were burnt in sacrifice [see Isa xxx.27–33].

sure as Tophet/Tunket [Maine NH NY] (See above.)

like a lamb to the slaughter [Isa xliii.7:1400] Neither protesting nor resisting.

J.34r Jeremiah

jeremiah One who laments excessively, complainer.

jeremiad Woeful tale (as were the lamentations of Jeremiah).

is there no balm in Gilead? [Jer viii.22] Why have the things that ought to have been done not been done? (‘Balm in Gilead’ is something that ought to be there, but is not.)

the Ethiopian’s skin [Jer xiii.23] The epitome of what cannot be changed.

can the leopard change his spots? [Jer xiii.23:1546] Inherited character persists, and immutably so.

the same animal with different spots Cynical comment on a pretended reformation.
J.34s Daniel

Daniel [who is shown to be a wise interpreter of dreams and visions] An upright, discerning judge.

feet of clay [Daniel ii.33] Unsound basis; evidence that someone is more commonplace than they pretend.

balthazar; nebuchadnezzar [Daniel v.1] Very large wine bottles. (Referring to Belshazzar, the king who ‘drank wine before the thousand’.)

writing on the wall [Daniel v: 1720] Warning information; ominously significant occurrence; hint that is plain enough to anyone not wilfully blind.

weighed in the balance and found wanting [Daniel v] Tested and found unsatisfactory.


J.34t Hosea

sow the wind and reap the whirlwind [1583] Suffer the consequences of reckless folly or wickedness; one evil leads to a worse; bring about tumult and destruction [Hosea viii.7].

J.34u Joel

locust-years [Joel ii.25] Times of poverty and hunger; hard times.

locust (n) Person destructive and voracious for consumer goods.

J.34v Amos

a brand plucked out of/snatched from the burning/the fire [Amos iv.11; Zech iii.2:1382] One rescued from imminent danger; a convert.
J.34w Jonah

Jonah [Jonah i] Passenger who brings bad luck with him.

J.34x Apocrypha

apocryphal Of doubtful authority (from the name given to fourteen books admitted by Roman Catholics to the OT, but of dubious authenticity).

he that touches pitch shall be defiled therewith [Ecclesiasticus xiii.1: c.1300] You cannot keep bad company without suffering some corruption; of contamination generally.

J.35a The Gospels

as true as the gospel [C14]/holy writ; gospeltruth
take for gospel Accept as true beyond question.
gospel (n) Guiding principle, main theme. Always pleading the gospel of hard work.’
rob Peter to pay Paul [c.1380] Transfer money or property unnecessarily, ownership being of no consequence; clear one debt by incurring another. (There was also the case, in 1540, of St Peter’s Westminster being made a cathedral, but when this was annulled ten years later, and the diocese of Westminster was reunited with St Paul’s, its revenues went to repair St Paul’s.)
tickle the peter [till, safe, money-box—Aus NZ] Embezzle, steal—often of servants from their employer. (Probably from the above.)

J.35b Matthew

a voice (crying) in the wilderness [Matt iii] Unheeded message or prophet; lone individual with an unpopular warning or prophecy; unregarded advocate of new idea, reform etc.
out/wandering in the wilderness [1930] A party politician out of favour, someone discredited by their group or organisation. (As/from the above.)
in a political wilderness Out of favour with those in power. (As above.)
hide your light under a bushel [Matt v.15] Waste talents by misuse, disuse or concealment. (The Greek μοδίως—a dry measure of about two gallons, is the word translated as 'bushel', Wyclif [1382] being the first so to render it in English.)

turn the other cheek [Matt v.39] Counter violence with submission, refuse to retaliate (as Jesus taught).


serve two masters [Matt vi.24] Try to reconcile two conflicting demands.

beam in your own eye [Matt vii.3] Larger unrecognised, or unadmitted, fault.

mote in another's eye Very slight fault compared with your own. (As/from the above.)

cast pearls before swine [Matt vii.6:1362] Waste valuable gifts or services where they are not appreciated.

of a thorn tree there springs not a grape or fig Of inherited characteristics. (From 'Do men gaddre grapes of thornes? or figges of bryres?' [Matt vii.16:1537].)

a good tree brings forth good fruit ‘Even soo every good tree bryngeth forthe good frute’ [Matt vii.17]. Worth is seen in works.

house built on a rock [Matt vii.25] Person or institution with a reliable, secure base or background.

build on sand [Matt vii.26:1548–9] Depend on unreliable support. ‘A house built on sand’ would describe an unstable nation or society.


like a man possessed [Matt viii.28] Like a maniac; with furious energy (from the man possessed of a devil).

what possessed him to…? Said when a man acts quite out of character. (As/from the above.)

a new patch on old clothes [Matt ix.16] Describing the incongruity of an association between new and old, or young and old.

new wine in old bottles [Matt ix.17] A new principle too strong to be contained by the old forms.

serpentine wisdom [Matt x.16] Cunning, worldly, devious. ‘Be ye therfore wyse as serpentes, and innocent as doves.’

innocent as a dove [1580] (As/from the above.)

two a penny [Matt x.29] Expendable (like sparrows at two a farthing).

no longer pipe no longer dance [Matt xi.17:1620] Of those who are kind only while getting benefits; their good-will ends when your help ceases.

sow the good seed Preach the Gospel (from Christ’s parable of the sower [Matt xiii.3]).

grain of mustard seed [Matt xiii.31] Small thing capable of vast development.

a pearl of great price [Matt xiii.45–6] Someone or something that is highly valued, coveted, cherished.

move/remove mountains [Matt xvii.20; I Cor xiii.2—note that both these verses refer to what may be achieved by faith] Tackle great labours however daunting; make supreme effort; work miracles.

a millstone round your neck [Matt xviii.6:1787] An insupportable burden.

at the eleventh hour [Matt xx.6] At the latest possible time.
bear the burden and heat of the day Have the worst of a job. (From the parable of the labourers in the vineyard ‘which have born the burden and heat of the daye’ [Matt xx.12].)

all labourers in the vineyard Members of the same organisation and therefore owing a common loyalty to it, in spite of differences in status, income etc.

many are called but few are chosen Many want to, but only a few will be able to. (From the parable of the wedding guests where ‘many are called and feawe be chosen’ [Matt xxii.14].)

strain at a gnat and swallow a camel [Matt xxiii.24: c.1200] Be scrupulous over trifles and overlook what is far worse. (From straining wine and other liquids, as is shown by Tyndale’s original version ‘strayne out a gnat’ [1525].)

swallow a camel Surprisingly make no trouble about an impossible or outrageous difficulty. (As/from the above.)

clean the outside of the platter [Matt xxiii.25] Pretend to do what is necessary while merely doing as much as will be obvious, as Jesus rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees for doing.

painted/whited/whitewashed sepulchre [Matt xxiii.27] A hypocrite; one whose fair exterior conceals inward corruption.

there will the eagles be gathered together [Matt xxiv.28] You will know the cause by its effects, the hidden by its obvious manifestation. ‘For wheresoever a deed karkas is, even thyther will the egles resorte.’

talent [=Gk τάλαντον=fixed weight of money] Gets its present meaning from the parable of the talents [Matt xxv.14].

this cup pass from…[Matt xxvi.39] Be spared this trouble, affliction (from Christ’s agony in the garden).

a Judas kiss [Matt xxvi.48] A great falsehood, betrayal.

kiss of death [1948] An outwardly kind, well-intentioned action but which brings disastrous consequences. (As/from the above.)

a Judas goat An animal used to entice others to be shot or captured, a decoy. (See above.)

resurrect [Matt xxviii] Revive something forgotten or defunct.

J.35c Mark

not worthy to loose the latchet of shoes [Mark i.7] Most unworthy, far inferior.

rob Jesus Christ of his shoe-strings [nYks War] Be unscrupulously grasping.

fall by the wayside [1965] Succumb to conditions, competition etc.; fail to stay the course.

And it fortuned as he sowed, that some fell by the waye syde, and the fowles of the ayre came and devoured it up.

[Mark iv.4:1525]
fall on stony ground [Mark iv.5] Be ill-received; find no sympathy.
widow’s mite [Mark xii.42] A small contribution, but the most you can afford.

J.35d Luke

light as St Luke’s bird Ironical (St Luke’s symbol being an ox).
physician, heal thyself! [Luke iv.23] A rebuke to one offering criticism to which he is himself subject. (This was already a proverb when Jesus Christ used it.)
blind leading the blind [Luke vi.39:1450] The process of drawing a shoemaker’s thread through to its place with another thread [Wm nYks].
lay/put/set your hand to the plow [Luke ix.62] Once you have undertaken a task or started on a course of life or conduct, continue without hesitation. ‘No man that putteth his honde to the plowe, and loketh back, is apte to the kyngdome of God.’
pass by on the other side [Luke x.31] Without help or sympathy (from the parable of the Good Samaritan).
look the other way Studiously avoid noticing something likely to prove awkward. (As above.)
walk away from… Renounce; refuse to deal with; shirk a responsibility. (As above.)
a Good Samaritan One who helps a neighbour or stranger in trouble. (From the above.)
Martha and Mary [Luke x.38–42] The types, respectively, of a practical woman who works hard serving others, usually in the home, and by contrast of a woman of an intellectual or spiritual nature, who seeks higher things.
poor as Lazarus [Luke xvi]
lay up in a napkin [Luke xix.20] Neglect to use; store carefully—and then forget it. ‘Beholde here thy pounde, which I have kepte in a napkyn.’ Also, hide talents in a napkin.
for if they do this in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? [Luke xxiii.31] If this happens in easy times, what will be done under pressure? So ‘in the green tree’ refers to conditions involving no pressure or hardship.

J.35e John

the stirring of the waters [John v.2] The moment of opportunity. (From the account of the miracle performed by Jesus Christ at Bethesda’s Pool.)
with an eye to the loaves and the fishes [John vi.26:1614] Thinking mainly of the material advantages, especially with reference to the emoluments of a clerical profession.
cast/throw the first stone [John viii.7:1568] Take the lead in fault-finding; start an argument [Nhp].

J.35f Acts of the Apostles

kick against the pricks [1382] Be impatient with petty annoyances [Acts ix.5].
great is Diana of the Ephesians [Acts xix.24] Self-interest blinds the understanding. (This slogan was the reaction of the silver-smiths of Ephesus to the gospel preached by St Paul about a god for whom no silver shrines would be required.)
gamaliel [the Rabbi who was Paul’s teacher—Acts xxii.3] Pedant; very learned man.
gamaliel issue = a purely academic issue.
appeal to Caesar [Acts xxv.11] Appeal to the ultimate authority (as Paul did).

J.35g Epistles

leaven the lump Add a tempering element, a tinge or admixture of some quality that permeates the whole—and, according to Paul [I Cor v.6–8], for the worse.
muzzle not the ox [I Cor ix.9] ‘Thou shalt not mosell the mouthe of the oxe that treadeth out the corne’ [Tyndale: 1525]. Do not deny a labourer a share of the produce—his ‘perks’.
heap coals of fire on his head [Rom xii.20] Produce remorse by returning good for evil. In its extreme form this expression of ‘Christian’ revenge will inflict nauseatingly sanctimonious bouts of forgiveness on its victim.

J.35h Revelations

Laodicean [Rev iii.14–16] Someone of small commitment, especially in religion and politics.
the mark of the beast [Rev xvi.2; xix.20] Signs of iniquity, heresy etc.
scarlet woman Immoral woman, prostitute; the Church of Rome [a Protestant interpretation of Rev xvii.1–6].
J.36 Christianity

**Jesus nut** The one that holds the main blade on a helicopter [RN] (being the only one that can save us).

**Jesus factor** Safety-margin which it is hoped will avail in an unforeseeable emergency. (As above.)

**creeping Jesus** The type of pious humility, coupled with obnoxious evangelism.

**cross** Personal affliction. ‘Everyone must bear his own cross’ (like the man to be crucified who had to carry his own cross).

**no cross, no crown** Nothing is achieved without pain, effort, trouble.

**crucify/excruciate** Torture, generally; give extreme (mental) pain (as death by crucifixion must have done).

**nail...to the cross/wall** [Amer] Make a public example of someone.

**icon** Small picture or symbol on computer screen through which a program or application may be approached [1982]; person or institution of popular veneration.

**bleeding heart** [Amer] Soft touch; over-sympathetic, gullible person (from religious paintings depicting the bleeding heart of Jesus).

**cunning** [sensible—Lei]/[faus]e [clever, shrewd, precocious—NCy]/[wise] [Nhb] as a Christian Often of a dog, horse or other intelligent animal. (Christian=human being, as the animal is also observed to bear malice, grow old etc.)

**mean as a Christian** [Jewish]

**firm as Hodge wife** [nLan] (She is said to have been confirmed several times by the bishop.)

**greedy as the godless** (As they say no grace before meals.)

**get/make the best of both worlds** Benefit from two vastly different realms; reconcile secular and religious interests. (It was formerly thought that life could be divided between worldly and religious activities—‘the two worlds’.)

**death-bed repentance** Change of policy made too late to be of either use or credit.

**Gabriel’s hounds/gabbleratchets** [Wm wYks] Wild geese in flight. (By legend they are the souls of unbaptised children wandering through the skies till the Day of Judgement. ‘Gabrielle rache camalion’ [Catholicon Anglicum—Z1483]. Also cf. ratche/ratch=hound OE ræcc=a dog that hunts by scent].)

J.37 Charity

**cold as charity**

**steal a goose and give the giblets in alms** [1659] A derisory penance; the petty charity of a wealthy but unscrupulous trader.

**steal a hog and give the feet in alms** [1609] (As above.)

**steal a sheep and give away the trotters for God’s sake** (As above.)
J.38 Sin and penance

black/clever/foul/gripple [greedy, miserly—Sc nEng]/ugly as sin [1666]
work/hate etc. like sin Hard, intensely, vehemently.
far be it from me to…but… A formula used by those who disclaim any wish to do or say what, in effect, they promptly perform—often with relish.
wouldn’t put it past [Ire 1870]/beyond him to (do something outrageous)
covers a multitude of sins Of an all-embracing term, phrase or definition.
have a lot to answer for Be responsible for many errors; have caused much hardship, injustice etc.
stand in white sheets [C17] Make public apology. (From the old custom of sinners doing public penance by standing in the church swathed in white sheets.)
stool of repentance Conspicuous position where someone is censured. (In Scottish churches one was placed in front of the pulpit so that offenders against church law could be publicly rebuked.)
get the dud [ragged clothing—Sc] and sacken gown [Bch] Do penance.
mortified [C18] Humiliated; filled with remorse. (From the Christian discipline of becoming dead to sin by mortifying the pleasures of the flesh.)

J.39 Church history

she has a chip of Bede’s chair in her purse Of a bride who soon has her baby.
merry as Pope Joan [Occurs in E.Spenser, FQ II.vi.3–1590]

J.40a Martyrs and pilgrims

a martyr to—rheumatism, conscience, a husband’s temper etc. Someone who accepts the suffering attendant on such ills.
saint (n) A piece of wood in a coach-builder’s workshop, spoilt and therefore consigned to the flames.
only fit to wear a steeple-crowned hat Mad; godless; heretical; blasphemer. (Convicts of the Inquisition had to wear them.)
lazy as Lawrence (Supposedly from his martyrdom when, being roasted over a slow fire, he asked to be turned, as he was ‘done on that side’. Also, St Lawrence’s Day, 10 August, often coincides with a time of enervating heat.)
Lawrence [1907] Heat shimmer seen over roads in hot weather.
carries/has Lawrence on his back/Lawrence has hold of him [Yks Lan Chs Nrf Shr sPem Nhp Glo Som Ken Sus Hmp IW Dor Dev Cor] Lolls, loiters.
Lawrence is about today [Dor] It is a day for being lazy.
I wouldn’t go to the stake for…ferring to a dubious truth, cause etc.
pilgrimage Our life on earth, conceived as a journey with a holy destination.
canter An easy gallop (originally=the ‘Canterbury pace’, from the ambling gait adopted by pilgrims riding to the shrine of St Thomas à Becket).
plain as a pikestaff [the long stick carried by pilgrims from the C14 and on which was fastened a statement of their devotion to Christ: 1542] (See also A.7a, plain as a packstaff)

J.40b Saints

effective to try the patience of a saint/make a saint swear [c.1560]
enshrine Reverently preserve someone’s memory; give moral authority to; ‘enshrined in our hearts’.
such saint, such shrine The state of the place reflects the nature of the occupant.
the saint who works no miracles has few pilgrims People pay respect only where they stand to gain something for themselves.

enough to vex a saint in a stone wall [eYks]
plaster saint Someone possessing neither fault nor failing.
carve yourself a niche in… Create for yourself a humble but secure position or job to settle in. ‘A niche in the temple of fame’=a claim to be remembered by posterity.

niches The immediate environment in which a particular animal, plant etc. can thrive. (From the above.) Hence, niche-marketing, where advertising is exclusively directed at the group most likely to respond.

they are not all saints that use holy water Pious ways are no proof of true saintliness.

die in the odour of sanctity [a balsamic fragrance which the body of a holy one gives off instead of the stink of corruption] Die with a good reputation.

Barbara and her barns [=bairns—Yks] A particular formation of clouds in the west denoting stormy weather. (St Barbara’s father was about to strike off her head when lightning laid him dead at her feet. Thenceforth she has been invoked in thunderstorms.)
born at Bardney [Lin] Said of those who fail to close the door. (When St Oswald’s bones were brought to Bardney in 697, the monks barred the doors against those who were fetching the relics, and they spent the night in a tent. Next day, remorse at such a sacrilege made the monks resolve never to close their doors again.)
she braids St Catherine’s tresses Is still a virgin. (It was a custom in C16 and C17 France for unmarried women between twentyfive and thirty-five to dress the head of the statue of St Catherine of Alexandria annually for her feast-day.)

St Crispin’s lance An awl (St Crispin being the patron saint of cobblers).
Crispin’s holiday Every Monday (see above, and B.8a).
oriflamme [the sacred banner of St Denis carrying his device in flaming gold, presented by the Abbot of St Denis to early French kings setting out for war] Focal or rallying point in a struggle; shining ideal.

on St Geoffrey’s day Never. (There is no saint of that name.)

like St George, always in the saddle, never on his way [1579] Of one who is always in the posture of success, but does not actually achieve it. (St George is invariably depicted on a horse.)

tickle the dragon’s tail [1964] Undertake a dangerous operation or experiment.

the dragon on St George The woman on top.

rides out with St George, but at home with St Michael Of a henpecked husband. (St George rides a horse, but St Michael a dragon.)

burn one candle to St Michael and another to the Dragon Keep in with both sides; err on the safe side.

he is in St Giles’s sweat In bed while his clothes are being mended. (St Giles’s parish was an area of poverty, dirt and crime.)

lame as St Giles, Cripplegate Of feeble excuses or lies. (St Giles was the patron saint of cripples.)

St Hugh’s bones [1597] A cobbler’s tools.

she has had Martin’s hammer knocking at her wicket [q.d. gate] She has had twins, one boy and one girl. (St Martin was the patron saint of drunkards. In France, Martin-baton was represented as having a phallus cudgel. A martin or freemartin in cattle is a heifer twin with a bull-calf brother.)

tie with St Mary’s knot [Sc] Hamstring.

went through St Patrick’s needle [sChs] Went bankrupt.

drunk as a Perraner [Cor] (Because of the celebrations on St Perran’s/Piran’s feast day, 5 March, which is linked with the feast of Chewidden [<Cor De-Yew Widn=White Thursday], the day when tin was first smelted. St Perran is the patron saint of tinners and reputedly died drunk. Note also, Chiwidden [<OC or chiwidden=white house=the smelting house where black ore was smelted into white tin].)

all aboard, like Perran singers [Cor]

go/pass through St Peter’s needle [Lan Chs: 1917] Suffer serious misfortune; be severely disciplined—often of children. (Probably by association with getting through the eye of a needle into heaven, and St Peter’s control of admissions there.)

as freely as St Robert gave his cow [1670] (He was a Knaresborough saint who was given a cow and cheerfully gave it away to a fraudulent beggar, but got it back again when circumstances made the rascal repent.)

St Tibb’s eve [Sc Ire Yks Rut Nhp Cor Nfld: 1785] Never (because there is no such saint).

veronica The proffering by a matador of his cape to the bull (from the similarity to the attitude in illustrations of St Veronica holding out the towel to Jesus on his way to Calvary).
J.41a The church calendar

eith [easy] to cry Yule on anither man’s stool [Sc] Of those who are prodigal with what belongs to others.

after Christmas comes Lent The fast after the feast; a time of want following one of extravagance.

fit as a pancake for Shrove Tuesday
so needy he couldn’t give up biting his nails for Lent [Ire]
jejune [<Lat jejunus=fasting] Hence, unsatisfying, meagre, insipid and uninteresting.
Lenten—face, looks Dismal, frugal (as food in Lent).
long as Lent
bashful as a Lenten lover

an inch every Good Friday, the rate lawyers go to heaven Of very slow progress.
when our Lord falls in our Lady’s lap When Easter Sunday falls on the same date as Lady Day (25 March)—as in 1951.

black lad Monday Monday in Easter week.
Lucy light The shortest day and the longest night. (From St Lucy’s Day.)

J.41b Holidays, saints’ days, feast days

he no more knows what to do with it than a cow does with a holiday
keep the feast till the feast day [Sc Mich] Do not lose your virginity before time.
piss/rain on his parade [Amer] Spoil the occasion for him; shatter illusions.

J.42 The Pope in Rome

go to Rome Run a fool’s errand.

it is ill sitting in Rome and striving with the Pope [1628] If you live with or near someone in power, it is best to agree with them.

I know no more than the Pope of Rome [1664] (i.e. nothing)
nepotism [<It nepote=nephew] Unfair favouritism of friends and relatives when making appointments (originally by the popes to their ‘nephews’ [=at times, their own sons]).

bless the world with his heels Be hanged. (A fanciful comparison of the movements of the hanged person’s feet with the hands of the Pope making the sign of the cross when giving his blessing urbi et orbi.)
imprimatur [<Lat *imprimatur* = let it be printed = the authorisation for publication of a MS submitted to the Vatican for examination — to protect the Catholic faithful from the subversive or heretical] Approval and support — for new ideas etc.

fine Italian hand Autocratic skulduggery (from the fair writing of Vatican scribes, which often brought treacherous messages).

**J.43 Bishops**

**pontificate** Assume the airs and authority of a bishop; pompously lay down the law. (The original derivation [<MedLat *pontificare* = build a bridge] was itself a metaphor. The *pontifex* builds the bridge by which we may cross from earthly to eternal life.)

**bishop’s finger** A sign-post.

**the bishop has put his foot in it** [Der Nhp] Of anything burnt in the cooking (because ‘the bishops burn who they lust’ [Tyndale—1528]).

**bishop** (v) Burn, let burn; burn in the pan [Cum wYks]; burn milk in boiling [Chs nwLin]. (From the above.) See also H.12d.

**bishop** (n) A fly burnt in the candle-flame (see above); a broken sign-post (because they neither point the way nor travel it themselves).

**bare as the Bishop of Chester** A sarcastic reference to his wealth,

**too dear for the Bishop of Durham** [a very rich diocese]

**like the bishop’s mother, never content nowther full nor fasting** [Dur] (When Robert de Insula became Bishop of Durham in 1774, he was able to make generous provision for his poor old mother, but soon learnt that she, no longer having a justifiable outlet for her spleen, was even worse-tempered than in the days of her poverty.)

**quarrel over the bishop’s cope** Over something that cannot do you any good. (Each new Bishop of Bruges, when he first entered the town, gave his cope to the people, who tore it to shreds in sharing it.)

**shoot a bishop** [C19] Have a wet dream.

**looks liker a deil than a bishop** [Sc] Of someone with a villainous appearance.

**he is the bishop’s sister’s son** Nepotism is implied.

**J.44 Priests**

**honest as the priest** [Ire]

**long as a parson’s** [Yks]/priest’s coat [Cum]

**a dumb priest never got a parish** [Ire] You will not obtain if you do not ask.

**a mad parish must have a mad priest** [1732] The correlation between leader and led.

**take the best first—as the priest did the plums** [Sc]
it is a foolish sheep that makes the wolf his confessor [1670] Don’t show your weakness to your enemy.

they have need of a blessing that kneel to a thistle [1580] They who cannot worship are in deep trouble; they are in most need of help who do not know where to obtain it,

beg a blessing of a wooden god [Ill] Make request of those who cannot grant it.

have the blessing of… Have someone’s approval, support, generally.

J.45 Vicars

the patronage tea-party [1973] The epitome of a harmless, quiet and orderly occasion; often in the context of an exaggerated comparison, as ‘it will make…[some fearsome riot] look like a vicarage tea-party.’

not every man can be Vicar of Bowden [one of the best livings in Cheshire: 1678]

Vicar of Bray One who changes his loyalties as often as is necessary to retain his position. (The popular song refers.)

cunning as crafty Craddock [John Craddock. Vicar of Gainford in 1594, who built Gainford Hall in 1600 and had a reputation for corruption as a Durham judge]

higgledy-piggledy, Malpas shot [Chs: C17] All share alike; without consideration of rank. (From a legend about the insistence of the Rector of Malpas that the cost of their dinner at the village inn should be divided equally between himself, his curate and the king [probably William III]. Note the use of higgledy-piggledy in its original sense, q.v. E.25j.)

J.46 Parsons

parson [wYks]/clergyman [Chs] A black rabbit.

parson Finger-post (because directing you in the right way); a larger heap of dung than was intended, caused by the cart tipping too far [Wil].

pale as a parson [Northallerton, Yks] (Compared with farmers.)

an Isle of Wight parson Cormorant (from the black plumage).

Kirby-parsoned [midYks: C19] Of bottles having a cavity at the bottom. Who the parson was, in which of the several Kirbies in Yorkshire, and how such an association originated are unknown.

like the Saddleworth parson that could read nobody’s book but his own [sLan Chs: 1670]

enough to make a parson swear! Of something very annoying.

like the parson’s fool, likes everything that’s good
tender as a parson’s leman [mistress, sweetheart: 1546]

come home, like the parson’s cow, with a calf at her feet [1670]
poor and peart [lively, brisk, sprightly; healthy, likely to survive—sChs+passim: 1887] poor but hearty, like parson’s pig certain as a thorn-bush [Yks] (From the parson marking his tithe by placing a thorn branch on every tenth stook.)
big as the parson’s barn [tithe-barn], always ready for more [Dor]
like parson’s barn, never so full but that it could take a little more pinch on the parson’s side Where it will hurt.

J.47 Curates, divines, evangelists, theologians

good in parts, like the curate’s egg (From a joke in Punch, in which a curate was asked how he found the egg he was eating and, trying to emphasise its positive aspects, replied ‘Good in parts’.)
deacon apples [NH Mass] Put the best on top to attract the customer (a practice ascribed to rural deacons in New England).
begin again, like the clerk of Beeston [wYks Not]
neat as a bandbox [=clothes folded in a bandbox—originally used for storing clerical bands]
come out of a bandbox [Amer] Look neat and clean. ‘Looks as if she had just stepped out of a bandbox.’
that’s my arse on a bandbox! No good at all! (i.e. it will not fit).
layman [1477] Non-specialist variously, man in the street.
wild as Whiston’s prophecies (W. Whiston [1667–1752] was a divine, scientist and lecturer who connected many later events, such as the arrival of Prince Eugène in London in 1711 as being the fulfilment of some of the prophecies of the Apocalypse, with ancient and biblical prophecies.)
coming-to-Jesus collar A single-walled collar with stand-up points, opening at the front. So-called because popular with evangelists preaching in the Fylde [Lan].
the minister’s face [NH Conn Vir] A pig’s head, butchered, after removal of ears, jowls and eyes.
tell it like it is [Amer] Don’t hesitate to speak out, however unwelcome the matter. (A phrase used by hot-gospellers.)
make a believer out of…[Amer] Convince someone, usually by harsh means.
the missionary position Sexual intercourse face to face and with the man on top (as recommended by missionaries for practising Christians).
J.48 Monks

fit as a pudding for a friar’s mouth [1568]
   cowl (n) Covering for a shaft or chimney. (From its resemblance to the shape of a monk’s hood.)
   Reynard is still Reynard, though he put on a cowl A wicked person is not changed by new clothes or new ways.
   sit like a bean in a monk’s hood Completely out of place; sit powerless to do anything about your plight; be lost and inconspicuous.

   Ye make her a cockqueane, and consume her good
   And she must sit like a beane in a Munk’s hood.

   [J.Heywood §4—1546]

a runaway monk never praises his convent [1666] Don’t expect approval from a recreant.
   the day is come that we fasted the even for [Paston Letter 1472 Nrf] We have arrived!—there is no longer need to work or go short of good things. (From the C15 tale of a monk who became abbot by dint of abstinence and holy life, but then, remarking thus, fasted no more.)
   swear like an abbot [1623]

J.49 Nuns

chaste as a veiled nun
   she is a sister of the Charterhouse She talks much (especially in scolding her husband).

   as who should say, ‘She thinketh that she is not bound to keep silence; their silence shall be a satisfaction for her.’
   [Tyndale, Obedience of Christian Men 305 (P.S.)—1528]

nice as a nun’s hen [C15] Genteel, fastidious.
   in more trouble than a pregnant nun [Aus]
   like a nun in a knocking-shop [brothel—Lan] Incongruous, out-of-place.
J.50 Church business

churchwarden A long clay pipe.

conceited as a churchwarden like Congleton clerk, who sold the church bible to buy a bear for baiting [1813] Of degenerate bargains.

a job half-done, like Ancroft [Dur]/Dalton bell-rope (After many vestry meetings to debate whether to buy a new rope for the old bell, it was finally decided to splice the old rope.)

pull Lymn from Warburton [Chs] Pull it all to pieces; part completely. (The church livings of Lymn and Warburton were once combined, but on being separated the incomes were reduced.)

J.51 Churches

he’ll forheed [=foreheed, preconsider, hesitate before, draw the line at, promise not to]

nowt but building churches and louping ower ’em [wYks 1889:1678] Of a man capable of committing anything, however outrageous, the limits of his inclination and ability set by no less than the examples cited.

consecrate (v) Devote, dedicate generally. Used loosely of many things other than churches or church furniture.

fast [safe, secure—Lan]/peaceful [Cor]/safe/ steady [Som] as a church

fast as a church tied to a holly bush [Shr] (Possibly from tying up the old religion with the new, and securing Christianity by ensuring a continuity with the existing religion, for holly trees often used to be planted near houses and in churchyards, e.g. in Westminster Abbey cloister. *Aquifolia arbor in domo aut in villa sata, veneficia arcet* = a holly planted in home or farm is protection against poison or black magic.)

sleep as sound as a church

old as Paul’s

a York Minster job One that lasts for ever. (From the belief the when York Minster is completed, it will revert to the Catholics, and so a gang is always kept working on it.)

treasure house [the safe-room in a church or cathedral—C15] Rich repository, collection of information, antiquities etc.

treasure (v) in the memory Carefully store precious memories for future recall.

dine with the cross-legged knights Have no dinner. (These are the stone effigies in the Temple Church where lawyers used to meet their clients.)

old-fashioned as Cheddle [=Cheadle—Chs] Church

like Cranshaw Kirk, as many dogs as folk! [Bwk] Usually the complaint of a housewife when she cannot get to the fire for dogs. (In a shepherding area, many dogs would accompany their masters to church.)
married at Finglesham Church [1736] Married in nature, not in church (Finglesham being a chalk-pit in Kent).

send her to Temple Moors [a remote church in Cornwall built by the Knights Templar and offering refuge] Make her an outcast from society.

backwards, the way Mollie went to church, (i.e. she didn’t go)
break an elbow/leg at the church-door [Sc Chs] Do no work, grow idle after marriage.
more...s (ships, pubs etc. etc.) than parish churches! In emphasising a large number.

nearest the church, furthest from God [c. 1303]/nearest the kirk, farrest from God [Sc]/nearer the church, farther from heaven [Wal] Often those who can most easily do something do not bother to do it.
plain as way to parish church [See Shaks, AYLII.vii–1593]
ye’re no ay gaun to the kirk when ye gang down the kirk-gate [Sc] The obvious inference is not always the right one.
his stockings are of two parishes He wears odd socks.
the world is his parish His interests and activities are wide-ranging, and he is correspondingly well-informed.
let the kirk stand in the kirkyard [Sc: 1678] There is a place for everything.
church key [Amer] Can-opener that punches a triangular hole in the lid.

J.52a Steeples

go round the church to find the steeple Take excessive trouble to find the obvious.

high/plain/tall as a steeple/Boston Stump [Lin]/Marlin Tower [=St Mary Magdalene, Taunton—Som]

Tenterden steeple is the cause of Goodwin sands Any excuse is better than none.

old as Paul’s steeple [1659] Certainly older than 1561, when it was destroyed by lightning.

grin together as gargoyles on a steeple

lightning rod [Amer] Someone who regularly attracts anger or criticism, the first person on whom the blame falls.

as many faces as a churchyard clock Of those who change their attitude and policy as often as their company.

J.52b Weathercocks

kenspeck [nYks]/kenspeckle [conspicuous—Sc Ire nEng] as a cock on a church-broach [spire—nEng]
weathercock (n) A changeable, inconstant person.
weathercock (v) Change about, be unstable.
woman is a weathercock [1548]
changeable/wavering as a weathercock
turn about like a weathercock
put beneath the weathercock [Abd] Imprisoned. (Churches were sometimes used as places of temporary detention.)

J.52c Bells

have bats in the belfry [late C19] Be crazy, lunatic. Hence, batty=crazy.
fear the loss of the bell more than the loss of the steeple [1628] Worry more over trifles than important matters.
sure as the steeple bears the bell
clear/sound as a bell [1576]
crack the bell Ruin a job; make a bad mistake, muddle.
cracked Unsound in mind.
ting-tang [small or tuneless bell—Sc Eng, passim] Worthless, useless person, animal or thing.

louder as Tom o’ Lincoln [the tenor bell: 1625]
as frequent as the bell on Sunday [Glasgow, Sc]
bell-mouth Widening of a narrow road where it meets a main road.
bell-bottoms Trousers, wide at the bottom of the leg.
like the clappers (of bell) Very fast; very hard.
he who cannot bear the clapper should not pull the bell Advice to a man who grumbles about a woman’s tongue.

if you don’t like the jangle, you shouldn’t set the bell swinging If you don’t like criticism, you should not give occasion for it.

hang on the bell Endure in desperate circumstances. (From the action of a woman during the C15 Wars of the Roses whose lover was condemned to hang as soon as the church bell rang for curfew. She hung on to the bell, prevented it from sounding, and his reprieve came before the next curfew time.)

ye hae a tongue, and sae has a bell [Sc] Implying that someone is using their tongue as senselessly as a bell.

he is like a bell that will go for anyone that pulls it
have no saxon [=sexton (—to toll the bell for me)—Mass] Words fail me
[E.Dickinson—1862].
chime (in) with… Agree, be in harmony with.
they agree/tune like bells—and want but hanging!
J.52d Bell-ringing

bells call others to church, but enter not themselves [1670] Said when disclaiming the need to take one’s own advice.

ring the changes Repeat with all possible variations. (From the practice of bell-ringers who alter the order of their bells according to regular methods.)

ring him a peal/ring a peal in his ears Give him a reverberating scolding.

ring the bells backwards [i.e. start rounds with the tenor instead of the treble bell] Raise the alarm [C16–C19].

ring the knell of… Herald or cause the abolition of something. (From tolling a bell for the funeral service.)

sound the death-knell of… Signify the end or ruin of something.

hang in the bell-ropes [Lakel nwDer sChs nLei Wor] Of a couple in between their banns and their marriage; also of the deserted partner if the marriage does not take place.

merry as wedding bells/a marriage bell he’s letting the bells down [sLan] Is drinking cautiously after a heavy drinking bout. (The bells are usually ‘let down’ after a spell of ringing.)

muffle (v)/mute (v) Reduce the amount or volume of protest, criticism etc. (Bells are muffled to ring more quietly at funerals; and wind instruments can be muted for quiet passages.)

ring the potle-bell [Bnff C19–C20] Confirm a boys’ bargain by linking the little fingers of each right hand. (Probably from the position of the hands resembling the shape of a bell.)

J.53a Parts of the church

uncover the church to mend the quire Do a great harm in repairing a small one; rob Peter to pay Paul; do something preposterous.

peel/rive/tirr [=tirl, strip, uncover forcibly—Sc nEng] the kirk to thee/kthick the quire [ =thatch it—Sc: c.1523] (As/from the above.)

ride the riggin [roof-ridge] o’ the kirk [Gall] Be ever praising the church.

buttress (v and n) Support.

pillar of the church Valuable servant; respected member.

maze Confusion; situation consisting of many puzzles and problems. (The earliest formal mazes were laid out in the Gothic teaching cathedrals to symbolise the progress of the Christian soul.)

wide as a church-door
do it at kirk-door [Bch] Openly, without shame.
J.53b Church-furnishings

be thrown out of/fall over the desk Have the banns read out in church [wSom].
be thrown/hang over the (rannel-)balk [rood-beam dividing the nave from the chancel, where marriages are performed—nYks] Have the marriage deferred after the banns have been read.
brant as a balk-sty [steep as the ladder for the rood-beam—Cum]
sounding-board [a wooden screen placed behind the pulpit to throw the preacher’s voice forward to the congregation] Someone who provides the opportunity, reason and pretext for someone else’s outlet or unburdening.
pulpit (n) A harpooning platform on the bowsprit of a fishing boat; an auctioneer’s desk; a raised platform from which machinery can be watched and controlled; the pilot’s cockpit in a plane.

J.53c Unwelcome visitors

hungry/poore as a church mouse [1659]
iconoclast [<<eccles =breaker of images] (The original iconoclasts were the Byzantine emperors of the C8 and C9 who had the sacred icons of the church destroyed.) Flouter of tradition, cherished beliefs etc.
catastrophe [<<Gk =overturning, toppling down]

J.54 Monasteries, convents

bring an abbey to a grange [a monastery farm, usually with granary and tithe-barn—1440] Make things worse; dissipate wealth.
cloister (v) Narrowly restrain, confine generally.
cloistered Secluded; withdrawn from the world (like a monk in the cloister).
he that will to CUPAR maun to CUPAR [Sc: 1721] A wilful person will have their own way, even to their own injury. (Refers either to the Cistercian monastery there, or else to the Fife Courts of Justice formerly held at Cupar, where ‘Cupar justice’=trial after death, from the occasion when a prisoner refused to come out of his cell for trial, and water was let in to flush him out, but, obstinate to the end, he drowned. The body was then produced in court, and the trial proceeded.)
wise as the women of Mungret Wise only in reputation. (From a hoax played on Cashel professors coming to the seminary of Mungret to test the scholars there, when
students and monks dressed up as women and peasants answered the visitors in Latin and Greek, and so conveyed an exaggerated impression of the standards of learning there.)

**in…’s black books** Out of favour and in trouble with someone. (This dates from the time of Henry VIII when he recorded the scandalous doings of the monasteries in his black books.)

**in his good/bad books** In/out of favour. (Deriving from the above.)

* dull as a convent

## J.55 Chapels, Nonconformists

**Puritanical** Strictly correct and formal, but lacking those imaginative qualities that inform the more exalted forms of art and devotion.

**prick-eared** Priggish, puritanical (from the prominence given to the ears by the short hair-cuts of the Roundheads).

**quiet as a chapel**

**all on one side, like Marton Chapel** [Wilmslow, Chs]

**eyes sticking out like chapel hat-peg**

**thou’rt looking as peaked and pined as a Methody preacher after a love-feast** [wYks]

**sons of the manse** Proverbial for being poor but educated.

**go-to-meeting/Sunday go-to-meeting—clothes, behaviour etc.** The very best (as are to be seen at Nonconformist meetings on Sundays).

**dim** (sc. -witted) **as a Toc H lamp** [1970s] (The Toc H was a Christian mission founded in 1915 for soldiers on service, offering a break and a refuge from active duty.)

**the grave is the general meeting-place**

**Quaker meeting!** When a sudden silence falls on a group.

**dull as a Quaker meeting**

**melancholy as a Quaker meeting-house by night**

**Quaker-grey** The dark, sober grey favoured by Quakers.

**like a Quaker, he answers one question by asking another**

**Quakerish** Of the character of a Quaker, plain in dress, quiet in behaviour, and with strong, strict principles.

**Quaker-mild—voice** [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—28 May 1822]

**Quaker’s bargain** A straightforward transaction without complications. (From their reputation for directness and honesty.)

**Quaker guns** [Amer C19] Non-violent means of settling disputes; empty threats (from the noncombatant principles of Quakers).

**Anabaptist/Baptist** A pickpocket, condemned summarily to a ducking.
J.56a Weddings

all on one side, like Smoothy’s wedding [Cor]
as fu’ o’ maggots [fancies] as the bride o’ Preston, who stopt hauf way as she gaed to the kirk [Sc Bwk]
you’re early with your orders, as the bride said at the church-door [Ant]
marry the pigs [Hrf] Put rings in their noses.
confetti money Paper currency that has lost its value and is now worth little more than the pretty paper shapes thrown at weddings in lieu of rice.
Irish confetti Stones and bricks used as missiles.
have you been to an Irish wedding? To one with a black eye.
feel like a baby at a wedding Feel de trop, out of place.
like a spare prick at a wedding Hanging about awkwardly—with a hint of embarrassed superfluity.
pulled into church by the end of his penis [Ire] Of someone who became a Catholic through marrying one.
wedding-cake style of building Sumptuously decorated.
toss the stocking [Frf Lth Edb Wgt, 1694 Nhb Cum wYks nLan Amer, C19] Make an end of feasting and drinking. (It was customary to throw the bride’s stocking at the very end of the marriage feast to foretell who would next be wed.)

J.56b Baptisms

baptism of blood, fire etc. Initiation, first experience.
it ‘ud baptise you! [Ire] Describing a leaky roof.
christen your own child first [Sur: 1659] Charity begins at home.
when the child is christened, you may have godfathers enough [1623] Plenty often comes after the need is over; it is easy to make an offer you know will not be accepted.
godfather [Amer] Chief, highest authority
when ye christen the bairn, ye should ken what to ca’t [Sc: 1721] To a seller who hesitates about the asking price.
demure as a whore at a christening [Sc]
you shape like a whore at a christening Are very clumsy.
like a moll at a christening [Aus] Uneasy, flustered.
drunk as nurses at a christening
christened by the baker Freckled (as if dipped in bran).
die like a Chrisom child Peacefully. (The Chrisom is the white cloth set on a baby’s head at baptism, and used as a shroud should it die within the month; up to 1726, babies that died within the month were recorded as Chrisoms in the bills of mortality.)
a made a finer end, and went away and it had beene any Christome Childe
J.56c Catechism

catechize Interrogate stringently. (Originally it meant to instruct in the church teachings, thence to examine by articles whether the child knew them, then to examine a person’s beliefs and so to this more general use.)

give him his carritch [catechism—Sc Yks] Scold him.
he still has his confirmation money [Ire] That is how miserly he is!

J.56d Burial of the dead

dirge [<Lat dirige=guide] Any mournful song. (From the first word in the Office of the Dead in the Latin rite, taken from Psalm v.8, Dirige, Domine, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam.)

J.57a Liturgy

the kirk is mickle, but you may say mass in one end of it [1628]/if the kirk is ower big, just sing mass in the quire [Sc] If there’s too much there, you don’t need to use it all. Said when folk protest at being given too much.
you cannot say mass but at your own altar [Sc] Are too fearful of travel, too parochial.
a month’s mind [Chs Lei War EAn Glo Som IW Cor: 1575] A strong inclination, often of pregnancy-cravings. (Refers to a pre-Reformation practice of repeating one or more masses at the end of a month after death for the repose of a departed soul.)
sing Lachryma Be sorry, mournful.
sing Nunc Dimittis [1642] Be thankful, your work is finished; you have leave to go.
sing Placebo [1340] Be flattering, servile.
no penny, no Placebo [1548]
sing the black psalm [C18] Weep.
mumpsimus A mistake adhered to even after correction. (A priest used the word instead of sumpsimus in the Mass, but refused to amend with the declaration ‘I will not change my old mumpsimus for your new sumpsimus’.)
give/sing a kyrie eleison to…[Tyndale—1528] Scold, reprimand.
litany Repetitious enumeration—of complaints, errors, requests etc.; succession of unfortunate events.
leave before the gospel Practise coitus interruptus.

J.57b Paternoster

paternoster Piece of angling tackle with three arms for three hooks (local to the Preston [Lan] area, where there is a large Catholic population).
no penny, no Paternoster [1528] Pay first and then receive (from buying indulgences).
a Paternoster while [Paston Letters C15 Nrf] Only as long as it takes to say the prayer.
say an ape’s Paternoster Chatter with cold or fright.
the old wives’ Paternoster Grumbling and complaining (from the whine of old women praying).
like saying Paternoster to a post [1530] A waste of breath.

J.57c Magnificat

sing Magnificat at matins Do something at the wrong time or place.
correct Magnificat [1533] (before you have learnt Te Deum) Criticise without qualification, find fault unreasonably.

J.57d The Rosary

rosary Originally the title of a book of Christian devotion [1526] and later used: first for a set of devotions, and then for the string of beads used as a help in performing those devotions.
rickety rosary A line of small lumps on the chest caused by rickets. (From the string of 165 beads representing fifteen groups of a paternoster, ten aves and a gloria, to help Catholics in their devotions.)
J.58a Church services, prayer

a matter of breviary [the book of Divine Office] Something that admits of no doubt or question.
two wafers short of a communion Unintelligent.
deprecate [<Lat de-precari=pray something away, seek to avert by prayer] Disapprove; dismiss as unacceptable.
lay that ghost to rest Finally resolve a longstanding dispute, misunderstanding, vexation, fear.
precarious [<Lat precarius=dependent on prayer, only obtainable by grace and favour] Hence, unlikely; not to be depended on.
inexorable [<Lat in-exorabilis=unmoved by prayer]
past praying for Of someone or something we cannot hope will improve.
like Hilton Kirk [Bwk] Of a scene of confusion and disorder. (The laird there, being reproved for his licentiousness by Daniel Douglas, the minister, dragged him from his pulpit.)

J.58b Sermons

sermon (n) Moral lesson suggested by natural objects (see J.25a, sermons in stones), and by occurrences and experiences; reproof given in solemn or pontifical manner.
dry as a sermon
a good example is the best sermon
preach to the converted [1867] Persuade someone who is already convinced.
lean on the cushion Preach, sermonise (like a priest leaning on the pulpit cushion).
you cannot preach out of your own pulpit You have no authority here, so you should not give orders.

J.58c Confession

short shrift [1814] Small mercy; insufficient time allowed (not even enough for a doomed man to make full confession before his execution).
make a clean breast of…[1752] Confess all, concealing nothing. (From the idea of pure renewal from church absolution after confession.)
silent as a father confessor (Who will neverbetray confidences heard during confession.)
J.59 Mystery plays

out-herod Herod Be even more evil, bold and blustering. (The traditional portrayal of Herod in mystery and nativity plays was of a loud, blustering and hectoring ruler. This is an early tradition and presupposes the performance of local plays and pageants well before the date of those mystery plays for which we have documentary evidence. (See Shaks, Hamlet III. ii, ‘I could have such a fellow whipped for o’erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod’)  

a Pilate voice [1530] A loud ranting voice.

J.60a Church customs

draw/throw a veil over…[1701] Be reticent about; conceal from the public. (From the old practice of covering images with a veil during Lent.)

J.60b Candles

fine/gay as the king’s candle Usually of an overdressed woman. (From the Epiphany custom at Cologne, of presenting a candle of various colours at the shrine of the three kings.)  

light/proffer/set/vow a candle to the devil Propitiate him by bribery or ill-doing.

Old ffillimore of Cam, going in anno 1584, to present to Sir Tho Throgmorton of Tortworth with a sugar lofe, met by the way with his neighbor, who demanded whither and upon what business he was goinge, answerd, ‘To offer my candle to the Divill’ [Glo].  

[Smyth, Lives Berkeleys III.28—1885]

a man must sometimes set a candle before the devil [Paston Letter 1461 Nrf] It is at times politic to behave civilly even to your enemies.  

it’s an ill procession where the devil holds the candle [1670]/bears the cross A criticism of the integrity of someone’s leadership.
J.60c Congregations

dissident [<*Lat dis-sedere=sit apart]

keep your seats, there’s no collection [nwEng] To calm an over-reaction. (Jocular.)

I have said my prayers in the other corner [Dev: 1869] The answer to a complaint that a cup has not been filled.

he says more than his prayers Implying, not always the truth.

that’ll stop his farting in church! Said when a wrongdoer, or one who has had too much of his own way, is stopped by a sharp punishment or setback.

Gawdelpus A helpless, exasperating person.

wicked and good-for-nothing as two penn’ orth of Gawdelpus stuck on a stick [Corfe.—Dor Som 1903] Describing a hated stepmother by this fanciful intensifier to Gawdelpus (see above).

out of God’s blessing into the warm sun [1540] From best to second-best; from bad to worse; of those who seek change, but are seldom the better for it.

Like a congregation hurrying out of a cold church immediately after the benediction into the sunshine, there is a contrast between those inside church and those on the ale-bench outside:

In your rennyng from him to me, ye runne
Out of gods blessing into the warm sunne

[J.Heywood, Proverbs and Epigrams II.v–1562]

Therefore if thou wilt follow my advice, and prosecute thine awne determination, thou shalt come out of a warme Sunne into Gods blessing

[J.Lyly, Letter of Euphues to his friend Livia—1579]

Pray God they bring us not, when all is done,
Out of God’s blessing into this warme sunne.
For sure, as some of them have us’d the matter,
Their sunne-shine is but moone-shine in the water

[Sir J.Harington, Epigrams ii.56–1615]

There is the implication that the sun is still part of God’s blessing, but there has been a spiritual worsening, that a lasting has been forsaken for a temporary blessing, or even for an outright evil. The warm sun is certainly regarded as an evil by Harington, who is criticising a ‘smooth-tong’d Preacher of the sunne-shine of the Word’. As also,

Thou out of heavens benediction comest To the warme Sunne
J.61 Psalms and hymns

whistling psalms to the taffrail [naut: 1836] Giving advice that may be sound, but is not appreciated.

useless as whistling psalms to a dead horse [1836]

as big a jolterhead as ever sang psalms to a dead duck [Lan]

I might as well have chanted the evening hymn to a dead founart! [=foul marten, polecat] Of a plea that has fallen on deaf ears.

don’t start singing before they give the tune out Do not start a job before you know what to do; do not be premature, variously.

singing off…’s hymn sheet Repeating their arguments, adopting their position.

he is singing whillaluja/halleluja to the daynettles [=red dead-nettles—Uls: nIre] Has died.

J.62 Hell

dark as Erebus [place of darkness between Earth and Hades]

black as Hades

limbo [place on outskirts of hell whither the souls of unbaptised babies and of the just who lived BC were consigned: C14] State of neglect or oblivion to which unvalued people or things are relegated.

black/false/hot/ugly as hell [1657]

hell let/broke loose [1670] Complete riot.

pandemonium [the capital of hell and abode of the demons] Loud, confused uproar.

no hell like a troubled conscience

make him smell hell [Ire] Make his life a hell-on-earth.

go to hell in a handbasket [Amer C20] Deteriorate, fade away rapidly.

has a whiff of sulphur about him Gives the impression of having an element of evil in his character.

devilled [1823] Grilled in hot condiments—as devilled bloaters, kidneys etc. (after the torments either inflicted or suffered by the devils in hell).

hot as the hinges of hell

deep as the hell-kettles/divel’s kettles [three pools about a mile from Darlington, at Oxen-le-Hall; and at Oxenhall, Durham] (See also I.47e.)

go like a bat out of hell [1909]/like the hammers of hell Fast and impetuously.

he’d rake hell for a bodle/halfpenny! [1832] Of a stingy person. (Rakehell was a popular abuse word in the C18.)
as much chance as a snowball in hell! Also, an icicle’s chance...
as much chance as a cat in hell (without claws) Of someone disputing with a much better debater. Hence, not a cat-in-hell’s chance!
as much chance as a dog with tallow legs chasing an asbestos cat through hell
[Calif]
hell-cat [wYks] Violent unmanageable person; termagant.
quicker than hell would scorch a feather Very promptly (a command-embellishment in the Services).
five miles beyond hell, where Peter pitched his waistcoat! When consigning someone or something as far away as possible.

J.63a The devil

black/drunk/false/foul/handsome/ugly as the devil [1725]
slidderly as da melishin [=malison, the devil—ShI] False, hard to combat.
the devil himself A blue thread in the canvas of a sail. (Otherwise perfect!)
look like the deil in daylight [Sc]
Satanic Devilish, fit only for hell, diabolically depraved.
bledivilled As if in the devil’s power or control, haunted.
demon (n) Malignant, forceful, fierce person. Hence, a demon for—work etc.=efficient but fanatical; a demon bowler is truly formidable.
fiendish Diabolically clever; consummately malignant.
laugh like Old Bogie [the devil—Nhp]
tough as Old Nick [the devil]
false [deceitful, treacherous, sly, unreliable] as the very Old Fuller [=old fella, Satan—wSom]
proud as Lucifer [c.1394]
artful/deep as Garrick [eYks Lin midEng Wil Sur Sus Cor]/Garret [Pem]/Garlick [wSom]/ Garry [War Glo]/Garry-Warwick (All refer to an old name for the devil, Gerard [C14+ earlier]. ‘Here is Gerard’s bailiff, work or die of cold’ [Som: 1678].) Cunning, astute etc.
dark as Hummer [the devil—Lakel Yks] (A humming top or hummer is known to the French as bruit de diable.)
black as Humber (Probably a corruption of the above.)
the devil is not as black as he’s painted [1592] Said in extenuation to someone who is condemning another too severely.
although I am black, I am not the devil You blame too harshly
J.63b The devil—his attributes

fit to blow the devil’s horns off [Cum] Of a strong wind.
write on the devil's horns ‘good angel’ and many will believe it [NY Calif] On the effect of the written word on the gullibility of readers.
hard as the devil’s forehead [Lin]
dark as the devil’s mouth
the devil’s toothpick [Dev] A crook or contraption for supporting the load on a packsaddle.
the devil’s guts A measuring chain (detested by tenant farmers).
black as the devil’s/Old Harry’s [Lin]/Old Nick’s [Cum] nutting-bag/nutting-poke [a bag for collecting nuts of coal—Cum Wm Lin eSuf Cmb Brks Som Sus]
il-gien [=ill-given, bad-tempered, evilly inclined] as Old Nick’s nutting-bag [Cum]
black as the devil’s crout-box [=crust/ lunch-box—Glo Wil Som Dev Cor]
proud as the devil is of his tail [wYks]
black as the dule’s hoof [Sc]
hard as the devil’s nagnails
show horns/the cloven hoof [1594] Reveal an evil nature, a sinister side to a character.
see the cloven foot See through a person, become disillusioned, disenchanted with them.
they’re a bonny pair, as the devil said o’ his cluits [=cloots, hooves—Sc Ire Nhbb Cum IMa Yks: Sc]
the deil doesna aye show his cloven cloots [Sc] All wickedness is not immediately recognizable.
spotted and speckled like Jack Adam’s devil (He saw such a devil in Northleigh [Oxf].)
the devil’s luck Never-failing luck.
the devil’s boots don’t creak [Sc WVir] Temptations are insidious; you cannot recognise them when they come.
black as the Duke/Earl of Hell’s black riding boots/waistcoat
dark as the inside of the devil’s waistcoat pocket [Calif]
gone to Davy Jones’s locker [the sailors’ devil] Dead and buried at sea.
the devil’s bedstead [Chs Shr War Lon]/bedposts [Amer] The four of clubs.

J.63c The devil—his relations

mended—as the devil mended his dame’s leg (i.e. broke it in pieces)
the devil is beating his wife/grandmother (with a shoulder of mutton) When it shines and rains together (because he laughs and she cries).
the devil’s children have the devil’s luck
J.63d The devil—his relations with us

raise the devil/Cain [1852] Make such a fuss or disturbance as would raise either from hell.

swear the devil out of hell Swear vehemently, convincingly.
daredevil Bold and courageous in unnecessarily dangerous ventures.
throw crumbs in the fire and you feed the devil
poetry is the devil’s drink [Oreg] (The old Platonic heresy.)
you have daily to do with the devil and pretend to be frightened at a mouse? You have no cause to be worried at such trivialities; get things in proportion.

he’s fond o’ barter that niffers [exchanges, barters—Sc Yks] wi’ Old Nick [Sc] There is surely a limit to how far a man will go in his favourite pursuit.

hold a candle to the devil [1461] Help someone in crime, become an evildoer.
give the devil his due [1589] Recognise that no one is wholly bad; do not condemn utterly; even the undeserving deserve justice. (Lucifer, though fallen, is still an angel.)

he wouldna lend his gully [knife], no to the devil to stick himself [Sc] Of a miserly lender.

the lucky shot won’t kill the devil [Ire] Don’t rely on luck to combat evil.
seldom lies the devil dead in a ditch [1670]/ by the gate [1460]/by the dikeside [Sc: c.1600] Never underestimate the power of evil.

you would do little for God if the devil was dead [Sc] Your actions are prompted by fear rather than love.

you need not wite [blame] God if the devil ding you over! [1721] To a long-legged person.

he has a great fancy for marriage that goes to the devil for a wife [1732] Of immoderate desires.
as bad as marrying the devil’s daughter and living with the old folks [1830] happy is the child whose father goes to the devil (Implying that the child will inherit much ill-gotten wealth.)
do as the collier did when he met the devil, hae naething to say to him if he has naething to say to you [Sc]
match for match quoth the devil to the collier [Sc 1821] Of a fair exchange. (See also J.63h, claw for claw…)
polite as the devil [Yks] (Reputedly willing to shake hands with anyone.)

J.63e The devil and the church

wild as an undipped devil (i.e. unbaptised)
the devil’s martyr One who perishes in needless danger.
a queer Christian, like the devil’s head in a cowl Of a hypocrite.
he that preaches war is the devil’s chaplain [1659]
**J.63f The devil in other places**

**devil in the horologe** [1519] A type of disorder in an orderly system.
- **true as the devil’s in Dublin City** [Sc 1785]
- **as sure as the devil’s in London**
- **the devil’s mint** [EAn] An inexhaustible supply of something obnoxious.
- **the devil looking over Lincoln** [1546] A vitriolic critic; envious person. (Possibly from a statue of the devil on Lincoln College Oxford, taken down in 1731; another explanation suggests he was envious of the devotion that raised Lincoln cathedral spire higher than 520 feet.)
- **between the devil and the deep blue sea** [1621] Between two equally dangerous or devastating alternatives. (Perhaps from the account of the Gadarene swine possessed of a devil [Matt viii.31], since it came into use in the early C17 when reading the Bible became widespread.)
- **you look like a runner quoth the deil to the lobster** [Sc] To those who are unlikely to do what they promise.
- **Elephant-end, where the devil can’t get for nettles!** When consigning someone or something as far away as possible.

**J.63g The devil in action**

**as busy as the devil in a high wind/gale of wind** [War] Have many different jobs to do and make much fuss about doing them.
- **play the devil** Create havoc.
- **play the dule** [wYks] Torment.
- **as big a lie as ever Cluty** [=clooty, hoofy (i.e. Satan)—Sc nEng] **himself cleckit** [hatched, fabricated: Ayr]
- **needs must when the devil drives** [1601] There is no point in resistance when greater powers than yours are exerted.
double diligent, like the devil’s apothecary Making a great show of diligence.
hug, as the devil hugged the witch [of Endor: 1640]
when the husband is fire and the wife tow, the devil easily sets all in a flame
the devil finds work for idle hands (i.e. mischief)
the devil could not do it unless he were drunk [nIre] Of a thing very hard to do.
looks like the devil had an auction Of an untidy house.
the devil has cussen his cloak over him already [Fif 1625] He is cursed, doomed to a
bad end. (Said by King James of his infant son, the future Charles I, when his nurse
reported a malignant visitor at midnight.)
the devil has thrown his club over the house [Lan] Said when misfortunes occur.
the devil has gone over Jock Webster [Lth Bwk: 1725] Things have proved too
much or too strong for someone, their affairs are worsening.

J.63h The devil in trouble

claw for claw, as Conan said to Satan, and the devil take the shortest nails [Sc]
Fighting talk. (Conan fought the devil.)
pull the devil by the tail Struggle constantly against adversity; take too great a risk;
go speedily to ruin.
it came over the devil’s back and it’ll go under his belly [wYks Chs nLin Can
Amer: 1582] Ill-gotten money will be badly spent.
that caps [surpasses, beats—nEng] Long Crown [a Cavalier, after the height of his
hat] and he capped the devil! [Lin]
that caps Leatherstarn, and he capped the devil! [Yks]
that cobs [surpasses, outdoes—Lan Der Chs Shr War] Dolly and Dolly cobbed the
devil! [Shr]
whip the devil round the stump [Amer] Enjoy the fruits of evildoing without
suffering a penalty; dodge a difficulty dishonestly but successfully.
‘now off we go again’ as the hedgehog said to the devil (From a folk story where
two hedgehogs run the devil to death.)
he would flay two devils for one skin [Craven,wYks sLan] Is very stingy.
could flay the devil and eat his broth [eSuf] Very hungry.
you might as well eat the devil as the broth he’s boiled in [wYks Can Amer: 1545]
You might as well endure the whole evil as the worst part of it; might as well commit the
crime as be accessory to it.
in a horn when the devil is blind [Der] Said ironically of a thing never likely to
happen. (See also E.19a.)
Purgatory

**purgatory** Torture, torment generally; a state of grievous suffering, temporary though indeterminate.

**purgatory(-hole)** Ash-pan under or in front of the fire-grate.

### J.65 Heaven, angels

**a fool’s paradise** [Paston Letter 1467 Nrf] A condition where someone is happy only as long as they remain deluded, ignorant of the truth; an illusory happiness.

**England is the paradise of women, the hell of horses and purgatory of servants** [1617]

**go to heaven in a string** Be hanged. (A phrase first used of the Jesuits hanged in the reign of Elizabeth I.)

**move heaven and earth to**… Make superhuman efforts to achieve something.

**the halo effect** A favourable bias fostered by an initial good impression, often in psychological or intelligence tests, but also in commercial contexts where a prestigious product helps the sales of ordinary goods.

**sprout wings** [Amer] Become (usually unexpectedly or uncharacteristically) conscientiously honest, chaste, religious; die.

**angel** An unidentified signal on the radar screen.

**street angel, house devil** [Ire Amer] His behaviour alters for the worse as soon as he enters the home.

**angels/devils on horseback** Oysters rolled in bacon and served on toast [1888].

**on the side of the angels** [1864] Aligned with law, order and the more wholesome, worthy and idealistic members of society.

**fallen angels’ bones** [nYks] Fossil bones of the saurians.

### J.66a Life from a corpse

**near is my purse, but nearer is my soul** I value my essential life before my possessions.

**cannot call his soul his own** (Because completely dominated by another.)

**enough noise to waken the dead** Very loud.

**corpse candle** Lambent flame seen in churchyards and other burying places.
J.66b Ghosts

spectral Unreal, insubstantial.

pale/white as a ghost/spirit

ghostly (The drift of this word has moved from the spiritual to the horror aspect of a ghost or spectre.)

whisht as a ghost at Hallowe’en [Cor]

you look as if you had seen a ghost! To someone noticeably agitated, pale and frightened.

so mean he wouldn’t give you a fright if he was a ghost [Aus]

looks liker a ghost than…[Cum] Of someone in decline.

ghost image/picture A second, fainter image—in a poor telescope or faulty TV set.
ghost town One deserted by most of its citizens.
ghost writer/artist etc. Literary hack; one who does the work for which another gets the credit.

phantom limb The sensation (pain, cold etc.) of a limb that has actually been lost, a well-attested phenomenon of the nerves.

not the ghost of a chance! Not the slightest chance.

the ghost in the machine [G.Ryle—1949] A philosopher’s phrase for the idea of mind and body as separate entities.

away like a ghost-train! Describing someone who departs with uncanny speed.

like Paddy’s ghost, two steps ahint

meticulous Originally=fearful [<Lat metus—fear], and then nervously scrupulous.

raise the spectre of… Represent a possible outcome in alarming, horrifying terms.

the shade of…! An exclamation conjuring up the memory of a dead person who would have reacted in life with outrage, pleasure etc. at whatever caused the comment.

haunting—fear, tune, memory etc. [C19]

J.66c Boggarts

as steady as a buggin [ghost—Chs] in a bush Very unsteady.

think every bush a boggard [1534] Be demoralised with nervous fear.

take boggarts [Ashton in Makerfield, Lan] Take fright; of a horse, rear up in alarm.

black [wYks]/fause [crafty—Lan] as a boggart

foul as a corn-boggart [scarecrow—sLan]

slamp [loose, soft, limp—Yks Lan Der] and wobbly as an owd corn-boggart [Der] should as soon think of getting wed to a corn-boggart! [Lan]

crow-boggart [wLan] Scarecrow. (Frightens the crows and rooks as much as a real boggart frightens humans.)

blash-boggart [apparition that comes and goes in a flash—Lan] Person of wild and strange appearance.
ye mak’ boggles o’ windlestraes [imagine ghosts out of dry grass blown by the wind—Sc] Are too easily frightened.

like t’ Clegg Hall boggart, allus keeps coming again [near Rochdale, sLan] (This is the restless ghost of a C13/C14 uncle who had murdered two orphans and thrown their bodies in the moat.)

in and out like Fearnla boggart [wYks]

enough to flay [scare] a boggart out of the ground [Lan]

flay-boggle [n&wYks Aus] Scarecrow; strangely dressed person.

run the pad-foot race [=footpad, a terrifying animal-boggart with staring eyes and a soft padding pace—Yks Cor] Run to fetch the midwife or doctor to a woman in labour.

dead as a nippen [boggart—NCy]

bogle-hunter [nYks] Someone oppressed by imaginary difficulties or fears.
K
AT PLAY

K.1a Music

he that lives with the muses shall die in the straw (i.e. in poverty) hope is grief’s best
music to the height of music [Rdn] Very much. to the truth of music [Dev] Severely,
to the ultimate; thoroughly, completely. face the music [Amer 1851] Meet the
consequences resolutely.

K.1b Notes

gamut Entire range, whole series (as in the gamut of notes).

strike a false note Introduce a contradiction, something out of keeping; an error of
government.

strike the right note Say or do what is exactly appropriate. (The opposite of the
above.)


strike a chord Awake, evoke a memory.

strike/touch the right chord Elicit the desired response; appeal successfully to an
emotion.

overtone A connotation, reminiscence or implication of an additional meaning carried
by the action, style or language. In literary contexts denotes a subtle evocation produced
by words or images.

harmony Good agreement, understanding between people.

disharmony Quarrelling; lack of sympathy or tolerance.
K. Ic Tunes

to the tune of...In accordance with, to the extent of.

  to some tune To a great extent.

in/out of tune with...In/out of sympathy with.

change your tune [1524] Alter your attitude; reverse your policy; become more considerate, respectful.

make him change his tune/sing another/a different song/tune Make him change his attitude. ‘ye schule on oþer wise singe’ [Nicholas de Guildford, The Owl and the Nightingale—c.1248].

K.1d Performing

prelude [ < Lat praemunere=practise beforehand, rehearse a performance]

accent [ < Lat accentus=marking the beat in a song]

incentive [ < Lat incentivus=setting the tune]

strike up acquaintance etc. Make a start. (From striking up the music.)

play it by ear [1839] Manage without technical aid or precise information; adapt your action to the situation as it unfolds instead of being rigidly doctrinaire; proceed step by step according to results.

descant upon...[harmonise to a set theme : 1510] Remark, comment on a particular text; enlarge on.

chime in with...Interpolate a remark in agreement with what has been said. (See also J.52c.)

orchestrate a protest etc. [1969] State unanimously, in unison, all reinforcing the same theme, message (as do the different instruments in an orchestra).

up-beat Vigorous, positive, confident, encouraging, optimistic.

off-beat humour etc. Eccentric, unorthodox, abnormal (as music seems when played off the beat).

doesn’t miss a beat Is alert and skilled.

have/stand a bar of... [Aus] Put up with, accept—usually as a negative, ‘not stand a bar of...’=detest, utterly reject.

reach a crescendo Increase to a volume that demands recognition. Of public protest etc. one-man band Organisation or business largely or wholly run by one person.

when the band begins to play When the trouble or action starts; when matters become serious.

It’s ‘Thank you Mister Atkins’, when the band begins to play
[R. Kipling, Tommy—1892]

don’t give me Hathern band! Don’t keep repeating yourself. (The village band of Hathern [Lei] knew only one tune—and kept on playing it.)
like Tregony band, three scats behind [A scat is a short spell of work or weather—Cor]
climb on the bandwagon [1899] Join the winning or more popular side. (From the American custom at election times of having a band on a wagon on which supporters could ride.)
don’t monkey with the bandwagon if you can’t play the horn [Amer] Don’t criticise what you cannot do yourself.
make (sweet/beautiful) music Make love together.

**K.2a Fiddles**

fine/fit as a fiddle
ready and willing as Spode’s fiddle [nStf; Josiah Spode, 1733–97, the inventor of Eng-lish bone china, was a violinist of repute] This saying was still current in the C20.
dry as tharm [twisted gut, used for fiddle-strings and spinning wheels—Nhb]
a face made of a fiddle [Sc 1816] Cheerful, capable of raising the spirits of all the company.
a face as long as a fiddle Looking miserable.
long as Jan Bedella’s fiddle [Cor]
look like the far end o’ a French fiddle [Sc] (As above.)
play the Scotch fiddle [the scab] Scratch yourself [Sc Wm wYks wSom Amer].
as well try to borrow a fiddle at a wakes Of a hopeless project.
find a fiddle Discover something very amusing; find a child dropped by the gypsies.
Become inexplicably merry [Sc].
a heart without love is a violin without strings [NY]
have the fiddle but not the stick [1595] Have the wherewithal but not the skill, have the means but not the sense to use them; be impotent sexually.
fiddletick (n) The erect penis [at least C16—as in the nursery rhyme, Cock a doodle doom]
fiddleticks! [UK Amer] Nonsense.
there’s many a good tune played on an old fiddle With sexual reference.
tak a spring o’ your ain fiddle, ye’ll dance till’t afore it’s dune [Sc: 1721] Follow your own plan and take the consequences. (A spring is a lively dance tune played on pipes or fiddle.)

**K.2b Fiddlers**

drunk as a fiddler/fiddler’s bitch [War]
drunk as a Gosport fiddler
first fiddle Chief man; most distinguished of the company.
play first fiddle Have the mastery, be in control.
play second fiddle to...[1809] Take subordinate place to.
harmony is often obtained by playing second fiddle [Ont]
cunning as Crowder (a fiddler)
the least boy always carries the greatest fiddle [1670] Those who are least able to resist are the most imposed upon.
fine as a fiddler’s foo [=either fool, the wag or entertainer accompanying the fiddler, or= feu, fee or fare, the pay of a fiddler—Lan]
fiddler’s pay Thanks and a drink—or thanks only.
fiddler’s fare Meat, drink and money.
fiddler’s money Small change, threepenny and fourpenny bits.
fiddler’s news [Slg] Stale news.
up and down/in and out like a fiddler’s elbow [wYks Chs] Of a wagon-wheel askew [wSom].
welcome as two fiddlers [sLan] Very welcome.
fiddlers’ dogs and flies come to feasts uncalled [Yks: 1585] A comment on the arrival of additional dependants.
so long as you’ll crowdy, they’ll dance [Cor] [<Cor crowdy=Welsh crwth=fiddle] They will continue (whatever) as long as you give the occasion or encouragement.
Fiddler’s Green [C19] Fabled elysium for sailors (and others) where the fiddler never stops playing and the dancers never tire.
great strokes make not sweet music [1592] Strength is out of place where skill and subtlety are needed.
let’s stop and rosin, like fiddlers do [wYks sLan] Stop for a rest.
resin up [naut] Smarten up a sailor’s seaman-ship.
rosined up for...[wYks 1885] Ready to speak, sing etc.
short of rosin [Cor] Short of cash.
hang up your fiddle Retire from business.

K.3 Tuning up

keynote [1783] Dominant idea, theme. (This compound was a metaphor to start with, and is now doubly so.)
low key/low-keyed Quiet, restrained; with the majority of the tones in a photograph at the dark end of the grey scale.
in a low key [wYks] Depressed in spirit.
lower, minor/higher, major key Lesser/ greater intensity of feeling, tone, style etc.
in/out of key with...In/out of accord, sympathy, agreement with.
off-key (adj and adv) Wrong(ly), inappropriate(ly).
keyed up Tense, excited, expectant.
pitch it high Aim high.
pitch (v) a speech, writing etc. in a certain style Express yourself at that level,
**concert-pitch** State of high efficiency, readiness generally.

**screw up your courage** Bring to the point of effective tension.

But screw your courage to the sticking place, And wee’le not fayle

[Shaks, *Macbeth* I.vii—1606]

**fiddle about** Fuss and fidget unnecessarily (as in tuning up a violin).

**friends, like fiddle-strings, must not be screwed too tight**

the tighter the string, the sooner it breaks [Wal NDak: 1595] A relationship that is too tense or over-strained will end abruptly.

**take him down a peg** [1589] Lower his self-opinion; reduce him in others’ esteem; snub; humble. (There are three possible origins:

1From music, where the pitch of stringed instruments is lowered with pegs.
2From communal drinking. Some old tan-kards were measured off with studs or pegs to mark each drinker’s ration, and by drinking more than your share, you took your neighbour down a peg.
3From the naval custom of flying flags at different heights as a mark of honour. The height was regulated by pegs.)

**off the nail** [=peg, (2) above] Tipsy [Sc].

**rise a peg** [wYks] Improve in circumstances (probably from (3) above).

**on a high/jolly/merry** [Sc Nhb Wm sWor] pin In excited and merry mood (from the pin=a tuning peg).

Your herte hangeth on a joly pin


**put on another pin** [Sc] Divert, change subject.

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**K.4 Lutes**

**a rift in the lute** (Cause of) disharmony, disagreement.

**pull a chord** Court; make love. (From the idea of creating harmonies by playing on heart-strings.)

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**K.5 Harps**

**thick as strings on a harp**
harp on the string that gives no melody [1546] Complain gratingly.

harp on one string/harp on…[1374] So reiterate as to weary the hearer.

lose your touch [1927] Lose the finer points of your peculiar skill and genius.

the stang [Sc]/tang [Sc Nhb]/tongue o’ the trump [Jew’s harp—Sc Ire Nhb] The one preferred above others, the best of anything; the leader, chief, spokesman, active partner in a business, the one in actual rather than titular control. Often as:

ye hae tint the tongue o’ the trump [Sc: 1721] You have lost the most important part.

K.6a Pipes

every reed will not make a pipe Everyone cannot become successful, or even turn out well.

bagpipe/windbag Wordy, long-winded talker.

he that’s scant o’ wind shouldn’a meddle wi’ the chanter [Sc] Act within your capabilities; spend only what you can afford.

like a bagpipe, he never talks till his belly is full

there’s both meat and music here, as the dog said when he ate the piper’s bag [Sc: 1832]

tune his/her pipes [Sc] Cry, weep.

another would play a spring [tune] ere you tune your pipes [1721] To a slow starter.

no sae scant o’ [short of, in need of, lacking Sc Yks EAn Dev] clean pipes as to blow

with a brunt cutty [short clay pipe-stem—Sc: 1721] Do not have to marry a widower.

K.6b Pipers

drunken [neSc Per Cum Wm Yks Lan Stf]/full [drunk—Ayr Frf, Ags]/mad [passionate, excitable] as a piper

piper-faced [Lnk] Pale and delicate.

enough to take the pearl [clouding, white spot or cataract on the eye—Sc ShI wYks Wil] from a piper’s eye [Scarborough, Yks] Of something so astonishing and shocking the most insensitive person could not help but take notice.

he’s an ill piper that wants the upper lip [1546] Irreparably handicapped.

the piper wants muckle that wants the nether chafts [Sc: 1638] Of something essential that is missing.

lazy as a piper’s luidin [little finger—Ir-Gael]

a tinker and a piper make bad music together [1626] People who are naturally incompatible will not agree; crafts and arts are sometimes at variance.
he’s a gude piper’s bitch, comes in ay at meal times [Sc]
piper’s news [Cum] Stale news; and, in Matterdale, short notice.
(go) pipe in/with an ivy leaf! Take consolation in trivial or frivolous employment; do
any silly thing you like (q.d. it will make no difference). The ivy leaf is a type of
worthless toy. (See also G.64a.)

But Troilus, thou mayst now, est or west, Pype in an ivy leef, if that thee
lest;

[G. Chaucer, T&C V.1433–1374]

not play pew on…/to…[a small whistling or breathing sound—ShI OrI Sc Nhb] Not
make the slightest effort; not achieve anything, have the slightest effect on.

bundle/park/put up your pipes [1521] Desist; stop talking! (A peremptory
dismissal.)

K.6c Paying the piper

he who pays the piper calls the tune [1895] The choice belongs to the one who pays.
Hence:
call the tune Control events.
pay the piper [Sc: 1681] Suffer, smart for something; sustain the whole cost; pay the
ultimate price [=die].
get the spring [a lively dance tune played on bagpipes or fiddle] to pay [Sc] Pay the
cost; bear the consequences.
no pipe, no pudding [Glo] You must earn it first; perform your part of the bargain
first.

K.7a Drums

drum into… Drive a lesson or information into someone by forceful persistence. (From
the emphatic and insistent nature of the drum-beat.)
sound/tight/trig [distended, tight—Sc nEng Lin] as a drum
like a pea on a drum Of a small hat on a large head.
hard as a tabber [=tabor—Glo]
drumstick Lower joint of cooked fowl’s leg.
empty as an old drum [Cockney] Very hungry.
wame’s as hollow as a drum [Wm] (As above.)
empty drums make the most noise Empty-headed fools speak loudest, have most to
say.
howl [=hollow, empty, hungry—nEng] as a two-legged drum [Lan]
‘I know’t, my lord, I know’t’—as John Noble said [Suf] Lord Dysart had congratulated him on his drumming at the Monk Soham rectory one Christmas. He was a wheelwright at the time of the Napoleonic wars.

K.7b Trumpets

razzamatazz [early jazz music, partly onomatopoeic from the blare of trumpets etc.—Amer] Noisy, showy display; extravagant bal-lyhoo (after the brash ostentation of jazz extemporising).
  blow three horns and a bugle [Aus] Blow a storm.
  bugle-duster Handkerchief.

K.7c Flutes

blow/play the (skin) flute/piccolo [Amer 1941] Practise fellatio.
  teach a pig to play on the flute Attempt the impossible.

K.8a Organs

pull out all the (organ-)stops Make every effort; use every argument; use all your forces.
  go all out Use every effort and resource (as if all the organ-stops were out. See also A.4d.)
  eyes popping out like organ-stops

K.8b Pianos

Jewish piano Cash register.
  office piano Typewriter.
play the piano Feel the sheep’s back with fingers to find the best place to start shearing [NZ]; give fingerprints.
try that on your piano [Amer] Think it over.
play that on your Aunt Emma’s piano [Cockney] Reply to that—if you can!
soft-pedal Reduce, restrain comment, tone down (as when depressing the soft-pedal of a piano).
wouldn’t trust him as far as I could throw a piano!

K.8c Barrel organs, accordions

I don’t want the monkey chipping in when I’m talking to the organ-grinder! A rebuke to a less important person interrupting.
when I want monkey I’ll pull t’ string [Lan] (As above.)
have a monkey on your back Be angry; be a drug-addict [Amer], hence ‘get the monkey off your back’=break the drug habit.
on my back [Sc] Continually finding fault; continually plaguing, pestering me [Amer].
get on the stick [Amer] Get actively to work.
a monkey on a stick A fidgety, restless person.
have...on a/the stick [Yks Lan] Tease, torment, make fun of someone (as with a monkey on a stick).
would not have him on a stick! [Vir—c.1900] Said by a woman rejecting a suitor, even if he were to be as much in her control as a monkey on a stick.
monkey-board The platform at the back of a bus where the conductor stood (and often slipped about like a monkey).
monkey’s wedding [SAfr] Swiftly alternating periods of rain and sunshine; a combination of drizzling rain and sun shining; an unpleasant smell [naut].
concertina Collapse, fold up together, wrinkle.
accordion pleats Pleats that fold together like the bellows of an accordion.
accordion wall An interior wall that slides aside, folding into a compact space.

K.9a Dancing

you need more than dancing shoes to be a dancer [111] Having the gear is no use without the skill.
mind/watch your P’s and Q’s [1779] Be careful; act and speak correctly. (There are three possible origins:
1 the phrase of a dancing master in Louis XIV’s time to mind their feet and wigs—*pieds et queues*—when bowing and curtsy-ing,
2 an instruction to printers to distinguish between p’s and q’s, two letters easily confused, or
3 a warning to the landlord not to mix up Pints with Quarts when chalking them on the slate.)

**not put a foot wrong** Behave impeccably.

**trip along** Go lightly and easily—of verse, music etc.

**caper/dance upon/on air/thing** [Abd Ant] Be hanged.

**they love dancing well that dance on thorns** [1623] There is a limit to what is tolerable, even in the most enjoyable pursuits; there is always something that can spoil enjoyment.

**bring on the dancing girls** [c.1930] Let’s have something more entertaining than this. (Eastern potentates, bored with their guests, ordered the dancers to attend.)

**go into your dance** [Amer] Begin a prepared speech, act, performance, ‘sell’ etc.

**bubble-dancer** [Amer] Dish-washing person.

**dance in a net** [Sc: 1528] Think to escape detection, though with insufficient cover; deceive, hoodwink.

**tap-dance** [Amer] Improvise; distract so as not to reveal ignorance.

**dance Barnaby** Move quickly or unevenly; make haste. (Barnaby was a quick dance popular in the C17.)

**dance cookuddy** [a children’s dance performed from cooking postures—Cld Cum] Perform antics.

**dance the hay(s)** [a dance popular during the reign of George III in which the dancers dance round and round in a ring] Drink too much (from the giddiness).

**dance the Phibbie** [=Phoebe, an old country dance—Cor] Get a horse-whipping.

**Moll Peatley’s jig** [C17–C20] Sexual intercourse.

**between the jigs and the reels** [Lan] Attributable to one cause or the other; where one thing leads to another.

**dance the miller’s reel** Have sex (probably from the connection with grinding).

**dance the reel o’ Stumpie** [Sc] Have energetic sex together.

**dance the hornpipe** Be cuckolded.

**dance the blanket-hornpipe** [1810] Have sex.

**my nerves are doing the lambada** [a fast, erotic Brazilian dance] Am extremely agitated, keyed up [1980s].

**jump Jim Crow** [Amer] Change your party; principles (from a black song and dance of the early plantations: ‘Wheel about and turn about and jump Jim Crow’).

**do-se-do** [Amer] Dull fight, with more dancing than punching (from the square dance call *dos a dos*).

**figure-dancer** [performer in a figure dance, one divided into figures or divisions where different subjects are illustrated pantomimically] One who fraudulently alters the figures on banknotes, cheques, bills etc. [1796].

**dressed like a Bessy** [the one in a group of sword-dancers who dresses grotesquely and takes the collection during a performance—Nhb] Clothed extraordinarily.

**shindy** (n) [a sailors’ dance] A lively party, riotous merrymaking. Sometimes spelt shindig and inextricably associated with shindy=a quarrel (see K.35b).
next time you dance, heed/know whom you hold/take by the hand [Sc Okt: 1621]
Take better care what company you keep. To those who have become involved with folk
too cunning and unscrupulous for them.
a morning’s rain is like an old woman’s dance, it doesn’t last long [SC Miss]
his dancing days are done [1573] Age and infirmity are curtailing his activities.

K.9b Dancing and music

dance to a new tune [Cromwell—1649] Alter behaviour, activities.
play one tune and dance another Say one thing and do another.
play him a reel [nIre] Scare, play a trick on him.
he dances well to whom fortune pipes He may well be happy who is lucky.
dance to someone else’s pipe/tune/whistle Follow his desire or lead; obey his whim.
dance/march to a different tune Change policy, activity, allegiance.
dance the same dance React similarly. And I fear themperor will daunce the same
dauce’ [Bishop Richard Fox, Letter to Wolsey—16 May 1513].
they that dance must pay the fiddler [Can Amer]/if you can’t pay the fiddler, you
had better not dance [Iowa Calif]
he that lives in hope dances without a fiddle/music [1670]
they who dance are thought mad by those who hear not the music [1575] Said
when someone’s motivation is not appreciated; we should not judge others without
knowing all the facts.
all-singing, all-dancing [1929] Ultra-versatile and advanced, of new and sophisticated
equipment, vehicles etc.

K.9c Dancing for joy

have seen the merry dancers [Northern Lights, superstitiously taken as a portent of fine
weather] Expect good weather.
knowledge makes a man laugh, but wealth makes him dance [1640] (The
difference between knowing you are happy, and feeling you are.)
the devil dances in a pocket/purse that contains no cross [i.e. coin: 1412] (At one
time, before the debasement of our coinage, by symbol no less than value, all coins
carried a cross on them.)
dance his/her lane [=alone—Sc] Express great joy, rage etc.
dance the haka [a Maori dance of a wild character—NZ: 1890s] Dance for joy;
exhibit your delight.
K.9d Dancing at weddings

dance attendance Wait obsequiously, assiduously on another. (It was an old custom at wedding-feasts for the bride to dance with every guest.)

…to daunce attendaunce most abowt youre plesure and ease  
[Paston Letter 1475 Nrf]

dance in the half-peck [=half-pace, the raised platform or foot-pace at the top of steps or the landing of a staircase like a broad step between two half-flights—wYks] Be left a bachelor on a brother’s wedding.

dance in a hog-trough [Amer 1995]/pig-trough wearing a silk stocking/dance barefoot [1534]/dance barefoot over the fuz [=furze—Dor] Be still unmarried at a younger brother or sister’s wedding. (See also B.6m, wear green garters.)

I must dance bare-foot on her wedding day, And for your love to her, leade Apes in hell.  
[Shaks, Tam Shr II.i]

you can’t dance at two weddings with one pair of feet [Calif] Cannot go beyond your natural limitations.

K.9e Dancing at balls

have a ball [Amer] Enjoy a hectic, uninhibited time.

open the ball Make a formal start; begin a quarrel [sNot].
‘I’ll make one’ quoth Kirkham when he danced in his clogs [Chs: 1670]
Waterloo ball A light-weight occasion preceding a momentous one—as was the ball given in Brussels by the Duchess of Richmond on the eve of the battle of Waterloo.
lead off/lead up to…[start the dancing] Make a start, generally.
begin/lead the dance Take the lead in any course of action.
lead him a (pretty) dance Exact irksome obedience, usually from an admirer.
dance after them [S. Pepys—17 February 1668] Be in obsequious attendance; perform their slightest whim.

you will neither dance nor hold the candle [sSc: 1721] You will neither be merry yourself nor allow others to be so. (It was customary for one who did not dance to hold the candle for those who did.)

he that worst may shall hold the candle [1534] He that is least skilful must wait on them that can work better. Second-best for them that cannot [Glo].
waltz…around [Amer] Prevaricate with; evade.
**K.9f Dancing at masked balls**

**mask** (n and v) Disguise, conceal—variously.
- **masquerade as...** Assume a pretended character (as at a fancy dress ball or masquerade).
- **drop/throw off the mask** Reveal yourself in your true character.

**K.10 Whistling**

**wet your whistle** Take a drink.
- **it’s hard whistling without top lip** [Clitheroe,Lan] Something vital is lacking; we cannot do it without the means.

**K.11 Songs and ballads**

**tragedy** [<Gk τραγωδία= goat-song, supposedly from the beginnings of the ancient Greek festivals of drama and tragedy]
- **keeps coming back like a song** (From the haunting quality of a tune.)
- **no song, no supper/you must sing for your supper** You must earn your keep.
- **make a song** [1843] **and dance about...**[1895] Exaggerate, make more fuss than is warranted; tell a contrived story, a rigmarole.
- **nothing to make a song about!** Hardly worth considering; of no consequence; stop your fuss!
- **the mother never had a song but the daughter had a verse of it** [Sc] You can expect a daughter to take after her mother.
**singin’ hinnies** [Nhbl Dur] Currant cakes done on a girdle and so-called from the noise they made when baking.

**buy/sell something for a song/an old song** [1602] Very cheaply

**like the sough of an old song** [Sc] With a dying echo; feebly; hardly noticed.

**there’s a hole in the ballad there!** [S Lan] Of a hiatus or mistake in the narrative. (A certain illiterate street-singer, when he came to a word he could not remember, declared there was a hole in the ballad at that place.)

**your head’s running on Jolly Robins** [a hero in old ballads: 1596] You are thinking of other things, are wool-gathering [Der Chs]; are merry and witty.

**like John Tamson’s wallet, frae end to end** [Sc] Packed solid. (From the refrain of a traditional song.)

**where is our wandering boy/girl tonight?** Of someone who is not where they should be. (From the words of an anonymous sentimental song.)

**Kathleen Mavourneen** Term of imprisonment of no fixed length [Aus NZ]; non-paying debtor; the hire-purchase system; an habitual criminal [Aus]. (From the title of an early C20 song that contained the words ‘it may be for years and it may be for ever’.)

**whistling Dixie** [Amer] Saying something trivial in the hope of creating a favourable impression. (From the so-called Dixieland jazz that was popular in the early C20.)

**down in the forest something stirred** [Song by Landon Ronald—1915] Of sexual consummation.

**Mother Machree** [Amer] Alibi; affecting story relying for its success on a sympathetic hearer (from the maudlin Irish song of WW1).

**life of Reilly/Riley** [H. Pease, *My Name is Kelly*—Amer 1919] A life (often temporary) of ease, pleasure and pampered luxury.

**spinach** [Amer] Nonsense, rubbish (from the phrase ‘gammon and spinach’ in the refrain of the song *A frog he would a-wooing go*).

**sing small** [softly] Be less assertive, humbler; say nothing.

**always sing low in a bad tune** Don’t commit yourself unreservedly to a bad cause or argument.

**if you make songs about yourself, you can’t blame other people for singing them** [Dor] A reminder to those who invite comment that it may be indifferently rendered.

**a good song is none the worse for being sung twice** [NY] The reply of those rebuked for repeating themselves.

**not too poor to have time to sing** [Dor] Comfortably off.

### K.12 Poetry

**poem** (n)/**poetry** (n); **sheer poetry**! A comment on anything beautifully executed or performed.

**every man is not born to be a poet** Inherited genius is rare.

**there’s neither rhyme nor reason in it!** [1529] It is neither beautiful, useful nor sensible.
poetic(al) justice [J. Dryden, T&C—1679] That ideal state in which punishment—and reward—precisely fit the deed (realizable in a work of the imagination, but not in real life).

rhymed to death, like Irish rats [1581] (From the belief that rats could be driven away with rhymes or charms.)
go into rhapsodies Enthuse extravagantly.
wax/become lyrical [1875] (As above.)
sure as Silas Wegg is to drop into poetry (But who was Silas Wegg?)

K. 13 Story-telling

tell the droll [story—Cor] Explain the state of a mine-face, holes and blasting etc., to the first-comer on the next shift.
tell a tale Reveal amazing events, secrets. ‘That old clock could tell a tale.’
tell-tale (adj) [1754] Revealing, significant, incriminating. ‘Tell-tale blushes, hair on his jacket, mud on his boots, fingerprints’ etc.
tell-tale (n) Mechanical attendance record; warning when fuel-tank is getting empty; indicator of position of tiller; checking-compass hung in captain’s cabin.
tell its own tale Be highly significant; speak for itself; give the secret away.
tell his/her own tale Give his/her own version of what happened.
tak your ain tale hame [-Sc] Follow your own advice.
make him tell another tale [1481] Make him change his attitude etc.
tell the tale Speak plausibly, speciously; elicit sympathy with hard-luck story.
laugh like little Audrey She is the subject of children’s jokes and recurs in different stories making fun of the adult world and authority.
meantwhile, back at the ranch…[a favourite switch-phrase in cowboy stories and Westerns to bring in a diversion or secondary plot] Now used as a witty formula for introducing such side-plots.

K.14a Sketches

sketch in Give a rough outline.
sketchy Basic, in outline, but without details; inadequate.
thumb-nail sketch Brief, quickly produced, word-portrait.
scarify [<Gk=scratch an outline, sketch lightly and so scratch or criticise] Criticise severely.
scratch team, players etc. Group hastily, promiscuously or arbitrarily assembled. (From the style of drawing a sketch-map or lightning sketch by roughly scratching it.)
draw the king’s/queen’s picture Forge coins.
**profile** Verbal sketch, outline in words. (Properly an outline portrait, but now also extended to the meaning given here.)

**etch** (v) Impress deeply (as when etching with acids). ‘Her rebuke is etched on my mind.’

**come up and see my etchings!** [Amer] A sexual invitation.

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**K. 14b Parts of a picture**

**put in the picture** Inform fully.

**get the picture** Have enough information to understand the situation.

**out of the picture** Irrelevant; excluded; uninformed.

**in perspective** Without distortion; with a view balanced over a period of time.

**in the round** [in three dimensions] In real life, to the life (in contrast with someone known only by hearsay, or in print).

**the background** Inconspicuousness.

**keep in the background** Avoid notice.

**background knowledge** Knowledge of someone’s past or environment that might prove relevant.

**foreground** (v) Bring into greater prominence, stress, emphasise; admit a possibility.

**blot on the landscape** [1912] An intruder or intrusion that spoils otherwise pleasing surroundings.

**out of/in keeping** [proper relation and harmony between different parts of a picture] (In)appropriate, (un)suitable; out of/in harmony.

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**K.14c Painting**

**depict** [<Lat *depingere*=paint a subject on to a picture] Represent, show, describe generally.

**paint a picture** Describe a situation briefly and in general terms, to suffice for the time being.

**paint a black/bleak/gloomy picture/prospect** Describe in the worst terms.

**paint a broad-brush picture** [1967] Show the general outlines without detail—of early plans, briefings etc.

**colourless** Insipid, lacking interest or distinction—of style, personality etc.

**colourful** The opposite of colourless, above.

**coloured** Affected, influenced—by preconceptions, prejudice etc.

**bariolage** [<Fr=motley, varied medley of colours] Unusual variety or combination of different musical effects.
palette (n) Rich variety, variously, and especially of descriptions or depictions in other art fields.

**paint in bright colours** Describe favourably, optimistically.

**paint him in his proper colours** Describe him accurately and without flattery.

**paint him with his warts/warts and all** Spare no detail, even uncomplimentary ones; without disguising or minimising a person’s faults or imperfections. The phrase originates with Oliver Cromwell’s instruction to his painter, at the start of a sitting, ‘I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me and flatter me not at all. But’, pointing to his face, ‘remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts and everything as you see me.’

**the human face of...** A warmer, more compassionate aspect of a government, institution, public body etc. than is usually encountered or even suspected.

**candid** The sense succession from Lat *candidus* =white seems to be: white→pure→sincere→frank.

**black and white—issues, views, groups etc.** Clearly defined; diametrically opposed.

**two blacks do not make a white** [1721] Two wrongs do not make a right.

**grey areas** Intermediate and indefinite states that defy categories, problems without any easy solution (being neither black nor white).

**not as black as he’s painted** Not as bad as reported. (See also J.63a.)

**denigrate** [ < Lat *denigrare*=stain, paint or dye black] Defame, ‘blacken’ a reputation.

**blue and better blue** [Sc] Degrees of excellence, even between peers.

**greenery-yallery** Affected (after an aesthetic movement of the C19).

**yellow Cowardly (the colour of fear). ‘Show a yellow streak.’**

**dark as umber** [a deep red-brown pigment] (Also by association with Humber—see J.63a.)

**painting in** Filling in the orchestral part of the score, especially in concertos [Sir Edward Elgar].

**fill someone in** Supply them with the necessary information (from filling in unpainted parts with colour to ‘complete the picture’).

**tone down** Soften, make less emphatic.

**subaqueous** Nebulous, wishy-washy, vague (as underwater scenes are often depicted).

**pale into insignificance** Lose emphasis or importance by contrast with something given greater prominence.

**test all shades of opinion etc.** Compare, even the slight differences and variations.

**faad** Lose physical strength, often before death.

**shades of meaning** Delicate and subtle variations. (As/from the above.)

**adumbrate** (v) [fill in a sketch with light and shade] Represent a reality by its emblem; prefigure, foreshadow.

**tinged with...** Affected, modified by—envy etc.

**dabble in...** Indulge an interest—in a dilettante way, without being deeply or seriously involved. (Probably, originally, a development from dabble [play in mud, paddle—Sc Yks Wor Hrf Suf Oxf Glo].)

**a great artist can paint a great picture on a small canvas** [NY]

**widen the canvas** Enlarge the sphere of operations generally; be more ambitious.

**limn** (v) Describe, fill in, portray, give colour and detail to descriptions etc.

**limn the water/limn (something) on water** Perform something transient or futile.
**highlight** (v) Draw attention to one aspect of the problem, situation etc. by various means of emphasis. (A painter or photographer can ‘highlight’ that part of the picture where emphasis is required.)

**put the finishing touches to**...Give the final refinements to a piece of work.

**dot the eyes on a painted dragon** Make what you are saying come alive.

**gild/paint the lily** [1595] Give excessive praise, superfluous enhancement; try to improve what is beyond improvement.

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**K.14d Finished pictures**

**pretty as a picture/paint**

**no oil-painting** [1930] Ugly, plain (opposite to the above).

**large as life/life-size** Bigger, more real than expected.

**look like a picture of—health, ill-luck, misery etc.** [1624] Appear the very personification of...

**like Uncle Acky Slodden, the picture of ill-luck** [Cor]

**painted pictures are dead speakers** [1616] They tell us something even though they are not alive.

**maudlin** Tearful, sentimentally weeping (from the pictures of the sorrowing Mary Magdalen).

**do a Chloe** [Aus] Go naked. (The picture of Chloe, nude, that was banned by the Melbourne National Gallery, found a home in one of the Melbourne hotels.)

**full frontal** [Amer] Complete, unrestricted.

**the other side/reverse of the picture/coin** The other version of a case, different point of view, opposite argument.

**without light and shade** Monotonous, unrelieved by any variety. Of a person’s character, life-style etc.

**rub off on**...Be imparted incidentally. ‘Some of it is sure to rub off on him.’ (The colours of a picture done in dry colours easily rub off on to the adjacent sheet of paper.)

**scratch a...and you will find a...underneath** [1823] Usually of a person’s disguised origins or disappointed ambition. (From covering one painting by painting another over it.)

**patina** Superficial covering, colouring, even a contrived atmosphere to convey the impression of age, indifference, whatever.

**grotesque** [Lt grottesca=rough painting, similar to that found on the walls of excavated buildings, or grotte]

**I shall see you dangle in the sheriff’s picture frame** Shall see you hanged.

**in the frame** [1941] Strongly suspected of the crime (as if the investigators have found a good picture of the culprit). Hence:

**frame** (v) Make it appear that an innocent person has committed the crime.
K. 14e Painters and paintings

round as Giotto’s O Describing something perfect but effortlessly done (as was this specimen of his work sent by Giotto di Bondone [1276–1337]).

Gioconda/Mona Lisa—smile, attitude, in-scrutability etc. A tantalisingly enigmatic quality, as in the expression on the portrait, La Gioconda, also known as the Mona Lisa, by Leonardo da Vinci [1452–1519].

vandykes Deep cuts or scallops round the edge of anything, usually of a garment. (Named after Vandyke [1599–1641] who painted portraits of people wearing collars of this style.)

violon d’Ingres [1780–1867] An alternative form of expression, secondary artistic outlet. (The French painter Ingres would play his violin as a relaxation and aid to his painting.)

Whistler Dreamy, deliberately vague and indistinct—of talk, ethics etc., as well as art. (Many of Whistler’s paintings were foggy in atmosphere and execution.)

K.14f Photography

soft-focus Of a performance, work of art, criticism etc. One where a deliberate imprecision, vague and blurred, is conveyed.

not on your tin-type! [an early type of photograph, a positive printed directly on to a tin plate] By no means! (An emphatic refusal.)

blow up [enlarge grossly] Exaggerate, give disproportionate importance to a news item etc.

K. 15a Sculpture

take shape [1756] Gradually become recognisable, feasible, credible.

mute/still/white as a statue

colossal Enormously large. (From the huge Colossus statue of Apollo at Rhodes.)

man on horseback Someone whose military achievements raise him to the leadership of his country.

put/set on a pedestal [1882] Admire to excess, rank high, worship. (From the placing of a work of sculpture or a saint’s statue on a plinth.)

many have lived on a pedestal who will never have a statue when dead [Utah]

unveil Make public something that has been expected but not previously available.

left/stuck out there like Venus on a rock-bun [Nhb] Grotesquely isolated.
cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey [Amer 1928] Of freezing weather; hence, brass monkey weather.

throw into relief Bring into prominence, make obvious. (From the sidelighting of friezes etc.)
bring out in strong relief Emphasise, show clearly and forcibly.

K.15b Carving

off for a loiter-pin [a stick to whittle—Lin War Wor] Left work for no good reason [Wor].
make lointer-/lonter-pins [Cum nLan] Idle.
whittle away Reduce gradually.
whittle...down to size [Amer] Humiliate a pompous person; reduce to their proper level of importance; stop them being over-ambitious. (See also J.1c, cut down to size.)
futtle-the-pin (adj and n) [Bnft] Idle(r) [futtle= whittle—Sc].
like a wooden Indian [Amer] Stolidly, stiffly, silently and without expression.
dead as a wooden Indian

K.15c Pottery

unless the clay is well pounded, no pitcher can be made [111] Discipline is a necessary part of education.
we are clay in the hands of the potter [Ind 111] Our lives are under a higher control.
the furnace that hardens clay will melt gold [Vmt]/the same sun that will melt butter will harden clay [NC] People respond differently to the same influence.
fierce as a pot lion [sLan]
stupid as a pot mule [wYks]
like a pair of pot dogs on the mantelpiece! Of a well-suited married couple.
like a cloamen [earthenware] cat, hollow to the toes [Cor] Referring to someone insatiable for food and drink; hypocrite.

K.15d Mosaics

mosaic A word used often and variously, particularly in biology, to describe a condition where two or more different elements combine to form a pattern, especially in the
processes of growth. A *mosaic map* is a composite map made up of overlapping aerial photographs.

**K.15e Arts and crafts**

*state-of-the-art* [1910] Of a skill or technology, enjoying all the latest improvements; in its most advanced state to date.

*get it to a fine art* [1884] Practise and improve something until it reaches a high level of skill and polish.

*pattern* A regular order or design, observable in widely varied contexts.

*all part of life’s rich fabric/tapestry!* [1581] A good-humoured exhortation to someone to accept an unwelcome incident or resented experience.

**K.16a Malt**

*get green malt in floor* [nLin Dor] (Green malt is malt before it is dry, obtained by steeping light barley in soft water for forty-eight hours, when the water is let off…until it gets warm and begins to sprout; the ‘floor’ is a batch of grain laid out at one time for steeping.) Spoil the result by imperfect preparation or by being too hasty. [See T. Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* iv; this saying encapsulates the whole of Tess’s tragedy, it is her ‘fatal flaw’]

*you breed of* [resemble, take after] *good malt, you are long in coming* [sprouting—Sc]

*soft fire makes sweet malt* [1530] Unhasty work gives best results (a fierce fire would burn the malt); be merciful, gentle; often of love-making.

*smeddum* [finely ground malt—Sc Dur Bdf WCy] Force of character, pith, courage, intelligence [Sc].

*for my peck of malt you may set the kiln on fire* [1616] Disregard my small interest in the matter.

*fire the kiln/set the kiln a-low* [=on fire—Sc]/on fire Raise a commotion, cause an upset.

*the kiln is in a blaze/on fire* [Sc] Everything is in commotion, uproar; there is enmity between them [Nhp].

*merry as mice in malt* [1639]/a maltman

*malt-worm* Toper.
K.16b Brewing

**brewing** Of trouble, storm, mischief etc., and usually something injurious. Inevitably gaining strength; in preparation.

- **the malt is above the water/wheat** He is drunk.
- **as you brew, so must you drink** [1670] Accept the consequences of your action.
- **stay and drink o’ your ain browst** [brewing Sc] Suffer some of the mischief you have instigated.

**home-brew** A player who is native to the town or area that their team represents.

**full as a tun** [fermenting vat; also wine cask]

**she has pissed in the tub-hole** [hollow where the kive (=mashing-vat) stands] Of an ale-wife gone bankrupt [Sc].

**cast in his worts** [yet unfermented ale] that... Leave/cause him to consider, ponder it.

**ferment (v)** Be in an early but very active stage of formation or formulation.

- **in a ferment** In confusion, usually at a time of change; in a state of agitated excitement.
- **work like barm in a barrel** [Sc] Hard and unceasingly.
- **put out your barm where you took in your ale** [Sc] Vent your bad temper on the company that generated it.
- **bad/wet as draff** [the malt refuse after brew-ing, dregs generally—Lakel nYks] Worthless.

**cider-making** [Wor Glo] The circling flight of rooks, a sign of approaching rain. (From the screwing down of a press, and the subsequent dripping of juice.)

**beaten to a pummy** [=pomace, an apple crushed for cider—Shr Wor Hrf EAn Wil Som Sur Dor Dev] Of anyone badly pummeled.

K.16c Brewers

**drunk as a brewer’s fart**

- **couldn’t organise a piss-up/booze-up in a brewery!** Of inept management.
- **smile like a brewer’s horse**
- **the brewer’s horse has bitten him** He is a drunkard.

K.17 Distillers

**distil** Convert, concentrate, drive one part away from another.

- **a double-distilled lie** [orig. Aus] One outrageously untrue, the essence of falsehood.
K.18a Cellars

damp as a cellar

K.18b Barrels

the whole hogshead of...[1838] A very large quantity of.
  as big as a Dorchester butt [Dor]
  toom [empty—Sc Ire nEng] as a barrel
  barrel-chested Large and tubby.
  empty barrels make the most noise A comment on garrulous folk.
  barrel (v) Of a motor vehicle—move dangerously and erratically down the road (like a rolling barrel).
    round as a hoop [c.1555] Also in the sense of sudden, summary [1651].
    thirteen staves and never a hoop will not make a barrel [NY] (Originally an anonymous Philadelphian writer made this point in stressing that the separate states would need the cohesion of a common policy.)
    gives one knock on the hoop and another on the barrel [1813] Does not stick to the point.
    sting and ling [pole and line or rope—Sc nEng] Forcibly, against the will (as if slung by a rope from a pole carried by two men; barrels were often carried thus).
    bung up and bilge-free All correct (from the careful stowage of barrels of liquor).

K. 18c Drawing from barrels

broach a subject etc. Introduce, initiate discussion. (From the process of boring a hole in a beer or wine barrel to put in the vent-peg, called ‘broaching a cask’.)
  set a broach/abroach/on broach Get something started; publish, spread abroad. (As/ from the above.)
  the cask savours of its first fill Early impressions and first lessons are retained longest.
  tap into Draw on, derive advantage from, open up access to—energies, knowledge, hidden resources etc.
  on tap Freely and immediately available (as when you only have to turn on the tap to obtain a drink).
cock-sure Arrogantly certain. (Originally = quite secure, as is a barrel when fitted with a cock [tap], or a gun when fitted with a cock on the firelock.)

**set cock-a-hoop** [1519] Be prodigal, joyfully extravagant. (From the practice of pulling out the cock of a barrel and putting it on top—on the hoop—and then drinking continuously.)

cock-a-hoop Exultant (see above).

give vent to... Allow to escape; give free outlet to—feelings, words etc.

take out the spigot [vent-peg, barrel tap] Give vent to, generally [Ayr].

like spicket and faucet [spigot and tap—nLin] Flowing copiously—of blood.

**spare at the spigot and spill at the bung** [1642] Be miserly in small things and wasteful in large.

spiddock-pot legs [=spigot-pot, a large earthen jar with a spigot-hole in the bottom—wYks] Thick, clumsy legs.

drunk as a bunghole
bunghole Cheese (possibly because of its constipating effect).

leak out Come to public knowledge unofficially.

leak (v and n) (Allow an) improper or even deliberate release of information. (See above.)

leck (n) [=leak] Windfall [Yks Lan].

a drap in the house [=a drip, leak—Sc] Someone in the company not to be trusted.

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**K.19a Wine pots**

pot-belly A gut the shape of a wine-pot, pearshaped.

**K.19b Bottles**

tight as a bottle

slipper as a glass bottle [Cor]

**a drunkard’s purse is a bottle** [1640]


**green as bottle-glass**

**bottle-green** A deep blue-green.

face like a brandy bottle [Cor] Red-faced.

**bottle-neck** Narrow part of road; point where congestion occurs.

**worse face than under a cork upon a bottle** (‘Greybeard’ bottles were produced with a hideous bearded visage on the neck. [See J. Marryat, History of Pottery and Porcelain—1850] In the time of King James they were called ‘Bellarmines’ in ridicule of
Cardinal Bellarmine who informed James that the oaths of allegiance of Catholic subjects to a Protestant monarch were invalid.)

- **bottle up**—emotions etc. Suppress, repress, restrain them.
- **keep the cap on the bottle** Suppress unfavourable facts or information.
- **cold as the inside of a pop-bottle** (A stone one, no doubt.)
- **codswallop** Froth and nonsense; imaginative rubbish. (Bottles with glass marble stoppers were invented by Hiram Codd in 1875. The phrase ‘a load of Codd’s wallop’ expressed the derision of strong beer drinkers for the mineral waters sold in Codd’s bottles.)
- **jaup** [the sound of liquid sloshing about in a bottle, egg etc.—nEng] Senseless talk [nLin].
- **lose your bottle** [collection or share of money—Sc] Fail sexually—of the man; lose courage, spirits, nerve [1950s].
- **bottle it** Lose courage. (As/from the above.)
- **break a bottle in an empty sack** Defraud through a wager. (The phrase contradicts itself.)

**K.19c Corks**

- **save a cork** [Dor] Go drinking with someone who is bottling beer.
- **corker** Final blow or retort to close a matter (like the hammer-blow that drives the cork into the bottle-neck); something or someone exceptional, especially an attractive girl. The further meaning of something astonishing is probably connected with caulker.
- **keep the cork on** Control your emotions.
- **straight as a corkscrew** Immoral, completely dishonest.
- **queer as a left-handed corkscrew** Very eccentric; a committed homosexual (implying that he/she does things opposite to normal).
- **draw the cork** Give a bloody nose.
- **draw their cork** [IMa] Triumph over them.
- **pops his cork** [Amer] Explodes with anger.
- **cork-brained/-headed** Light-headed, foolish, frivolous.
- **bob up (like a cork)** Return, irrepressibly, after a set-back; reappear suddenly.

**K.20 Beer**

- **merry-go-down** Good ale.
play merry-come-up with...[sOxf] Play havoc with, ravage, turn topsy turvy. (From a reversal of the above.)

egg in my beer [Amer] The height of luxury; something beyond what could reasonably be expected.

thick as grout [a thick ale—wEng]

small beer Unimportant people or things, and acceptable only in default of better. (Probably originates in the phrase ‘chronicle small Beere’ [Shaks, Oth II.i—1603].)

couldn’t blow the froth off a glass of beer! [Aus] Of someone feeble.

stale as old beer

worse-tempered than a barrel of sour ale ‘Wur nor a barrel o’ sour ale’ [sLan] Very ill-tempered.

mends—as sour ale mends in summer [1546] Only gets worse.

sour as elliker [=alegar, sour ale, vinegar : Lakel]

such beer, such bottle The state of the house reflects the character of the inhabitant.

brisk as bottled ale [Ire 1819] Active.

we’re only here for the beer! Don’t expect us to help or join in; we’ve only come to enjoy ourselves.

take the can back/carry the can [1929] Take the blame. (From the idea that the one who is delegated to take the can back for a refill will be required to explain how it has been consumed so soon.)

K.21a Wine

vintage Year or period in the past memorable for quality of—whatever. ‘Vintage car’, ‘vintage year for history students’ etc.

you cannot know wine by the barrel [1611] Neither report nor appearance bring knowledge, only experience does that.

a wine will taste of the cask [1579] On the effect of environment, upbringing etc.

wine in the bottle doesn’t quench thirst [1640] Develop your gifts, potentialities; an answer to counsels of temperance or chastity.

he cries wine and sells vinegar His actions fall short of his promises.

sweetest wine makes sharpest vinegar Corruption of the best is all the worse.

siphon off Judiciously separate the good from the bad; divert, tempt members out of their organisation; embezzle money.

put water in your wine Be more moderate.

a fair woman without virtue is like palled wine [which is flat and stale through exposure to the air]

the dregs [the lees of wine; the settled solids, such as tea-leaves in an infusion] The worst, useless element, the rejects of a society.

there are lees to every wine No one without some defect.

settle on the lees Make the best of a bad job; make do with a small remainder—as after wasting a fortune.


drain to the lees Experience to the full, to the bitter end, proceed even further than is advisable.
to the dregs Completely, without leaving anything (untried).
when the wine is run out you’d stop the leak Do a job too late to be of use.

K.21b Types of wine

champagne Something exhilarating.
bubbly—girl, personality Outgoing, welcoming, effervescent.
broach his claret/tap his claret jug Give him a bloody nose.

K.21c Spirits

safe as brandy [Nhp]
balderdash [frothy melange of liquors] Nonsense [1674].
clear as gin [Aus] Of river water.

K.22a Preparing the drink

cocktail (n) [1971] Combination of miscellaneous ingredients, factors, circumstances etc.
gone for a Burton [a strong ale, originally a blend of two beers—Glo] Died; been destroyed [RAF 1939]. (From the idea that he has gone for something so much stronger than his usual that we shall not be seeing him again.)
as weak as wassail (Because made with weaker beverages.)
water down Reduce strength, effectiveness (as when diluting strong drink). ‘He watered down his account by omitting the worst details.’
dilute (v) doctrines, policies (When too strong for the recipient.) Modify them.
like two penn’orth of eels waiting for the liquor [Cockney] Waiting aimlessly; loafing about. (Jellied eels were often served in East End pubs.)
standing there like two of eels Dreamily, vacantly. (As/from the above.)
K.22b Drinking vessels

cup and can [1546] Constant friends.
   merry as cup and can
   pot-sure With a confidence engendered by drink.
   foul as an empty gill-pot [sLan]

K.22c Drinking

no small drink [Sc] Of considerable importance, consequence.
   a cup in the pate is a mile in the gate [way] A drink for the road is as good as having
gone a mile.
   a cup too low Moping and cheerless (suggesting that another drink is needed to raise
the spirits).
   turd in the punchbowl [Amer] Something received or discovered without
enthusiasm.
   to be a cuckold and know it not is no more than drink with a fly in the cup and
see it not
   swallow a flee [=fly]/spider [Sc] Be a sot.
   supernaculum The best wine. (From the old custom of leaving a drop in the bottom
of the glass to tip on the thumb-nail. The better the wine, the less would be left.)
   make a pearl on your nail [1592] Drink the cup empty and tip the last drop on your
nail. (As/from the above.)
   take a last drink Drown.

K.22d Drinking in company

drink with the flies [Aus] Drink alone, or with no other company than that of the flies.
   flap-dragon/snap-dragon [Nrf; a drinking game where raisins are snatched out of
blazing brandy, thrown in the mouth, extinguished there and eaten] Syphilis or
gonorrhoea.
   splash out Spend recklessly (as if splashing liquor out of a bowl to give everyone a
share).
   hob-nob [1828] Chat confidentially; converse affably. (Originally a drinking toast:
‘Here’s to your health, rich or poor, have or have-not, hab or nab, hob or nob, hob-nob!’)
a peg too low [1589] Despondent. (The earlier meaning was tipsy, suggesting its derivation was from the pegs that marked drinking shares in a communal tankard. The sense-connection may have come via ‘the maudlin stage’.)

all talk and no cider [Penn] Said when performance falls short of expectation.

pass the bottle of smoke Cant; give countenance to a conventional falsehood; agree to a white lie (as if pretending that a bottle containing only the fumes of its liquor is still supplying drink to the company).

back-handers Tip, bribe. (From the receipt of an extra glass of wine, out of turn, the bottle being handed back.)

like old Ratcher’s cream-jug, that keeps going round and round and never stops till somebody’s under the table [sLan]

K.22e Drinking too much

give him kelty [force a reluctant drinker to take a double portion—Sc] Persuade an unwilling person to do something.

drunk as rosin [warmed up with drink < rosin (v)=drink hard—IMa] Very drunk.

easy as falling off a chair when drunk

stagger like a drunken man [1530]

walk the chalk/chalk line Live soberly; behave properly; keep to a course of action without deviating. (One test of a drunkard’s capability is to make them try to walk along a chalk line on the ground.)

walk a/the crack [in floor boards] Keep orthodox, behave correctly.

sobering thought, remark etc. One of such serious import as to have the effect of dispelling levity and establishing graver, more responsible attitudes.

K.23 Parties, clubs

festooned with…Hung around with, generously garlanded with [ < It festone=garland or decoration for a feast].

it’s no picnic It is a serious, hard task; but a picnic [Aus]=an awkward or nasty situation.

one sandwich short of a picnic Mentally lacking.

invite criticism, trouble etc. Provoke, bring upon yourself.


clam-bake [party where, originally, cooked clam was the main dish—Amer 1937] Loud, lively gathering; an enjoyable time; broadcast-ing failure caused by inadequate rehearsal [Amer].

the party’s over You have had your fun, now be serious.
welcome to the club! [Amer] So the same has happened to you as to the rest of us; now we are in the same predicament.

in the (pudden) club Pregnant.
bounced like a young widow at a club dinner [sLan]

K.24 Smoking and chewing tobacco

the Queen’s (tobacco) pipe [1843] The furnace in the Port of London where customs officers burnt confiscated tobacco.

plain as a pipe-stem
frush [=froff, brittle—Sc Ire nEng] as a pipe-stapple [Ire] (Clay pipe-stems were very easily snapped.)
snap like a pipe-staple [Slk Rxb nIre NCy Nhb Cum Dur]
hasna the pith o’ a pipe-staple [pipe-stem Sc]
I’ll go, though it should rain old wives and pipe-stapples [sSc] A determination to be there, whatever the obstacles.
take your tobacco [nIre] Don’t be in a hurry.
has filled his pipe Has attained to easy circumstances or wealth.
filled his pipe and left others to enjoy it Left a fortune for his heirs to dissipate.
in the filling of a pipe In a short time.
put that in your pipe and smoke it! [1836] Think over that and take it to heart—usually administered at the end of a rebuke or home-truth.
blow smoke [Amer] Boast, brag.
pipe-dream [1896] Unrealistic ambition or daydream (as if induced by smoking opium or a tobacco drugged with a hallucinogen).
pipe [Amer] Anything easily achieved. Hence, pipe-course=an easy course for students. (From the above.)
put his pipe out [Sc nLin] Quench his ardour; arrest his success; subdue, silence him.
hubble-bubble [primitive hookah] Babble of confused voices.
make dead men chew tobacco [naut] Retain dead or departed men on the pay-roll.
chews his tobacco twice Is mean.
packed like cigarettes [Calif]
as much use as an ash-tray on a motor bike
not worth a bumper [fag-end—Aus]
so low he could sit on a cigarette paper and hang his feet over the edge [Calif]
talk like the back of a cigarette card Speak in a stilted style, affecting more learning than you have.
K.25a Snuff

dry as snuff [Cum]
  up to snuff [1811] Advanced, precocious; not to be deceived; no longer childish or
  naïve (as you would expect of one who was ready to take snuff).
give snuff to…Deal severely with; reprimand.
beat to snuff Defeat. (As/from the above.)
in high snuff Elated; on form.
sneeshing [pinch of snuff—Sc Ire Nhb] Something of little value.

K.25b Drugs

hype up Artificially, wilfully stimulate or overexcite someone, or yourself. (From the
  administering of stimulating drugs by hypodermic injections.)
  spaced out Unrealistic, high-flown, out of touch with ordinary people. (From the
  sensation when ‘high’ on hallucinogenic drugs.)
  get a charge [dose of a drug] out of…Obtain a thrill or satisfaction from something.
  buzz [late 1940s] Thrill; feeling of happiness or achievement. (From the expression of
  drug-users for the pleasant sensation induced by certain drugs.)
  opium/opiate An anodyne or consolation for the (various) pains and troubles of life.
  (Opium and similar drugs induce a hazy forgetfulness of your circumstances.)

K.26a Inns and hotels

common as a tavern door
doss in the Star Hotel [NZ] Sleep out in the open.
  bed-and-breakfast Temporary and fraudulent movement of sheep on to farms where
  the ministry is due to take a census for subsidy calculations. As soon as the visit is over
  they are moved to other farms for the same purpose.

K.26b Inn-signs

red as the Rising Sun at Bromford [prob. Bromford near Erdington—War]
red as Martlesham Lion [Suf]
has a face like the Red Lion of Brentford
live under (the sign of) the cat’s foot [1678] Be henpecked; on sufferance (like a mouse under a cat’s foot).

stand like the dun cow Awkwardly, stiffly, without response or help (like a caricature on an inn-sign, or even in heraldry, a dun cow being the cognizance of the Earldom of Richmond).

good wine needs no bush [1539] Only inferior goods need advertisement. (Flowers and branches used to be hung outside inns to advertise the wine.) Similarly, gude ale needs nae wisp [Sc: 1500–20].

K.26c Ininside

the tavern bitch hath bitten him in the head He is drunk.

swallow a tavern token [1601] Be drunk.

there’s no (such thing as a) free lunch [Amer] You will have to pay for this one way or another. (Old-time saloons used to offer free lunches to those who were buying drinks.)

on the side [1893] In addition, extra to entitlement. (In American bars or drugstores, when cigars, soda water etc. were ‘put on the side’, they were an extra to what was expected or paid for.)

a bit on the side=extra-marital intercourse.

reckon without our host [1489] Omit an important consideration or possibility; do business in the absence of the person most concerned; overlook a difficulty.

pay off old scores/quit scores with…Get revenge, retribution (from paying off old scores=debts).

clean the slate/scrub/wipe the slate clean Settle all debts, obligations; clear the record; forgive the past; forget, ignore it.

a clean slate A new start without debts; a complete pardon.

market-fresh [Nhp]/market-merry [Shr Nhp]/ market-peart [Shr sNhp nOxf] Merry, not quite drunk.

market-notch [=market-notch, the limit allowed a man by the landlord on marketday—Dor, see T.Hardy, Tess of the d’Urbervilles ii] Full quota of drink.

K.27 Barmen

drunk as a tapster

nick and froth Tapster’s fraud.

the tapster is undone by chalk (i.e. by giving credit)
K.28 Games, keeping score

looks as if he had neither lost nor won [wYks : 1590] Looks stupid, inanimate.

can you tie that? [equal that score—Amer Can] Match, come up to it. Often as an exclamation of surprise—‘Tie that!’

get up a notch [tally, score on stick—Oxf] Improve in position or circumstances.

chalk up an achievement, success etc. Get it recognised.

score (n) State of affairs; main point or crux of a matter.

know the score [1938] Be well aware of what is involved and of the likely outcome; be up-to-date with the relevant information [Amer].

one up against my duck-house [Aus] Something that baffles or defeats me. (From keeping the score on the duck-house wall or door.)

upset my duck-house [Aus] Foil my plans. (As/ from the above.)

duck-house (v) [Aus] Outwit, baffle, score over. (From the above.)

put a cross/an X on the wall! [Aus] A comment on something done unexpectedly or out-of-character.

K.29a Athletics—running

walk-over An easy victory (as in a race where, through lack of entries, a runner has only to ‘walk over’ the finish to gain a place).

work-out [strenuous training session for athletes] Preliminary trial, practice, working test.

succinct [<Lat succingo=gird up ready for effective action, with all loose, extraneous parts tucked out of the way] Terse, pithy, concise.

not in the race to…[Aus] Without a hope or chance of achieving something.

the dart is set up for…The rewards, advantages are well-known, publicised. (An arrow was the prize at many medieval sports meetings.)

The dart is set up for virginitee

[G.Chaucer, Prologue of the Wyves Tale of Bathe ln.75–1386]

come up to scratch [1824] Show good performance; do all that is required and expected (which in athletics would qualify you to start from scratch—q.v.).

start from scratch Begin without any start or prior advantage (from handicapping the better runners by starting them further back than the slower competitors, i.e. on the ‘scratch’ line).

toe the line/trig [the starting line for a race and also the standing line for quoits etc.—Ire Nhb War EAn] Conform. To toe the party line=to be politically orthodox.

stand her/his trig [Nhb] Be ready to start whatever.

from the word ‘go’ From the very beginning.
at the drop of a hat [1854] Ready, on the slightest pretext or hint. (The starting of children’s races was often signalled by dropping a hat.)
drop the rag [Amer] Give permission; signal the go-ahead (as if by pre-arrangement at the lowering of a flag).
false start A bad beginning. (From starting to run before the starter’s signal.)
back to the trig! [Nh] Start again; have another try, starting at the beginning.
beat the starter Become pregnant before the wedding.
jump the gun [1942] Anticipate the moment; start too soon; act before the agreement or permission.
be left/stay at the starting line Be at an initial disadvantage.
leave them standing Make much faster progress.
go off at score Start vigorously, especially to declaim on a pet subject. (The score was the starting line for a race.)
be quick/slow off the mark [1917] Lose no/ waste time in starting.
get/set off on the right/wrong foot [1909] Make a good/bad start. (There could well be a connection here with the belief of the ancient Romans that it was a bad omen to set off on the left foot. For this reason their temple steps were always of an odd number so that the right foot might touch the first step and first enter the temple.)
get off the block(s) [Amer] Make a quick start at anything (from starting-blocks for sprinters and hurdlers).
a good start is half the race [Ont NY 111]
a flying start [one where the runners are already racing when they reach the starting line] The advantage of a good or early start. Also, head-start=an early advantage in a race. (See also K.50b.)
sandbag (v) [Amer 1965] Purposely under-perform in order to get a better handicap (from running more slowly, as if carrying a sandbag). Occurs in poker tactics [1940].
come/tread hard on the heels of…Immediately follow.
come inside…[Ire] Push someone aside; supplant someone (as if taking the inside lane).
have/be on an inside track [passim+Amer] Have an advantage, especially of sound information; be lucky generally.
set the pace Give an exacting example or standard.
go the pace Lead a dissolute life.
pace-maker/pace-setter A leader and example to others of what can or should be done often in matters of fashion; surgical device inserted in the chest to ensure regular heart-beats through electrical stimuli.
stand/stay the pace Continue to the end; keep up with the work.
keep pace/up with…[1647] Stay level with, variously, as ‘wages kept pace with inflation’; ‘keep up with the Joneses’=recognizably maintain the same social status as your neighbours.
keep abreast of…[1845] Cope with, avoid dropping behind or losing touch with events, recent developments etc.
do/make his/her/their dash [Aus 1916] Make a final, desperate, exhausting effort.
cursory [<Lat cursorius=like a racing athlete] Fleeting, hasty (as if seen or done while running past).
in the running Likely to succeed, eligible.
out of the running With no chance of participating, let alone winning.
make the running [1855] Dictate the policy, control the speed etc.
second wind [recovery after initial breathless-ness] Renewal of vigour, energy, achievement.
jog along with… Assent to, acquiesce in, form a loose association with.
in the long run [1656] Finally; discounting previous setbacks.
marathon swim, piece of music, speech etc. One of exceptional length and requiring extraordinary endurance. (From the twenty-six-mile running race named after the Greek battle of Marathon in 490 BC from which Pheidippides ran all the way to Sparta to ask for help.)
goal [finishing line of race—1531] Objective, proposed end, variously.
come up to the wire [finishing tape—Amer] Get near to finishing.
go (down) to the wire [Amer] Be in close competition right to the end. (As/from the above.)
kiss the post Do without due reward.
pot-hunter One who enters examinations for the sake of the qualification rather than the education; sportsman who shoots at everything; professional competitor.
do a Bannister [=Dr Roger Bannister who was the first to run a four-minute mile on 6 May 1954] Go unusually fast.
track record [Amer 1965] Evidence of a person’s capabilities and achievements to date.

K.29b Athletics—relay racing

torch of learning, knowledge, tradition etc. (In a torch-race, each runner has to keep his torch alight and pass on the flame to his successor, just as learning has to be handed on from one generation to another.) Hence:
hand on the torch Keep the tradition alive.

K.29c Athletics—hurdling

hurdle One of a series of obstacles, tasks or difficulties.
fall at the last hurdle Successfully overcome a series of difficulties, only to fail at the very last.
K.29d Athletics—jumping

**jump to conclusions** Arrive at a (less reliable) opinion—across empty space—instead of by logical progression.

**overstep the mark** Transgress the bounds of decency or accepted behaviour (as if in the long jump).

**by leaps and bounds** By surprisingly quick advances or increase.

**hop-skip-and-jump pudding** [Brks] One where the fruit is as widely spaced as possible.

**peg prices etc. at the present level** Stabilise, prohibit further raising or lowering (as of a high-jump bar).

**peg (n) [1933]** Limit imposed on currency exchange rate.

**for the high-jump [hanging]** Destined shortly for serious trouble. (See also K.50b.)

**reculer pour mieux sauter** [Fr=draw back in order to jump better] Take a break, a diversion in order to return to a task with renewed energies, fresh ideas etc. (Such a withdrawal or retrenching often results in a better performance afterwards.)

K.29e Athletics—field events

**make/keep your putt good** [Sc nYks] Make good your position; make your point.

**ejaculate** [<Lat e-jaculari=throw the javelin out]

K.30a Swimming and diving

**go/be dropped/be pushed in at the deep end** [1922] Enter something that is in full swing, without preparation, unceremoniously (as if learning to swim at the deeper end of the baths).

**go (in) off the deep end** [1921] Get unnecessarily excited or agitated; lose your temper; have an irregular love affair. (Possibly from the reaction of someone who did not intend to go in thus.)

**teeter on the brink/edge/verge of...** Totter, dither, be insecurely placed on at the start of something.

**poised to.../over.../on the brink of...** Just on the point of, nearly starting to.

**spring-board** Means of attainment; position used merely to proceed to something better; vantage point for launching into a new venture etc.
K.30b Surf-riding

**train-surf/surf** [1980s Rio de Janeiro Amer UK] Ride on the outside of trains for the thrill (as in sea-surfing).

**surf the internet** [1990s] Search for information on the internet (an activity involving similar alternations of waiting and exhilaration).

**jump when the wave is on the swell** [NY] Study the situation and then pick the right moment.

**in the tube** [Aus Amer] Doing well; where you want to be; at the moment of achievement (from the position of a surfer under the curl of a wave [=in the tube] at the time of the greatest risk). Hence:

**tubular** [Amer 1982] A general term of hyperbole, meaning fantastic, exciting, weird.

K.31a Winter sports—curling

**cauld as a curling stane** [Sc] Which slides on ice.

**get out (of) his rink** [team, course for curling Sc Dwn] Go astray morally; lead a dissolute life.

**ken to soop** [=sweep—Sc] **the ice to any rink** [Dmb] Have all your wits about you. (You quicken the speed of a curling stone by sweeping a path clear in front of it.)

**let ilka** [every] **man soop the ice wi’ his ain besom** [Sc] Everyone must do their own work in their own way; must do his best with what talents he has.

**lie at the hog-score** [the distance line which a stone must pass to be counted in the game Sc] Be unable to surmount a difficulty, or to make progress beyond a certain point.

K.31b Winter sports—snowballing

**snowball** (v) Grow larger at an ever-increasing rate.

**cast all your snowballs** [Edb] Become bashful, show reserve.

**snowman** A deceiver; one who easily charms the women.
K.31c Winter sports—sledging

**breakneck speed** Fast enough to result in a broken neck if you fall—from a sledge, skis, a horse etc.

**roller-coaster (n)—of a book etc.** An exceptionally good one (as a roller-coaster is an exceptional sledge, running on rollers).

**roller-coaster along** Keep going indefatigably, work incessantly.

**go on the toboggan** [Amer] Deteriorate seriously. (See also F.23b.)

K.3 1d Winter sports—skating and skiing

**skating rink** A dangerously icy road.

**get your skates on!** [1895] Prepare to do this more quickly; work against time.

**skate (v) [Amer]** Evade a duty; default on a debt.

**slide (v) [Amer]** Depart.

**skate over/round the facts** Pass quickly over unwelcome or awkward facts; avoid facing an issue.

**skate/tread on thin ice** Follow a risky course; go to the very limit of safety; undertake negotiations demanding much tact.

**skirled** [slid on ice—Cum Wm Yks Lan] to death Very worried.

**get shirled/sholled on** [slide—nEng Dev] Pass on through life decently.

**scull around** [skate without lifting skates from ice] Lie around untidily, especially of articles left on deck where they slide about with the ship’s motion; move aimlessly.

**split-arse airman** A daring and high-class stunt flier. (After those ice-skaters who kick their legs into the ‘splits’ position during an ice-jump.)

**split-arse plane** One that manoeuvres well. (As above.)

**fall on your ass** [Amer] Fail.

**never ski the last run** [NJ] Do not push your luck to the limit; stop before it is too late. (The last run of the day is when most accidents occur.)

K.32a Football

**a level playing-field** [1980s] The establishment of fair conditions for negotiations, an election etc.; the prerequisite for a just outcome, generally.

**ask which way you are playing** Find out the conditions and procedure required.

**line up with...** [Amer] Support, side with—variously.

**Italian football** [Amer] Grenade.
bounce the ball [a preliminary to most games] Test public opinion; test the market [UK NZ].

kick it around Try out—a plan, theory etc.—by discussion and asking for opinions.

kick off (with) Start the proceedings (with).

on the ball Well up with the situation; in a position of participation, if not control.

keep your eye on the ball Concentrate on what you are doing; don’t be distracted or diverted.

set the ball rolling Put the process (whatever) into motion or operation.

keep the ball rolling Don’t interrupt the work or continuity.

has the ball at his/her feet Is in full control; is in a position to improve him/herself.

own-goal [British army 1976] Someone on your own side killed by mishap or mistake when attempting an operation against the enemy; misfortune or injury incurred by your own actions. (If players kick or knock the ball in error through their own goal, it is counted against their own side.)

move the goalposts Alter the rules or regulations—or the interpretation of them—to obtain a more favourable result than was likely under previous arrangements.

opposite number Equivalent rank or position in an opposing party, company or nation. (Players often have numbers on their shirts to help quick identification by referee or spectators.)

league Class, generally.

out of your league Outside your proper sphere; beyond your capabilities.

league tables Order of ability or achievement.

bump along the bottom Continue hopelessly and uncomfortably behind the others (like a club at the bottom of the football league table).

kick back (v) Return money or goods to the person from whom they were stolen.

kick-back (n) A refund of money; payment (like a bribe) to someone who has helped put through a deal.

kick in Pay a share; contribute to the expenses; start to take effect—of drugs etc.

kick for touch! Here’s a tricky situation, try and get out of it as soon as possible.

kick into touch Cut short any further development. ‘This idea was kicked into touch at the meeting.’

kick it into the long grass (As when disposing of a practice ball at the start of a proper game.) Dismiss, reject, forget it.

side-step—an issue, question etc. Cunningly avoid answering or facing it (as footballers in possession of the ball side-step to avoid a player coming to tackle them).

jink [a swerve, as when ‘selling a dummy’] A swerve, generally, in a course of travel or thought.

make/run rings/small circles round…Completely outclass someone (because a player who can run so fast round an opponent as not to be tackled even when making small circles, must be much quicker).

catch on the hop Catch unawares, and so at a disadvantage.

blow the whistle on…[1934] Abruptly stop someone’s activities; inform the police about a crime or criminal. (From the immediate cession of play when the referee blows the whistle for an infringement.) Also, a whistle-blower is a public protesters, and see C.21f.

have your card marked Be cautioned.
**send to the showers** [Amer] Dismiss for bad conduct.

**take an early bath** (As a player would who had been sent off the field for misconduct.) Be dismissed peremptorily.

**a’s fair at the ba’ o’ Scone** [=Scone ball-game—Sc] There are no restrictions here.

**into injury time** Past the time when you would normally have finished. Of those who are over seventy years old, or have passed a delivery deadline, or who are attempting in their old age work that they should have done in their prime. (From the extra time allowed by the referee to compensate for time spent earlier in the game attending to injured players.)

**locker-room sex** Sexual relations that are brief, basic, furtive, experimental and purely physical.

**quarterback** [American football player who co-ordinates the team’s play] Capable organiser, variously.

**Monday morning quarterbacking** Agonising about past events; holding recriminatory and critical ‘post mortems’; predicting events that have already happened.

**pick up the ball and run with it** [Amer] Commit yourself and take the necessary action.

**catch flat-footed** Unprepared (like an American footballer receiving a pass).

**I had her on the five-yard line** [i.e. very near to a touch-down in American football] I very nearly got what I wanted—applied to various frustrations.

**when push comes to shove** [Amer 1958] When the serious action starts, when the worst comes to the worst; when something finally occurs to precipitate work that has been long postponed.

**go for the long ball** [Amer] Take a large risk for a large gain. (The term for a long desperation pass.)

**get a guernsey** [a jersey as prescribed for Australian rules football] Receive proper recognition [Aus].

**score (v)/score between the posts** [Aus] Manage to achieve sexual intercourse with a woman.

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**K.32b Watching football**

**take a rain-check** [a ticket, or the stub of one, valid for the replay of a game cancelled because of bad weather—Amer 1930] Accept for some other time; agree to deferment of a promise; receive a chitty certifying that you have ordered something not yet available.

**replay** (n) A simple repetition of almost any event involving two or more people.

**bystander effect** Where cancerous cells that are dying tend to affect one another.

**sit/stand on the side-lines** Refrain from taking sides or helping; stand by in readiness to help if needed.

**side-line** (v) Remove from the centre of affairs and relegate to a peripheral and less active position.

**fill in his coupon** [Sc] Slash his face with a broken bottle. (From the marking of football pools coupons on random impulse.)
K.33a Cricket—fielding

cricket-team [Aus] A derisively sparse moustache (eleven a side!). Also called an ‘eleven-a-side’.

hard as a cricket ball
not cricket! Not decent behaviour, not socially acceptable.
let the side down Embarrass your colleagues; frustrate their efforts.
open the bowling Start proceedings; begin the (usually verbal) attack.
pull/put a fast one over... Trick, defraud by sharp practice. (From a bowling trick, to send a fast ball after several slow ones.)
spin (n) [1978] Bias or slant to give (un)favour-able impression about news or policies to the public.
body-line work Dishonest or unfair practice (from the body-line bowling dispute of 1932).
overpitch (v) Exaggerate.
bowl out Defeat; astound.
stump a person Ask a question they cannot answer.
miss catches Lose chances, generally.
catch someone out Make him convict himself or betray something, usually by a trick question or move.
hat-trick Three achievements in succession. (Originally three wickets taken in three successive balls, sufficient to entitle a bowler to be given a new hat, or its equivalent, by his club.)
a long-stop Further precaution, last resort. (The long-stop should pick up those balls that the wicket-keeper misses.)
field (v) Cope with, deal with; dispose of any quick succession of items, questions etc.
draw stumps Conclude a matter.

K.33b Cricket—batting

bat and bowl Be bisexual.
on a good wicket [Aus] Enjoying financial success, advantages generally.
bat on a losing/sticky wicket Face a difficult task’ operate at a disadvantage.
on the back foot At a disadvantage (as is a batsman when forced back by a difficult ball).
play yourself in Give yourself a settling-in period for learning and getting used to new skills, rules and conditions.
off his/her own bat On their own initiative; by their own efforts.
play a straight bat Act in a straightforward, wholesome manner, without being devious.
ball-on-the-bat [Sur] Scapegoat. ‘Tried to make me a ball-on-the-bat between him and the police.’

score off...Gain an advantage over; humiliate, usually by wit or trickery.

score (a) point(s) off...(As/from the above.)

state-of-play The situation existing at that moment.

tip-and-run raids Those in WW1 and WW2 when German sea or air raiders made a quick strike across the Channel and then withdrew.

has had a good innings Had a good life or career—usually of someone near the end of it.

hit out at...Attack, usually verbally. (Also, possibly, from boxing.)

play into the hands of...Act precisely as your opponents would wish; give them an advantage.

hit/knock for six Deal a severe and unexpected blow to; demolish an argument, scheme etc.; astonish, discompose someone.

carry his bat Outlast others, outlive his contemporaries; succeed in the end. (In those games where there were only two bats, only the last two batsmen, one of whom was notout, would carry their bats in from the wicket.)

over the fence [Aus NZ] Of a person, unscrupulous, greedy or scandalous beyond the bounds of reasonable conduct.

appeal against the light [Aus] Object, reason or no; any excuse will serve for our refusal or awkwardness.

off my turf Out of my own area of knowledge, beyond my subject; in unfamiliar territory.

K.34 Baseball, basketball

(All these expressions are American in origin.)

older than baseball

(not) in the (right) ball-park [baseball-ground] Off/on target, objective. ‘Not even in the ball-park’=not even remotely workable, relevant, realistic.

all over the ball-park Confused, inconsistent.

ball-park figures A rough approximation.

grandstanding The popularisation of science by producing showy books and TV programmes.

play hardball [baseball] Be serious and inflexible (in contrast to playing softball).

softball—policy etc. Feeble, slack.

play the field [1936] Try out all partners or possibilities; avoid commitment; embrace many causes. Especially used of sexual promiscuity. (This metaphor probably had vague origins in several field games, and perhaps even in horse-racing, where punters bet on others than the favourites.)

go to bat against/for...Challenge, contend with generally/support.

right off the bat Swiftly, instantly.

first base; second base [1983] Sexual advances above or below the waist.
get to first base Achieve the first step towards your objective.
touch base with...Consult.
off-base/off your base Mistaken; inaccurate; not called for, inappropriate, presumptuous; crazy.
you can’t steal second base while your foot is on first [I11] To get what you want you will need to take a risk and make a move.
a man who tries to get home on a three-base hit is generally thrown out at the plate [NJ] If you are too ambitious you risk losing all.
touch all bases Be thorough, omit nothing—in negotiations.
out in the left field [an area of play outside the centre of activity] Out of touch with events; crazy, unorthodox, weirdly unconventional.
on deck [the circle marked out for the next batter] Ready and waiting.
pinch-hitter [substitute batter] One who substitutes for another in a crisis.
get to home plate Achieve sexual union.
in there pitching Coping energetically and successfully.
make a (strong) pitch for...Try hard, seriously for, make a committed effort to achieve.
pitch for...Support actively, agitate for, promote the cause of. (As above.)
lowball [1961] Low price offered to generate customer interest.
screwball (n) [in cricket, a ball bowled with spin; in baseball, a ball pitched with reverse spin against the natural curve of flight] A madman, eccentric (because of the unorthodox and unexpected results of his actions).
put spin/top-spin on to—an article, news report etc. [Amer 1980s] Enhance with more vivid or sensational material. Hence, a spin-doctor [1980s] is an agent or publicist who presents the affairs of a political party in a suspiciously favourable light.
screwball (adj)/screwy Mad, crazy. (As/from the above.)
spitball (n) [a ball moistened on one side with sweat or spit to make it swerve when pitched—contrary to the rules of baseball] An outrageous insult, piece of insolent impudence.
spitball (v) Throw out ideas for discussion.
have something on the ball Have a certain gift, talent, skill.
good field, no hit Expert in one branch, but not in the other.
have one strike/more strikes against you Have so many things against you, to your discredit.
give it the old college try Keep trying, even if it seems pointless (from the chanting of team cheer-leaders).
three strikes [a rule whereby a hitter is out if he fails to hit any of three fair balls] An American law condemning a criminal convicted of three serious felonies to a life sentence [1980s].
lose the ball-game End in failure, disaster generally.
talk a great ball-game Discuss something persuasively—but without much prospect of anything getting done.

it’s a new ball-game [Aus mid-1940s] We’re starting again, and whatever happened before doesn’t count now.
slamdunk [decisive shot where the ball is slammed down into the basket from a jump—1980s] Action crowned with finality and certainty of success.

K.35a Bandy

bandy-legged With legs curved like bandy sticks.

bandy—words Altercate. (In the game of bandy a hard ball is bandied from side to side with crooked sticks.)

K.35b Shinty

shindy (n) Violent argument, prolonged row not without entertainment. Hence, kick up a shindy and cut shindies [Amer]. (From the Scottish game of shinty, a rough sort of hockey.)

crooked as a cammock [hockey/shinty stick Sc IMa]

jolly hockey sticks! A verbal caricature of the hearty, athletic attitude of public schoolgirls.

shinny's well enough—if shins were safe [shinny=shinty—Cum] It (anything) would be all right, but for the risk.

K.35c Knurr-and-spell, tip-cat, piggy

knurr (n) [small knob of hard wood used in shinty and knurr-and-spell—Sc Ire nEng Nhp Hnt sEng] Rough, hard, ill-natured, short-tempered man. Hence:

knurred [Longtown, Cum 1900s] Awkward, cross-grained.

hard as a knurr [sLan]

right [straight, true] as a knurr-stick [the stick used in knurr-and-spell, a game popular in nEng up to and into the C19, in which a wooden (or sometimes porcelain) ball, the knurr, was struck with the knurr-stick after it had sprung up from the spell, a device with a spring which shot the knurr up into the air] In the Sheffield [Yks] district, the game was played every Shrove Tuesday, and in other parts of the West Riding on Good Friday.

pum [=pummel, the bat used in knurr-and-spell—Cum sWm nLan] Fool, blockhead.

pummel-head [WCy] (As/from the above.)
dead as a trippet [the cat or piggy that was the equivalent of the knurr and which was struck in the boys’ game of tip-cat—Lakel= bunting—Lin] Records of this game go back to 1440.

set the spell up on end [wYks] Be determined to prevail.

**K.35d Hurling**

the best hurler is always on the dike [1856] (i.e. a spectator of the game of hurling, a kind of hockey played in Ireland) The spectator sees most of the game (and conveys the impression that he could play it better).

like a hurler [player in a hurling match, a violent and injurious ball game native to Cornwall and Wales, where it is known as knappan, a different game altogether from that of the Irish] Of rough and unkempt appearance.

what you win on the field, you lose at the saiseamh [the wrestling that followed the hurling matches—Ir-Gael] As in ‘what you gain on the swings…’.

**K.36 Tennis**

round as a ball [1555]

the ball is bandied to the height Preliminaries have reached a critical stage.

…to raise forces against the King if he offers any force against Hull. The ball is almost now banded to the height.

[Knyvett Letter—28 April 1642]

the ball is with…is in our/your/their court The next move lies with…

home-court advantage [Amer] Such advantage as is conferred by familiarity.

catch/take the ball before the bound Anticipate an opportunity.

catch on the wrong foot/standing on one leg/wrong-foot (v) Trick into making a mistake; catch unprepared; put at a disadvantage; upset their plans.

strike the ball under the line [1533] Fail; flout the rules.

have a bisque in my sleeve Have something to fall back on, another resource. (The bisque was an advantage given to a weaker player in tennis, allowing them to score one point once in a set, whenever they chose.)

give him fifteen and a bisque Outclass him entirely. (See above.)

game, set and match A complete and decisive success, victory.
K.37a Squash

**rebound** (v) Return, recoil, to give the originator their own back—or worse. ‘The slander will rebound on himself.’

**on the rebound** In reaction to a previous event. ‘Married on the rebound’=soon after being jilted by a previous lover.

**off the wall** [Amer] Unusual, outrageous, eccentric (because of the unpredictable flight of balls bouncing off the wall in games like squash etc.).

K.37b Badminton

**light as a cleckin** [shuttlecock—Cum]

**shuttlecock** (v) Pass quickly between two or more people. a **shuttlecock existence** [1660] is an unsettled life where a person is frequently moved from one home or job to another.

**nat worth a shyttel-cocke** [J. Skelton, before 1508]

**play at battledore and shuttlecock** [the game that preceded badminton by some three centuries] Go to and fro; change and change about (like the shuttlecock, continually knocked one way and then the other). Also, a **battledore-and-shuttlecock argument or conversation** is one whose main concern is to keep the talk going with repartee and adroit exchanges [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—20 January 1819].

K.38 Golf

**tee up/off** Prepare to start. ‘All teed up’=completely prepared, organised.

**tee...off** [Amer] Hit someone or something hard; make them angry.

**stance** Deliberately adopted position, attitude of mind, particular policy.

**follow-through** (n) Subsequent care and attention.

**hole out in one** [Aus] Become/make pregnant at the first attempt.

**get it in one** Succeed at the first attempt or guess.

**rub of the green** [small irregularity of the turf: 1931] An attendant disadvantage; a risk intrinsic to the situation.

**put me off my stroke** [1914] Disconcert me; spoil my style; distract me from doing my best.

**bunkered** In an awkward situation from which it is difficult to extricate yourself.

**stymied** Obstructed, foiled, baffled. (A stymie is where an opponent’s ball is lying on the putting green in a direct line between the player’s ball and the hole.)
The bar-room of a golf-club. (A golf-course has eighteen holes.)

What you would expect, normal in the circumstances.

**K.39a Bowls**

smooth/flat as a bowling green Usually of turf and other lawns.

**as easy as to bowl downhill**

see how the bowls would row [rolls—Sc] See how things would turn out [eFif].

if the bowls row right [Sc] If all goes well.

**get inside someone** [Dub 1914] Push aside, take their place.

**as near as a toucher** [a bowl that touches the jack—w&middYks]

ty they are upon their jacks [the small target bowls] They have the advantage.

**bias** [the eccentric weighting of bowls] Tendency, prejudice.

**biased** [1628] Prejudiced. (As above.)

**there’s the rub** [the irregularity on a bowling green which diverts or slows the woods]

That’s where the trouble occurs.

**you cannot join a game of bowls half-way through and get the best out of it** To a late-comer.

those who play bowls must expect to meet with rubbers [the final game to decide the winner: 1762] If you put yourself in the way of them, you must expect these disadvantages, days of reckoning.

an honest man and a good bowler! A comment on one who combines two qualities seldom found together.

an honest man; looke you, and soone dasht. He is a marveylous good neighbour, fayth, and a very good Bowler:

[Shaks, LLL V.ii-1595]

In the next quotation Francis Quarles is preaching against the depravity of those who play bowls, accusing them of lust, greed and blasphemies—all provoked by the symbolism of the game. He concludes that the popular saying is wrong:

The vulgar proverb’s crost, he hardly can Be a good bowler and an honest man.

[F.Quarles, Emblem 10 in Bk I—1635]
K.39b Nine-holes

_in the nine-hole(s)_ In trouble, in a difficulty [Amer]. (Nine-holes was an old English game where you rolled small balls into holes in the ground; later adapted to indoor use on a board.)

K.40a Preparing to box

_box with a shadow_ Expend energy against a non-existent opponent; go through the motions of debating a cause that is already decided. (A form of training for boxers.)

_fight with his own shadow_ Talk at random; struggle in vain.

_sparring partner_ Friend with whom you enjoy arguing; with whom you have a love-hate relationship.

_give you Jim Smith_ [a boxer—c.1887] Give you a thrashing.

_the real McCoy_ [Amer]/McKie/MacKay [Sc] The genuine thing; best quality. (From ‘Kid’ McCoy [=Norman Selby, 1873–1941], a champion prize-fighter who had many imitators who took his name, but who were recognizably not ‘the real McCoy’. The American version was adopted from the older phrase, the real MacKay [Sc : 1886], which was itself later applied to several brands of whisky. The origin is probably C17, arising from uncertainty about who was chief of the clan. See also E.Partridge’s article in _From Sanskrit to Brazil_ [H.Hamilton, London, 1952].)

_hold/keep the ring_ Stand aside while others quarrel or fight.

_bottle-holder_ One who gives moral but not material support (like a boxer’s second who merely holds the bottle of water).

_throw his hat into the ring_ Issue/take up a challenge; announce a candidacy.

bring up to scratch [the mark in the centre of a boxing ring where prize-fighters had to stand] Bring to the point of action, fully trained.

_It’s too late to learn how to box when you’re in the ring_ [Ill] Prepare in good time.

_square (your shoulders) up to…_ Face resolutely.

_pack a punch_ Be potentially effective, formidable. In wide, general use, ‘punch’ means any effective vigour.

_keep on your toes_ Be alert and ready.

_ringside seat_ Point of vantage, good position for observation—generally.
**K.40b Boxing**

**set** (v) [manoeuvre someone into a position where they can be knocked down] Contrive a situation for cheating, fooling or ‘framing’ someone.

- **beat him to the punch** Anticipate him.
- **lead with the chin** Attack from your weakest position; ask for trouble.
- **duck out of trouble** Avoid trouble by a sudden evasion.
- **take off the gloves** Get down to serious, uninhibited argument.
- **knool** [beat with knuckles or fist—Sc Nhb Dur] Make someone yield or cringe.
- **knooled** Dispirited, broken. (See above.)
- **couldn’t punch his way out of a paper bag** Is feeble, a poor fighter.
- **pull punches** Be lenient, restrained, refrain from using your full power.
- **pull no punches** [1937] Use full powers of opposition; contend without restraint.
- **infighting** Closely involved negotiation; unofficial and tough conflict within a group, often in a power struggle.

- **fight your own corner** Defend your position, promote your own arguments unaided.
- **rough-and-tumble** [an unofficial boxing match without rules—1832] Describing those areas of social interaction like school playgrounds, the Forces, competitive business and modern politics where the common decencies of fair play and mutual consideration are largely disregarded.

- **according to Rafferty’s rules** [=no rules at all—Aus] Without principle or restraint.
- **straight from the shoulder** Hard hitting, powerful, unrestricted—remark, verbal attack etc.

- **slug** (v) [<slug (n)=hard, heavy blow—Sc n&midEng Cockney Amer (=defeat)] Overcharge [Aus]; extort; render insensible with drugs.
- **clout** (n) Power, influence [1960s]. ‘Carries some clout.’ (From clout=blow, suggesting that the influence could be backed by physical coercion.)

- **have punch behind it** Have a motivating force and powerful impact.
- **punch-line** Climax, crux of a story or joke (having both impact and finality).
- **punchy** [1926] Conveying a telling impact.
- **punch** [1926] Conveying a telling impact.
- **a body-blow** A severe set-back, disabling blow generally
- **box clever** Use skill and cunning rather than brute force.

- **roll with the punches** [a boxer’s stratagem of rolling the body sideways to reduce the force of impact] Cope with difficulties; adapt to troubles as they occur.

- **rock back on your heels** Cope with a mishap, setback or more or less serious blow by minimising the damage and retaining the ability to continue.

- **below the belt** [1890] Mean, unfair—variously.

- **take a swipe at...**[Amer] Criticise savagely, treacherously.

- **take a side-swipe at...** Tackle a related problem or subject incidentally and, as it were, *en passant*, while dealing with a major issue.

- **side-wipe(r)** [sly blow from the side] Sarcasm; indirect censure [Sc Nhb Wm n&w Yks neLan n&seLin Not nwDer Nrf Nhp: 1824].

- **side-blow** Sly, indirect remark or enquiry [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—2 November 1821].

- **put his nose out of joint** [1581] Shatter his self-opinion; supplant him.
ding [strike—passim] on the nose Taunt, reprove.
do in the eye Gain complete and unfair advantage over.
one in the eye A severe set-back; a timely and sharp lesson.
it hits you in the eye Obtrudes upon the sight; offends visually; is very obvious.
ding in his teeth Bring up old offences; charge; reprove.
stagger [cause to totter, reel] Bewilder, render helpless with the shock of amazement.
take it on the chin Accept without evasion; face up to it; be trounced [Amer].
fight back to the ropes Continue to the very end (as in prize-fighting).
on the ropes On the point of collapse, exhausted, virtually defeated.
a blow by blow account [Amer 1937] One giving every detail in strict order (like the radio commentary on a boxing match).
round-by-round recital etc. (As/from the above.)
go the full distance [last the full number of rounds] Be caught, tried, convicted and imprisoned.
outpoint Gain an overall advantage by a series of small successes.

K.40c Losing the fight

saved by the bell [which ends the round, or the match] Saved from a nasty situation by some timely intervention.
the crunch of the matter/when it comes to the crunch In the last resort, at the moment of truth; decisive moment (from the blow to the jaw that crunches the teeth).
knock-out Someone or something or an event with overwhelming impact.
a knock-down argument One that ends the debate; to which there can be no answer.
out for the count [of ten: a boxer is declared defeated if unable to rise within ten seconds] Decisively worsted.
take the long count [Amer] Die.
down and out A loser in life’s struggle; reduced to hopeless poverty.
throw in the towel Admit defeat. (The action of a boxer’s second when his man will not or cannot return to fight the next round.)
chuck/throw in/up the sponge [1861] Abandon an undertaking; concede victory. (As above.)

K.41a Preparing to wrestle

weigh up... Get the measure of; understand someone’s weaknesses; make reckoning of someone’s strength; appraise; understand generally, often as ‘I can’t weigh him up.’
flex their muscles [Amer] Give a menacing show of force; indicate how far they are prepared to go.
throw your weight about  Act belligerently; bully.
no holds barred  Without restriction; all means allowed.
catch-as-catch-can  [a style of wrestling where all holds are permitted except those excluded by mutual consent] Use all available means for the purpose.

turn your belt/girdle  Prepare to fight; find a harmless outlet for anger. (Wrestlers always turned their belt buckles behind them before wrestling.) This form derives from ‘turn the buckle of the girdle’, which Cromwell in 1656 described as ‘an homely expression’.
go to the mat  (where wrestling bouts are held) Engage in an argument or confrontation.

try a fall with…  Test yourself against; contend with someone.
throw  (v)  Confuse, disconcert, upset a person’s balance.
consternation  [<Lat consternare=throw flat on the ground]
dejected  [<Lat de-iacere=cast down]
downcast  (As above.)

he that is thrown would ever wrestle  [1640] A man, once corrupted, tends to be trapped into further episodes.
fall guy  [professional engaged to fake spectacular ‘falls’ in the wrestling ring—Amer 1906] Dupe, victim, especially one ‘set up’ to take the blame.

K.41b Wrestling

agon [<Gk αγωνία=struggle, contest—and already in Classical times extending into the present meaning]
reluctant  [<Lat reluctari=wrestle against]
wrestle with…(v)  Struggle, contend grimly with conscience, a task etc.
worstle  [=wrestle—Sc Ire nEng] a thing out  Puzzle it out, struggle mentally with it.

Cornish hug  [1617] A deceptive welcome, what at first looks like an embrace turns out to be the cause of your downfall.

get/come to grips with…  Tackle seriously, resolutely.
lose your grip  Lose your wonted control, ability.
set your shoulder against…  Oppose strongly, with determination.
push-over  [Amer 1906] Easy success or conquest; easily seduced woman.
have him at a lift  In your power.
cross-buttock  [one of the throws] A surprise rebuff.
have him on the hip  [1546] Gain an advantage over him.
floor  (v)  Confound, nonplus.
sat on  Repressed.
have the heels of…[Sc] Become superior to; take first place.
thrown out on his ear  Dismissed, with impatience and in disgrace.
get my thumb out of his mouth  Escape from his clutches.
stranglehold  Complete dominance; restriction.
subject [<Lat subicere=throw below, subordinate] Hence, a ‘subject nation’ is one placed under the control of another—in subjection.

come out on top Be finally successful, dominant.
go up on his back [Abd] Baffle, defeat him.
nip and tuck [1859] A near thing, close contest. (An old wrestling term from Devon and Cornwall describing a match where there might be no more than a nip [grip] on one side and a tuck [blow or ‘touch’] on the other upon which to make the decision.)

**K.41c After the wrestling**

if you wrestle with a collier, you will get a blotch Expect contamination from corrupt companions.

who wrestles with a turd, to be undermost or uppermost, is sure to be bedirten [Sc wYks] (As above.)

hot as/mouth like a Turkish wrestler’s jockstrap

**K.42 Tug-o’-war**

tug-o’-war Stoutly contested struggle; dispute between separating parties.

anchor-man Successful organiser.
dig your feet/heels in Offer more determined resistance; become obstinate.
take the strain Tackle the work-load; undertake full responsibility.

throw in your weight Give your—considerable—support.

you can’t decide a tug-o’-war by cutting the rope with a knife [Ire] Any solution, to be effective, must satisfy the conditions.

draw Dun out of the mire Assist someone in trouble (from the old English game where a log of wood representing the cart-horse, Dun, is supposed to be in the mire, and the players try to pull it out and obstruct the others in doing so).

If thou art dun, weele draw thee from the mire [Shaks, R&J I.iv—1596]

**K.43 Fencing**

measure swords with...Oppose publicly; try strength against someone.
worthy of my steel A worthy match for my own prowess, reputation.

forte [the strongest part of a blade, from hilt to middle] A person’s speciality, strong point, particular skill.

the buttons are off the foils Niceties of controversy are abandoned.

fence with—question or questioner Avoid answering.

make a pass at...[1928] Make a provocative action, gesture, often towards one of the opposite sex to attract attention.

repercussion (As when a stroke is turned back against yourself.)

thrust and parry Give-and-take in argument; verbal repartee.

parry a question etc. Divert, avoid, ward it off.

touché! The acknowledgement that someone has made their point—with a telling remark.

catch him off his guard Catch him unready to defend himself.

throw him off his guard Trick or lull him into carelessness.

catch him with his defences down (As/from the above.)

lower his guard Relax, become (temporarily) less defensive and suspicious.

an unguarded moment A moment of carelessness before an opponent.

take a venew [a thrust] under the girdle Be got with child.

fight at the leg Profit from any and every situation; turn anything to good account.

K.44 Climbing

climber (n) One bent on improving his/her social position.

he that never climbed never fell [1546] Implying that it is better to come to grief by taking risks and trying, than not to try at all.

climb higher, fall further The greater the ambition, the more painful is loss or failure.

hasty climbers have sudden falls [1449] If you try to proceed too quickly, you will meet setbacks the sooner.

fall (v)—in love, into debt etc. Enter a state involuntarily, as if impelled by a force like that of gravity.

go off/over the edge Become insane; transgress the bounds of reason.

get into a scrape A predicament, risky escapade, usually through thoughtlessness. (From the idea of scraping through a narrow passage, like a chimney, crevice or pot-hole.)

have a toe-hold—in a business, social group etc. A small start from which you can ascend to better things.

dig your toes in Prepare for greater effort.

foothold Start in the ascent—in business, a mission to foreign parts etc.

find your footholds Become established; work out an understanding.

footing Established, secure place; share. ‘To be on a footing’=to enjoy a relationship.

pied à terre [foot on the ground—Fr] Refuge, resort after travels; secure dwelling to/from which you can return/set out.
cliff-hanger [1937] Prolonged suspense; unanswered question; serial melodrama (like the TV dramas of difficult climbs).

make a false step Make an error of judgement, mistake of intention etc.

a large mountain to climb A formidable task ahead.

summit Limit of ambition; highest possible position.

rarefied atmosphere of... Usually refers to a limited élite, an exclusive coterie, a highly specialised discipline or recondite subject.

Everest [the highest mountain on earth] Supreme challenge, achievement, difficulty; moment of highest attainment.

Sherpa [Amer] Presidential adviser, assistant helping climbers to the summit. (Mountaineers on Himalayan expeditions recruit porters from the Sherpas of Nepal.)

K.45a Cycling

on your bike! [UK 1967] On your way! Be off!

free-wheel Proceed with little or no restraint or effort.

free-wheeling [1911] Less prescribed, not so undeviating, without a rigorous discipline—of more liberal courses of study, aleatory music etc.

rides like a town bike Of a woman, have frequent and energetic sex.

bicycle/town-bike/camp-bike Prostitute or easily available woman.

back-pedal Reduce progress; postpone demands; ‘Not so fast! you’ve gone too far’; ‘I can’t believe that’; give back-word. (Backpedalling on certain bikes applies a brake.)

awkward as a chow [Chinaman—Aus] on a bike

get off his bike [Aus] Become angry.

turn my bike [swWar] Go aside to urinate.

puncture (v) pride, reputation etc. Humiliate; flatten with some slight but penetrating remark.

handlebar moustache One with long waxed ends sticking out sideways (favoured by ser-geant-majors).

K.45b Ballooning, gliding

come back/down to earth (with a bump) Return to reality after day-dreaming etc. (as in making a landing from a balloon or glider).
outshoot a man in his own bow [1585] Better him at his own strong point.

run/shoot/walk at rovers Follow wild or random courses; have no settled abode. (From the exercise in archery of picking chance targets at unknown distances.)

not by a long shot Far from the truth; badly out of reckoning. (A long shot=a large distance.)

scope [<Gk σκοπός=mark to aim at] (The sense has developed from goal→distance to be covered→capability of arrow to cover that distance→mental grasp→area comprehended by a subject, science etc.)

malice seldom wants [lacks] a mark to shoot at One so inclined can always find a victim.

the only mark you shot at [Sir T. Wyatt, Letter to his Son—1537] Sole ambition.

great marks are soonest hit Prominent people are easy to blame or criticise.

overshoot (the mark) Exceed, exaggerate.

shoot beside/near/far from/wide of the mark [c.1550–60] Conjecture with more/less success.

miss the mark Be mistaken.

wide of the mark [1666] Badly mistaken.

your shot falls wide Your guess, calculation misses the truth.

err/fall/go far/wide at/on the bow-hand [left hand, usually therefore wide of the mark: 1590] Fail in a design, intention [Sc].

hit the right word, attitude etc. Arrive at it, partly by good luck.

ask him point-blank [1627] Directly, bluntly, plainly. (From aiming directly at the pointblank of a target, that white dot in the centre at which, if you stand near enough, you can point direct.)

hit/shoot nigh the prick/pin/white [1400] Come to or near the truth. (The white dot in the centre is the bull’s-eye.)

bull’s-eye Complete success; the very best.

a fool’s bolt [arrow] may sometimes hit the mark/white [1580] Even a fool may occasionally be right.

upshot [final and deciding shot in contest C16] Hence, the current meaning of issue, concluding result.

in the nick of time [1612] Just in time, at the very moment. (The nick was an opening serving as a target. Cf. how the meaning of the Greek term καιρός [=opportunity] derives from a similar gap or opening, both in weaving where the opening in the warp lasts only for that limited time that gives the opportunity for casting the shuttle [=‘shot’], and also in archery, as where Odysseus shot through a row of twelve axe-‘eyes’, a feat requiring both accuracy and power [see Homer, Odyssey xxi.419–23, and for other parallels, R.B. Onians, The Origins of European Thought III.iii].

leave boys’ play and go to blow-point [an old English game of blowing arrows at a mark—1616] Proceed to more serious matters, and give up childish things.

sort out the men from the boys Distinguish between the serious and able and those who are still only learning or playing.
K.47 Hatchet-throwing

fling/sling/throw the hatchet [UK Vir] Colour highly, exaggerate. (This was an old contest of throwing at a mark. Cf. ‘draw the long bow’= brag, recall past exploits.)

K.48 Pistol-shooting

knock spots off/out of…Get the better of, surpass easily (from the sport of pistolshooting at playing cards where the aim was to knock out the spots/pips).

Annie Oakley [Amer] Theatre or circus ticket after being punched; complimentary, punched railway ticket (from the sharp-shooting performance by Miss Annie Oakley in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show when she shot the pips out of playing cards).

shoot the lights out [Amer] Excel, perform well (as if shooting accurately at light bulbs).

shoot from the hip React instantly and without thought.

K.49 Clay pigeon shooting

clay pigeon Person who is cheated, ‘rooked’ or plucked; something easily done [Amer]; aircraft catapulted from ship [Amer].

dead bird [Aus] A certainty (because a pigeon released in front of a good shot is certain to be hit). This dates from the end of C19 when the target was a live rather than a clay pigeon.

K.50a Horse-racing

go to Holt to see Farne races [Chs] Go the wrong way to work. (Holt and Farndon are on opposite sides of the River Dee, and are connected by a fine old bridge. Farne races used to be very popular.)

on the outer [that part of a racecourse outside the enclosure—Aus] Rejected; excluded, broke.

grandstand view etc. Superior, commanding.
don’t judge a man’s knowledge of racehorses by the clothes he wears [Oreg]
Appearances can be deceptive.

*talk horse* Boast, talk ‘big’.

*out of the same stable* In the same tradition. Hence:

*stable-companion/stable-mate* One of the same clique.

*out of a good stable* [1950] With a good family, background, training.

*you can’t make a racehorse out of a mule* [Okl]

*dark horse* [1831] Someone who shows himself capable of unsuspected prowess (from the racing term for a horse of whose performance nothing is known).

*be a dead/real ringer for...* Be identical to, indistinguishable from. (From ‘ringer’=a horse illegally substituted in a race or sale.)

*use the horse for the course/horses for courses* [1898] Employ the appropriate person/tool for the job.

*give it the herbs* [=oats—Aus] Give extra power; accelerate.

*well-groomed for...* Prepared, rehearsed for some big event (as a horse for a race). ‘Grooming him to be my successor’.

*saddling paddock* [Aus 1876] The bar of the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, at one time a haunt of prostitutes.

*put the weights on...* [Aus] Seek a loan, ask a favour from someone.

*carry weight* Have authority, influence. Of a person’s opinion (possibly from the weight handicap in horse-racing, although the phrase was already used in this sense in the C17).

*a raffle* [foolish—Yks] tongue and a racehorse go faster the lighter weight they hug [carry—nYks]

*weigh in with...* Introduce; produce as an extra (from the weigh-in of a jockey before a race).

*a fair field and no favour* Equal opportunity for all.

*non-starter* One who is not even good enough to start a job etc. (A non-starter in a race is a horse or dog that cannot or will not start.)

*under starter’s orders* Under arrest.

*jockey for position* [1908] Try for an initial advantage, usually by furtive manoeuvres; prepare for the trial (like jockeys moving their horses at the start of a race when under starter’s orders).

*jockey* [sLan early C20] Small free extra of tobacco sat on top of main purchase.

*Derby dog* Minor upset which so often precedes an important event. (A dog on the Epsom course delays the start of a race.)

*local Derby* [1914] Match between two teams from the same neighbourhood.

### K.50b The run

**Bill Daley** [a coach who advised jockeys to get a good lead early in the race...and keep it Amer] A long lead.

head-start A decisive initial advantage.
front runner The favourite candidate; person or competitor likeliest to succeed.  
bring/come back to the field [Aus] Return to reality; shatter the illusion; end delusions of grandeur (from a front runner dropping back into the crowd).  
left at the post Hopelessly beaten from the very start.  
long-winded speeches, talkers etc. Lengthy, tedious. (Originally only of horses or runners.)  
run (true) to form [1869] Be consistent, perform as expected.  for the high-jump Facing a supreme test; unpleasant task; crisis; certain punishment (from steeplechasing—see also K.29d).  
have a run for your money [1874] Have a good return or satisfaction for your expense or endeavour. (Having bet money on a horse, at least to see it run.)  
 stay the course Continue to the end; show stamina.  
horse and horse [Amer 1859] Equally matched.  
get/go under someone’s neck Anticipate their intention; usurp their prerogative.  
ext in merit—of close competitors.  
neck or nothing! The expression of one desperate to succeed, risking everything to win (by the length of a horse’s neck or not at all).  
nose ahead Go into the lead by a narrow margin.  
raise a gallop Have an erection.  
the final gallop The acceleration in sexual intercourse just before, and culminating in, orgasm.

K.50c The finish

beaten/pipped at the post [1924] Foiled, defeated at the last moment (just when victory seemed assured).  
first past the post [Aus 1952] An electoral system whereby the party with the most members returned from separate (and often disparate) constituencies forms the government. This sometimes results in disproport-tional representation.  
pull it off [win the prize—horse-racers’ slang] Succeed in achieving something difficult.  
give a stone and a beating to…Be far superior to, easily surpass.  
win in a walk [Amer] Win confidently and easily.  
won in a canter Easily achieved.  
win hands down [1867] Win effortlessly. (From the way in which a winning jockey sits up and rests his hands on the saddle.)  
short-head (v and n) Defeat narrowly; anticipate by a narrow margin. A ‘short-head decision, verdict etc.’ is one that might very easily have gone the other way. (A horse is said to win ‘by a short head’ when the margin is very narrow.)  
Eclipse first and the rest nowhere! Said of a person easily first or by far the best. (Eclipse was a famous C18 racehorse.)  
the horse that wins doesn’t lose the reins [Ire] The successful need controlling no less.
**K.51 Dog-racing**

**away/off like a long-dog** [greyhound—Cor Sus]/**mad dog** [Lan] Departed in haste; quickly gone.

**you can’t make a whippet out of a cart-horse** Said when someone is inherently incapable of the performance expected of them.

**a lean dog for a long race** This refers to the longevity of people (and probably originated from hound-trailing).

**lay his ears back** Commit himself totally to realising an opportunity, ‘go for it’.

**keep your nose in front** Barely maintain a lead.

**off I seet** [set] **down th’ fowt** [=fold, the yard or area of ground common to several houses Lan] **like a thrail dog** [=trail hound, one raced over a trail of aniseed scent] Very quickly.

**K.52 Pigeon breeding and racing**

dove (n) Gentle, peaceable person.
**doves and hawks** The moderate and aggressive parties respectively in any group, council or meeting.

- **harmless/mild/white as a dove**
- **house-dove** [WCy] Stay-at-home.
- **soiled dove** [Amer Aus] Prostitute.
- **pigeon** [Amer] Informer (from carrying messages); dupe; young woman [NJ].
- **pigeon** (v and n) Smuggle(r of) news report from one country to another, to evade censorship.
  - **pigeon-chested** With a high and protruding chest.
  - **pigeon-hearted** Cowardly.
  - **pigeon-necked** With goitre.
  - **pigeon-toed** With the feet or toes turning inwards.

- **dovetail** A joint in carpentry (from the shape).
- **doo's cleckin'** [=dove’s clutch—Sc/pigeon pair] Boy and girl twins (from the belief that the two eggs of a pigeon always produce one cock and one hen); two feet of exactly the same size—which cobbler’s know to be unusual.

**the pigeon is never woe till a-benting she goe** [1609] [Benting=feeding on the seed of the bent grass] Of one who has only one complaint in an otherwise happy life.

- **pigeon-hole** (n) [1789] Compartment to docket papers in (after the resemblance to the different rooms in a dovecote); an unacceptable gap between two words in printing; small room, cramped quarters [1777].
- **pigeon-holes** The stocks; the place where a prisoner’s hands are restricted during a flog-ging.

- **pigeon-hole** (v) Defer consideration of a matter (as happens when papers are filed away—see above).
- **dovecot** (n) Officers’ wives’ quarters on a troopship.
- **letting board** [the perch to a dovecot—Lan] Large peak on a cap.
- **dinna tak the doo or ye hae the doocot** [= dovecot—Sc] Do not wed before getting a house.

**thick as doos in a doocot**

- **flutter the dovecots/cause a flutter** Alarm quiet people; cause agitation. There is no evidence of this saying being in popular use until 1864, yet it could well have continued unrecorded right from its first appearance:

  That like an Eagle in a Dove-coat, I Flutter’d your Volcians in *Corioles*  
  [Shaks, Coriol V.vi-1609]

**a flutter at cards, gambling on a horse etc.** (From the excited fluttering of a bird displaying.)

- **bill and coo** Engage in soppily affectionate courtship.
- **there’s ay feathers where the doo** [=dove Sc] roosts Evidence of courtship.
- **milk a pigeon** Attempt the impossible.
- **fly the blue pigeon** [naut] Swing the deep-sea lead. (See below.)
fly the pigeons Steal coal from a cart. (How this metaphor originated is obscure, but it
was in use from c.1785, when ‘to fly the blue pigeon’ meant to steal lead from a roof,
especially a church roof, so perhaps it began as an excuse for being there. See also
above.)
couldn’t lead a flock of homing pigeons [Aus] Which can be trusted to find their
own way home. In scornful dismissal of someone’s claim to leadership.
bronzewing [a breed of Australasian pigeon] One of the lower classes; half-caste
[Aus]. (From the colour.)

K.53 Car-racing

fine-tuning Bringing a vehicle, equipment, team, business or other project to the point of
maximum efficiency. (From the fine tuning necessary to bring a motor engine to
maximum power.)
burn rubber [Amer] Depart quickly. (The skid-ding caused by accelerating too
quickly when starting causes tyre rubber to be burnt off on the track.)
around the bend [Amer] With the hardest work done.
flag down Stop someone who is going fast, by signals.
make a pit stop [Amer] Stop to pass water.

K.54 Betting on races

the…stakes A category. ‘He has now entered the leek-growing stakes’ etc. (From the
stakes or prize money offered for the winner of certain prestigious horse-races.)
sporting chance/offer One with a not unreasonable amount of risk.
mark his card (as in giving information about horse-races) Put someone right; give
him the necessary information; warn him with a ‘tip-off’.
from the horse’s mouth [1928] Someone told me who can be trusted to know (as if
the horse itself should give a tip to a punter).
makes no odds Makes no difference. (In betting on a horse-race, two similar horses
will have no odds between them.)
the odds are against… Success is unlikely.
against (all) the odds Contrary to expectation.
shout the odds about… Wax vociferous over something; put a case rantingly.
suit his book Agree well with his ideas, plans etc. (From fitting a bet to a
bookmaker’s book.)
one for the (end) book An incredible fact; a tall story. (From the exclamation at
American race-betting, to one who is asking for incredibly high odds, implying that there
might be someone at the very end book to accommodate him.)
across-the-board Embracing all without exception. (From a combination wager on a horse to win, place or show, known as ‘betting across the board’.)
go through the card Cover all eventualities; be exhaustively comprehensive; choose something of everything on offer (from betting on every horse at a meeting).
my money is on… My own suspicion, forecast, preference is for…
put your shirt on… Be absolutely sure about (From staking your last possession on a horse.)
big-note (v) [Aus] Boost your achievements, status. (From the term big-note=a large bet.)
go down in the betting Deteriorate generally; worsen in health.
hang back for bets Needlessly delay; delay in the remote hope of some late benefit.
juggins [the name of a man who ruined himself in 1887 by gambling on horses] A fool.
back a loser/the wrong horse [1897] Take the losing side or argument.
a turn-up for the book [1959] An unexpected result; a lucky outcome. (When an unbacked horse wins a race, it is said to be a turn-up of luck—for the bookmaker.)

K.55 Badger-baiting

badger (v)/brock (v) Worry, annoy, bully, tease (from badger-baiting).
badger-box [Tasmania, Aus] Small house, triangular in section.
rough as a badger in a bag [Cor]
set by the ears/lugs [Nhb Cum: 1530] Cause to quarrel; create discord. (A method of inciting animals to fight. Also from horse-fighting, a popular sport in old Norway and Ireland.)
at nip-lug [Sc] On the point of coming to blows.
together by the eares [S. Pepys—20 March 1669] In conflict, if not actually at war.
draw the badger [tempt it from its barrel to fight the dogs; badger-drawing=badger-baiting] Lure an opponent to face public opposition.
draw out…[1778] Elicit information from someone, tempt them to talk against their better judgement.
refuse to be drawn Give guarded replies to an interrogator who is trying to provoke an injudicious response.
overdraw his badger Overdraw his bank account.

K.56a Bears

like a young bear, with all your troubles to come [1833]
bear (n) Rough, ill-mannered, uncouth person.
surly as a bear
cross/mad as/like a bear with a sore ear/ head/leg/lug
bear’s muck A mixture of peat and clay [Nhp Cmb].

K.56b Keeping a bear

a bridled bear A young nobleman under the control of a travelling tutor.
muzzle (v) Impose silence.
a man under no restraint is like a bear without a ring Uncontrollable.
a bear sucking his paws Industrious idleness (from the notion that a starving bear would obtain nourishment from sucking its paws).
not fit to carry guts to a bear Incapable of performing even the most menial of services.

as a bear picks mussels [1546] Clumsily.
handsome [dextrous, elegant] as a bear picking mussels (As/from the above.)
awkward as a bear with a muck-fork [wYks]
honey is too good for a bear A bad-tempered person deserves no good thing.
he who shares honey with a bear will get the least [1659] To compete with the strong is to invite failure.
only buns to a bear! Of an inadequate amount.

he needs iron nails that scratches with a bear [1678] Suit your tools to your task; be rough with them that are rough with you.

if it had been a bear it would have bitten you! Said to one who has been near to what he should have noticed, but did not.

a bear-leader Itinerant tutor, especially a rough, uncouth one, not uncommon in the days of the Grand Tour.

the bear thinks one thing, his leader another When those in authority cannot get their own way.

... And thus men seith, that ‘oon thenketh the bere
But al another thenketh his ledere!’

[G.Chaucer, T&C IV.1453–1374]

are you there with your bears? You are soon round again; are ready to give the same old trouble.

kings and bears often worry their keepers [1641]
take the bear by the tooth [1601] Run into danger needlessly; undertake something very daring.

ride the bear Get into conflict with a dangerous competitor.

have a bear by the tail [Amer] Be in a double predicament; a situation that can only end badly, a bear having no tail.
though the bear/mastiff be gentle, bite him not by the lip [1640] Do not provoke the irascible, even when they are in a good temper.

K.56c Bear-gardens

bear-garden A place of riot, noise, quarrels (as were those gardens where bears were publicly baited in Elizabethan and Stuart times). Hence, ‘bear-garden language’=rough, unseemly talk.

hurdy-gurdy [=hirdy-girdy] A wild uproar, confused noise [Nhb: 1500]. (A calumny on an ingenious instrument.)

play the bear [Bdf] Create havoc, do damage. Hence, ‘bear-play’.

make the bear talk [sNot] Work the stocking frames (a saying of frame-work knitters).

oppose Preston and his mastiffs Resist the irresistible. (Preston was the proprietor of a bear-garden in the C17.)

K.56d Bear-baiting

bring on your bears [Amer] Do your worst.

with as good will as a beare goth to the stake [1546] Most unwillingly.

go like a bear to the stake Hang back, delay starting.

tie to the stake Put into a position from which there is no escape.

abet [<OF abeter=urge a dog to attack the bear] Assist, usually in acts of a criminal or dubious nature.

fight dog, fight bear! [1642] To the bitter end; until one is overcome; do not intervene in this dispute.

stave off Ward off, delay some impending ruin or other unwelcome outcome. (From beating back a dog from baiting a bear or bull.)

K.57 Bull-baiting and fighting

shake the bull-ring [Cum] Issue a daring challenge (from a local custom).

bull-baiting [Cor] A noisy rumpus, riot.

mad as the baiting bull of Stamford [1662] (William Earl Warren, Lord of Stamford in the time of King John, standing upon the castle wall saw two bulls fighting for a cow
in the meadow till all the butchers’ dogs great and small pursued one of the bulls—
maddened with noise and multitude—through the town. This so pleased the Earl that he
gave the meadows to the butchers in common on condition they found a mad bull every
year six weeks before Christmas for the continuance of that sport.)

like the Bloxwich bull! [near Walsall, Stf] When hopes are disappointed. (Someone
stole the baiting bull—C19.)

one dog, one bull [Shr: 1879] Fair play.

red rag (to a bull) [1580] Incitement, an infuriating object or reminder to a person, a
pet abomination. (Bulls are reputed to be angered by red cloths.)

see red [1900] Become infuriated. (As/from the above, but another explanation is that
an enraged man sees a red mist before his eyes.)

like a bull out of a chute (Depart) suddenly and explosively.

aficionado [devotee of bull-fights—Sp] Keen follower of a sport, hobby, pursuit—
variously.

K.58a Fighting cocks

cock-loft Attic in the house-roof area (where fighting cocks used to be kept).

game as a fighting cock [Nhbl]

live like a fighting cock On the best of fare. (Fighting cocks were well-fed to increase
their pugnacity and stamina.)

well-heeled Capable of looking after himself. (A good back toe had hard, fine spurs
set low with a strong hind toe, straight out and flat to the ground, enabling a fighting cock
to launch forward well. A weak back toe is still a fault in game birds. See also B.9a.)

cliped and heeled [Cum] Well-dressed; in fine fettle; ready to go (like a gamecock
prepared for battle).

dub (v) [trim wattles, comb and ear lobes of gamecock or ears of bulldog—Lakel
wYks Lan] Cut down, reduce—wages, prices etc.

in fine/high feather [wYks Shr wSom] In good spirits.

cock-bird height [Sc] High spirits.

like a cock out o’ fedder [=out of feather] Out of sorts, out of humour [Cum].

show the white feather [1785] Show cowardice. (A white feather in gamecocks was a
sign of bad breeding, as no pure-bred game-cock has any white feather in its plumage.)
ginger-hackled Red-headed.

there’ll come a good cock out of a ragged bag [Shr] In answer to criticism of farm
buildings etc.
K.58b Cock-fighting

cock-farthing Pet name for a little boy (reflecting the cock-pennies that bigger boys took to school, originally to pay for cock-fights, but later—in Wordsworth’s time at Hawkshead for school fees).
cock-pit The pilot’s compartment in an aeroplane.
pit…against…[1754] Oppose; contend with (as cock against cock in a pit). Often in the phrase ‘pit your wits against…’.
let ilka cock fight his own battle [Sc] Everyone must stand up for himself.
that cock won’t fight [Sc: 1819] That argument won’t avail; an unlikely excuse!
shoot the pit Retire, from cowardice (like an unwilling cock rushing out of the cock-pit).
a cock of a different hackle An opponent of a quite different (usually better) character.
show hackle [IW] Be willing to fight.
with his hackles rising/up Roused, ready to fight. Also of dogs.
get your tail-feathers up Become annoyed, lose your temper.
get your pecker [beak] up Be in a temper [wYks].
keep your pecker up! Keep your spirits up.
quarrel like fighting cocks
this beats cock-fighting [Sc Ire Shr: 1659] Is supremely exhilarating, exciting.
it beats cock-fighting and the judges coming down to York to hang folk [nYks]
battle royal [a fight between three, five or seven cocks all engaged together, and the winner is the cock that stands longest—nwLin: 1672] Contest between giants; free-for-all, general shindy.
make the feathers fly Cause a disturbance; upset someone.
no cock een out [Lan]/no cocks’ eyes out yet [Stf] Chances are still even; no harm done yet.
stand the gaff [steel spur attached to a cock’s leg—Amer] Endure the hardships.
like Teague’s cocks that fought one another, though all were of the same side [Ire: 1732]
like Lord Thomond’s cocks, all on one side Of a group or organisation, supposedly of one mind, but in fact very liable to quarrel. (As above, the cocks were foolishly left together overnight.)
long main [Der] The upshot, finish.
Welsh main [an elimination cock-fight in which the victors from each pair in the first round are pitted against each other, and so on through quarter- and semi-finals until the deciding fight is between two surviving birds] An electoral procedure where candidates are eliminated to the point where only two remain, and the final vote decides between them.
crow (over)...[1522]/overcrow...[1562] Exult (over)...(like a fighting cock crowing after a victory).
knows how to carry his dead cock home [Der: 1868] Is a good loser, accepts defeat manfully. (A weary trudge, often a long way back from the main, and a disappointing end to his prized bird.)
vail the crest  Be humiliated.

…would continually have to veil [sic] his crest before them
[C. Brontë, Letter—26 August 1846]
crestfallen [1589]/feather-fallen  Dejected.

basket!  [the call when someone couldn’t or wouldn’t pay their debts, and so was suspended over the cock-pit in a basket] Pay up, or else…

K.58c Other ‘sports’ with animals

a cock-shot/cock-shy  An ill-considered or ill-prepared attempt; object of ridicule; random target [Uls Brks Wil]. (From the old Shrove Tuesday sport of throwing at a cock and then running to pick it up before it could get on its legs again. A similar version was called cock-squailing/squoiling [Wil Som], and involved throwing sticks at a cock, tethered by a leg, at a penny a go, whoever killed it, took it. See below for another variation.)
cast all at the cock  [Paston Letter 1474 Nrf] Deal with everything together at the same time. (From the sport where a blindfolded man shies at a tethered cockerel. If he feels sure of its position, he throws all his ammunition in a short space of time. This was a regular sport among the young and exuberant on the Shrove Tuesday holiday for schoolchildren and apprentices, and still observed in C17; ‘…saw the flinging at cocks’ [S. Pepys 26 February 1661].)
cast at the cocks  [Lnk] Waste, squander. (From the above.)
like shooting fish in a barrel  [Amer] Much too easy.
spangfew  [nLan Chs]/spanghew  [flip a frog or toad into the air by jumping on the higher end of a see-saw when the frog/toad has been set on the lower end] Reject, discard violently; fling to the winds [Cum]; beat severely [Nhb wYks]. Falstaff refers in:

fillip me with a three man beetle
[Shaks, Hy IVii I.ii—1598]
fell belly-flought  [=flaught, fully extended, with wings outspread—Sc] on t’ grund like a
spanghewed frosk  [=frog—Dur] Fell flat on the ground with all limbs extended.
cornfield meet  [an arranged fight between animals—Can] A meeting, head-on, of two trains on the same line.
like cats on a clothes-line  [Calif] Arguing noisily. (From the cruel trick of tying two cats together by the tails and hanging them over a line to fight each other. One account suggests that the phrase fight like Kilkenny cats, I.13b, originated in such an incident.)
K.59a Circuses

circus [Amer] Bright, hilarious occasion.

get the show on the road [1957] Stop time-wasting, and get down to serious business; put the plan into operation.

don’t let the sideshow run away with the circus [Calif] Don’t allow main control to a minority.

top of the bill The very best, top quality.

fill the bill Be the only conspicuous item, be given prominence.

round as a circus ring

one-ring circus An organisation with limited capabilities.

three-ring(ed) circus Extravagant showpiece; flamboyant performance.

arena [ < Lat harena=sand—originally the sand-strewn area in an amphitheatre where the gladiators fought] Sphere of conflict, action.

let the dust settle Let the immediate confusion clear up before appraising the situation.

the dust settles The upset and distressing after-effects slowly subside.

first-of-May [Amer] Beginner; person who stays for only a short time (from those amateurs who join a performing troupe at carnival time, but who then decide not to make it their career).

K.59b Performing horses, show-jumping

jibby-horse [showman’s over-decorated horse EAn] Young woman in her finery.

put him through his paces Give him a working trial (from the training of circus horses).

desultory Spasmodic; irregular in occurrence. (Originally, the desultor was the acrobat who jumped from one horse to another in the circus at Rome; hence the present connotation of inconstancy and irregular shifting.)

dog-and-pony act/show [Amer] Elaborately staged event etc.

Harvey Smith An insulting gesture of two fingers raised twice (made by him to the competition judges in August 1971).

K.59c Other performing animals

cagey Wary, reticent, non-committal. (A caged animal becomes suspicious and withdrawn.)
safe as caged
artful/cunning as a wagon-load of monkeys
fause [cunning, clever] as a bag of monkeys [Chs]
funny as a barrel of monkeys [NC Tenn Calif sAmer]
as many tricks as a dancing bear [1666]/a barrow-load of monkeys
whimsical as a dancing bear
jerk [Amer]/pull/rattle his chain Annoy, harass, victimise him. ‘Who pulled your chain?’= don’t interrupt, we want no interference from you.
put your head in the lion’s mouth Take sides; ask for trouble; get into a dangerous predicament.
proud as a dog with a tin tail [Lan]/dog in a doublet [leather protection when boar-hunting in Germany: 1549]
dog in a doublet Bold, resolute man.
dutch [refined in speech and manners—wYks sLin sChs Shr] as a dog in a doublet
go/jump through the hoops [1917] Do what is expected, what you are trained to do; submit to an ordeal, as: ‘obliged to go through all his professional/political hoops’; accommodate someone in a frantic, harried manner [Amer].
go through the hoop [Glo] Become bankrupt.
ever follow a dog act [Amer] Don’t seek comparison with your betters.
trained seal One who accepts orders without question.

K.59d High wire artists

safety-net Provision to forestall a possible accident; precaution against anticipated trouble.
walk the tight-rope (between…) [1934] Engage in a precarious undertaking; keep a nice balance between nasty alternatives; maintain a delicate balance in difficult personal relationships.
dance on a tight-rope (As/from the above. Rope-dancing was popular at St Bartholomew’s Fair [S. Pepys—27 August 1668].)
like a rope-dancer’s pole, with lead at both ends Is a sluggard in body and mind.
on her high ropes In high dudgeon; haughty (like a rope-dancer who looks down on her audience. See also D.3c for an earlier use.)
on the tight ropes Arrogantly superior. (As above.)
play tricks in a tow [rope] Hang [Sc].
K.59e Fire-eaters

fire-eaters Those ready to quarrel over anything.

K.59f jugglers

juggle with—figures, awkward arrangements etc. [1897] Rearrange adroitly; reconcile awkward elements.

keep many plates in the air Reconcile many different policies, projects; perform many tasks simultaneously without neglecting one more than another.

K.59g Clowns and tumblers

on stilts [1734] Using high-flown, condescending talk; abnormally elevated. (Clowns often perform on stilts.) Hence:

stilted language Pompous, bombastic and affected talk or writing.

vacillate Originally=stagger, totter [<Lat vacillare—sway, stagger], then to waver doubtfully between different possibilities.

totter (v) Show insecurity generally—of finances, government etc.

everything does not fall that totters [NY Geo Ala]

topple (v) Overthrow from a position of high authority.

fall flat [1841] Fail to amuse—often of a bad joke.

top-heavy Drunk.

allude [<Lat ad-ludere—play towards, jest, mock at]

old as circus jokes

three blue beans in one blue bladder [a rattle on a stick used by court jesters and clowns] Noisy, futile rhetoric.

as much chance as a one-legged man in an arse-kicking contest!

grockle [dim. of Grock, a famous clown] Tourist, visitor, tripper (from a humorous comparison of the many holiday-makers around Torbay in 1962 to lots of clowns).

could do it standing on my head! [1880] Expressing such a level of accomplishment as to be able to perform a task even under impossible conditions.

stand on my head to…[Amer] Try very hard to.

heels-ower-gourie/-gowdie [heels-over-head Sc] In confusion, variously.

turn it heels over head [Abd]/pitch-poll [turn head over heels—War Wor Glo Oxf] Double its purchase price when re-selling.
K.60a Fairs

taken to the fair [Sc] Deceived; abashed.
thrang [crowded] as a fair [wYks]
all over the place/out and in/run about like a dog at a fair [1540]
fine as a fool at a fair/mountebank’s fool [sLan]
merry as a little andrew [1797;=merryandrew, a mountebank’s fool—1673]

K.60b Particular fairs

all over, like the fair of Athy [Ire] Over before well-begun.
dressed like a Bartholomew baby Over-finely dressed (like a child’s doll at Bartholomew Fair, [1133–1855]).
fine as Bartholomew babies (As above.)
jealous as three Bartelmy dolls in a wicker basket
Bartholomew-Boar/-Pig Fat man. (Roast pork was a popular commodity at Bartholomew Fair.)
all play and no play, like Boscastle fair, which begins at twelve o’clock and ends at noon Describing a non-event, one that gets nowhere because of an inherent flaw in its constitution.
thrunk [crowded] as Chiddle [=Cheadle/Eccles wakes, no room areawt
[outdoors—Not Der Chs Rut]
got at Clickum fair [nYks] Stolen. (Clickum is a fabrication derived from the slang term ‘click’=seize, grab.)
Donnybrook (fair) Scene of uproar; Irish free fight. (Donnybrook, a village near Dublin, had held a fair there ever since a yearly eight-day fair was granted by King John in 1204, but it became proverbial for disorderly gatherings.) Hence, Donnybrooking [Aus]=indulging in wild and riotous behaviour, celebrating immoderately.
put up your pipes and go to Lockington wakes [Lei: 1678] Desist, and go away.
thrang [=thrang, crowded] as Knott Mill fair [Manchester, Lan]
three on one horse, like going to Morva(h fair) [Cor] Overcrowded, variously.
Paddington fair A public hanging. (Tyburn is in the parish of Paddington.)
tawdry Cheap, showy and trashy. (St Audrey’s fair [=St Etheldreda of Ely, died 679] got the reputation for gaudy lace and worthless artistic trinkets.)
like Tregonetha fair, nigh by and handy [Cor]
has been as far north as anyone [seWor] Knows as much as anyone. (See below.)
too far north Too canny, shrewd. (From the observation that the further north you went, the harder they drove their bargains.)
K.60c ‘Fair’ trading

metaphor \(<\text{Gk } \text{metaxērion} = \text{carry in exchange}\) Hence, carry with it a change of meaning.

pert as a pearmonger [Lan Bck Oxf]
the loudest shouters at the fair often have little on their stalls Those who protest or exclaim most, have often least cause.
give him the rinky-dink [a worn-out or worthless object—Amer] Swindle him.
sell a packet [Dev] Hoax.
if you only have a goat, be in the middle of the fair with it [Ire] It is important, if you have not much to offer, to make the most of it.

K.60d Peep-shows

fine as a gallantry-show [peep-show—sLan]
no show without Punch! Implying that some one person is the main (and perhaps ridiculous) attraction. (From Punch and Judy shows.)
pleased/proud as Punch [1848]
Punch has done dancing Expect no more, you have had all you are getting from me!

K.60e Contests

ring the bell Win the prize or contest; succeed variously; achieve an ambition; gain recognition, satisfaction; make a girl pregnant; bring your partner to orgasm. (From ringing the bell on a strength-testing machine or in a shooting gallery.)
soaped pig style Vague, intentionally ambiguous. (At fairs the tail of a pig was soaped for the contest of catching it by the tail.)
slick/slippery as a greased pig [NC Calif]
close, but no cigar! [Amer] (A cigar was the prize for performing certain carnival feats.)
bring home the bacon [1924] Bring back what you went for. (At country fairs, a pig was the prize for certain events such as bowling.)
win the whistle [War] Win nothing at all (the whistle of a pig!).
bear away the horn [Sc: 1721] Be the overall winner (from horn-blowing contests).
win the porcelain hair-net/barbwire garter/cast-iron overcoat/fur-lined bath-tub/hand-painted doormat/solid gold chamber pot [Amer] Deserve a spectacularly useless reward.
slape [slippery—Cum nLan] as the greasy pole (A contest at fairs and sports was to climb a greasy pole, or to sit on it by pairs and buffet each other off.)

that takes the cake/biscuit! Surpasses all often of an outrageous piece of effrontery. (A cake was the prize at fairs and garden parties—often for guessing its weight. Another possible origin is in the old Irish Sunday Cake Dances of C18-C19 at which a large cake was the weekly prize for the best girl dancer. But E. Partridge cites evidence of medieval origins with a quotation from 1610, *Ista capitis biscot-tum* with reference to a local beauty in Rothenburg-am-Tauber.)

pick up the cheese Gain the honours.

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**K.60f Other entertainments**

queer his pitch [1846] Jeopardise his chances of success beforehand. (The pitch, originally, was a place of performance and an interruption or accident could ‘queer’ or spoil the pitch.)

intricate [Lat *in-tricare*= (put) in tricks, toys, puzzles]

two more and up goes the donkey! Of promises that cannot be kept (like the fair-ground swindle in which pennies are collected for a performance when a donkey is supposed to climb a pole and balance on top).

John Audley (v) Cut something short; be quick and finish. (From the agreed signal of the showman to those on stage in the booth ‘Is John Audley there?’ when he estimated the waiting queue was large enough to warrant starting the next performance.)

Aunt Sally Something intentionally put up for anyone to attack, often to draw fire from a more vulnerable target; object of unreasonable attack. (The Aunt Sally in a fair was a figure of a woman for the public to shy at.)

modoc [a dummy to throw baseballs at—Amer] Stupid person.

no door! [Chs] A failure, complete miss. (From the Shrovetide sport of shooting for tea-kettles at a target on a door.)

have a shy at... Attack by sarcasm; jeer at.

knock over a doll [Aus] Accept the consequences of your actions, your hobby, whim, whatever.

every one a coconut Success each time!

give the gentleman a coconut Well done! You have managed it!

roll, bowl or pitch One way or another, whatever the obstacles.

throw some balls in the air and see where they land Propose several options; state the choices, and await their reception.

grinning like a clown through a horse collar at Eccles Wakes for a pound of `bacco [Lan]


merry-go-round [wYks] A colliery where as soon as one train leaves laden with coal, the next draws up to be loaded; scene of bustle, generally; succession of activities; confusing, tiring occupation.
what you lose on the roundabouts, you gain on the swings [1910] Losses or disadvantages on one side are made up by gains on another; there is a final balance between gain and loss, good and bad.

roller-coaster (n) [1973] System of drastic checks and balances designed to redirect undesirable tendencies, particularly in economic situations. (From the flinging alternations of direction, ascent and descent experienced in a roller-coaster ride.)

K.60g After the fair

like lucky John Toy, lost a shilling and found a twopenny loaf! [wCor] Of anyone who rejoices over a small gain, ignoring a greater loss.

lucky Tim/Tom Hodges, lost five pounds and found a pig’s yok! [=pig’s yoke, frame put on pig’s neck to prevent straying, a worthless or nonsense thing] Of those continually unlucky [Shr Hrf Suf Oxf].

good luck [Lin] Cat’s dung.

give him his fairing [a small present brought back from the fair] Give him his deserts, punishment [Sc Nhb].

a day after the fair [wYks Der Oxf: 1530] Too late.

K.60h Shows

in the ribbons Among the prizewinners. (Winning animals and exhibits at agricultural shows are identified by differently coloured rosettes or ribbons.)

K.61a Plays

stage (v) Produce some public event requiring organisation and preparation.

as good [entertaining, interesting] as a play (as Charles II remarked when in Parliament for the debate on Lord Ross’s Divorce Bill).

as good as a Christmas play [Cor] Of something funny.

ghost! Friday pay-day (The ghost walks on Friday.’ The company playing Hamlet were not getting their pay regularly until the actor playing the ghost intimated that ‘the ghost will not be walking tonight’.)
K.61b Preparing for the play

scenario The proliferation of meanings attaching to this word has spread out from the original=outline of a play→plot of novel, opera etc.→detailed shooting script for a film→forecast of possible sequence of events →(very loosely) a situation.

dress rehearsal Full, final practice for a forthcoming event (as is the dress rehearsal for a stage production).

all right on the night! An expression of confidence in ultimate success in spite of present difficulties.

behind the scenes In private, out of the public sight; unofficially.

scene (n) Favoured haunts; way of life [orig. Amer]—‘these parties are not my scene’; familiar sight in fresh aspect—‘wintry scene’, ‘scene of desolation’; change of scene=fresh surroundings as a result of travel.

scenery Landscape considered principally for visual impact [C18].

make a scene [1761] Indulge in a public outburst.

set the scene Give necessary preliminary information; describe events leading up to something.

the scene/stage is set for…Everything has been prepared for.

scrim [gauzy material used as curtains, painted screens or as filters to soften the stage lighting] Political device, contrived propaganda to conceal or disguise certain facts or facets of the case.

back-cloth/back-drop Unobtrusive environment; ever-present situation.

mise en scène [<Fr=setting on the stage] Setting, milieu, environment, background generally.

join the flats [horizontal sections of the stage scenery that need to be fitted together to give the desired effect] Make a coherent, compatible whole; show consistency.

ring down/up the curtain on…End/start an action, enterprise etc.

curtain-raiser Something that starts the action, initiating event; introductory item generally. Also:

fall of curtain! The end of that!

curtains for…[1912] The end, death of. There is also an association with the crape curtains used by undertakers, and with the custom on Death Row in American prisons that when someone was led out for execution, curtains were drawn over the other cells.

appear on the scene Arrive, usually unexpectedly.

become part of the scenery Retire from active participation; fit in unobtrusively.

split the scene [Amer] Depart. ‘He has split London’=he has left London.

leave the stage Withdraw from public affairs, retire to private life.

K.61c Performing plays

hypocrite [<Gk υπόκριτης=actor]
person [OF persone<Lat persona= actor’s mask; character in a drama]
act/play an important part/the fool etc. etc. Assume that character in real life.
play a new role Do a new job; enter a new relationship.
the villain of the piece The culprit, generally.
walk-through [a part so undemanding that it needs little more effort than that of walking across the stage] An undemanding task, generally.
take your cue Take your initiative, hint, incentive to start.
on cue At precisely the right time, promptly.
shoot a line Overstate your case or achievements so as to produce an immediately favourable impression on the audience. (From the theatrical phrase ‘shoot your lines’= declaim vigorously.)
upstage (adj) Offensively haughty, opinionated (because the most important actors occupy the front of the stage, and there is a rigorous order of positions dictated by theatre etiquette).
upstage (v) someone [manoeuvre so that you are facing the audience while he/she has their back to them] Detract from their esteem; lower their dignity; steal their thunder; establish your superiority. (As/from the above.)
hold the stage Dominate the company; monopolise the conversation.
occupy centre stage Be given absolute priority, high status.
play down/underplay Reduce the emphasis, minimise, present in a restrained and subdued manner, depreciate, diminish the part (as in the performance of a part on the stage, or of a passage of music).
wringing their hands Showing signs of grief or emotion—often pretended.
a wooden dagger in a painted sheath Empty threats.
Hamlet without the Prince A failure, the principal person being absent.
play Hamlet [sYks] Play the fool.
pickle-herring Clown, buffoon. (From the name of one such character in a German play of 1620.)
steal his thunder Use someone else’s idea, equipment or method, and so detract from their glory and credit; make an important announcement before the proper person has a chance to do so. (When John Dennis [1657–1734] heard the thunder that he had designed for his own play used in a performance of Macbeth, he exclaimed ‘Damn them!…they will not let my play run, but they steal my thunder.’)
played out Finished, obsolete. (Like a play when played out to the last scene.)
go to the green-room [actors’ retiring room in a theatre] Retire from the centre of activity; be superseded.

K.61d Audience reaction

the devil among the tailors A good slanging match; public disturbance (after the demonstration of tailors outside the Haymarket Theatre in 1830 when they considered themselves insulted by a play).
do as Garrick did Disregard public opinion and rely on your own judgement. (Garrick was reputed to have written his own notices.)

explode—a theory, argument etc. Dismiss, reject, show to be untenable. [<Lat explodere—hiss off the stage, hence the modern meaning of explode and explosive which derive from an extension of the same word to a more violent release of air or gas than the hissing of an audience] (See also C.7a.)

rolling in the aisles Helpless with mirth (as if incapable of sitting on their seats).

K.62a The theatre and on the stage of a theatre

the man outside Hoyt’s [a Melbourne theatre] An originator of rumours; an authority (after a flamboyantly uniformed commissionaire at that theatre).

wait in the wings [1876] Await your turn, opportunity, right moment; hold yourself in instant readiness to seize the ‘big chance’.

get in on the act Enrol yourself in a concern, especially on realising it is becoming a success.

on the boards On the stage.

to be a man of the boards [c.1800] To have been a professional actor.

come/get it/put it across Make understood or appreciated (like a performer getting it across the footlights to the audience).

limelight [the theatrical term for stage lighting] Full glare of publicity, popular notice.

steal the limelight Thrust yourself forward to pre-empt the public notice or acclaim earned by another.

cast/put/throw into the shade [1824] Outshine, detract attention from, make yourself conspicuous at another’s expense (like a performer who ‘steals the limelight’).

spotlight (v) Isolate a subject and show it up in detail; concentrate on.

star turn Best performer in a group or team, variously.

one-night stand [single performance given by a company of travelling players] Isolated occasion of sexual intercourse.

K.62b Different acts

slapstick Boisterous comedy. (From the flexible divided lath used by harlequins in buffoonery.)

travesty Ridiculous pretence, caricature, feeble imitation. (Originally a form of burlesque or caricature, intended for ridicule.)
ham-fat/ham-fatter/ham actor Mediocre performer (from an old-style black song, *The Ham-fat Man*).

do double in brass [Amer] Have more than one skill (like an actor who could also play in the orchestra).

get your act together Become more efficient, better organised after a shaky start.

clean up your act Improve performance generally; become more efficient; discard unwanted or unnecessary elements.

a hard act to follow [Amer 1975] A situation where, through no fault or failing of their own, someone suffers by comparison with an outstanding predecessor.

put on an act [Aus] Indulge in a tantrum.

**K.62c Audience reaction**

play to the gallery Appeal to unrefined tastes; seek easy popularity; give a showy performance to this end. (The gallery, or ‘gods’, is where the rougher and less critical part of the audience resorts.)

gallery-hit/gallery-shot A piece of showy play in cricket or tennis, intended to gain applause from uncritical spectators.

he’s a scream! Of a very funny person (comparable with a comic at whom you would ‘scream’ with mirth).

get the bird Be hooted at, or goose-hissed (as by a disapproving audience).

clap-trap Nonsense, foolish talk. (Originally a trick or catch-phrase to get applause.)

you’ve got to hand it to... You must give credit to (as if handing someone a bouquet or an award).

throw bouquets at...[Amer] Praise extravagantly; acknowledge publicly.

**K.62d Stage history**

chestnut Old, stale joke. (In general use first in America, but originating from an incident in W.Dimond’s melodrama, *The Broken Sword* [1816], where a repetitious captain referring to a cork-tree was reminded that it was a chestnut by one who had already heard the joke twenty-seven times.)

Box and Cox A term used to describe an arrangement in which two persons take turns in sustaining a part, occupying a position etc. and who fail to meet because of their mutually exclusive life-styles (from J.H.Morton’s farce of 1874).

mascot Lucky charm, person or animal—like the goat that has been the mascot of the Welsh Fusiliers ever since an incident in Boston in 1775 [see T.J.Edwards, *Military Customs*, p.46]. (From La Mascotte, a luck-bringing heroine of French comic opera, 1880.)
hooligan Trouble-rouser (after a rowdy Irish family of that name, famous in music-hall sketches in the 1890s).

K.62e Radio, television, recordings

on the nose [Amer] Accurately, precisely, exactly on time; entirely relevant. (From the practice of American radio producers of signalling with a finger on the nose when a programme is on time.)

a short between the earphones [Amer] Mental carelessness or failure, feeblemindedness.

static [the atmospheric disturbance that spoils the enjoyment of radio programmes] Aggravation, fuss and trouble.

on the same wavelength In sympathy, en rapport, of the same mind.

tune in/out to... Concentrate on, be receptive to/ignore. Hence, tuned in on.../to... = in harmony, sympathy with, en rapport with.

the 64,000 dollar question The really critical, important question (from a radio quiz game where the contestant, having answered one question correctly, could elect to try for another, harder one carrying a higher prize, $64,000 being the final amount).

soap opera [Amer Aus UK] Serial drama for radio or TV, usually with stock dramatic or sentimental situations. (From the sponsorship of such programmes, often by soap manufacturers.)

not so much a programme, more a way of life Said when describing what started as a mild interest or activity, but ends up as an all-engrossing life-work.

instant replay [Amer] Immediate repetition, variously. (In live TV sports programmes it is possible to show a second viewing of a noteworthy event like a goal scored or a wicket taken, only seconds after it has happened.)

signature tune [the introductory or finishing music of a programme or band’s performance by which they can be regularly recognised] Typical style; recognition feature.

put another record on! We have heard enough of that theme!

the flip side [less important side of a record] The second, less well-known, less obvious side of a personality or public event; the reverse, converse generally.

bird-dog (v) Steal another’s girlfriend; break up a college romance (after the Everly Brothers’ hit Bird Dog of 1958).

raise the decibel level [Amer] Make a greater impact.

on the receiving end of... In the unfortunate position of having to bear the brunt of criticism, hostility etc.

put a sock in it! [1916] Be quiet, we have heard enough. (From the ad hoc muffler for those early speakers that lacked a volume control, but doubtless the military, who had been using the phrase from c.1910, would envisage the sock as a gag.)

in the groove Performing well—often of jazz musicians; appreciative; making good progress in a personal relationship.

groovy [Amer 1940s] Very good, generally; of people, fashionably attractive.
**off the charts** [an order of popularity inferred from sales figures of popular records—Amer] Beyond calculation, beyond all imagination.

**wipe** [Aus NZ] Dismiss from consideration; consign to limbo (like a recording on magnetic tape ‘wiped’ away by a subsequent recording).

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**K.62f Cinema**

**in the can** [Amer] Successfully completed. (From the round, flat tin in which the film is stored after filming.)

**on the cutting-room floor** [Hollywood Amer] Dead.

**let her flicker** [Aus] Let the operation (whatever) start.

**Mickey-Mouse around** [Amer] Waste time with trivialities.

**Bambi effect** [Amer 1979] The change of a homosexual person into a heterosexual under the influence of spring (as when the ‘twitter-pated’ Bambi left Thumper in Walt Disney’s film *Bambi*).

**Mae West** [American film actress of ample feminine proportions] Inflatable life-jacket issued to RAF crews in 1940 in case they came down in the sea. (So-called because the shape of the wearer was then reminiscent of Mae West’s.)

**Bogart** (v) Monopolise; fail to pass on a drugged cigarette in a communal smoke. (Humphrey Bogart often appeared in films with a cigarette in his mouth.)

**in like Flynn** [=Errol Flynn, film actor—Aus] Of someone seizing an opportunity with alacrity.

**Hanoi Jane** [=Jane Fonda who visited North Vietnam in the 1960s] Someone who makes a cultural visit to an enemy country and so incurs the reputation of a traitor.

**black hat** [Amer] Bad man (from the Holly-wood convention of depicting the villain in a black hat).

**white hat** [Amer] Righteous, law-abiding citizen. (From the above.)

**bomber crew** Motley collection of characters (from casting in Hollywood war films).

**take a D** [Amer] Commit suicide. (From legendary suicides of disappointed actors jumping off the end letter of the Mount Lee HOLLYWOOD sign.)

**track with** [Amer] Agree, fit in with. ‘That doesn’t track with what I have been told.’ (From a faulty synchronisation of the soundtrack on a film, resulting in the words being heard out of phase with the lip movements.)

**Technicolor yawn** [Amer] Vomit. (Many early colour movies were advertised as having been filmed in ‘glorious Technicolor’.)

**trailer** Advance advertising or information (after the style of trailers in the cinema consisting of appetising extracts from ‘forthcoming attractions’).

**flash-back** [cinema technique of recalling earlier events after later ones have been screened] Recurrence of drug-induced hallucinations, sometimes months after the original dose.

**do a Shirley Valentine** [1989] Refuse to return home, having started a holiday romance (after the eponymous heroine of the film).
ride off into the sunset (A favoured closing scene in Westerns.) Achieve a happy outcome.
pass out of the picture [1919] Die.
this is where we came in Our discussion has gone round in a circle without getting anywhere.

K.62g Opera

magic bullet Infallible, but eventually fatal means to an end; therapeutic agent specific for one particular disease. (In Weber’s Der Freischütz, Max sold his soul to the devil for magic bullets.)
prima donna [Amer] Touchy woman demanding much attention. (From the reputation of leading opera singers for temperamental tantrums.)
the opera ain’t over till the fat lady sings Don’t reach any conclusions until those in control have had their say; further possibilities still exist [Amer].
Pooh Bah Someone with many positions and functions and with much influence and importance (after Pooh Bah in the Gilbert and Sullivan opera The Mikado).
do a Melba [Aus] Return frequently from retirement. (As did Dame Nellie Melba [Helen Mitchell, 1861–1931] in order to make ‘definitely her last appearance’.)
Chinese opera [Amer] Extremely elaborate event, parade, performance etc.

K.62h Pantomime

pantomime Ludicrous performance; unseemly and unworthy proceedings.
spill and pelt Rough and tumble, rowdy romp (from the boisterous fun at the end of comic scenes, from as early as 1830, when there was licence to spill and throw things).

K.63 Conjuring

round/sure [secure] as a juggler’s box
do the trick Achieve the desired result or effect.
know a trick worth two of that [See Shaks, Hy IV i—1597] Know a much better plan, method etc.; be better informed.
for my next trick… A cover-up phrase when something attempted has gone wrong.
the tablecloth trick Removing religion from life without disturbing anything else. (The trick is to jerk the cloth from under all the dishes etc. on a table without moving any of them.)

palm off something on someone Induce them to accept it against their better judgement, usually by fraud or deception. (From the conjuring trick of making coins etc. disappear from the palm.)

spoof—a radar system Confuse and ‘fool’ it with false signals.

illusion [<Lat illudere=mock, play tricks on, deceive]

lie like a conjuror Of necessity, as part of the entertainment.

prestige [<Lat prestigiae=juggling tricks, illusions, those conjuring tricks or jugglings that were such as to dazzle and delude the eye] Reputation, dazzle and glamour.

smoke-and-mirrors [Amer 1980s] Manipulation of news, explanations, demonstrations in order to deceive by impressive but insubstantial effects.

gimmick (n) [device or gadget for obtaining dishonest results in gambling; a magician’s method for ensuring the success of a conjuring trick: in this connection it is suggested that the word may derive from gimac, an anagram of magic—orig. Amer] An advertising novelty or smart trick to attract customers.

like magic Very quickly; finished before you could see what was happening,

have a card/something up his sleeve Have a reserve plan, secret resource ready.

play fast and loose with...[1596] Be unpredictable and unreliable towards someone. (From an old cheating game played with a stick and a belt or string so looped that spectators would think they could make it fast by placing a stick through its intricate folds, whereas the operator could detach it at once.)

play Jock Needle and Jock Preen [=pin—Sc: 1628] Play ‘fast and loose’. (A game of chance and trickery.)

pull the rabbit out of the hat Do the unexpected; amaze everyone; defy credibility.

give the show away [1899] Betray the secret; reveal inadequacies generally (from a conjur-or’s assistant spoiling a trick by revealing its method to the audience).

K.64a Puppets

puppet (n) Person ostensibly in a position of authority and action, but in fact under the control of someone in the background.

puppet-state A country under the control of another, though apparently independent.

supple-jack [puppet with limb-strings, capable of violent contortions—Amer] Person prepared to be drastically manipulated.

wired (up) [1980s] Nervously excited, tense; annoyed, angry [Amer early C20].

pull the strings/wires/ropes Wield the actual power or influence; control events from behind the scenes.

have him on a string Have complete control over him.

pull a string Get something done unofficially, behind the scenes; exert backstairs influence.

gather the strings/pull the strings together [wYks] Regain strength after illness.
pull yourself together Control yourself; stop indulging your weaknesses; start working efficiently.

with strings attached Under conditions—as with economic aid in return for political allegiance.

pull devil, pull baker [Sc Lan: 1759] An incitement to effort between two equal contestants; the principle of possession to the stronger; a ding-dong struggle; contest with fluctuating fortunes. (From a popular scene in puppet shows dating from the C17 and which flourished most between 1750 and 1800, in which the devil and a dishonest baker were portrayed in a tug-o'-war on the very brink of hell. The theme was subsequently incorporated in Punch and Judy shows.)

K.64b Effigies and figures

deaf as Gog and Magog [the two figures carried in the Lord Mayor of London’s procession, originally called Gogmagog and Corineus, later degenerated to Gog and Magog]

K.65 Waxworks

wax in...'s hands Entirely malleable and obedient to his/her wishes; unable to avoid being manipulated.

mould him like wax Manage him easily; make him act in any way you wish.

a nose-of-wax [Sc Shr Nhp Hrf: 1529] Anything malleable, easily altered; a person easy to influence; a flexible, accommodating man.

people with wax heads shouldn’t walk in the sun [1640] Those who cannot accept criticism should not invite it.

stupid as a wax widow in a show

the same heat that melts the wax will harden the clay [1578] People respond differently to the same treatment according to their natures.

melt like wax [1562]

stiff as a plaster mask (Death masks are made of plaster.)
K.66 Bedlam

bedlam Confused noise. (In C17 the madhouse of Bedlam was visited for amusement and recreation.)
  climb the wall [Amer] Become frantic with anxiety, frustration.
  bounce off the walls [Amer] Be upset and nervous and confused.

K.67a Children playing

play at… Conduct, perform in a half-hearted, flippant way; not take it seriously.
  play on… Move happily over/on. ‘A smile played on her face.’
  play up Of mackerel when they jump out or swim near the surface.
  playground Area of water in an estuary where salmon may not be caught.
  child’s play Something very easy to do.
  the only game in town [Amer] Good or bad, the only choice; the only one worth considering.
  new to the game Without experience in a particular practice or activity.
  what’s the game? what are you playing at? Angry accusation demanding an explanation of someone’s conduct.
  play the game Act, behave fairly and honour-ably.
  play his/her game Unintentionally help or support him/her.
  give the game away Let out the secret, reveal the plan.
  the game is up All is over, lost; all is exposed; any hope of success is lost.
  toy with… Tackle, treat with insufficient seriousness.
  collusion [<Lat colludere—play together]
  play with your neighbours [Dor] Help them who help you.
  beat him/her at their own game Overcome someone in the sphere of his/her own choice and excellence.
  two can play at that game/that’s a game that two can play [1819] Unpleasant behaviour that can be turned against the perpetrator.
  that’s the name of the game [UK Amer Can late 1960s] That’s what it’s all about; that is the heart of the matter; that sums it all up; the real meaning, true nature, actual situation.
  not in the game Unlikely to succeed.
  play skaivie [trick, prank—Sc] Have a child though unmarried.
  draw a line in the sand [Amer 1978] State a limit, level of tolerance beyond which something is unacceptable.
  big [build] a sandy-mill with… [Sc] Be intimate with someone.
  we’ll never build sandy bowrocks [=bour-achs, heaps, mounds, children’s play houses, castles etc.—Sc] together Shall never be friends again. (The successful completion of these is a severe test of true friendship in cooperation.)
romp through… Perform without effort; easily succeed in completing.
romp away Make effortless growth or progress.
pissing match/contest [Amer] Pointless, futile argument, altercation.

K.67b Children’s games

skip (v) Avoid (as girls avoid catching the skipping rope with their feet); miss reading (usually the less interesting) parts of a book or article; miss out altogether—‘skips the final polish’.
 skip it! No more of that! Change the subject.
play ball Co-operate; get started [Amer].
bounce it off someone [Amer] Try it out on them; test for reaction.
strike the ball when you get it on the hop [Ire] Act at the first favourable opportunity.
the ball’s in the slates (and the game’s a bogie) It is all finished; no more today (as if the ball had got lodged on a roof).
lose the ball Lose control of work, daily arrangements; get into a worsening situation.
pat-ball [an unexacting ball-game for two; sometimes, disparagingly, of a lazy game of tennis] An undemanding, unproductive, polite exchange between two people.
kick someone around Treat unfairly, inconsiderately, harshly.
play a waiting game Bide your time, await your opportunity.
play at bogle-about-the-stacks [a sort of hide-and-seek played at night in the stackyard/garth which involved jumping out and giving frights—Sc nEng] Cajole, circumvent.
play bo-peep Be elusive, reluctant to come to terms; be inconsistent, evasive [W.Tyndale—1534].
look through your fingers at…[Elizabeth I, Letter—1578–93] Pretend not to see.
touch-and-go [1815] A near thing; almost a collision or a failure; something with an uncertain outcome. [Touch-and-go=touch-and-run=tig] (See also D.17c for an alternative origin.)
pig-in-the-middle [≡Bull-in-the-Middle, a game where one child is surrounded and tries to escape; another version is where one player tries to intercept a ball thrown between two others] Anyone trapped in a difficult situation, and often of a child caught in an adult crisis; someone caught in a dispute and obliged to make their own decision.
play follow-Dick to…[Gall] Servilely follow.
get your feet wet in… Gain experience, be initiated in something, start to participate.
ay at pillie-winkie wi’ the gowdnie’s eggs [eggs of the goldeneye duck] Always up to some harmful mischief [Fif]. (Pillie-winkie was a game where a boy, blindfolded, struck down with a stick attempting to break the eggs of ground-nesting birds. In parts of England this was a Whit Monday sport where to ‘switcher’ was to strike with a switch, blindfold, at birds’ eggs [wYks]; in Wink-egg [wSom] eggs that had already been stolen from birds’ nests were distributed on the ground and struck at by a player whose eyes were closed.)
Tom Tiddler’s/Ticker’s/Tinker’s ground [wYks Lan Der Suf Brks: 1823] Favoured place where careers and fortunes can be made without effort; no man’s land; disputed territory; body of material open to anyone to select what they want (from the game where children sing ‘Here we are on Tom Tiddler’s ground, Picking up gold and silver’, to be chased by the Tom Tiddler of the moment, trying to keep them out of his base).

not worth a chuckstane [=chuckie-stone, one of the pebbles used in playing Chucks, a girls’ game where, out of a spread of stones one is tossed up and caught again by the same hand which has, meanwhile, been picking up a required number of the lying stones—Sc Nhb Dur]

tisty-tosty [cowslip-ball, tossed and caught and counted to determine length of life—Hrf Glo Wil Som Dor Dev; =tossy ball—Shr] Plump, pleasant, wholesome.’…a rosy-cheeked, tisty-tosty little body enough’ [T.Hardy, Wessex Tales—1888].

daisy-chain (n) An arrangement of lesbians, each of whom excites erotically her neighbour in the circle; also a mixed group performing oral sex.

daisy-chain (v) Perform a dance in single file; inflate the price of a commodity by conspiring with others to make a corner in it; join elements in electronics or computing into a single sequence by making the output from one part of the sequence form the input into the next.

honey-pots/honey-pigs [game where one sits on his finger-locked hands, making ‘handles’ of his arms by which two ‘honey-merchants’ lift him and carry him to ‘market’ with much shaking which is intended to make him lose his hold—Sc Ire nEng Lon Sur Wil : 1813] Also played by girls sitting in a row and being tested in turn by two bigger girls with:

Honeypots, honeypots, all in a row! Who will buy my honeypots, O?
[Oxf C19]

This position in yoga, or in jumping into water [Aus].

leap-frog (v) Alternate in taking the lead from each other; increase or advance at every stage—often of wage demands, but also in many other, including military contexts.

high cockalorum [Wm nLan: 1823: Amer late C19] Pompous, self-important person. (From the schoolboy game of leap-frogging up onto a heap of boys, the last and highest being the high cockalorum.)

here-be-l, where-be-you? [Oxf] Of a plum pudding in which the plums are few and far between.

play mum-budget [a game where silence was required of one of the players: 1559] Refuse to talk; keep a secret.

sit like a mumchat [Calif] (As/from the above.)

run, sheep(ie), run/rin, sheep, rin [Sc] [a game where a shouter directs an unseen group to a hiding place] To describe a situation where only one knows what has to be done, and he has difficulty in communicating with those who have to do it—a malady most incident to industry.

just a game of hot cockles [an ancient rustic game—the modern children’s version is Stroke the Baby—where one lies blindfold and has to guess who struck him] A feeble imitation of, or preparation for the real thing (see also J.8a, make cockle/cockelty
bread); sexual titillation for a woman (from the meaning of cockles=lips). One of the last songs of Thomas Arne [1710–78] is entitled Can you forget our cockles hot?

play level-coil [<Fr lever le cul=lift your bottom, a rough, rowdy, seat-swapping game that used to be played at Christmas] Make love together.

shoe/ride the mockish [skittish]/wild mare [1529] (Originally a boisterous game played at Christmas, this is one of several rough-and-tumble boys’ games dating from the C16 or earlier. Wild mare is where one boy slides over the shoulders of several others who are linked together. He gets strapped with leathern aprons and such like all the while he is getting over them. In Shoe the old mare [Gall] a beam of wood is slung between two ropes, a player gets on to this and contrives to steady himself while performing a number of antics. If he can do this, he ‘shoes the old mare’. Shoe the wild bear [a corruption of wild mare] is similar: the player sits cross-legged on the suspended beam and whips it with a switch making it all the harder to keep his balance. Desferer l’asne [unshoe the ass—Fr] is supplied with ‘ride the wild mare’ as its English equivalent by Cot-grave [1611], by which time it had become a euphemism for the sex act as an irregular ‘wild’ sport, like a ‘roll in the hay’. Note also that a young mare is called a ‘mocky’ in south-west Texas.) Achieve sex with a woman, irregularly.

throw a handkerchief to…Show (condescending) preference for someone. (From the game of Kiss-in-the-Ring or Stir-up-the-Dumplings [Nrf].)

play the dozens [a game of verbal abuse played by black American children] Insult someone’s parents.

put him in the dozens [Amer] Insult his mother verbally.

handy-dandy (n) [1362: a game, played with the hands, one of which contains a marble; if the second player guesses which hand that is, he wins it, but if he fails, he pays a forfeit] Forfeit.

K.68 See-sawing

see-saw (v and adj) policy, drug, dosage etc. Oscillate(ing) between two directions, vary(-ing) from more to less and less to more; a contest where the advantage repeatedly swings from one side to the other.

rantipole [see-saw—Nhp] Romping, boisterous child [Cum nYks neLan Shr Glo Hmp]; a rantipole life [ Ire]=an unsettled life (now up, now down) [Maria Edgeworth, Letter—18 May 1813].

K.69 Fireworks

fireworks/pyrotechnics A performance of great brilliance and virtuosity (as in an exciting firework display).
scintillate [<Lat scintillare=sparkle] Act, speak with wit and brilliance.
squib [an exploding firework—Amer] Brief, witty contribution to newspaper or magazine.
a damp squib High expectations disappointed; unsuccessful attempt to impress.
rocket (v) Rise very quickly—of prices etc.
up like a rocket, down like the stick The extremes of jubilation and dejection, success and failure etc.
spent rocket Brilliant person, now past their best.
Roman candle (n and v) Parachute jump where the parachute fails to open.
bomb of fire [Amer] Spectacular performer; overachiever.
hot as a fire-cracker [Can Tenn Calif sAmer] Amorous and promiscuous.
whizzbang [Amer Aus] The popularisation of science by producing books and TV programmes that are more spectacular than serious.

K.70 Spinning-tops

drunk as a top
sound as a tap [=top—Sc] / peerie [peg, spinning-top—Sc Ire Nhb]
slow as a horn-top [eDur nYks]
sleep like a top [1613] Quietly and steadily (This metaphor is also used in reverse, see I.79g.)
spinning around like peeries [Edb Dmf]
give it a whirl [Amer] / burl [rapid twist—Aus] Try it out, give it a chance to prove itself in a preliminary trial.
as soon drive a top over a tiled house Of something derided as impossible.
scopperil (n) [a spinning-top, often made out of a button—nEng] A lively, nimble child or animal [wYks nwLin]; fidgety person [Chs].
dance / fly / run / skirl round / spin / whip about like a scopperil [Yks Lan Lin Not Der Lei] ‘Skirled me round like a scopperil’ [Lan].
worse than a scopperil [Lan]—for darting about unexpectedly
he’s an ill boy that goes like a top, no longer than ‘t is whipped spin around like a whirligig [Som]

K.71 Flying kites

fly your kite when it is windy [Ont Ohio] Don’t attempt something when the necessary conditions are lacking.
fly your kite too high [Utah] Be over-ambitious.
high as a kite Very drunk.
light as a kite
fly a kite [1739] Issue a feeler; test public opinion by experiment, to see ‘how the wind blows’; raise money by an accommodation bill; explore something tentatively; depart [Amer]; have a mental breakdown; smuggle a letter into or out of prison [Amer]; pass a worthless cheque [Aus].

flying his kite [Lan] Attracting attention; cutting a dash; off on a pleasure trip [War].
blow it as high as a kite [Amer] Spoil it by revealing the secret.
take your kite! [Nhb] Be off with you, on your way!


K.72a Dolls

white as a doll
dolly Wooden agitator for possing clothes in a wash-tub f=dolly tub] and whose projecting ‘arms’ and ‘legs’ give it a doll-like appearance.
as light on his feet as a rag man [Ant]
full up to dolly’s wax [where the wax head is stitched to the body—Aus] Completely full (usually when refusing more food).
china doll [Amer] Woman of refined features, delicate beauty.
quiet as a pot-doll [sLan]
Barbie doll [Amer 1966] Mindless person. (From the name of a make of teenaged doll for young children.)
lick the doll [Yks] Surpass everything.
flog doll [wYks] Beat everything, pass comprehension.
cut out (paper) dolls [Amer] Behave like an insane person.
hot button issue etc. [Amer 1980s] An emotive issue or word recognised by politicians and advertisers as likely to elicit the desired response from their public. (Soft toys often contain a hidden pressure button to make them sing, talk, walk etc.)
living doll [Amer] Pleasant, decent person.

K.72b Toy horses

wooden horse The gallows.
ride the wooden horse Get a military flog-ging. (From the name given to the frame to which offenders were strapped.)
rare as rocking-horse shit/droppings [Aus]
hobby-horse Pet theory (both because it is ridden to excess, and implying that it is merely an amusement that will soon be discarded).
hobby Spare-time occupation (as is a hobby-horse for a child).

K.72c Other toys

plaything Person treated as a passing amusement.

contrary as a whim-wham [weather-cock, toy windmill made of cross arms and paper sails—sLan] Very cross.
a fool will not leave his bable/bauble for the Tower of London [1577] Different people have different values.

house of cards Insecure scheme, situation; unstable organisation. ‘Collapse like a house of cards.’
kaleidoscopic Richly varied and continually changing.

toom as a whistle [empty as a whistle—Kcb]

pay (too dear) for his whistle [1779] Pay too much for a whim or caprice. (Benjamin Franklin, when a boy, offered another boy all the money in his pocket for a coveted whistle, and so paid more than it was worth. This is a possible origin of the saying.)
balloon-head [Amer] Inane person.
blow up Enlarge—a photograph (which is magnified very similarly to the image painted on a balloon when inflated).
pump yourself up [Amer] Prepare for a big effort; arouse, inspire yourself.

the balloon with the most air makes the loudest noise when it bursts [Amer] On the puncturing of pomposity.
deflate Reduce pomposity, self-esteem; shatter pride (like deflating a toy balloon).

went down/over like a lead/steel [Calif] balloon [originally of crashing aircraft—RAF] Was ill-received; was flatly rejected.

we’ll stick to each other like a take-up to a door-flag [leather sucker to a door-step—sLan] Said by newly-weds.

up to pussy’s bow [Aus] Having eaten to capacity.
sit like a little wooden hullet [=owlet—sLan] Very still.
now you’re shaping—like a wooden duck/horse! [Lan]
cute as a (speckled pup pulling a) red wagon [NC Tenn Calif]
drunk as a little red wagon [Amer]
sharp [bright, intelligent] as a rubber knife [Calif] Ironically.

cockle-shell heroes Valiant fellows—in their own estimation. (From the toy boats made of cockle-shells with which boys used to re-enact naval engagements.)

up and down like a yo-yo [Japanese children’s toy that spins up and down on a string] Often of a person’s spirits, morale. A yo-yo economy, state of health etc. is one that continually oscillates between extremes of prosperity and depression.
winding up So manipulate a person’s feelings that they over-react, with anger, indignation etc. (from winding up a clockwork toy to make it perform—see also A.5c).

toy soldier Soldier in peacetime; a ceremonial soldier only.
play cross-swords The action of schoolboy friends who stand together and direct their streams of urine to cross half-way to the ground.

-crack [gossip—Sc nEng] like a pea-gun/pengun [pop-gun that fires slices of turnip stuck through with a pen (i.e. a feather)] Be very talkative.

kicking can [Amer] Object of attack; scapegoat.

K.73 Indoor games (including billiards)

the game is not worth the candle (which is burnt while we play) [1602] Of anything that does not repay the expense.

the jig [game, joke, sport—1590] is over/up The game is up; that episode is over.

make a Russian scandal of...[a game where a message is whispered down a succession of players, to see by how much it changes in the process] Get the message wrong; end up with an account badly garbled by repeated hearsay.

Chinese whispers [a game like Russian scandal—see above] Of a situation, idea, philosophy, political system etc, which has grown in stature and significance through accretions and adjustments in time.

blindfold a pair [Amer] Fry each side of two eggs. (A blindfold was used in games like Blind-man’s-buff.)

getting hot/warm! A hint that you are nearer to finding what you are looking for (from Hunt-the-Thimble).

play Puss-in-the-Corner Swap around, change places; exchange jobs. (The game was played by five children, one in each corner of a room and one in the middle trying to get a place when the others changed corners. British sailors also played a more complex version.)

high jinks [a forfeits game played in the old Edinburgh clubs: 1700] Exuberant frolics.

off the oche [line behind which darts players stand to throw] Off the mark, mistaken.

ping-pong (v) Refer a patient to other specialists—often merely in order to obtain more fees; pass proposals endlessly to and fro between departments, negotiators etc. (After the rapid passage of a table tennis ball between players.)

push-pin [a children’s game in which one player tries to get his pin across his opponent’s pin C16] Trivial or meaningless pursuit.

bald [NC Tenn Calif]/round/smooth as a billiard ball

flat as a billiard table

pocket the red Penetrate sexually.

pot the white Have intercourse with a woman.

put on side Give yourself airs (from putting on side when playing a stroke at billiards—a sophisticated refinement).

play for safety (As a cautious billiards player will.) Act cautiously.

play pocket billiards/pool Of a man—play with the genitals through a trouser pocket.
snookered Placed in an insoluble difficulty; forced into an inextricable situation. (From the position in snooker where a player is unable to play the red—or coloured—ball when he should do so.)

behind the eight-ball In a position from which you cannot escape without making a mistake (from the game of pool, =snookered).

put cue in the rack [Aus] Retire. play tiddlywinks Engage in trivial pursuits; waste time.

scissors and paste Writing a book compiled solely of others’ writings, without any original contribution.

tick-tack-toe [noughts-and-crosses—Amer] Any grid form or pattern like the one used in the game.

cat’s cradle [game in which a string is intertwined among one player’s fingers and his/her partner takes it off in the form of another pattern or symmetrical figure] Complicated and ever-changing relationships; a tangle, difficult to unravel. A cat’s cradle of intrigue.’

they draw the cat-harrow(s) [a frustrating game for two, played by pulling at loops of thread that are crossed over each other: 1555] They thwart each other [Sc]; get at cross-purposes.

jig-saw Intricate puzzle, problem—variously.

things/pieces fall into place The mystery, chaos etc. is being resolved, explained; proper relationships are being established (as in a manipulatory or jig-saw puzzle).

click (v and n) Fall into place, come out right, fit together, be successful; become pregnant; become comprehensible. (As/from the above.)

click with…Have a satisfactory meeting with someone, usually of the opposite sex.

box of dominoes [Amer] Mouth full of teeth. Hence:

dominoes [Amer] The teeth.

by a long chalk By a good margin. (In domino and other games, points or merit were recorded by chalk-marks of different length.)

I’m domino [Yks Lan] I’m finished—variously. (As exclaimed by the winner of a game of dominoes.) ‘It’ll be domino with him if he doesn’t take care’ [Cum].

domino/knock-on effect, theory, reaction etc. When an event in one place provokes the same event in other places, especially of political and fiscal decisions. (Either from the method of play by which each player places a domino of the same value next to the one last laid; or else when one domino, falling, makes all the rest of the row topple over.)

Monopoly money [1970s] Currency made worthless by inflation or devaluation; large gains or losses lightly shrugged off. (From the board game which uses toy money and title deeds.)

back at/to square one [1960] Back at the very beginning, with no progress made (as in a squared board game like Snakes-and-ladders where a player can be sent back to the first square by the chance of the game).

snakes-and-ladders situation, career etc. One where progress and set-backs, gain and loss, success and failure oscillate fortuitously. (After the board game where a throw of the dice determines whether you go up a ladder or down a snake.)

sweep the board Win overwhelmingly (from draughts).

block off [Amer] Prevent someone from proceeding; stop an event from taking place. (From blocking off all your opponent’s draughts and so preventing them from moving.)
backgammon-player Sodomite.

turn the tables on…[1612] Reverse the relative positions between two persons or parties (from backgammon, where each half of the board is known as a table).

coup the tables [turn the tables—Ayr] Retort.

K.74 Chess

how the squares go How matters, events are proceeding.

exchequer [<OF eschequier<MedLat scaccarium=chess-board] (From early bookkeeping on a chequered cloth.)

chequered With alternations of good and bad (like the white and black squares of a chess-board). A chequered career has an intermixture of success and failure.

if you had the world on your chess-board, you could not fit all to your mind [1640] Of someone hard to please.

play a close game [one with very cautious opening moves] Be secretive; divulge little.

the bystanders/lookers-on see most of the game [1569] Said when recommending an impartial assessment of a situation where the participants are too involved to be objective.

gambit [stratagem that tempts a player to capture a piece at the expense of their own position] Opening move in a discussion; negotiating trick.

a pawn in the game Someone without influence, used and even sacrificed by others.

knight’s move A devious or indirect way of arriving where you wish to be.

when a man’s house is on fire, it is time to break off chess To one urging too frivolous a course of action.

stalemate—in negotiations etc. [1885] The point beyond which neither side can progress or will concede; deadlock.

checkmate [<Arab shah mata=the king is dead : 1346] Final blow; the move that defeats an opponent (from the final position in a game of chess when the king is trapped).

at the end of the game the king and the pawn go into the same bag All are equal in death.

K.75 Marbles

sharp [bright, intelligent] as a marble [Calif] Ironically.

has more rattle than a bag of prits [marbles—nNot] Is a chatterbox.

not care/give/worth a dump [small marble or lead counter—Hnt Nhp Cor]

those that have marbles may play, but those that have none must look on If you wish to participate, you must contribute.
play for keeps [Amer] Be serious, unyielding.
bring to taw [the starting line for a game of marbles] Compel to do something; bring under control [Nhp Hnt],
come up to taw [Lei War] Qualify, come up to scratch.
get back to taws [Aus] Start again, either by choice or necessity.
I’ll be one/a marble upon your taw I’ll pay you out, get even with you some time.
lose your marbles [Amer 1927] Go mad, crazy; be outraged.
has not all his/her marbles Is mentally deficient.
has all his/her marbles [Amer] Is sane, shrewd.
she has all her marbles in the taw She has her hands full of work.
taw (v) [shoot a marble—Yks] Pay.
down on his taw [watching another boy’s marble closely to seize an opportunity to have a shot at it—Ire] Observing a person with a view to gaining an advantage over him.
make your marble good [Aus] Improve your position, prospects, reputation; ingratiate yourself.
shoot the agate [Amer] Swagger along with hands hanging down and thumbs extended.
eyes rolling like bullikers [=bullockers, large marbles—Nhb] in a tin can
glassy alley/marble [Aus] The favourite; the very best.
just the glassy [Aus] The best, most admired. (As/from the above.)
knuckle down [1740] Submit; be subservient. (From being obedient to the other players saying ‘knuckle down to your taw’.)
speak in his knuckle Interrupt. A player, rejecting advice from bystanders, might say ‘Don’t speak in my knuckle’.
with a fub [Nhp]/fullock [jerk, especially in marbles—n&midEng] With a rush, violently.
you won’t fullock it through me [wYks] Don’t expect me to help you play such a dirty trick.
fillip [the flick of finger or thumb in shooting marbles] Stimulus.
dross him up [win all his marbles—nLin] Bankrupt him.
pass in his marble [Aus] Die.

K.76 Skittles, quoits

skittle out Dismiss batsmen in cricket in quick succession.
skittle over Knock/fall down all together, like skittles.
bowl over Amaze; create an impression; dis-concert.
go down like ninepins/skittles
down pin Depressed; out of health.
neat/nice as ninepence [=ninepins, by oral corruption] (When neatly set up.)
not all beer and skittles! Not unmixed pleasure; some trouble or disadvantages attach.
ten-strike [in ten-pin bowling, a bowl that knocks over all the skittles—Amer] Resounding success; a well-executed performance; a task both luckily and skilfully completed.

set *em up in the other alley! Now that job is finished, let’s start on the next.

go for your quoits [Aus] Depart suddenly.

shed riners with a whaver [Chs: 1826] Surpass a skilful achievement with one even more adroit. (A riner touches the peg, but a whaver rests on it and so wins the throw.)

shift your motty [the mark at which you aim in quoits or pitch-and-toss—Nhb Cum Lan War] Alter your position, policy.

K.77a Betting

he who laughs last laughs longest Said by a loser who still hopes to win in the end.

have the last laugh Be the final winner; succeed ultimately. (As/from the above.)

have a stake [=wager] in… Have a material interest in.

at stake At risk; doomed to be forfeited unless some condition is fulfilled.

play for high stakes Stand to lose or gain much—variously.

win the mare and lose/tine the halter [C17] win the horse and lose the saddle [Sc Nhp: 1549] Play double or quits; risk everything.

play false/foul Cheat, betray generally.

bank on… Depend on, count on something with assurance (like gamblers who stake their money in the ‘bank’, confident that they will get it all back and more).

put your money where your mouth is Back an opinion, statement etc. with a personal commitment.

K.77b Lotteries

he who trusts all things to chance makes a lottery of his life

marriage is a lottery The odds are against you being lucky.

fall to the lot of… So chance that it devolves upon someone.

cast in your lot with… Join fortunes with; share a venture with [from Proverbs i.14]. (Somewhere between 1535 when Coverdale’s translation of Proverbs gave this phrase to the language—but in its literal sense—and 1678 when Bunyan used it figuratively in Pilgrim’s Progress i.6, the present meaning became the common one.)

there is a crook in the lot of everyone There are vexations in everyone’s life. (When drawing sticks in a lottery, it is desirable to pick them smooth and straight, but such are rare.)

draw the short straw [1939] Get the smallest share; be unlucky, generally.
**draw a blank** [1832] Have no luck or success. (One way of drawing lots is to allot each entrant a folded piece of paper, only one of which carries the winning mark or word. The others are blanks.)

**thick as blanks in a lottery**

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**K.77c Roulette**

**when the chips are down** In the final reckoning before action is started; when the final decisions have been taken. (As when gamblers at roulette place their chips at a selected number.)

**put too many chips in one corner** Specialise, support exclusively; rely too much on one person, policy, plan etc.

**turn of the wheel** Change of fortune.

**up she comes and the colour’s red** Things have suddenly improved; a big snag has been removed.

**above-board** Honest, fair-dealing. (Spinning wheels for gambling were sometimes manipulated by a treadle under the board. See also K.79b. Often as ‘all open and above-board’.)

**rake it in** Make money quickly (like the croupier who rakes in the winnings).

**rake-off** The share or commission due to an operator or agent; share of the proceeds generally.

**cash/hand/send/pass/throw in your chips/ checks** Die; withdraw. (When you stop playing roulette etc., you hand in your chips in exchange for money.)

**you’ve had your chips!** [1917] You are finished; your end is near. (When there are no more chips or counters to gamble with, the game is up. In the Battle of Britain, and afterwards, this was a popular saying of the airmen who were gambling with their lives.)

**Vatican roulette** The rhythm method of birth control, one of three methods officially allowed to Roman Catholics, so named because it is pure luck if it succeeds.

**play Russian Roulette** [extract one cartridge from a fully loaded six-shooter, spin the chambers, put the gun to your head and pull the trigger] Act with bravado; gamble against odds (5:1!).

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**K.77d Tossing coins**

**two sides to every penny** Unexpected contradictions in everyone’s character.

**a toss-up** An even chance.

**ken which side of the penny is up** [Sc] Know how to strike a good bargain.

**know both sides of a penny** Know your way about; be worldly wise; be hard to deceive [Som].
heads-l-win, tails-you-lose [1832] A situation where, whatever the outcome, the same person is inevitably the gainer—or loser.

cross-l-win, pile-you-lose [1673] An older version of the above. (The cross is the face, pile the reverse of a coin.)

argue the toss Dispute in detail and energetically.

grouter [one who joins a game of ‘two-up’ only when he thinks the spinner will ‘spin out’ or will fail to ‘head them’—Aus] Someone taking an unfair advantage; person who goes out of turn.

come in on the grouter [Aus] Seize an unfair advantage (like one who joins a game when a run of either heads or tails suggests a change is due—see above).

play pitch-halfpenny [Nrf] Of rooks stooping to pick up worms.
pitch in Contribute. (From the pitch-in of a coin when starting to play pitch-and-toss.)

K.77e Other gambles

the gentleman will take a chance [Amer] Has ordered the hash.

find the bean in the cake Come into some good fortune; win a lottery. (From the custom of baking one bean in twelfth-night cakes. The lucky recipient is the ‘twelfth-night king’.)

handicap (v) Put at a disadvantage. (Originally a gambling game involving exchange and forfeiture; later transferred to the weights imposed on the best horses in a race and thence to the general meaning of disablement.)

handicap (n) A disabling disadvantage (see above).

thimble-rigging Kind of low fraud or jiggerypokery. (From a gambling game where you have to guess which thimble of three covers a pea.)

pea [Aus, obs elsewhere] Favourite, likely horse; sure bet. (From the above.)

play/bowl booty [C16–C19] Conspire to de-fraud a victim, variously, but usually in gambling games.

blow the gaff [concealed cheating mechanism of a carnival game—Amer] Let out the secret; expose the deception.

the penny has dropped! [1951] He/she understands at last. (From the automatic penny-in-the-slot machines for gambling, buying sweets or cigarettes, hearing records or being weighed—which will only work when the coin has fallen.)

pay-off [winnings from gambling] (In more general senses) reward, recompense, punishment, come-uppance, result, outcome, crucial factor, giddy limit! The pay-off or pay-off line in a joke or story is the point or crux of it, the punch-line.

punch-board [a perforated board in the holes of which gambling slips were placed prior to being punched out when determining a winner—Amer] A promiscuous woman.

sweat on the top line Anxiously await something imminent on which much depends. (From the game of Bingo [=Housey-housey =Tombola] when players can be feverishly waiting for their winning number to be called.)

like a pakapu ticket [Aus] Completely undecipherable; very untidy, disordered. (Pakapu is a Chinese game like Tombola, played with tickets.)
rigmarole [≡ragman roll, Ragman being a game of chance dating from the C14 and
tamed after the legal lists authorised by Edward I; the game featured a list of verses with
threads attached to be chosen by the players] An involved, but incoherent and disjointed
story, excuse etc.; an inconsequential list.

let...in on—a secret, joke, plot etc. [C20] Allow to partake, invite to join in (from
admitting someone to a gambling school).

K.78 Dice

clean/level/smooth [1530]/straight/true as a die (From the necessity of dice being
precise cubes.)

upon a/the die At stake; depending on chance or a contingency.

aleatory [≪Lat aleator=dicer] Of music or poetry in composition or performance
when produced out of choices and impulses as random as the throw of dice.

tin-horn (adj) Showy and pretentious, but really of small account. (A certain class of
American gamblers shook their dice in a tin horn.)

shit through a tin-horn [Amer] Do something rapidly and effortlessly.

teeth chattering like dice in a box

the whole box and/of dice Everyone in the company or organisation without
exception.

in a brace of shakes [two shakes of a dice box] Very soon.

slur [slip or slide the die out of the box without turning it—C16] Slide, generally.

the die is cast The irrevocable, irreversible move has been made.

dice with death Take terrible risks—often in road traffic.

dicey Risky, uncertain, and where the outcome depends more on chance than any
other factor.

throw deuces [Aus] Do well, generally.

on a roll [Amer] Winning regularly, having much success; enthusiastically engaged in
an activity, course of study etc.—‘on a theology roll’.

hazard [a dicing game with complicated rules 1300] Chance, risk—generally.

at sixes and sevens [1340] In confusion, disagreement. (Probably a fanciful alteration
of ‘to set on cinque and sice’, the two highest numbers.)

throw a/the seven/sevens [Aus] React drastically; do badly; faint; vomit; die. (There
is no seven on a single die.)

chuck a seven [the losing throw at craps] Die.

come/turn out crabs [two aces, the lowest throw at Hazard—see above] Turn out a
failure or disappointment.

have an eye to the main chance Be ready to profit from the best or most promising
opportunity. (From the game of Hazard—see above.)

bar by and main [1567] Prevent completely—i.e. in both principal and subsidiary
aspects. (From the possibility that a dicer might gain more by the incidental than the main
chance.)

false as dicers’ oaths
load the dice against.../play with loaded dice Prejudice the result; introduce bias against; ensure they do not succeed. (Dice can be dishonestly ‘loaded’ with a weight to prevent them falling true.)

foist on to...[<Du vuist—take in the hand or fist] (From the cheating of dicers who conceal an extra, flat die in their hands and use it at an advantageous moment.)

my last throw My last attempt, chance generally.

you can’t win them all! Consoling thought on a failure or disappointment and recommending the attitude of a gambler—a healthy acceptance.

K.79a Cards

ace (n) Top performer in a class; supreme exponent (the ace being the highest card in a suit).

black as the ace of spades/ten of clubs

the ace of spades A woman’s genital area (from the shape of her pubic hair).

duce of clubs [Amer] Both fists.

spade (n) [Amer] A black person with very dark skin.

face card [Amer] Important person.

there is no pack of cards without a knave [1600] A rascal may be found in every company.

a joker in the pack/deck That one in a group who is unpredictable and contrary; one of those small-print clauses in the text of an act or contract that frustrates its apparent intention, or offers a loophole for evasion; hence, a snag, defect, disadvantage, fraudulent trick [Amer].


out of sorts Temporarily in poor health (from a disarranged pack where the cards are all out of suits or sorts).

shuffle the cards Make a new beginning; change the situation; change the parts or the policy.

shuffle them up [Amer] Switch railroad cars.

reshuffle (n) An all-round rearrangement—often of cabinet appointments.

riffle through Search through papers, pages etc. in a casual manner (from the offhand way of ruffling or shuffling cards by bending them at the corners. Also associated with the verb rifle=plunder, which was originally pronounced riffle).

a fair/square/raw deal Favourable/just/harsh treatment by fate—or such other bodies as have the power to impose conditions (in the same way as the dealer allots various ‘hands’ in a card game).

deal a poor deck to...[Amer] Treat them cruelly, unjustly.

deal from the bottom of the deck Cheat, deceive. (A way of manipulating the deal.)

stacked against/in favour of... Chances are unfavourable/favourable. (From dealing a hand in cards whose contents have been predetermined by the order in which the pack has been stacked.) Hence:

stack the deck [Amer] Prearrange something in your own favour; prejudice the result.
many can pack the cards that cannot play [1659] Knowledge (of the tools etc.) does not guarantee skill.

K.79b Playing at cards

play with a full deck [Amer] Lack nothing in intelligence.
play your cards right/well [1702] Behave or do what is necessary so as to reach a desired end; act in a way calculated to bring success.
overplay (your hand) Overstress something; spoil a case by excess or exaggeration.
take a hand in… Play a part in, share the work.
force the hand of… Compel someone to do what you want.
above-board Fair, honest-dealing. (From the tricks of card-sharpers who change their cards under the table or board. See also K.77c.)
play with marked cards Act dishonestly, play false.
play (your cards) close to your chest/vest Be cautious, secretive; keep information to yourself.
dessous des cartes [underneath the cards—Fr] A secret aim, object or explanation kept in reserve.
lay/put (all) your cards on the table Declare your intentions, resources etc. unreservedly. show your cards/hand Reveal your true intentions.
discard Reject generally; throw away.
be within an ace of… Be very near to. (Within one card, and that the lowest. Alternatively, the phrase may have originated from the single pip on a die, known as the ace, and giving the C16 meaning of a jot, particle, minute portion.)
an ace up your sleeve An advantage known only to yourself.
hold all the aces Be in an unassailable position, have all the advantages.
cool/calm as a Christian with his aces wired [Amer] Serenely assured (because, if he had the aces electronically bugged, a Christian card-sharper was doubly assured of salvation).
a sure card Dependably successful person (like the winning card in a hand).
a clear conscience is a sure card [NY Ill]
play his ace Use his best resource.
play the ace against the jack Of a woman, grant the sexual favour.
play his last card Make a final attempt; use the sole means or argument left to him.

K.79c Keeping score

pool (v) Contribute to a common fund—of ideas, money etc.
pool (n) [the accumulation of stakes in certain card games] Common store or fund.
scoop the pool Gain all the prizes, profits, success, applause etc. to the exclusion of other rivals.
cribbage-face A pock-marked complexion (after the numerous peg-holes in a cribbage board).
bilk [deliberately confuse the pegs on a cribbage board] Avoid paying a debt, give the slip to a creditor.
level-pegging [1927] With equal scores. (The position of the pegs in a cribbage board is level when the scores are equal.)
on the home stretch [the last row of holes that ends in ‘home’] In sight of the objective.

K.79d Card games

play a lone hand Manage your own affairs without others’ help. (From such card games as Euchre in which you can either play with a partner or against all the other players.)
leave in the lurch [1576] Desert (a friend) in trouble; leave without help. (From Cribbage-and-Lurch, a C16 card game where the ‘lurch’ was a state of the game where one player has won before the other has hardly scored.)
set up your rest [1575] Stake everything; finally settle, decide. (A term from the game of Primero.)
go nap on… Risk everything on, back through thick and thin; enthuse over [Aus]. (From the game of Nap, when a player sets himself to get all five tricks.)
nap-hand A double infection of syphilis and gonorrhoea. (There is also a carry-over from the C17 when the word nap did mean any venereal disease.)
go the vole [<Fr voler=fly] Risk all in the hope of a great success (from the word used in several French card games when a player tries for all the tricks).
bunco (v and n) [=Banco, a Spanish card game—Amer] Swindle.
blind hookey [a C19 card game] Far too great a risk.
from soda to hock [the first and last cards in the game of Faro, a game that developed on the boats of the Mississippi, and in which cards are taken from the box in turn—Amer] From start to finish; all the way through.
play both ends against the middle [from Faro—NY Ohio 111 Miss: 1928] Help yourself by pitting your opponents against each other.
snap decision One taken on the instant, without deliberation (from the game of Snap where the player who calls soonest takes the cards).
play penny pool [Amer] Deal in trivialities, childish matters.
K.80 Whist and bridge

according to Hoyle [E. Hoyle, who wrote Short Treatise on the Game of Whist, 1742, soon recognised as the authority on the rules of the game] Absolutely correct(ly).

long suit Strong point; expertise.

follow suit Do likewise; leave the initiative to a neighbour or predecessor; agree with another’s decision.

strong card/suit Speciality, forte; personal excellence.

guard the ace Form a destroyer escort all round a large warship at sea.

ace (v) Kill (from trumping with an ace).

play your best card Do your best, try your hardest.

in spades (adv) In abundance; very much so, to the utmost [Amer] (spades being the top suit in Bridge).

clubs are trumps [1588] Force decides.

trump card Best chance; last resort; valuable resource.

hold some trumps Have resources that may bring success or victory


turn up trumps [1621] Come, opportunistly, to the rescue; turn out better than expected.

play a trump Make a winning move, to the surprise of your opponent.

be put to your trumps [1559] Be forced to a last expedient.

trumped up—charge etc. Irregularly produced; fabricated.

never miss a trick Never fail to seize an opportunity; always make the most of a situation.

cannot take a trick Am constantly unsuccessful.

go a bundle on...[=abundance, a call in Solo Whist] Approve, support; take a chance on something.

bidding movements [the process of making bids in Auction Bridge, which continues until all bids are made] Bodily movements, postures, disposition of limbs inviting intercourse.

overbid/overcall [bid higher than your cards justify] Force an opponent to offer more, or to work harder, by exaggerating your own intentions.

K.81 Poker

(Many of these expressions are American in origin as poker was developed on the Mississippi river-boats.)

smooth as a poker-table

for openers As a start; to start things off. (Openers are the cards on which a player can open the betting.)
**blue-chip investments** Reliable stock of good quality. (The blue chips in poker betting are high-value tokens.)

**brag/face it out/outface with a card of ten** [1520] Put on a bold front (from Brag, or Primero, the forerunner of Poker [see Bale, Yet a Course—1543]).

**wild card** [a card, usually the joker, which can have any rank chosen by the player holding it in Bridge and Poker] Someone who is likely to do the unexpected; who does not fit into the published programme; a ‘mystery man’ in a team.

**ace in the hole** [face down on the table, saved until it can be used to best advantage in Seven-card Stud Poker] A hidden asset, waiting for the right moment to be used.

**poker-face** [1885] An expressionless face (so as not to betray what sort of a hand the player holds).

**sit tight** Remain stationary; take no further action (the policy of a player who wishes neither to bet further, nor to throw in their cards).

**stand pat** [abide by the hand dealt] Stick by a decision; refuse to budge.

**standpatter** Politician who adheres to the party policies. (As/from the above.)

**four-flush** (v) Deceive with a bluff.

**busted flush** An attempt abandoned as a failure. (From the sequence of cards which cannot be completed in time to win the hand.)

**call your bluff** Challenge you to verify your claim or go through with a threat.

**go one better than...** Continue in the series started (like a player who, wishing to continue, must either raise the stake or go one better).

**hit the jack-pot** [a pool that accumulates until a player has a pair of jacks, which enables them to open the betting] Win a large prize in a lottery or other gamble, especially one that accumulates until won; have a stroke of good luck variously.

**pass the buck to...** Make a dupe of someone; shift responsibility to them. (From the practice of passing an article on to the next dealer as a reminder. The article originally used on the Mississippi river-boats was a buck-horn-handled knife, and any player who did not want to risk dealing might pass it to the next player.)

**show-down** [1904] Dénouement; general disclosure of plans etc.; confrontation intended to be conclusive. (The show-down is a poker hand where all the cards are dealt face up and the best hand wins at once.)

**throw in/up your hand/throw up the cards** Accept defeat; despair of success; give up as a bad job; withdraw.

**chuck your hand in** Die. (As/from the above.)

**cash in on**... Realise on; settle accounts.
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barrel (v) K.18b
bad apple in b. E.30f
have over b. J.19
herrings in b. D.13d
knock on the b. K.18b
know wine by b. K.21a
like neither b. nor herring D.13d
little b. E.34h
look down the b. C.10a
neither b. better herring D.13d
of monkeys K.59c
of snow G.16b
pork b. E.29e
scrape the b. I.43a
shake the b. I.86b
shooting fish in b. K.58c
sit on b. of gunpowder C.7a
smells of herring D.13d
toom as a b. K.18b
barrel-chested K.18b
barrel-head, put money on E.2b
barrels make most noise, empty K.18b
Barrington’s bloodhound H.13b
barrow
about my b. F.29
go on with b. F.29
just my b. F.29
laid down the b. F.29
push your own b. F.29
set down the b. F.29
take b. back F.29
with square wheel F.29
barrow-backed F.29
barrow-load of monkeys K.59c
barrow-steel, keeps up F.29
barrow-trindle, wallockin’ about like F.29
Bartelmy dolls K.60b
barter, fond o’ J.63d
Bartholomew
  babies K.60b
  baby K.60b
  boar/pig K.60b
base
  first b. K.34
  get to b. K.34
  off your b. K.34
  second b. K.34
  steal second b. K.34
  touch b. with K.34
baseball, older than K.34
bases, touch all K.34
bashful
  as (a/the) girl I.3a
Lenten lover J.41a
Basing! that’s C.16
bask in G.12b
bask-apple G.28a
basket! K.58b
(n) I.86c
  all eggs in one b. E.28c
  leaks/lecks like a b. I.45a
  left in the b. I.2c, I.86c
  Moses b. J.34c
  of chips I.72c
  of eggs I.52e
  of oranges I.55c
  of wet whelks D.12
  pick of b. I.86c
  pin the b. I.86c
basket-making I.45a
baskets
  carry egg in two b. E.28c
bass I.80d
  fond as b. G.28f
bastard (n) E.31e
  calf E.21d
  on Father’s Day I.3a
basteth (a/the)
  fat hog I.60b
bastion C.12a
bat (a/the)
   and bowl K.33b
   blind as b. G.68b
   carry b. K.33b
   catch a b. G.68b
   eyelid I.23b
   go to b. against/for K.34
   off his own b. K.33b
   on losing/sticky wicket K.33b
   out of hell J.62
   play straight b. K.33b
   right off the b. K.34
   sleepy as b. G.68b
   warm as a b. I.73c
bat-eyed G.68b
bat-fowl H.6f
bath
   take a b. I.32a
   take an early b. K.32a
bath-brick, scraped as I.32a
bath-mat, dry as Pommy’s I.32a
bath-tub, win a fur-lined K.60e
bath-water, baby out with I.2g
baton, staff and C.13f
bats
   his eyes like louse… G.41
   his wings a long time G.45f
   in belfry J.52c
   in steeple G.68b
batten on… E.25c
batteries
   mask b. C.9
   recharge b. A.4d
batterill, flat as I.84a
batterering ram E.23b
battery girl E.28b
battle
   cruiser D.19a
   fight losing b. C.10g
   half the b. C.10e
   of the Bulge C.16
   on C.10f
   royal K.58b
   through C.10f
   to make a b. C.10c
   your way through C.10f
battle-axe C.3a
battledore
   and shuttlecock K.37b
   B/Bo/boo to a b. J.20c
   know B from b. J.20c
not know B/ABC from b. J.20c
battle-lines drawn C.10a
battles, hard C.10a
battleship (n) D.19a
sink a b. D.19a
batty J.52c
as a bed-bug G.42b
busy as B. I.4n
bauble, fool will not leave K.72c
bauchle, flung out like B.10a
baudrons, mim as pussy I.14b
bauk see balk
bauld as (a/the) black-faced wedder E.23b
bauson (n=badger) G.62
silly as b. G.62
bawbee I.2b
Lauderdale b. F.1b
not care/give/worth a b. F.1b
bawd, ugly as H.11e
bawdrons see baudrons
bawk see balk
bawling cow E.21d
Bawtry, saddler of H.21e
bay
at b. E.10b
for the moon I.9b
whale in the b. D.7b
window I.41i
Bayard, bold as blind E.14f
bay-tree, flourish like J.34n
bazed waker B.3a
beach
on the b. D.11
only pebble on b. D.11
beached D.17c
whale D.13b
beacon at sea D.17f
beadle of the law H.13a
beady E.4c
beak
dip b. E.28b
dipping b. in good seed-box E.28b
keep b. up G.45a
of the goose E.27a
bealing
cow E.21d
like calf/goat E.21e
beam
broad in the b. D.1a
fork in b. D.19b
in own eye J.35b
kick the b. I.88a
off/on the b. A.4e
beam-ends (n) D.17e
on his b. D.17e
beamfilled I.40f
bean
for a pea F.6a
has its black I.54b
in cake K.77e
in liberty I.54b
in monk’s hood J.48
jumpy as Mexican b. I.54b
not care/give/worth a/the b. I.54a
pea for b. F.6a
white as b. I.54b
with one b. H.6g
bean-counter J.27a
bean-fed E.6d
bean-pole E.31d
beans
be at/on b. I.54b
full of b. E.6d
have b. up nose I.54b
hunger makes b. sweet F.6a
in blue bladder K.59g
in flower E.31d
in sack E.31d
make five I.54b
not care/give/worth a hill/row of E.31d
old sow in b. E.25f
pretty as b. I.54f
put b. up nose I.54b
spill the b. I.54b
beanstraw, coarse as E.31d
beanswaup I.54b
bear (a/the)
(n—Stock Exchange) E.8d, K.56a
and kettle J.2c
as much as traffic will b. F.8
away the horn K.60e
bell E.23b, K.50c
black b. of Arden J.5d
bridled b. K.56b
bring to b. upon C.9
bull J.3a
bull’s neck E.19b
buns to a b. K.56b
burden and heat of the day J.35b
buy the b. E.2a
carry guts to a b. K.56b
clapper J.52c
coals F.34b
cup fairest I.48c
dancing b. K.59c
fight dog, fight b. K.56d
fruit E.30b
gruff as a b. C.17g
have b. by the tail K.56b
honey too good for b. K.56b
if it had been a b. K.56b
imprint of J.22a
itch I.30h
lantern I.78b
loaded for b. E.8d
long-tailed b. C.17g
low sail D.3c
mad as a b. K.56a
make b. talk K.56c
old horse can b. F.10b
palm J.8f
picks mussels K.56b
play the b. K.56c
rein upon E.16h
ride the b. K.56b
rough as a b. C.17g
sail D.3c
scars of… C.10d
scratches with b. K.56b
sell the b. E.2a
shares honey with b. K.56b
sold bible to buy b. J.50
sucking his paws K.56b
surly as b. K.56a
take b. by the tooth K.56b
thinks one thing, K.56b
though b. be gentle K.56b
to the stake ×2 K.56d
two faces I.33a
with muck-fork K.56b
with sore head/leg/lug K.56a
without a ring K.56b
would have bitten you K.56b
young b., all troubles to come K.56a

beard (a/the)
(n) I.21b
against his b. I.32c
crumbs in b. I.21b
dead lions by the b. J.2b
every man soap his own b. I.32c
fat flits from b. I.65d
goat reverend for his b. E.24a
have the b. on the shoulder I.21b
in a blaze I.32c
in his b. C.10c
in spite of b. I.21b
lick fat from b. I.65d
like baker’s shool I.62b
lion in den C.17c
make b. without razor I.85f
make his b. I.85f
maugre his b. I.21b
pull dead lion’s b. off J.2b
shave his b. I.85f
take by the b. C.10c
won’t pay for the shaving I.85f
bearded clam D.12
bear-garden K.56c
bear-hug C.17g
bearings
  bring to b. D.16c
  find b. D.16c
  lose b. D.16c
  take your b. D.16c
bear-land C.17g
bear-leader K.56b
bear-play K.56c
bear’s
  arse C.17g
  hand in b. mouth C.17g
  muck K.56a
  service J.2c
  skin E.2a
bears
  are you there with your b.? K.56b
  bad for puppies to play with cub b. I.6d
  bring on your b. K.56d
  time to catch b. E.8d
  vainglory never b. E.30b
  worry keepers K.56b
beast
  every b. his bottle E.19d
  has gotten boot and better b. E.15h
  mark of the b. J.35h
beat (a/the)
  about the bush E.11d
  air C.10f
  all to sticks I.80a
  at own game K.67a
  band C.14a
  booby D.7d
  bush E.11d
  devil round (gooseberry) bush E.30h
  devil’s tattoo C.14a
  doesn’t miss a b. K.1d
  dog before lion C.17c
  dog with E.18
  drum for C.13g
goose E.27f
him to the punch K.40b
like a stock-fish I.51b
over the old ground E.11d
retreat C.10g
starter K.29a
swords into plowshares J.34q
tar out of… D.8a
to snuff K.25a
water in mortar I.36h
when the fellow b. the dog I.10b
wind G.13c
with his own staff C.1c
with the spit I.66a
without b. of drum C.14a
beaten
at the post K.50c
dog b. out of the room I.10b
face like b. favourite K.50c
go off b. track G.10a
to a pummy K.16b
way G.10a
beating
devil is b… J.63c
give a stone and a b. K.50c
beats (a/the)
cockfighting ×2 K.58b
Dutch C.17a
my grandmother I.4g
not at a bunting E.9e
one b. the bush E.11d
Beauchamp, bold as C.16
beauty
draws more than ten oxen F.15c
is skin-deep I.18f
beaver (n) I.21b
away at… C.17h
busy as a b. C.17h
eager b. C.17h
work like b. C.17h
beaver-tail C.17h
becalmed C.17h
beck
ing the b. G.24a
thrang as B. wife I.82f
Beckermet, lasses of I.1b
beck-stone, hard as G.21b
becomes as well as a saddle… E.20d
bed (n) I.79a
barn better filled than b. E.13c
change b. I.37a
couldn’t lie straight in b. I.79f
down I.79f
easy as pissing a b. I.29f
full of brambles G.4b
get into b. with I.79f
goes to b. I.79f
in a crowded b. I.79f
in the middle of the b. I.38a
—lie on it I.79f
nor bolster I.79e
of bones I.79a
of nails J.9d
of Procrustes J.1c
of roses I.90g
of thorns I.90g
of Ware I.79a
only to throw trousers on b. I.1d
out of b. I.79i
piss the b. waking I.29f
Procrustean b. J.1c
put leg to b. I.79f
put/see to b. I.79f
put to b. with mattock/shovel F.28a
up ladder to b. I.79f
wets its b. I.2g
wheat long in b. I.79f
with boots on I.79f
wrong side of b. I.79i
bed-and-breakfast K.26a
bed-bug, batty/crazy as G.42b
bed-clothes over head, pull I.79f
beddax, clumsy as F.24c
Bedella’s fiddle, long as K.2a
Bede’s chair J.39
bedevilled by… J.63a
bed-fellows, strange I.1b
Bedford, Bailiff of H.14a
bedirten yourself I.29d
bedizen B.1a
bedlam K.66
bed-post I.79a
bed-posts, devil’s J.63b
bed-rock E.3b
beds, soft C.10a
bed-staff I.79a
bedstead, devil’s J.63b
bed-straw
fire in b. I.79b
looks as if he’d eaten b. E.21f
bee
brisk/busy as b. G.33a
buzzing about like bumble b. G.33a
caught in a shower G.33a
has honey in mouth E.30j
hummo b. in halse G.33a
in a bottle G.33a
in a box G.33a
in a tar-barrel G.33a
in a tar-/treacle-pot G.33a
in his bonnet G.33a
loudest bummer not the best b. G.33a
midsummer b. G.33a
queen b. G.33a
quick as b. G.33a
starve one b. E.30j
still b. E.30j
where the b. sucks honey… G.33a

beef (v) E.19f
about E.19f
Albany b. I.50c
at Christmas E.29a
big as if he’d eaten bull b. I.66c
down to the heels E.22a
honour buys no b. E.22a
ill b. I.67a
liked veal better than b. I.66c
mustard without b. I.66h
put more b. into it E.19f
red as raw b. I.50c
shin of b. I.50c
tit on round of b. G.57
beefed-up E.19f
beef-mountain G.20a
beefy E.22a
bee-hive E.30j
busy as b. E.30j
bee-line G.33a
bee-martin, beween bug and G.35b
been there C.17a
beer
and skittles K.76
blow froth off glass of b. K.20
bottle on Coliseum J.28b
chronicle small b. J.25a
egg in b. K.20
only here for the b. K.20
small b. K.20
stale as old b. K.20
such bottle, such b. K.20
Beersheba, Dan to J.34h
bee’s knee(s) G.33a
bees
birds and b. J.30a
busy as b. in a basin E.30j
cannot be turned E.30j
in a byke G.33a
old b. yield no honey E.30j
on the moor G.33a
swarm of b. ×2 E.30j
talk a butt of b. to death E.30j
thick as b. E.30j
thick as b. at a tee-hole E.30j
thrang as b. E.30j
bees’ byke G.33a
bee-skep
buzzing like b. E.30j
in a buzz E.30j
Beeston, clerk of J.47
beeswax E.30j
beeswing G.33a
old b. G.33a
beet (v—flames, passions etc.) I.74c
beetle (n) G.35b
among the bairns F.32c
and the block F.32c
away/off G.35b
blind/deaf as b. G.35b
Dovercourt b. F.32c
dull as b. F.32c
knows another G.35b
mad as a b. G.35b
make a b. F.32c
numb as a b. F.32c
ride on the b. G.35b
where the b. drives F.24j
will not sleep and the b. without F.32c
beetle-browed G.35b
beetle-headed F.32c
beetle’s eye, blind a G.35b
beetles up a hill G.35b
beetroot, red as I.54k
befog D.5
before them, hae it all E.33c
beforehand F.33a
beg (a/the)
blessing of wooden god J.44
like a cripple G.1
shive I.63a
sit up and b. I.7b
beget (v) I.1d
begets money I.1d
beggar
blushes like a b. G.1
drunk as a b. G.1
knows his dish G.1
on horseback G.7g
Pride as loud a b. G.1
sue a b. H.17
beggar-berm B.2e
beggarman’s crutch G.1
beggar’s
   clap-dish G.1
   staff G.6c
beggars
   cannot be choosers G.1
   great as two b. G.1
   in chaff G.1
   merry as b. G.1
   might bite I.71c
   should not be tarrowers G.1
   would eat birds G.3e
   would ride G.7g
beggary, idleness key to I.42b
begged on me G.1
begging, go (a-) G.1
begin (a/the)
   again J.47
   dance K.9e
   on porridge I.68
begowk (v) G.53
begun turn F.26c
behind (a/the)
   as much room b. I.89b
   closed doors I.41f
   cloud(s) G.14c
   door B.7b
   eight-/8-ball K.73
   fall in b. C.14b
   further b. than Walla Walla C.17a
   hand F.33a
   his back I.5g
   , like a cow’s tail E.20c
   , like a fat woman I.31a
   , like Barney’s bull E.19b
   odd as Oliver’s b. I.31a
   rides b. E.16e
   scenes K.61b
behind-hand F.33a
   like miller’s filler E.34f
behint the hand F.33a
beholden to a mouse J.2b
Belasye, daft as J.28c
belch (n) I.24j
   out/up I.24j
beleaguer C.12b
belfry, bats in J.52c
believe (a/the)
   bannock’s hardened I.62b
   he’s bald I.21a
moon is green cheese G.18b
water will flow uphill G.23a
believer out of…, make a J.47
bell (a/the)
  American as school b. J.16
  at/on/under the slow b. D.16a
  bear the b. E.23b, K.50c
  cat J.2i
  clear as b. J.52c
  crack the b. J.52c
  fear loss of b. J.52c
  frequent as b. on Sunday J.52c
  hang on the b. J.52c
  has a tongue J.52c
  ring a b. E.6c
  ring a loud b. I.85a
  ring his/her b. E.6c
  ring the b. K.60e
  saved by the b. K.40c
  should not pull the b. J.52c
  should not set b. swinging J.52c
  sound as a b. J.52c
  steeple bears the b. J.52c
  warm the b. D.19b
  warning b. H.2b
  whip and a b. J.8g
  will go for anyone J.52c
Bellasis see Belasye
bell-bottoms J.52c
Bellesdon, in and out like G.8a
bell-horse F.10b
bell-mouth J.52c
bellock/bellow like a bull E.19b
bellowing cow E.21d
bellows
  burnywind’s b. A.3d
  dark as b. I.73c
  drive windmill with b. E.34c
  fresh hand at b. I.73c
  puff like pair of b. I.73c
  to mend I.73c
bell-rope, Ancroft/Dalton J.50
bell-ropes, hang in J.52d
bells
  agree like b. J.52c
  all b. on one horse E.16k
  and whistles K.60f
  call others to church J.52d
  give her the b. E.9e
  knock/scare seven b. out of… D.19b
  letting the b. down J.52d
  ring b. backwards J.52d
seven b. in a wig-box D.19b
tune like b. J.52c
wedding b. J.52d
with b. on E.16k
bell-tinker, give you G.1
bell-wether E.23b
belly
blowtorch applied to b. H.16
but for the b. F.4a
clems her b. I.65a
cries cupboard I.43b
empty b. hears nobody F.6a
eyes bigger than b. I.23a
fill not the b. G.3a
fire in the b. I.29a
go to the bottom of b. I.35c
go under devil’s b. J.63h
hained off the b. I.65a
has b. like poisoned pup’s I.10a
has no ears I.29a
is full F.6a, K.6a
lower than a snake’s b. G.44a
out I.29a
slack of b. I.29a
slap across/in/on b. I.5i
thinks throat cut H.12b
whose b. is full F.6a
wolf in b. I.29a
belly-ache I.29b
belly-flought K.58c
bellyful E.6d
of wasps G.34a
belly-up I.10c
below (a/the)
    belt K.40b
    par E.1d
    salt E.6d
Bel’s two fires, between J.8a
belt (n—of rain, trees etc.) B.61
    and braces B.61
    below the b. K.40b
    bring your yule b. B.61
    good whittle at b. C.3c, E.29a
    ilka man wears his b… B.61
    tighten the b. B.61
    tine the twopenny b. B.61
    turn the b. K.41a
    under the b. B.61
Belstan bore B.61
belve
    like (a) bull E.19b
        calf E.21e
Tregeagle J.1e
belving cow E.21d
Ben
  fat as big B. I.85g
  send him b. I.72b
  ben’ leather, thick as B.8c
bench, welder’s A.3e
bench-mark (n+v) J.29
bench-warmer I.85e
bench-whistler I.85e
bend (v—will etc.) F.34a
  around the b. K.53
  before the storm G.27a
  better b. the neck I.25a
  beyond my b. C.2a
  bow of Ulysses J.26a
  like a willow G.27e
  over backwards F.5
  round the b. I.85c
  to the yoke F.15a
  while a twig E.30a
  with the tree G.27a
  with the wind G.27a
bending, ever C.2a
bend-leather, thick/tough as B.8c
beneath the weathercock J.52b
Benedict J.25a
Bengal tiger, brave as a C.17d
benighted G.17
Benjamin’s mess J.34b
bennel
  frush as b. G.30b
  green as b. G.31b
bent
  as (a/the) bucker G.6a
    butcher’s hook E.29a
    rainbow G.14d
    sickle F.26b
    tin spoon G.3b
  as twig is b. E.30a
  bow long b. C.2a
  dwable/dwebble as a b. G.27d
  gang/go to the b. G.10a
  of his bow C.2a
  on… C.2a
  on a splice D.3a
  take the b. stick I.72d
  take to the b. G.10a
  top of his b. C.2a
  tree b. while young G.6a
  young not always with bow b. C.2a
benweed, kick at E.13b
bereft of... I.38g
berm-stick, hit with I.57a
berries off a whin bush G.29d
berrin’ [=burying]
  been to Jerry’ b. I.38g
  mahogany b. I.38g
  shine like b. cake I.38g
  too slow to go to a b. I.38f
berry
  blacker the b. sweeter the juice I.55j
  brown as a b. G.28e
  he’s no the b. G.28e
berry-moucher G.28e
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send b. man to buy paint I.34c
spot I.34c
steal from b. hog F.13b
that wink I.34c
turn a b. eye I.34c
wary as b. eye E.14f
whelps I.6d
when devil is b. I.63h
blindfold a pair K.73
blindness, black as I.34c
blind-side I.34c
blink
like hoolet G.48
like toad in hailstorm G.44d
on the b. A.6b
blinker E.16k
blinkers, keep in E.16k
blister (n) I.35b
bright as b. I.35b
ill to ken… I.35b
red as a b. I.35b
sit on b. I.35b
blithe
as (a/the) bird G.45a
grig I.3a
linty G.57
robin G.55
blitz C.10h
block
  beetle and b. F.32c
  chip off b. F.30d
  get off the b. K.29a
  lay head on b. H.22
  off K.73
  put neck on b. H.22
  stock and b. F.30d
  talking to butcher, not b. E.29a
blockbuster C.10h
blockhead B.5k
blocks
  cut b. with razor J.10
  great b. F.24j
  put b. on F.24e
blonde, bush-fire C.17a
blood (v) E.8c
  and guts I.28c
  and snot I.26c
  blue b. E.6a
  boil I.59b
  come of good b. I.50g
  drops of b. I.26c
  from a flint G.21c
  horse-leech for b. G.42c
  in cold/hot b. I.26c
  infuse/introduce new b. E.14b
  lick b. G.59
  mousetrap smell of b. I.17b
  of Peter Cockerel I.4n
  out of a stone G.21b
  out of a turnip I.54i
  red as b. I.26c
  run cold I.26c
  shows on a grey horse E.14g
  smell b. E.8c
  suck the b. J.1d
  sweat b. I.18f
  taste b. C.17d
  thicker than water I.26c
  warmer than water I.26c
  without groats I.50g
  worth bottling I.36f
blood-colt E.15c
blood-curdling I.26c, I.53a
bloodhound H.13b
  bad as Barrington’s b. H.13b
blood-letting I.36f
bloods in a basin I.26c
bloodsucker G.42c
blood-trail, hound on E.10b
blooming G.26e
blossom
   better knit than b. E.30b
crab has sweet b. G.28a
   into G.26e
blossoms, vainglory E.30b
blot
   copybook J.20d
   fouler the b. J.20h
   on landscape K.14b
   on scutcheon C.15a
   out J.20e
   pens may b. J.20g
blouse, big girl’s B.6a
blottering cow E.21d
blow (a/the)
   (n) C.10c
   and hold meal I.24b
   away cobwebs G.36b
boiler A.4b
buck’s horn G.64a
by blow account K.40b
coal(s) I.73c
cover C.10g
divel’s horns off J.63b
enough to turn a mill E.34c
   winnow taters F.17b
for show and not for b. I.5j
froth off glass of beer K.20
fuse A.4d
gaff K.77e
gasket A.4d
good horn E.8a
grampus D.7b
groundsels I.41e
her stack D.10b
high as kite K.71
high, b. low D.5
his broth I.67a
hot and cold J.2a
in my lug I.5e
it out of his nose I.23e
itself out D.5
lid off I.47c
marlinspikes D.3a
moolins I.63b
not on dead embers I.73c
off course D.16b
off steam A.4b
one to b. I.5j
out of water D.19e
over D.5
own trumpet C.6b
save wind to b. kail I.69c
skin flute/piccolo K.7c
sky-high C.7a
smoke K.24
stour in his eye G.13d
strike a b. for…×2 C.10c
suck/sup and b. I.24b
three horns and bugle K.7b
top H.12a
up K.72c
up… K.14f
whistle on… K.32a
white wind in his lug I.24b
wind up his arse I.29c
with a brunt cutty K.6a
blowed
  full as b. mouse G.67
  in the glass A.5d
  saucer ed and b. I.48c
  up like spring chick E.28d
blow-horn (n) C.6b
  make a b. E.8a
blowing for a tug D.15a
blowing-horn out o’ a tod’s tail E.8c
blown
  about like a Mulfra toad G.44d
  egg G.45e
  storm b. over D.5
  toad G.44d
  up like a wilky G.44e
  upon G.37b
  wind has b. in I.41i
blow-pobs I.2e
blow-point, go to K.46
blows
  as wind b. D.3b, G.4b
  in the dust C.10f
  in the stour G.13d
  nobody any good G.13d
  steam that b. whistle A.4c
  there she b.! D.13b
  to make a battle C.10c
  way the wind b. D.3b
blowtorch applied to the belly H.16
Bloxwich bull K.57
bludgeon (v) H.11c
blue (adj=depressed) I.33d
  (adj=indecent) H.19
  about the gills D.13a
  aglet of a b. point B.5i
and better b. K.14c
as (a/the) badger G.62
    bilberry G.28g
    blaver G.30b
    leah stone F.31c
    mazzard G.28c
    needle B.5d
    sky G.12f
    wad J.8a
    whetstone F.31c
    whinstone G.21e

beans in b. bladder K.59g
blanket I.79d
blood E.6a
bolt from b. J.9b
chip investments K.81
clear b. water D.16a
Coventry b. B.3a
dad with b. bonnet B.5k
dahlia I.90l
duck E.26a
fly the b. pigeon K.52
lives up to b. china I.48c
moon J.1a
murder H.13b
not care/give/worth a b. point B.5i
out of the b. J.9b
rare as b. diamond E.4b
rose I.90g
shirt at masthead D.19d
snow G.16b
take the b. road G.7f
ture b. B.3a
blue-arsed fly G.37a
Bluebank, travel up G.8a
Bluebeard J.3b
Bluebeard’s key J.3b
blueberry pie, American as I.70c
bluebottle, fond of raw place G.37a
blue-chip investments K.81
blue-collar worker B.6j
blue-eye (v) I.23a
blue-eyed I.23a
bluejay never screams C.17j
blue-nose(d) I.23e
blue-stocking B.6m
blue-tongue C.17k
bluey, put knot in I.79d
bluff (a/the)
    call b. K.81
    rats D.17f
blunderbuss C.7c
blunt (adj=plain) (a/the) F.31d
   as (a/the) dag F.30b
      grandmother knees I.4g
   edge of F.31d
   too b. to cut turd F.31b
      wedge F.24j
blurb J.22a
blurred at the edges I.23b
blurry J.17
blush
   at first b. I.1b
   like a black dog I.6a
      pianet/pynat I.90l
      red bull-calf E.21b
   schoolgirl J.16
   pen and ink don’t b. J.20g
   pens can’t J.20g
blushes like a beggar G.1
bluster G.13d
Bo to a battledore J.20c
boar
   Giles Heathertrap’s b. E.25l
   gruff and grunt like b. pig E.25a
   in a frank E.25d
   in a holme-bush G.61
   tits on a b. E.25b
board (a/the)
   coming off a broad b. I.64a
   flat as a b. A.1b
   go by the b. D.17f
   gravy-boat/-train I.67c
   in the smoke D.19e
   sail on another b. D.3c
   stiff as a b. A.1b
   sweep the b. K.73
   take on b. D.15d
   two-inch b. A.1b
boarding the best laithing I.64a
boarding-house dumpling I.70a
boards, on the K.62a
boast, great E.8a
boat
   another side on the b. D.2a
   boy in the b. D.2a
   come in with the last b. D.15a
   devil into b. D.2a
   don’t risk all in one b. D.15d
   everyone row own b. D.2b
   first in the b. D.2b
   m the same b. D.2a
   is kittle to trim D.2a
   little man in b. D.2a
man who rows the b. D.2b
miss the b. D.15e
oar in another’s b. D.2b
push the b. out D.2a
rock the b. D.2a
without a b. I.1e
boat-horse, daft/sackless as D.10a
boats, burn your D.17a
boatswain, not born D.8a
Bob
cock-eye B. I.4n
down, you’re spotted C.10g
height of b. of coppers E.1a
up (like a cork) K.19c
bobbin
  bad b. B.2c
  clean as b. B.2c
  end of the b. B.1f
  right as a b. B.2c
bobbins, out of/stopped for B.1f
bobbin-turner B.1f
bobbin-winding B.1f
Bob’s-a-dying I.38a
boddle, not care/give/worth a F.1b
bode (a/the)
  for a silk gown B.6f
  robe B.6f
bodies are buried, know where H.12a
bodkin, ride/sit F.15a
bodle, not care/give/worth a F.1b
body
  going down the hill G.20a
  is buried I.36f
  is the worse I.35a
  little b. I.18a
  out of b. I.18b
body-blow K.40b
body-line work K.33a
body-louse, brag/brisk/busy as G.41
boffin J.24
bog (v) (a/the) F.10g
  brush I.85c
  down F.10g
  duck E.26b
  lark for the b. G.56
  old as Killylea b. G.23d
  Serbonian b. C.17a
  sound as b. sally G.27e
Bogart (v) K.62f
bog-blocker I.85c
bog-dirt under the fingernails B.6a
bog(founder) F.10g
boggart
    black as a b. J.66c
    Clegg Hall b. J.66c
    every bush a b. J.66c
    fause as a b. J.66c
    Fearnlea b. J.66c
    flay b. J.66c
boggarts
    take b. J.66c
bogged down F.21
boggle at E.14d
boggles
    mind b. E.14d
    o’ windlestraes J.66c
bogie
    game’s a b. K.67b
    laugh like old B. J.63a
bogle-about-the-stacks K.67b
bogle-hunter J.66c
bog-stalker, stand like H.6f
Bohemian coastline J.25a
boil (a/the)
    (v—with rage) I.59b
    all in a b. I.59b
    blood b. I.59b
    bring to b. I.59b
    cabbage twice I.61d
    down I.59b
    full pot will b. over I.59b
    go off the b. I.59b
    kettle I.59b
    make the pot b. ×2 I.59b
    on own neck biggest I.35b
    on the b. I.59b
    over I.59b
    pap I.2a
    pot I.59b
    pot will b. over I.59b
    sore as a b. I.35b
    stone G.21b
    stones in butter I.60d
boiled
    cabbage I.69c
    drunk as b. owl I.61b
    feel like b. rag B.4d
    halfpenny I.64a
    hotter than b. owl I.61b
    lobster I.61a
    shirt B.6g
    to rags B.4d
    to toe-rags G.4d
    tough as b. owl I.61b
turnip ×2 I.61d

boiler
  blow your b. A.4b
  burst his b. A.4b
  keep b. clear A.4b
boilermaker A.4b
boiling
  don’t stick hand in b. water I.59b
  keep the pot/kettle b. I.59b
  pieces I.50f
  point I.59b
  pot sets another b. I.59b
  the whole b. I.61d
boil-over I.59b
boils
  down to I.59b
  heads on them like b. I.35c
  kettle rattles most before it b. I.59b
  on arse I.35b
  saucepan b. over I.59b
  watched pot never b. I.59b
  when pot b. over I.59b
boisterous horse E.16i
bokanki, do/vanish in a C.16
bold
  as (a/the) badger’s horse E.34a
    Beauchamp C.16
    blind Bayard E.14f
    brass A.3a
    bull-beef E.22a
    Lammermoor lion C.17c
    lion C.17c
    miller’s shirt E.34a
  mouse I.13a
bollack (v) I.29h
bollacks (v) in the right place I.29h
bolley-eyed like a bothak D.13d
Bolliton, give G.8a
boll-weevil G.35b
Bolshie/Bolshy C.17a
bolster
  artful maid stronger than B. J.5d
  neither bed/pillow nor b. I.79c
  up I.40g
bolt (a/the)
  (v) C.2b
  at first b. C.2b
  bran E.34h
  door with carrot I.41d
  fletcher mends b. C.2b
  fool’s b. may hit K.46
  fool’s b. soon shot C.2b
from the blue J.9b
never out of your bag C.2b
no more like than fletcher and b. C.2b
shaft or b. C.2b
shoot your b. C.2b
upright C.2b
bolt-hole G.58d
bolt-holes, stop the E.8c
Bolton
  fond as men of B. H.21d
  quarter J.28d
bolts of, nuts and A.4a
bomb, go like a C.9
bombard C.9
bombast(ic) B.4d
bomber crew K.62f
bombshell C.9
bond, word is H.15
bone (v) I.18e
  bad dog not worth a b. I.8d
  bred in b. J.24
  carry b. in mouth/teeth I.8d
  cast b. between I.8d
  dry as (sun-struck) b. G.3e
  dry b. G.3e
  grin like dog at b. I.8d
  gnaw on b. G.3e
  gnaw the b. I.8d
  hard as b. G.58c
  in thropple I.35e
  into mouth of bad dog I.8d
  keep the b. I.8d
  near the b. ×2 I.66b
  nearer the b. I.66b
  neither feather nor b. of H.6f
  not a b. in the truck E.29a
  of contention I.8d
  one dog, one b. I.8d
  one end sure to be b. I.50f
  snarl about a b. I.8d
  strike dog with b. I.8d
  thirsty as sun-struck b. G.3e
  throw b. to dog I.8d
  to pick with…×2 I.8d
  up on… I.18e
  when dog has b. I.8d
  worry another b. I.8d
bone-dry G.3e
bone-headed I.21c
bone-idle I.18e
bones
  bag of b. F.6a
bare b. I.18c
bed of b. I.79a
bring meat E.29a
dogs gnaw b. I.8d
dry as b. G.3e
fair/high words break no b. C.10d
fallen angels’ b. J.65
find b. in… I.66b
jest breaks no b. C.10d
make no b. about I.66b
Napier’s b. I.38j
no meat without b. E.13b
pick over b. of I.66b
put meat on b. I.18c
rack of b. I.18c
rattle like old b. A.7c
roll the b. I.8d
scraping fat off b. I.50g
sell mother for old b. A.7c
sleep upon b. I.3b
tongue breaks b. C.10d
boneshaker I.18c
bonfire C.10g
cat in b. I.14d
bonnet
  bee in b. G.33a
  cast b. at bird H.6f
dad of b. + dad with blue b. B.5k
drite in b. B.6i
  fill your father’s b. B.6i
green b. B.6i
ilka head wear its own b. B.6i
lippie in the b. E.34h
over the windmills E.34c
rive his b. B.6i
bonniest bubblyjock E.28f
bonny
  a lad as ever bit… I.3a
    stepped… B.9a
  as (a/the) sheep-ked G.42a
  bride soon buskit B.6d
  marra/marrow to B. J.28d
  pair, as crow said G.46b
  pair, as devil said J.63b
  pigs to b. market E.25j
  pirl ×2 B.1f
    steyk him to b. side of door I.41d
bonoch, stand without F.11b
boo
  to a battledore J.20c
  to a goose E.27f
booby (n) D.7d
beat the b. D.7d
will never make a hawk D.7d
booby-trap D.7d
book
  bring to b. E.2c
  chat like halfpenny b. J.20a
  closed b. J.22a
  go by the b. J.22a
  he’s in the b. all right J.22a
  judge not b. by cover J.22a
  know like a b. J.20a
  leaf out of -’s b. J.22b
  like a prent/printed b. J.22a
  man of one b. J.22a
  mind like an open b. J.20a
  one for the (end) b. K.54
  sealed b. J.22a
  speak by the b. J.22a
  speak/talk like a b. J.20a
  starting at end of b. J.20a
  suit his b. K.54
  throw the b. at… H.17
  to every b. its copy E.21d
  turn-up for the b. K.54
  why buy a b.? J.22a
  write the b. J.22a
bookmark J.22b
books
  in good/bad/black b. J.54
  know more than b. J.22a
bookworm J.22a
boom
  lower the b. D.3c
  top your b. D.3c
boomer of a… C.17h
boomerang C. 17a
    make b. of… C.17a
boomerangs to the blacks, sell C.17a
boondoggle B.4e
boose
  Browney into Cherry’s b. E.15a
  get into Cherry’s b. E.15a
  good cow will sell in the b. E.20a
  into the wrong b. E.15a
  like the b. E.15a
boot
  dark as b. B.9d
  harmeth B.9d
  on the other foot G.7h
  pinches B.9d
  pour water out of leaky b. B.10a
  put the b. in H.11c
serve for either leg B.9b
thrown aside like old b. B.10a
warm b. B.9d
boot-eater B.9d
booted
and spurred E.16b
not always ready B.9d
boot-faced B.9d
bootjack, dry as B.9a
bootlace (n—allowance etc.) F.4b
bootlaces, pull up by B.9a
bootlegger D.18b
bootlick F.34b
boots
alligator b. C.17k
and all C.10c
before truth can put b. on H.13b
black his b. B.9d
black riding b. J.63b
buy/ride in old b. B.10a
devil’s b. don’t creak J.63b
die in b. B.9a
drawing it up from b. I.31f
go to bed with b. on I.79f
heart in b. B.9a
lick b. F.34b
like old b. F.4b
man with b. B.9d
new pair of b. B.9d
old b. past mending B.10a
over b. G.9a
play old b. B.10a
sit in tight b. B.9b
sole your b. B.10b
too big for b. I.31f
tough as old b. F.4b
waited of b. I.1b
when you’ve got your b. off B.9a
bootstrap (n+v) B.9a
bootstrapper B.9a
bootstraps, lift up by B.9a
booty, bowl/play K.77e
booze-up in brewery K.16c
bo-peep, play K67b
border
on E.7b
south of the b. C.21a
borderland C.21a
border-line—case etc. C.21a
bore (a/the)
  auger hole with gimlet A.1e
  socks off B.6m
bored
  for the hollerhorn E.19f
  sturdy E.23f
  woobles E.23f
boreen, know every weed in G.7c
boring as bowl of soggy cornflakes I.64b
born
  at Bardney J.40b
  Crow was b. there G.46b
doesn’t know he’s been b. I.2b
  in a/the cow-pat E.13d
  frost G.16c
  mill E.34d
  purple C.13e
  wood G.48
innocent as day we were b. I.2a
midweek I.81b
naked as they were b. I.2a
on steps of Newgate H.19
on wrong side of blanket I.2c
to be a boatswain D.8a
  poet K.12
  under a threepenny planet J.14c
  with a cramp in his fist I.34f
    silver spoon in mouth E.4e
borne in upon I.4o
Borough Hill, gone over E.25l
borrow (a/the) fiddle K.2a
borrowed
  garments B.6a
  plumes J.2j
borrower’s cap, ready as G.1
Borrowstown sow E.25l
Boscastle fair K.60b
bosom
  bird in b. ×2 H.6f
  friend I.4m
  friends G.41
  from Delilah’s lap into Abraham’s b. J.34h
  horns in b. I.25b
  louse in b. G.41
  snake/viper in b. J.2k
boss-cocky C.17i
bosthoon H.20d
Boston
  bare as B. Scalp D.16e
  high as B. Stump J.52a
Bostonian, worried as G.8a
bostoon G.31b
bot C.17l
botanical excursion J.30a
botcher, sweet as E.30k
bot-fly C.171
both
cut b. ways C.3a
dig with b. feet F.20a
not have b. oars in the water D.2b
pull b. ends of band E.33e
sheets aft D.3c
sides the blanket I.79d
sleep on b. ears I.9a
work b. sides of street I.85b
bothak, bolley-eyed like D.13d
bothersome as debt F.5
bottle
bee in b. G.33a
break b. in sack K.19b
drunkard’s purse is b. K.19b
eel/snig in b. F.7b
every beast his b. E.19d
face like brandy b. K.19b
fart in a b. I.29c
good web of b. of hay B.2e
it K.19b
keep cap on b. K.19b
kisses like olives out of b. I.69d
lose your b. K.19b
mix a b. I.37b
needle in b. of hay E.32e
not worth b. of hay E.32e
of piss I.36c
pass the b. of smoke K.22d
slipper as a glass b. K.19b
such beer, such b. K.20
thousand pounds and b. of hay E.32e
tight as a b. K.19b
up K.19b
wind in a b. G.13b
wine in a b. K.21a
worse face than under cork upon b. K.19b
bottled
brisk as b. ale K.20
porridge I.68
bottle-glass, green as K.19a
bottle-green K.19b
bottle-holder K.40a
bottle-jack, always the same way I.60b
bottle-neck K.19b
bottle-nose, harpoon a D.7b
bottles
old b. J.35b
tines b. F.17d
bottling, blood is worth I.36f
bottom
bound
  could have b. with straw F.17d
to J.9b
bounds
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Brownie points J.18b
brown-leamer G.28h
brown-nose I.23e
Brown’s cows E.20a
brownshiller G.28h
brows, skin between I.22a
browse
  on/through G.64a
  where tied E.24b
browser G.64a
browst, drink o’ your ain K.16b
bruise, spills the I.60d
Brummagem sixpence E.7c
brunt
  cutty K.6a
  flannen clout I.83c
brush
  aside I.82c
  blacking b. I.82b
  bog b. upside down I.85c
  colt E.14a
  daft as a b. I.82b
  his coat B.6e
  live over/under the b. J.8c
  mazed as a b. I.82b
  show his b. E.8c
  tarred with same b. E.23f
  under the carpet/rug I.82c
  up I.74c
  wisp in place of b. I.82b
brushers of noblemen’s clothes E.6c
brush-fire dispute/war F.24d
brush-off I.33b
brush-stale, married over J.8e
brustle along like hedge sparrow G.57
brutum fulmen G.15b
bry, got the G.37c
bualaifin, bald as F.17a
bubble (n) G.23a
  brains b. I.59c
  burst G.23a
  over I.59c
  prick the b. of G.23a
bubble-dancer K.9a
bubble-gum music I.71f
bubble-skin, thin as G.23a
bubblin/bubbling, bare as G.45f
bubbly K.21b
bubblycock’s neb E.28f
bubbly-jock (n) E.28f
  blather like b. E.28f
  bonniest b. E.28f
  red as chollers of b. I.52b
  strut like b. E.28f
buck (n=dollar) (a/the) E.8b
  (n=merry fellow) G.64a
  against tiger C.17d
  fierce/fit as b. rat G.66
  hearty as b. G.64a
  mad as b. G.64a
  of the first head G.64a
  pass the b. K.81
  system, trend etc. E.19a
  tiger C.17d
  up B.6d
  where b. is bound E.24b
  wild as b. G.64a
bucker, bent as G.6a
bucket (v) I.49a
  come up in the last b. D.8a
  down G.5b
  drop in b. I.49a
  drop the b. I.49a
  in well too often I.49a
  into an empty well I.49a
  is in the well I.49a
  kick the b. E.29e
  of warm spit I.24k
  of water G.5b
  old files in b. A.3f
  pigs won’t follow empty b. E.25c
  rattle the b. E.25c
  rope after b. I.49a
  tip the b. I.49a
  tow gang wi’ b. I.49a
  words not fill b. E.33e
bucket-chain D.15c
buckets
big b. filled at small streams G.5b
drop your b. F.11b
in a well ×2 I.49a
many b. I.49a
bucking, shirts, smocks at I.84b
buck-jumper G.64a
buckle (v) C.5c
   and thong C.5c
   and thongs C.5c
   bare b. and thong C.5c
   bring b. and thong/tongue together C.5c
   (down) to work F.4a
to/with C.5c
   up to the b. C.5c
buckled with one hasp E.5a
bucker, wit as a C.4a
buckles, borrow B.10b
Buckley panmug I.45b
Buckley’s chance H.19
buckram (n) B.4d
   in b. B.4d
   men in b. J.25a
   stiff as b. B.4d
buck’s
   blow the b. horn G.64a
   two-faced like B. clock I.81e
buck-toothed G.64a
buckwheat E.33b
crop E.33b
bud, nip in E.30d
budding G.26e
budget (n+v) A.7b
   open b. A.7b
   tinker and his b. A.7b
   tinker’s b. A.7b
budgie, chirrup like I.17f
buff (n) I.76e
   in the b. C.17h
buffalo (v) C.17h
   Queensland b. C.17h
buffer state A.4c
buffers, hit the A.4c
buffet with the bit G.3a
buffle-headed C.17h
bug (n+v) G.42b
   as (a/the) brass A.3a
   cheese I.53e
   lad with leather knife I.3a
   Queen’s coachman C.13c
   spice I.71f
between b. and bee-martin G.35b
have b. in ear G.40
in a rug G.42b
put b. in his ear G.40
up ass I.31a
bugbear J.5d
buggin in a bush J.66c
buggy, get in E.5d
buggy-ride, thanks for E.5d
bugle-duster K.7b
bug-letter F.8
bug’s ear G.42b
build (a/the)
castles in air E.7c
do not b. sty till litter comes E.25d
in the air E.7c
nest in your ear G.45d
on… I.40a
on sand J.35b
pig-pens E.25d
sandy bowrocks K.67a
two chimneys I.75c
up to… I.40a
building
churches J.51
needs b. up I.40a
nests in your hair G.45d
built
Holyrood not b. in a day C.12a
lawyers’ houses b… E.7c
like a brick shit-house I.85c
like a castle E.7c
on a rock J.35b
on wool-packs E.23h
Rome not b. in a day J.28b
built-in I.40a
bulb, dim I.78e
Bulge, Battle of C.16
bulhorn, smooth as G.39a
bulimia E.19b
bulk large D.15d
bull
aggressive as b. ant C.17l
at a bank/gate E.19b
at an anty-tump E.19b
at a Scawby man E.19c
Barney’s b. ×2 E.19b
bellow/belve like b. E.19b
Bloxwich b. K.57
by the horns E.19c
cheap as b. beef E.29c
cock and b. story J.2j
couldn’t hit b. E.19c
dossed the fiddler E.19c
eaten b. beef I.66c
fat as b. E.19b
fell as b. E.19b
fit as a mallee b. E.19b
get b. by the tail E.19c
get the b. down E.19c
grin like a hungry b. E.19b
in a china shop E.19b
in a pet E.19b
is a bachelor I.85e
leer like old b. E.19b
mad as a baiting b. K.57
mad as a capple-faced b. E.19b
mad b. E.19b
may bear a b. J.3a
not afraid of b. E.19b
of the woods E.19b
one dog, one b. K.57
out of a chute K.57
peddle the b. E.19b
play with b. ×3 E.19c
Pope’s b. B.4c
red rag to a b. K.57
roar like b. E.19b
score a b. C.8
scrub b. C.17h
scrub b. in a bog C.17h
seg, roar like E.21f
shoot the b. C.8
short-tailed b. E.19b
straw-yard b. E.19b
strong as b. E.19b
sulky as b. E.19b
sweat like b. E.19b
swing b. by the tail E.19c
tie that b. outside/to other ash- c. E.19c
town b. I.85e
voice like a Norway b. E.19b
bullace, black/bright/sour as G.28b
bull-baiting K.57
bull-beef
  big/bold/proud/ugly as b. E.22a
  cheap as b. E.29c
eat b. I.66c
bull-calf
  blush like b. E.21b
  in peat moor E.21e
bulldog courage I.9c
bulldog’s bollacks I.6a
bulldozer E.19c
bullet
  bite on b. C.10g
has its billet C.10b
magic b. K.62g
number written on b. C.10b
round as b. C.7c
bullet-headed C.7c
bulletin, false as C.21d
bullets
  big as b. I.71f
  hard as b. C.8
  she makes b. C.8
  sweat b. I.18f
bull-face E.19b
bull-foot, B from J.20c
bull-headed E.19b
bull-hided E.19b
bull-horn, show the E.19a
bullikers in tin can K.75
bull-moose C.17h
  strong as b. C.17h
bull-neck E.19b
tipple a b. E.19b
bullock (n and v) E.19f, E.21f
  big enough to choke a b. C.17h
in Smithfield E.29c
lish as b. E.21f
talk b. E.21f
wode as wild b. E.21f
your way E.19f
bullock’s
  blood E.29c
  heart E.29c
bull-peddler E.19b
bull-pen E.21f
bull-ring, shake the K.57
Bull’s dog I.7d
bull’s
  cleg on b. arse G.37c
  feather E.19a
  foot J.20c
  head E.19b
  liver ×2 I.50g
  neck E.19b
  out of b. pen E.21f
  pimple on b. arse E.19f
  thick as a b. ear E.19b
  tight as b. arse E.19b
tough as b. lug E.19b
trodden on… E.19c
bull’s-eye E.19b, K.46
bulls the cow E.19b
bull-scutter E.19b
bullshit E.19b
bullspink, peart as G.57
bull-week F.15c
bulrush
  knot in b. G.31b
  smooth/straight as b. G.31b
bulwark C.12a
bum steer E.21f
bumbaily, deaf as F.5
bumbee’s knee G.33a
bumbees
  bizzing G.33a
  humming over it G.33a
bumble
  bee in a churn G.33a
  bee in a cow-turd G.33a
Bumbledom J.24
bumbledone/-dore/-drane/-drone G.33a
bumbledore in pitcher G.33a
bumblekite G.28f
bumbler bee, buzzing about like G.33a
bumblers, busy as G.33a
bumbles in a byke G.33a
bummel-kite, spider in G.28f
bummely, thrang as a G.33a
bummer, loudest G.33a
bummled/bumm(l)ing about like bee G.33a
bummler in rose bush G.33a
bump
  against Jarrow D.10b
  along the bottom K.32a
  in the road G.7f
  like a b. on a log F.24h
bumper, not worth a K.24
bumps felt, need your I.36c
bun
  buttered b. I.71c
  cinnamon b. I.71c
  in the oven I.62b
Bunbury (v) J.24
bunch (n) I.55a
  of grapes H.4
  of rushes G.31b
bunco (n+v) K.79d
Buncombe=bunkum C.21d
bund sack E.33e
bundle
  drop the b. F.33b
  go a b. K.80
  make Jew drop b. J.9a
  up your pipes K.6b
bun-dough, plum/soft as I.57a
bung up and bilge-free K.18b
bungalow Bill I.39a
bunghole K.18c
drunk as b. K.18c
bunker mentality C.10g
bunkered K.38
bunkum C.21d
bunny like carrots? I.17e
buns
to a bear K.56b
to an elephant C.17f
bunting, goshawk beats not at E.9e
bunyip J.1a
buoy
go right round the b. D.15a
swing round D.15a
up D.15a
buoyant D.6a
bur (n) G.29f
cleave/cling/stick like b. G.29f
proved a b. I.90g
wouldn’t catch a b. G.29f
burbolt, no more brain than E.11e
burden
and heat of the day J.35b
knowledge no b. F.33b
thinks his breeks a b. B.61
tighter the b. strap F.33b
too much praise is a b. F.33b
weight of another’s b. F.33b
burdon, staff and C.13f
Burford bait G.8a
burgoo, thick as I.67b
Buridan’s ass J.2d
buried
body is b. I.36f
no one forgets where he b. hatchet C.17a
know where bodies are b. H.12a
under the gallows H.21b
with ham I.38g
burke H.12c
B. and Wills G.10a
burl, give it a K.70
burn (a/the)
bridges C.10a
candle at both ends I.77c
candle to St. Michael and dragon J.40b
charcoal F.24d
Coll-mill b. E.34b
daylight I.77c
does not babble G.24a
drink of b. F.6a
earth F.24d
fingers I.72b, I.73d
fire will b. when near G.5a
house and run away H.11b
house to warm hands I.76d
mill E.34f
money to b. E.1a, I.74g
not your house I.17a
old cat will not b. himself I.14d
old witch H.20c
paper he fried in I.60a
rather b. bannock I.62b
rubber K.53
slow b. I.76a
too green to b. I.72d
wary as b. trout E.12
water H.11b
why b. fingers? I.72b
wind F.24d
wish the b. dry G.24a
with low blue flame I.73d
writings I.5k
your boats D.17a
your fingers I.72b, I.73d
burned (a/the)
candle I.77c
catty K.6a
house is b. down I.76d
up about I.74a
burning (—passion etc.) I.74a
brand from/out of the b. I.73b, J.34v
contained its own b. F.24d
ears are b. I.23c
question I.74a
shame I.22b
thread B.5e
two candles b. I.77c
burning-glass J.30a
burn-out A.6b
burns (a/the)
fire closest kept b. most I.74c
hole in pocket I.76c
when neighbour’s house b. I.76d
whose gown b. I.76c
within socket I.77d
burnt
bandicoot on b. ridge C.17h
child I.3a
fat b. itself out of fire I.74c
flannel clout I.83c
her coal I.74a
holes in blanket I.79d
hot needle and b. thread B.5e
if you get b. I.35b
ill scalded as b. I.58b
lips I.65a
malt I.58a
stick I.35e
tough as b. whang J.19
with the same iron H.20c

burnywind’s bellows A.3d
burp a rainbow G.14d
burr D.7c
burro D.7a
burrow into… G.64c
burs, cleave together like G.29f

Burslem, all round G.8a
burst (a/the)
boiler A.4b
bubble b. G.23a
into… G.26e

bursting
at the seams B.7a
out of his ears I.23c

Burton
gone for a B. K.22a
stiff as B. dog I.7d

bury (a/the)
(v) I.38f
hatchet C.17a
head in sand J.3b
his old wife I.38f
place for Abraham to b. his wife J.34b

burying (a/the)
baby I.38f
is gone by I.38g

bus
see also bush
back of a b. F.8
boys on the b. F.8
drive the big b. F.8
miss the b. F.8
open oyster with b. ticket E.6d

bush (a/the)
bad b. G.4b
beat about b. E.11d
beat the b. E.11d
buggin in b. J.66c
cannot harbour two robins G.55
gob. C.17a
good wine needs no b. K.26b
he gets biel of G.4b
he that feareth b. H.6f
nor the b. it grew on G.28e
one beats the b. E.11d
rag on every b. J.8b
scorn not the b. G.4b
shoot in the b. C.17a
Sydney or the b. C.17a
take the rag off the b. J.8b
thin b. G.4b
think every b. a boggard J.66c
two gaps with one b. F.18b
wee b. G.4b
wild cat out of b. G.63a
worth two in the b. H.6f
bushel
   big as a b. E.33e
   by your own b. E.33e
   hide light under b. J.35b
   knows how many grains to a b. E.33e
of March dust C.11
   words not fill b. E.33e
bushes, where there are no G.28h
bush-fire
   blonde C.17a
   full of b. C.17a
   get on like a b. C.17a
   heatwave from b. C.17a
   spread like b. C.17a
   wouldn’t give you a light at a b. C.17a
bushman’s grave C.17a
bushy-tailed, bright-eyed and G.65
business
   about his own b. E.18
   as usual E.2b
busk
   bairn is eith to b. I.2a
   of broom I.74d
   your cockernonie I.32g
buskit, bonny bride soon B.6d
busman’s holiday F.8
bussa (n) I.46d
   drone in a b. E.30j
   gander geokin’ at a b. E.27a
bussa-head I.46d
buss-calf E.21c
bussock, fast as H.6d
buss-taps, ower G.4b
bust (a)
   gut I.35e
   shit or b. I.29d
busted
   flush K.81
   foul as b. clog B.10a
   tail-end E.20c
busy
   as (a/the) ant G.35a
   bag of fleas G.40
   Batty I.4n
   beaver C.17h
   bee (in treacle-pot) G.33a
   beehive attacked by bear E.30j
   bees in a basin E.30j
   bees on the moor G.33a
   bird-dog E.11f
   body-louse G.41
   boy killing snakes G.44a
   bumbledore in pitcher G.33a
   bumblers G.33a
   cat in pattens I.14b
   cat in tripe-shop I.15a
   cat on tin roof I.14d
   cranberry merchant E.30i
   devil J.63g
   dog in duff I.8c
   hen with one chick E.28d
   nailer A.1c
   one-armed bill-poster I.39d
   milker F.11b
   paper-hanger I.39d
   oven at Christmas I.62a
   ticking clock I.81e
   wife at an oven I.62a

   in b. streets G.7a

butcher (n) E.29a
   better pay the b. I.36a
   seeks knife in teeth E.29a
   speaking to the b. E.29a

butcher’s
   bent as b. hook E.29a
   dog E.29a
   pencil E.29a

butchers
   dogs would be b. E.29a
   many b. when the ox is down E.29a

butt
   big as Dorchester b. K.18b
   in E.24a
   talk b. of bees to death E.30j

butt-cut F.24i

butter (a/the)
   and mells G.30b
   blake as b. I.53c
   boil stones in b. I.60d
   brake E.22e
   bread on both sides I.63c
   bread under the b. I.63c
cast b. on coal I.60a
Deevil Danny’s b. E.22e
eat whole tub of b. I.65d
fat as b. E.22e
fish I.51b
for fish I.51b
from dog’s mouth I.8b
hair in b. I.53c
head of b. I.62b
hot knife through b. I.53c
in (a/the) bird E.28d
  black dog’s hause I.8b
gulls I.60e
  his eyes, no I.23b
  sow’s arse E.25g
is dear-bought… F.6a
is on your side of the bread I.63c
lick b. off his bread I.63c
long churning makes bad b. E.22e
lump of b. I.53c
made of b. B.5e
make b. and cheese of E.22e
no b. will stick to bread I.63c
no parsnips I.54h
off your bread I.63c
old woman’s b. E.22e
on bacon I.50g
Orkney b. E.22e
over I.53c
pound of b. E.10a
sealed with b. I.5m
slab as b. I.53c
soft as b. I.53c
spread like b. on hot backstone I.62b
stopping an oven with b. I.62a
thick as mould b. E.22e
to butter I.53c
tongue I.53c
up I.53c
whiting ×2 I.51b
worse than dirty b. E.22e
would staw a dog I.8b
wouldn’t melt in mouth I.65d
yellow as b. I.53c
butter-and-egg man I.61c
butter-and-eggs trot E.28c
butterball, fat as E.22e
butter-box I.87c
butterbump G.50c
butter-cake, lad with I.3a
butter-cakes I.71c
buttercup (n) G.30b
fresh as b. G.30b
buttered
  bun I.71c
eggs I.64a
  on both sides I.63c, I.71c
side bread b. on I.63c
butter-fingers I.30g
butterflies
  Brooklyn b. G.38b
  in stomach G.38b
butterfly (n+v) G.38b
  broken on wheel H.16
  cabman G.38b
  case I.34b
  effect G.38b
  gaudy as b. G.38b
  kiss G.38b
  mind G.38b
  musket to kill b. C.7c
butter-market, all in charm like I.86b
buttermilk
  dish of b. G.35b
  more knobs in the b… E.22e
quarrel like b. E.22e
  supping b. E.22e
  think little of b. E.22e
  wedding E.22e
butter-mountain G.20a
butterprint (n)+dunno poo E.22e
butter-whore/-wives, scold like I.71c
Butterworth for peace and quiet I.4n
Butterworth’s children, all Billy I.4n
buttery
  cuddling in b. E.22e
  fine face fills not b. E.22e
button
  brass b. B.5i
  bright as b. B.5i
  cap and b. B.6i
  cute as a b. B.5i
  have a b. loose B.6o
  hot b. issue K.72a
  it up B.6o
  not care/give/worth a B.5i
  old horn b. B.6b
  press the b. A.6b
  push his b. I.41c
  snug as a b. B.5i
  up B.6o
  your lip B.6o
buttondown B.6o
buttoned
up B.6o
up the back B.6o
buttoned-down B.6o
buttoned-up man B.6o
button-hole (v) G.1
(n) B.5i
lower B.5i
buttonhook B.9a
buttons (mushroom—) B.5i
and button-holes B.5i
cut off breeches’ b. B.61
cut off coat b. B.6e
have all your b. B.6o
in his b. J.15
not got all b. on B.6o
off the foils K.43
rub his b. J.17
spit on his b. J.17
button-stick, clean/regimental as C.15b
button-top, not care/give/worth a B.5i
butress J.53a
butts, headland before F.15b
butt-shut (v) A.3e
buy (a/the)
  baby new frock, won’t I.2g
  book J.22a
  cat in sack H.8
  cow E.20c
don’t b. any wooden nutmegs I.55k
  farm E.7a
  for a song K.11
  groceries I.87c
  honour will b. no beef E.22a
  milk E.20a
  old boots B.10a
  out of the fire I.76d
  pig in a poke E.25j
  pup I.6d
  rabbit(s) I.87a
  ranch E.7a
  slates for neighbour’s house I.40h
  sorrow wi’ ain siller E.2a
  white horse E.15h
  withy will b. a horse G.27e
buzz (n) K.25b
(v) E.30j
buzzard (n) G.35b, G.47c
  between hawk and b. E.9e
  blind as b. G.35b
  called hawk E.9e
  flayt b. E.9e
  high for a b. E.9e
sparrow hawk of b. E.9e
buzzards are circling C.17j
buzzart, fine as G.38a
buzzing
  about like bumbler bee G.33a
  around G.37a
  head b. like bees’ skep E.30j
buzz-saw, monkey with C.17e
buzz-word G.37a
by (a/the)
  …, out of… E.14a
  and large D.16a
bar by and main K.78
degrees I.15a
dint of… C.4e
hedge or by stile G.10b
inch of candle E.2a
leaps and bounds K.29d
long chalk K.73
long shot K.46
scowl of brow I.22a
string C.2a
bye
  bees’ b. G.33a
  bumbles in b. G.33a
  wasps’ b. G.34a
bystander effect K.32b
bystanders see most of game K.74
by-ways G.7b
Byzantine J.28c

C
c a’ see call
cab E.24a
  first c. in the rank E.5c
cabbage (n) E.31e, I.54d
  (v) B.5c
  be content with c. I.69c
  boiled c. I.69c
  butter no c. I.54h
  green as yellow c. I.54c
  mair strength in wet c. I.54c
  quiet pig eats the c. E.25c
  twice in same water I.61d
  weigh no more than c. I.54c
cabbage-head E.31e
cabbage-leaf
  run all day on c. I.54c
  turn on c. F.20c
cabbages behind his ears F.20c
cabbage-tree hat C.17a
cab-horse knees E.5c

cabin to White House, from log J.24
cabinet, kitchen I.43a
cable
cut the c. D.15c
hair to make c. D.15c
has parted D.15c
mouse bite c. in two D.15c
slip the c. D.15c
cables
coil up c. D.15c
cut your c. D.15c
habits are c. at last G.36b
caboosh, the whole D.4
cab-rank rule E.5c
cabroch I.50f
cache D.18a
cachet C.13b
cackle (v) E.28c
like a caddow/cadowe G.46d
cackles
in your house E.28c
most/loudest E.28c
cackling
bear with her c. E.28c
deaved with c. E.28c
hen reveals nest E.28d
not care/give/worth a/the c. E.28c
cactus, back to G.29e
cadgers cracking o’ crook-saddles A.7a
cadgers’ gate I.41g
Cadmean victory J.1c
cadowe, cackle like G.46d
Caesar
appeal to C. J.35f
dead as C. J.28b
Caesar’s wife J.28b
caff
and draff F.10e
dry/light as F.17b
scatter like c. F.17b
cag-byes, tears like D.13c
cage
crow in a c. G.46b
fine c. won’t feed the bird C.17i
gilded c. C.17i
rattle his c. C.17i
what’s rattled your c.? C.17i
caged, safe as K.59c
cage-rattler C.17i
cagey K.59c
cagmag I.69b
cailleach I.4g
cain
  eggs E.28c
  mark of C. J.34b
  pay the c. F.5
  raise C. J.63d
cain-hen in a cavey F.5
caird on a cuisser A.7b
cairn, add stone to I.38i
cake (n) I.71b
  and milk I.71b
  and pie I.71b
  as ever broke edge of c. I.71b
  baked and buttered I.71c
  bread today better than c. tomorrow I.63b
  devil owed c. I.71b
  find bean in c. K.77e
  good c. I.71b
  hath its make I.71b
  have c. and eat it I.71b
  ice the c. I.71b
  icing on c. ×2 I.71b
  is all dough I.71b
  is getting thin I.71b
  national c. I.71b
  never beuk a good c. I.62b
  out of the wheat E.34f
  piece of c. K.9e
  share of c. I.71b
  some like c. I.71b
  takes the c. K.60e
  turn my own c. I.62b
  wish your cake dough I.71b
cake-eater I.71b
cake-hole I.71b
caker (n) I.62b
cakes
  came out with c. I.62b
  go like hot c. I.71b
cake-walk K.9e
calculate C.21c
cale, coal-pit F.23a
calendar, death keeps no E.2c
Calenich, mayor of G.8a
calf (n) E.21b
  afraid of c. E.19b
  bastard c. E.21d
bealing/belving like E.21e
blatting c. soon weaned E.21d
cast the c. E.21a
cow forgets her c. E.21d
cow won’t have c. till ready E.21a
eat c. in cow’s belly E.21a
good cow has bad c. E.21d
in their own snares H.6d
keep the c. E.19b
kill fattened c. J.35d
lick c. again E.21b
lick your c. E.21b
like cow, like c. E.21d
lucky as the lousy c. E.21e
McEwan’s c. E.21e
milker’s c. E.21d
mutty c. E.21c
natural as milk to c. E.21c
show the fattened c. E.21f
slip the c. E.21a
sucking c. E.21c
swallowed grindlestone F.31c
think c. a muckle beast E.21d
to every cow her c. E.21d
Waltham’s c. E.21c
want c. with white face E.21b
with two dams E.21d
wi’ yalla pattens E.21b
worship the golden c. J.34c
calf-croft E.21e
calf-hearted E.21e
calf-lick E.21b
calf-licked E.21b
calf-love E.21e
calf’s
lug E.21e
ways of dressing c. head I.50g
calf’s-tongue E.21b
calf-yard E.21e
Caliban J.25a
calibre C.9
California prayer-book J.58a
call (a/the)
all through one ford F.11a
bells c. others to church J.52d
bird off a twig H.6f
don’t c. us I.5o
hardest A.1c
hogs to the hill E.25f
me an olive E.30i
nail to head A.1c
off the dogs E.10b
over the coals H.16
pot and kettle I.47c
shots C.8
soul his own J.66a
spade a spade F.28a
streea a straw J.21a
thi own calves E.21c
tune K.6c
your bluff K.81
your gird F.11b
called
  many c., but few chosen J.35b
to straw I.79b
caller
  as (a/the) kail-blade F.30e
toutr G.43d
calling (a/the)
  out of the kailyard E.13a
  yetlin smutty I.46b
callous F.9a
calls (a/the)
  thief H.2b
tune K.6c
calm
  as (a/the) Christian with aces wired K.79b
clock I.81e
  leek=lyke I.38c
  milk-bowl E.22b
  mill-pond/pool E.34b
after/before the storm D.5
casten in c. A.3c
down D.5
in a c. sea D.16b
calms, in the A.3c
calstock see castock
calve (v) E.21b
  have a cow c. E.21b
calved, coo has E.21b
calves
call thi own c. E.21e
Kilbarchan c. E.21e
makes fat c. E.19d
not care if cow c. E.21b
quey c. E.29c
sucking clothes E.21c
wanton as c. E.21d
Camac H.21e
Camborne, give him G.8a
cambrel see gambrel
Cambridge M.A. G.8a
Cambridgeshire nightingale G.57
cambuck, dry/hollow/light/weak as G.30b
came
as ever I came from school J.17
as it c. from the mill E.34h
in at a window I.41i
in hosed and shod B.6m
in/over with the Conqueror J.28c
out like rope D.8b
over devil’s back J.63h
where we c. in K.62f
camel
gets nose in tent C.17h
lost its ears J.2d
swallow a c. J.35b
camel’s back, last straw breaks J.2d
cameo E.4c
cammed
as (a/the) dog’s leg I.6a
wisket I.45a
cammerel, crooked as G.6a
cammock
crooked as c. K.35b
timely crooketh the tree… G.6a
campaign (n) C.10a
new c. C.10b
camp-bike K.45a
camps, foot in both C.19c
can
carry the c. K.20
cup and c. K.22b
going on like Sokespitch’s c. J.3b
in the c. K.62f
kicking c. K.72e
milk ower the c. F.11b
of worms 3 F.7a
take the c. back K.20
tie c. on/to I.10a
canard H.8
canaries, fly I.17f
canary (n) I.17f
cat ate c. I.15c
chippy as a c. I.17f
give cat a c. I.15c
hairy c. I.17f
knock dags off sick c. F.12b
mountain c. I.17f
sing like a c. I.17f
tits on a c. I.17f
can-bottle, to and agen like a G.57
cancer I.35c
candid K.14c
candidate J.28b
candle
at a little c. I.77b
at both ends I.77c
ate the cat I.15c
before the devil J.60b
burned the c. I.77c
burns within socket I.77d
by inch of c. E.2a
devil holds c. J.60b
fair as farthing c. I.77a
fly that plays too long in c. G.38a
fond as farden c. I.77a
he shall hold the c. K.9c
hold c. to... A.5a
hold c. to the devil J.63d
hold c. to the fire/sun A.5a
king’s c. J.60b
light his/her c. I.77b
man’s best c. I.77b
naffly c. I.77a
new-kindled c. I.77b
nor hold the c. K.9e
not worth the c. K.73
put out your own c. I.77c
Roman c. K.69
set forth sun with c. I.77c
snuff of a c. I.77e
strike a c. I.77a
to St.Michael and his dragon J.40b
vow c. to the devil J.60b
waste a c. I.77c
white as tallow c. I.77a
candle-ends I.77d
candle-holder A.5a
candles
    nose to light c. at I.77b
    pound of c. I.77a
    throws away whole c. I.77e
    two c. burning I.77c
candlestick, darkest under I.77b
candlewick, wax and I.77a
candy
    sugary c. I.71f
    taking c. from a kid H.3
candy-assed I.71f
candy-stripe I.71f
cangle about uncoft goat/kids E.24a
canker E.30e
cankered E.30e
cankervells, teeth chattering like G.16c
cankerworm G.38c
cannibal C.17b
cannibalise C.17b
cannon
  double charge will rive c. C.9
  fodder E.15b
  loose c. D.19e
  round/swift as c. ball C.9
  cannon’s mouth, march up to C.10a
  canoe
    inspection D.2a
    paddle your own c. D.2b
  canopy I.79a
  Canossa, go to J.28c
  cant as kitlin I.12
  canter J.40a
    won in a c. K.50c
    young cowte will c. E.14a
  Canterbury bell I.90i
  cantle of the causey E.5a
  canvas, widen the K.14c
  canvass (v) H.20a
  cap (v) B.6i
    and bells, wear C.13d
    and button B.6i
    cast your c. at… B.6i
    feather in c. C.17a
    fling/throw c. after B.6i
    have red c. B.6i
    if the c. fits B.6i
    in hand F.34b
    keep c. on bottle K.19b
    made of wool B.5k
    set him a c. B.6i
    set your c. at… B.6i
    throw c. against wind B.6i
    throw c. in first I.41g
    throw c. over windmill E.34c
  cape, double the D.16e
  capel rides a good horse E.16d
  caper
    on nothing K.9a
    would not venture out D.13c
  capers, cut E.24a
  capestone F.18a
  capital out of, make E.1d
  caples E.5b
  capon
    Crail’s/Glasgow/Kent/Severn/
    Yarmouth c. I.52a
    sarry collop off c. I.52a
  cap-paper, thin as B.5k
  cappel-faced bull E.19b
  capricious E.24a
  caps
cut lugs E.23f
Leatherstarn J.63h
Long-Crown J.63h
old Oliver J.28d
pull c. B.6i
rush-cartin’ J.8d

Captain
Drake D.19b
every ship needs c. D.8a
of the heads D.19b
cap-tallies, different D.19b
car
Friday afternoon c. A.4f
judge c. by paint job A.4f
carapace (n) C.17k
caraway seed, give I.56a
carbon-copy J.20d
carcase is, wheresoever the J.35b
card
clear conscience is a sure c. K.79b
face c. K.79a
get c. punched C.21f
going through c. K.54
have c. marked K.32a
mark someone’s c. K.54
of ten K.81
play last c. K.79b
play your best c. K.80
speak by the c. D.16c, J.22a
strong c. K.80
sure c. K.79b
trump c. K.80
up sleeve K.63
wild c. K.81
card-carrying member C.21f
cardin’, wammock(y) as B.1a
cardinal I.41b
cards
collapse like house of c. K.72c
fifty c. in pack K.79a
house of c. K.72c
in/on the c. J.15
many can pack the c. K.79a
on the table K.79b
play with marked c. K.79b
play your c. K.79b
show your c. K.79b
shuffle the c. K.79a
throw up the c. K.81
care
pound of c. I.88b
take c. of Dowb C.16
whether dog catch hare… E.10d
which end goes first F.24j
careful as hour-/sand-glass I.81d
careless parting between mare and cart E.14c
carg, think no D.13d
cargo, sea does not wait for D.15e
carl-hemp E.31e
carmine B.1a
carpenter known by chips A.1b
carpenter’s don’t take axe out of c. hand A.1b
carpenters
  best c., fewest chips A.1b
  such c., such chips A.1b
carpet (n and v) I.80e
  brush under the c. I.82c
  figure in the c. I.80e
  on the c. C.13h
  red c. C.13d
  smooth as c. I.80e
  sweep under c. I.82c
carpet-bag (v) I.80e
carpet-bagger I.80e
carpet-knight I.80e
carpet-way I.80e
carp-pie, eat I.69a
carried
  away I.21d
  baby that always gets c. I.2h
carrier, come with blind E.5c
carries (a/the)
  big gun C.7c
  broom D.1a
  coals G.8a
  Lawrence on his back J.40a
carrion
  corbies smell c. G.46b
  not kill crow G.46b
carritch, give him J.56c
carrot (n=incentive) F.10e
  and stick F.10e
  bolt door with c. I.41d
  break clean as c. I.54g
  daft as a half-scraped c. I.54g
  froff as c. I.54g
  half-scraped c. I.54g
  nesh as c. I.54g
  new-scraped c. I.54g
  smart/smopple as c. I.54g
  snap like c. I.54g
  snapple as c. I.54g
carro-crunchers I.69c
carrots
bunny like e.? I.17e  
cry e. and turnips I.86b  
carrot I.54g  
carry (a/the)  
  baby I.2g  
  bat K.33b  
  blacksmith A.3d  
  bone in the mouth/teeth I.8d  
  books J.22a  
  both ends of log F.24h  
  can K.20  
  coals F.34b  
  coals to Newcastle D.15d  
  cold dinner E.6c  
  corn E.15b  
  cup even E.6c  
  dead cock home K.58b  
  devil over the Sound D.2a  
  dish upright E.6c  
  egg in two baskets E.28c  
  fire in one hand C.19c  
  full cup I.48c  
  grindstone F.31c  
  hatchet F.30b  
  heavy rakes F.33b  
  hot water I.59d  
  knife even I.55b  
  milk pails F.11b  
  off his feet I.31f  
  off with high hand C.4c  
  on D.3c  
  on a chip A.1b  
  own hide to tanners E.29a  
  pedlar c. own pack A.7a  
  pigs to market E.25j  
  rake, you shall E.32d  
  salt F.21  
  seeds of… I.1d  
  strong enough to c. coal F.23a  
  three red lights D.19d  
  too much sail D.3c  
  torch for… I.78c  
  two faces under one hat I.33a  
  war into enemy’s country C.18  
  water in a sieve F.20b  
  water to the river F.34b  
  weight K.50a  
  your breed F.16a  
  carrying an umbrella, no use… I.85e  
  cart  
    away E.5b  
    before horse E.5b
best c. may overthrow F.21
Blind Charlie’s c. A.7c
broken c. E.14c
come out of c. E.5b
comes to caples E.5b
creaking c. E.5b
doesna lose errand F.21
empty c. rattles E.5b
fond as c. E.5b
get into the c. F.21
glean before c. F.16c
in the c. H.21a
keep c. on wheels E.5b
make c. go E.5b
needs third wheel F.29
neither horse nor c. F.21
of shit E.13d
off E.5b
off the wheels E.5b
on wheels E.5b
parting of old mare and broken c. E.14c
push at the c. E.5b
putt at the c. E.5b
rattlin’ c. E.5b
rumbling c. E.5b
spoke his c. E.5b
’sstinking fish’ ahint c. D.14
though c. overthrow F.21
unhappy man’s c. F.21
whelming, I’ll give it a putt F.21
worst wheel of c. E.5b
carte blanche C.20b
carter, swear like F.21
cart-horse (—methods etc.) F.21
    fart like c. E.14b
    whippet out of c. K.51
    work like a c. F.21
cart-load F.21
cart-rape, thread ends as B.1e
carts, coup the F.21
cart-shafts E.5b
cart’s tail, left at F.21
cart-way E.5b
cart-wheel (n and v) E.5b
    middle of c. E.5b
    spoke of c. E.5b
    wheedle tyre off c. E.5b
cart-wheels, keep grease for F.21
carve (a/the)
    niche J.40b
    up 1.66b
carved in stone J.34c
Cary’s dinner, Roger G.3b
Casanova J.24
case (v—the joint) E.29a
    Federal c. C.21d
    is altered H.18a
case-harden A.3e
cash
    in on… K.81
    in your chips K.77c
    take the c. in hand J.25b
cask
    savours of first fill K.18c
    wine will taste of c. K.21a
Cassandra J.1c
casson
    dry as a c. E.13d
    primrose in c. G.30b
cast (a/the)
    about for… E.8a
    all at the cock K.58c
    all your snowballs K.31b
    anchor in shifting sand D.15b
    anchor to windward D.15b
    aside like old boot/clog/shoe B.10a
    at the cocks K.58c
    away, fish is F.7a
    bane I.8d
    beyond the moon G.18b
    bone between I.8d
    bread upon the waters J.34p
    calf E.21a
    cap at… B.6i
    cat a castock I.15c
    cat in kirn F.11b
    cat ower him I.37a
    clod at… G.2b
    clod between E.31a
    cloths together B.6a
    dash F.9b
    die is c. K.78
    down the glove C.5b
    first stone J.35e
    flock to nettles G.29g
    gorge at… E.9d
    her rider E.16f
    in heroic mould A.3c
    in his worts K.16b
    in lot K.77b
    in the teeth I.5i
    in their own snares H.6d
    into shade K.62a
    Jeddart/Jedburgh c. H.15
kitten I.12
laggin-gird/leglen-girth F.11b
light on... I.78d
lurid light on... I.78d
no dirt in the well I.49a
o’ the bauk I.88a
off trammels E.15d
pearls before swine J.35b
shadow I.19
sheep’s eye E.23a
sprat to catch a hake D.13c
stone at... G.2c
stones against the wind G.13c
stour in his eye G.13d
to the winds G.13d
water into the sea/Thames D.6a
wide net D.13c
yourself at his feet C.11
caste, lose C.17a
casten in calm A.3c
cast-iron A.3b
have c. balls A.3a
pig-trough E.25d
win c. overcoat K.60e
castle
bow is in c. C.2a
built like a c. E.7c
is easy kept C.12b
stone hurled at c. C.12b
that speaketh C.12b
castle-building E.7c
castles
are built stone by stone C.12a
in the air/Spain E.7c
castock
cast cat a c. I.15c
heart no worth a c. E.31e
not worth a c. E.31e
wersh as a kail c. I.69c
castocks, froff as kail E.31e
castrate I.36e
casualty
first c. in war is truth C.10b
cat (n) I.11
among the pigeons, put I.15c
and clay I.39b
as many lives as a c. I.11
asbestos c. J.62
ashes c. I.14d
ate the canary I.15c
ate the flickle I.15a
ate the pestle I.15a
barber’s c. I.85fell the c. J.2i
blate c. I.13a
blind c. in a barn I.13a
buy a c. in the sack H.8
by the tail I.14b
can lick her ear I.11
candle ate c. I.15c
cannot fare well and lane I.13a
cast the c. a castock I.15c
cast the c. in the kirn F.11b
cast the c. ower him I.37a
chasing tail I.13a
Cheshire c. G.8a
choose how the c. jumps I.16a
climb like c. I.11
cloamen c., hollow to the toes K.15c
comb the c. I.14b
crouse as a c. I.14b
daft as an army c. C.12c
dead c. bounces I.16b
deaf as a white c. I.11
do but eat mice? I.13a
douce c. I.12
draw straw before c. I.14b
every c. cover its own stink I.14c
fast as scalded c. to cat-hole I.14d
fat c. I.15c
feathers off the c. I.11
fierce c. I.11
flog the c. I.16a
Forsyth’s c. I.14b
free a c. I.16a
full of hairs as c. I.11
Galtey’s c. I.14b
get c. to chew her meat I.15a
gets c. with kitten I.13b
gim like a c. I.11
give the c. a canary I.15c
give the c. a penny I.14b
glower like a c. I.16a
get your tongue? I.14b
grease the c. I.16a
grey as grannum’s c. I.14b
grin like Cheshire c. G.8a
had clean band I.14b
had kittened in mouth I.12
has gale of wind in tail D.5
haud the c. I.14b
he’ll lig anywhere I.11
honest as c. I.15a
I’m skinning this c. I.16b
in a bonfire I.14d
in a trap I.16a
in a tripe-shop I.15a
in a wheelbarrow F.29
in cockle-shells I.15b
in gloves I.13a
in hell(‘s) chance J.62
in patterns ×2 I.14b
in the churn E.22d
in the pock H.8
is out the house I.13a
Jimmy Glover’s c. I.16b
kick the c. ×2 I.16a
kitlin of good c. I.12
kitten bring mouse to old c. I.13a
knoweth whose lips she licketh I.14b
lame as a c. I.11
let the old c. die I.16b
licked the place I.15c
licked the stone I.15c
licks his arse I.11
likes mustard I.15c
lish as a c. I.11
little need to keep c… I.13a
look at king I.14b
looking in the bible I.14c
looks as if c. had kittled on it I.12
make a c. laugh I.14b
mawngy as old c. I.11
melancholy as a c. I.11
nae mair heart than c. I.11
nervous as c. I.11
never find c. on cold hearth I.14c
nimble as c. I.11
not a word for the c. I.14b
nurse the c. I.14b
old c. I.15c
old c. will not burn himself I.14d
on a bin-lid I.11
on a hot backstone ×2 I.14d
on hot bricks I.14d
on hot tin roof I.14d
on ice I.11
on the dresser I.14c
oot o’ our gate E.28b
out of the bag H.8
out of the kirn F.11b
played with c. till it scrat I.14b
proddled c. under a bed I.16a
pull the c. from the bacon I.15a
purr before it scrapes I.14b
round hot milk I.15c
run around like a cut c. I.16a
said ‘come to the point’ I.14a
say her c. was a thief I.15c
scalded c.×3 I.14d
shoot the c. I.16b
show c. way to dairy I.15c
shram a c. I.11
sick as c. I.11
singed c. I.14d
skin the c. G.3e
snirt of a c. I.14b
snob’s c. B.8a
Stack stripped the c. F.11b
stare like a throttled c. I.16b
swing a c. I.16a
tame c. I.14b
Tantra-bobus’s c. I.14b
tanyard c. I.85f
    teach c. way to kirn I.15c
tear a/the c. I.16a
tetchy as c. with wet tail I.16a
that sees cream I.15c
that stole the cream I.15c
to an old rat I.13a
to the kirn ×4 I.15c
too old a c. I.14b
took will of haggis I.15a
turn c. in the pan H.10
turn old c. frae ill hants I.14b
waffly as a c. I.11
waffy as a c. I.11
waiting for mouse I.13a
washing dishes I.15c
watches mouse I.13a
waukrife as c. I.11
way the c. jumps I.16a
ways of killing c. I.16b
what of c. but her skin? B.4e
what would young c. do but eat mice? I.13a
whip a c., but I must be at the tail I.16a
whip the c. (=drunk) I.16a
whip the c. (house to house) I.16a
whip the c. for I.16a
whist as a c. I.11
white c. I.11
will eat you I.17a
will fall on feet I.11
will not feed his c. I.15c
with two tails I.11
won’t jump I.16a
would eat fish I.15b
would not hang a c. I.16b
would not trust him with our c. I.14b

cataclysm G.14e
catalogue (n) E.2b
  lot out of c. E.2b
catalyst J.30c
cat-and-dog life I.14a
cat-and-mouse I.13a
catapult (v) C.1b
cat-arse pit I.11
catastrophe J.53c
catbird seat, in the C.17j
cat-blash I.15c
cat-burglar I.11
cat call I.11
catch (a/the)
  at shadow C.10f
  at straw(s) D.9d
  ball before bound K.36
  bat G.68b
  cold ×2 I.35d
  cow would c. hare E.20d
  crab D.12
  dead horse F.10h
  eels F.7b
  fell B.2h
  first c. your hare I.50g
  flat-footed K.32a
  flavour I.65a
  flies G.37a
  frog F.7a
  hare with drum E.10d
  horse E.16g
  infection I.35d
  it in the neck C.10d
  it in the rinse I.84b
  larks G.12f
  measles I.35d
  mire-snipe H.6g
  mouse F.15b
  napping F.10a
  no more fish than… D.13c
  not at falling knife I.44b
  off guard K.43
  old birds with chaff H.6f
  old one F.13c
  on the ground-hop G.20a
  on the hop K.32a
  on the wrong foot K.36
  out K.33a
  rabbit H.6c
  red-handed H.6a
  salmon E.12
sleeping F.10a
slip off the c. I.41b
standing on one leg K.36
Tartar C.17a
thief H.1
time to c. bears E.8d
tit in wringer I.84c
too slow to c. worms I.38f
tortoise c. hare J.2k
tripping H.13b
-22 J.24
two pigeons H.6g
weasel asleep G.63e
whale D.13c
wind in a net H.6d
with defences down K.43
woodcock H.6g
catch-as-catch-can K.41a
catcher of birds H.6d
catches, miss K.33a
catching
as (a/the) measles I.35d
scab E.23f
fleas G.40
Catchpole, ‘Cleanly’ quoth I.29d
 catechize J.56c
cater for I.64a
caterpillar tractor G.38c
cat-eyed I.11
cat-fat, short as I.11
cat-feet I.11
cat-gallows I.16b
cat-gate (n) I.14c
out of c. E.28d
cat-geatt see cat-gate
cat-ham(med) I.11
cat-harrow, draw K.73
cat-haul H.16
cat-head I.11
cat-hearted I.11
Catherine’s tresses, braids St. J.40b
cat-hole, key in I.42b
cat-ice I.11
cat-in-pan, turn H.10
cat-lick I.11
cat-loup I.13a
cat-lug, thin as I.11
catmallison I.15a
cat-maw, tumble I.16a
cat-nap I.11
catnip I.37b
cat-paper see cap-paper
cat’s
  arch of c. back I.13b
  arse I.11
  away I.13a
  brains I.11
  chance I.16a
  coarse as c. dirt I.14c
  cradle K.73
  ear I.13a
  elbow I.11
  eye I.11, I.14c
  eyes I.11
  hair I.11
  head I.11
  high as hair on c. back I.13b
  ins and outs of c. arse I.11
  live under c. foot K.26b
  looup I.13a
  meat I.15a
  miaow I.11
  paw (on water) I.11
  paw (tool of another) J.2h
  pull chestnuts with c. paw J.2h
  pyjamas I.11
  something the c. brought in I.13a
  tail I.11
  teeth I.11
  them that have c. dish I.15c
  whiskers I.11

cats
  Aberdeenshire c. I.15c
  and dogs J.6a
  and women, best at home I.14c
  a-running I.11
  back fence c. I.11
  bourd wi’ c. I.14b
  cross as bag of c. I.16a
  dark as stack of black c. I.11
  grey in dark I.11
  Hockin’s c. I.14b
  Kilkenny c. I.13b
  like mothers-in-law I.14c
  look best on their own hearthstone I.14c
  muffled c. I.13a
  on clothesline K.58c
  plays with c. I.14b
  two c. in a gutter I.13b
  cat-shit, common/mean as I.14c
  cat-sleep I.11
  cat-slide roof I.13a
  cat-steps I.13a
  catting I.16a
cattish I.11

cattle
  kittle c. to shoe behint E.15e
  little c., little care F.11a

catty I.11

cat-walk I.11

cat-witted I.11

caudle
  of hemp-seed I.57c
  together I.57c

captured (a/the)
  between two fires C.10b
  by circular saw F.24i
  fish soon c. F.7a
  fox E.8c
  good fish if c. D.13c
  greedy pike c. the quickest F.7a
  hare is c. at last E.10d
  if hare is to be c. E.10d
  like a rat in a trap I.17c
  on the horns E.19a
  twice with the same bait F.7a
  with pants/trousers down B.61

cauk the clath B.5c

caul, make hood above B.6i

cauled see cold

cauliflower
  ear I.54c
  shows the I.54c
  top I.54c

cauliflower’s style I.54c

caulk (a/the)
  seams D.1b

caumeril see cammerel

caupe
  little parritch in your c. I.68
  no aneath his ladle G.3b
  o’ corn E.15b

cause of own bane E.25k

causeway
  keep crown of c. ×2 E.5a
  make c. webs B.2e

causey see causeway

cautious I.83c
cauterize (v) I.36e

cauterize (v) I.36e

cauterize to snakes G.44a

cauve-licked see calf-licked

cavalier J.28d

cavalry are coming/here C.6a

cave (n) J.34i
  Aladdin’s c. J.2a
  in F.19
of Adullam J.34i
caveman J.30d
cavernous G.22b
caviare (n and v) I.69a
to the general I.69a
cavie
  cock in ain c. E.28a
  ne’er craw in my c. E.28a
Cawthorne feast/wakes G.8a
cazzie, trim the I.53e
ceiling (n) I.39e
  glass c. I.39e
  hit the c. I.39e
cellar, damp as K.18a
Celtic twilight G.17
cement (v) I.40c
  broke c. F.20c
  talk under wet c. I.40c
cement-mixer I.40c
cent, not care/give/worth a red F.1b
centipede G.35f
  with athlete’s foot G.35f
  with fallen arches G.35f
centre
  cannot hold J.25b
  occupy c. stage K.61c
  of gravity J.30b
centrefold I.5n
cents worth, put in two I.5o
Cerberus, sop to J.1c
Cernel
  Giant o’ J.5d
certain
  as (a/the) cess-gatherer C.21e
    multiplication table J.27a
    thorn-bush J.46
cess-gatherer, certain as C.21e
cess-pool I.85c
chafe in his own grease I.60a
chaff
  catch old birds with c. H.6f
  king’s c. C.13a
  much corn in c. E.33d
  much of grain blown out with c. E.33d
  old horse recognises c. F.10e
  sets up her c. I.24c
  wheat from c. F.17b
chafts, wants the nether K.6b
chagrin B.4e
chain (n) D.15c
  as strong as weakest link D.15c
  drag a lengthening c. H.19
drag the c. F.15b
grand c. D.15c
jerk c. K.59c
like c. D.15c
pull/rattle c. K.59c
reaction D.15c
to vicious dog a short c. I.7a
who pulled your c.? K.59c
chained
dog E.18
together E.23b
to the oar D.2b
chain-lightning ×2 G.15a
chains
old c. F.10c
only our c. to lose C.11
chain-smoker D.15c
chain-store D.15c
chair
be in/take the c. E.1e
cannot find easy c. I.80b
easy as falling off c. K.22e
take in c. I.80b
chairs at home, all I.80b
chair-warmer I.80b
chalice, poisoned H.11a
chalk
and cheese I.53e
by a long c. K.73
cheap as c. J.20b
his hat B.6i
is no shears B.5e
it out for you D.1a
undone by c. K.27
up K.28
walk the c. K.22e
chalk-line, walk K.22e
chalks, walk your C.12c
challenge, regard as C.5b
chamber pot, win a gold K.60e
chameleon C.17k
live on air, like c. C.17k
champ at the bit E.16i
champagne K.21b
champion (v) C.6c
chance (a/the)
as much c. as… C.12c, G.14b, I.72c, J.62, K.59g
Buckley’s c. H.19
Chinaman’s c. E.3a
dog’s c. I.10c
ducks E.26c
fighting c. C.10c
gentleman will take a c. K.77e
sporting c. K.54
trusts all to c. K.77b
chancery, hell and+in c. H.18c
chandler-chafted I.77b
chandler-pins, all on I.77b
change (a/the)
before death I.38a
front C.14b
get no c. E.2b
horses in mid-stream E.16e
is lightsome I.79i
leopard c. spots J.34r
not have c. I.87a
of pasture E.19d
of scene K.61b
oft G.11
penny waiting for c. F.1b
skin I.18f
take c. out of… E.2b
tune K.1c
wind of c. G.13b
women etc. c. D.3b
changeable
as (a/the) moon G.18b
weathercock J.52b
changes, ring the J.52d
channel (n and v) F.19
fog in the c. D.5
channels open, keep the D.15a
chanted (a/the)
evening hymn J.61
chanter, shouldna meddle wi’ K.6a
chap as married Anna/Hannah I.4n
chaplain
hat-pegs J.55
quiet as c. J.55
chapmen
ay to hansel A.7a
never out of their gate A.7a
chapter
and verse J.34a
of accidents J.22b
to the end of the c. J.22b
charcoal, burn F.24d
charge
double c. rive cannon C.9
for the garlick E.27g
get c. out of… K.25b
charged, highly G.15b
charger, mount a white J.3b
Charing Cross, old as G.8a
charity
  cold as c. J.37
  Vermont c. G.8a
Charlie I.4f
  Royal C. J.28d
Charlie’s
  Blind c. cart A.7c
charm (a/the)
  bird off a twig H.6f
  ducks off the water E.26b
  heart of beggarman’s crutch G.1
  heart of broomstick I.82b
  heart of wheelbarrow F.29
  like a butter-market I.86b
  like a c. J.7
  skin off a snake G.44a
charmle-pins, miss I.77b
Charterhouse, sister of J.49
charts, off the K.62e
Charybdis, between Scylla and J.26a
chase (a/the)
  dragon J.1a
  rainbow J.7
  up his own tree E.8d
chasing
  mice I.17a
  tail I.13a
chasm G.20c
chaste
  as (a/the) dog I.6c
    Penelope J.26a
    untrodden snow G.16b
    veiled nun J.49
chat like halfpenny book J.20a
chats, fire of I.74d
chatter like magpie G.46f
chattering
  like dice K.78
  teeth c. like cankervells G.16c
chauvinism J.28d
chaw
  see also chough
  high I.24g
  meal I.24g
cheap
  as (a/the) bull-beef/neck-beef E.29c
    chalk J.20b
    living at home E.1f
    muck E.13d
promises I.5b
feel c. F.5
, he wouldn’t pour water… B.10a
hope as c. F.1a
cheat-the-wuddy G.27e
check
pick up the c. I.87b
sure as a c. C.19a
that there’s bread under the butter I.63c
checkmate K.74
checks, hand/send/pass in K.77c
check-string, pull the E.5c
Chedle church J.51
cheek (n) I.22b
by jowl I.1b
more c. than Jessie I.91b
more c. than white man C.17b
tongue in c. I.24e
turn other c. J.35b
cheeks
chipmunk c. C.17h
more than c. can hold I.24a
cheeky (adj) I.24e
as a young bantam E.28e
cheeny-bone I.48c
cheer, Bronx I.85e
cheese
and c. I.53e
and money I.1b
at fourpence I.87c
Banbury c. I.53e
bread and c. C.5a
bug as c. I.53e
chalk and c. I.53e
chuff as c. I.53e
down I.53e
eat c. I.17c
for money I.87c
go back in your c. I.53e
keep its ain chisset I.53e
king’s c. C.13a
makes c. more binding E.22f
mice in hollow c. I.17a
moon made of green c. G.18b
mouse in c. I.17a
not say c. I.53e
old rat that won’t eat c. I.17c
pale as curd c. E.22f
penn’orth of c. I.53e
pick up the c. K.60e
rank as toasted c. in rat-trap I.17c
rat-trap c. I.17c
rotten as c. I.53e
see no green c. but... I.53e
simple as ha’p’orth of c. I.53e
soft c. I.53e
strong as rotten c. I.53e
Suffolk c. F.31e
Whillymer c. I.53e
won’t choke her I.65d
cheese-cake I.71c
cheese-cutters I.53e
cheese-paring I.53e
cheeses, make E.22f
cheesewell, gane oot o’ E.22f
celp G.46f
Chelsea, dead/safe as G.8a
chemistry J.30a
cheque, blank/open E.1c
chequered K.74
cherish (a/the)
   serpent/snake/viper J.2k
cherries
   bitter e. G.57
   disgraces like c. I.69d
   eat not c. with the great I.69d
   give c. to pigs E.25c
   life a bowl of c. I.69d
   tree of c. G.3f
cherry (n) I.55i
   no c. without a pip I.55i
   not care/give/worth a/the c. I.55i
   painted for own harm I.55i
   ready mouth for ripe c. I.69d
   red as c. I.55i
   two bites at a c. F.6a
cherry-clack E.30b
cherry-pick I.69d
cherry-picker I.55i
cherry-pie I.70c
Cherry’s boose ×2 E.15a
cherry-tree class/cherry-trees J.28d
Cheshire
   bred E.22a
   cat G.8a
   grin like C. cat G.8a
chess, time to break off K.74
chess-board K.74
chessy cat, grin like G.8a
chest
   cocks his c. D.19b
   get it off c. I.24k
   midshipman’s c. D.19b
   play close to c. K.79b
chesten, brown as G.28h
Chester, Bishop of J.43
Chesterfield steeple G.8a
chestnut K.62d
chestnuts out of fire J.2h
cheswell he was staned in E.22f
chetlens/chetterlens E.29e
cheval de bataille C.6a
cheverel B.4e
Cheviot, fixed as G.8a
crush (a/the)
at E.19d
cud E.19d
ear (off) I.5e
fat I.65a
good deal to c. I.63b
gum I.31e
leak I.69c
lug I.5e
more than you can c. I.65a
over E.19d
rag I.65a
tobacco K.24
up the scenery K.62a
wouldn’t c. meat I.66g
chewed
over I.24g
string F.17c
to loon shit G.50d
chews tobacco twice K.24
chick

craw thinks own c. whitest G.46b
day-old c. E.28d
hen with one c. ×2 E.28d
in wheaten arrish E.28d
in wheat stubble E.28d
in wool E.28d
raven’s c. is white G.46a
white hen’s c. E.28d
chickchacker, die/shake like G.57
chicken (n and v) E.28d
choke up, c. E.28d
Digby c. I.69a
…is no c. E.28d
run around like c. with head off E.29f
send c. to bring home fox G.60a
tender as c. I.52a
Torpoint c. E.28d
weak as c. E.28d
ye’re nae c. E.28d
chicken-button E.28d
chicken-dancing E.28d
chicken-feed E.28d
chicken-hearted E.28d
chicken-livered E.28d
chicken-porridge I.53a
chicken-run E.28b
chickens
  come home to roost E.28d
  count c. before hatched E.28d
  from fried eggs come no c. I.61c
  hen with many c. E.28d
  January c. E.28d
  keep c. in own backyard E.28d
  kit to watch c. E.28d
chicken-shit E.28d
chicken-switch E.28d
chicks
  expect c. to scratch for old hen E.28d
  hen with the c. E.28d
Chiddle wakes K.60b
chief steward, fox and D.4
chiefs, all C.17a
chig I.24g
child
  before born I.2a
  better a snotty c. I.2g
  burnt c. dreads fire I.3a
  Chrisom c. J.56b
dies F.5
  happy is the c. J.63d
  is christened J.56b
  is drowned I.49a
  kiss the c. I.3b
  mother thinks sun rises on her c. I.3b
  on its mother’s breast I.2d
  sleep upon bones I.3b
  snotty c. I.2g
  tetchy etc. as c. I.3a
  unborn I.2a
  weak as c. I.3a
  with c. to I.1d
  woman with c. I.1d
children
  all Billy Butterworth’s c. I.4n
  cobbler’s/doctor’s c. B.9a
  collar the c. F.10c
  first an arm-ache I.35a
  Harry’s c. of Leigh I.3a
  the devil’s c. J.63c
  to get c. I.1d
children’s shoes B.8c
child’s
name is Anthony I.38g
nose I.3b
pig E.25i
play K.67a
chime in with... J.52c, K.1d
chimera, chimerical J.1c
chimney
  bricks in Jack Cade’s c. I.75c
  long as c. I.75c
  looking out of c. I.75c
  make c. smoke I.75c
  mill c. B.1g
  monkey on c. I.17d
  smoke like c. I.75c
  top brick off c. I.75c
chimney-keeper I.74b
chimney-pot hat I.75c
chimneys
  build two c. I.75c
  in summer I.75c
chin
  held up by c. D.9c
  lead with the c. K.40b
  take it on the c. K.40b
  up to the c. in D.9a
china
  bull in c. shop E.19b
  doll K.72a
  orange E.7c
  worse state than C. C.17a
Chinaman (n) C.17a
  killed a C. J.7
  mad as a C. C.17a
  mean as a goldfield C. E.3a
Chinaman’s chance E.3a
Chinese
  arithmetic J.27a
  compliment C.17a
  fire-drill D.17a
  opera K.62g
  three-point landing A.4e
  wall C.12a
  whispers K.73
chink
  in armour C.5a
  iron C. C.17a
Chinky’s horse E.14e
chip
  blue c. investments K.81
  carry on c. A.1b
  in a mess of milk I.53a
  in his eye F.24e
in milk/porridge I.53a
not care/give/worth a c. A.1b
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  thrang as c. Monday B.8a
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cobweb (v) G.36b
ing the throat G.36b
tie purses with c. thread E.1f
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  blow away c. G.36b
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  of antiquity, of sophistry G.36b
coccyx G.53
cock (n) I.49c
  (v) E.28a
  and bull story J.2j
  at a bilberry E.28a
  at a grosset/grozer/grozet E.28a
  barley-corn to a c. E.28a
  cast all at the c. K.58c
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crowe as a c. E.28a
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in his ain cavie E.28a
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red c. will crow E.28a
said the c. to the horse J.2j
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cocktail K.22a
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  on the biscuit tin E.2b
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cocky’s cage, mouth like C.17i
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coddle (v) I.61c
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cog (v) A.4a
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Coggleshall jobx F.11a
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  up D.15c
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(v) F.10c
against the c. F.10c
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new c. and cuff B.7c
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  as many tricks as a c…. E.15c
  best c. takes most breaking in E.15c
  brush c. E.14a
  feel like c. in spring E.14a
  Garrak as unbroken c. E.15c
  helter a c. E.15c
  ignorant as Thompson’s c. E.14a
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  kipper as a c. E.14a
  Obitch’s c. E.14a
  ragged as a c. E.14a
  ragged c. E.14a
  Roden’s c. E.14a
  shoe the c. E.15e
  when you ride a c. E.16a
wild as an unbacked/unbroken/ mountain c. E.15c
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  alive to I.2b
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  all winds c. D.5
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contribute C.21e
contrite E.34f
control (v) C.21e
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Conway, drowned in G.7f
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  bill and c. K.52
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  hoarse as c. G.46b
  messenger J.34b
  winna pyke oot… G.46b
corbies
  dinna gather G.46b
  kittle shooting at c. G.46b
corbie-steps G.46b
cord
  run with a c. E.20e
cordon sanitaire C.12c
corduroy (v) B.4d
core (n) I.55b
  rotten/shaken/shocked to the c. I.55b
core-dump (v) A.4g
cork
  bob up like c. K.19c
  draw c. K.19c
  keep c. on K.19c
  pop his c. K.19c
  save a c. K.19c
  up K.19c
  worse face than under a c. K.19b
cork-brained K.19c
corker K.19c
cork-headed K.19c
corkscrew
  left-handed c. K.19c
  straight as c. K.19c
cormorantx K.19c
corn
  acknowledge c. H.5
  carry c. E.15b
  clover is mother of c. I.4b
  cockle and c. in same field E.33b
  crap for all c. E.28b
  deaf c. I.34d
don’t shuck your c. E.33d
earn your c. F.6a
every wind bloweth not c. E.33b
feel your c. E.15b
full ear of c. E.33b
give long c. F.10e
he that hath good c. E.33b
heaviest ear of c. E.33b
horse will see c. E.15b
in Egypt J.34b
is coming F.10e
lies in the chaff E.33d
measure another’s c. E.33e
mickle c., mickle care E.33b
miller grinds more men’s c. E.34f
more c. in crooked rows E.33b
mouse under c. stack G.67
new c. E.33b
no c. without chaff E.33d
no for staigs F.10e
no shorn by kempers F.16a
pickles E.33e
shakes no c. E.33b
sickle in another’s c. E.33c
thresh in other folk’s c. E.33d
to the band E.33c
two sparrows on one ear of c. G.57
under a millstone E.34e
water the c. E.33b
weeds outgrow the c. E.33b
corn-boggart
  foul as c. J.66c
  getting wed to c. J.66c
  slamp and wobbly as c. J.66c
corner (n—in the market) E.2a
  chips in one c. K.77c
done in a c. I.39c
drive into a c. C.10f
every house has dirty c. I.83b
fight your own c. K.40b
hole and c. H.14a
in a tight c. G.2a
of a street I.85b
paint into c. I.39d
push into c. C.10f
said prayers in other c. J.60c
staff to the c. G.6c
turn the c. G.7f
cornered H.14a
  rat when c. G.66
corners
  cut c. E.5d
knock off c. A.1b
corner-stone I.40f
corn-fed C.17a
cornfield
eat K.58c
cornflakes, soggy I.64b
Cornish hug K.41b
corn-lesow, mawkin in F.9c
corn-on-the-cob through p.-fence, eat I.69d
corns, tread on I.35c
corn-stalk E.33b
Cornwall, send husband into I.1e
corny C.17a
corporal’s guard C.13h
corpse
feel like warmed-up c. I.38c
dead/pale as c. I.38c
corpse-candle J.66a
corral (v) E.19f
Corra Linn, deaf as G.8a
corranto, true as I.5n
corrat as Crocker’s mare E.14c
correct magnificat J.57c
corridors of power C.21d
corrosive I.24g
Corshill shop E.2b
corset (v) B.61
Corybantic J.9b
cosmetic I.33a
cosset (v) E.23d
cost (a/the)
arm and leg I.30c
as much to get shut on… I.86b
as much to paint… I.85a
nothing I.87a
costive I.29d
Costlet served the king C.16
cosy
as a bug in a blanket G.42b
sick kitten on hot brick 1.12
Cotherstone G.40
Cotswold
barley E.33b
lion C.17c
cottage, wide door of little 1.4 1g
cottages
content oftener in c. F.3
love lives in c. F.3
cotted B.2e
cottered B.2e
hank B.1b
like old wig I.32i
cotter B.2e
cotton
dirt shows on cleanest c. B.4d
girl in c. stockings I.17a
in tall c. C.17a
nursed in c. E.6b
on to B.3b
shit in high c. C.17a
spit c. C.17a
straight as hank of c. B1b
together B.3b
cotton-mouth C.17a
cotton-picking C.17a
Cotton’s neck I.34a
cotton-white C.17a
cotton-wool, keep/wrap in E.6b
couch your lance C.6c
couched in… A.5b
cough
candy I.37c
cannot be hid I.35c
dry c. C.6b
lozenge I.37c
syrup I.37b
up I.24k
Coulbourn’s eye I.34c
coulter of plow F.15a
counsel
breaks not the head C.1c
in combat C.21b
mother of c. I.4b
of pillow C.21b
count
her thumbs I.30g
out for the c. K.40c
take the long c. K.40c
your chickens E.28d
your fish D.13c
countdown has started A.4c
counted
sheep E.23i
stand up and be c. C.21c
counter
go/hunt/run c. E.10b
nail to the c. E.2b
counterbalance (n and v) I.88a
counting pothooks E.6c
country
cousin I.4i
keep the c. abroad F.23a
lawyers H.18c
mouse J.2i
my line of c. E.7a
countryfolk bring fruit to market I.86b
counts a’ the pins in the plow F.15a
county heard from, another C.21c
coup (a/the)
apple-cart E.5b
carts F.21
crans D.14, I.59d
creels D.14
creels upon F.33b
harrrows on F.15e
himself to toom halter E.16g
ladles I.59d
over the creels D.14
over the heugh H.12d
tables K.73
Coupar see Cupar
couped (a/the)
mickle dish I.64a
coupit me ower F.17d
coupled
like rabbits G.64c
sheep drown each other E.23b
coupon, fill in K.32b
coup-your-creels D.14
courage
bulldog c. I.9c
Dutch c. C.17a
in both hands I.30e
in little finger I.30g
screw up c. K.3
course
another c. would have done it F.18a
blow off c. D.16b
collision c. D.17f
horse for the c. K.50a
maintain c. D.16b
nature will have her c. G.24b
of the narrative G.24b
only the first c. I.64a
par for the c. K.38
sail a long c. D.3c
set on c. to D.16b
shape/steer a c. to D.16b
stay the c. K.50b
steer a middle/narrow c. D.16b
courses, stars in their J.34h
court (v—disaster etc.) I.1b
ball in…’s c. K.36
Dover c. H.17
friend at c. C.13d
hold c. C.13d
laugh out of c. H.17
of sour-milk session H.17
out of c. H.17
courteous as a dog in kitchen I.8a
courts, love lives in F.3
cousin
  Betty I.4i
country c. I.4i
  first c. to I.4i
  Jack I.4i
  queen’s c. C.13c
  Tommy I.4i
  Welsh c. I.4i
covenants H.17
Coventry
  send to C.C.11
  true as C. blue B.3a
cover (a/the/your)
  ass C.10e
  blow his c. C.10g
  break c. E.10d
  ground F.9b
  judge not book by c. J.22a
  more ground than… G.10a
  multitude of sins J.38
  rock with hay E.32d
  run for c. C.10e
  tail C.10e
  under c. of G.4b
  up his tracks C.17a
  waterfront I.5n
  well I.49a
covered with earth I.36a
coverlet, stretch according to F.4c
covers himself with wet sack G.4c
covetous man E.6d
cow (a/the)
  and a cloot E.20f
  at a bastard calf E.21d
  ate grindstone F.31c
  bawling/bellowing c. E.21d
  between the c. and the haystack E.19d
  Billy Joy’s c. E.20a
  bulls the c. E.19b
calves or breaks her neck E.21b
  Collins’ c. E.20a
dark as inside of c. E.20a
drive c. to the hall E.20d
eat the c. I.66c
flings F.11b
gives much milk E.20f
good c. will sell in the boose E.20a
gowan G.30a
graceful as a c. E.20a
Halkerston’s c. H.18c
handling a musket E.20d
has a bad calf E.21d
have a c. calve E.21b
he that’s aught the c. E.20c
if one gives thee a c. E.20e
if you buy the c. E.20c
in a cage E.20d
in an unco loan E.20e
in the waist E.20a
kissed the c. E.20d
knows not worth of tail E.20c
like c., like calf E.21d
lucky as the c. E.20b
Mackissock’s c. E.20a
Malley’s c. E.20a
man may love his c. E.20d
man with a c. F.26a
may want her tail E.20c
miel c. E.20f
milk c. in sieve F.11b
milk c. that stands still F.11b
milk from brown c. E.22b
more than the dun c. had ribs J.3b
must graze where tied E.19f
need not keep c. E.20a
needs tail more than once E.20e
never tint a c. F.11c
o’ Forfar H.15
parson’s c. J.46
poor man’s c. dies F.5
proud as cow with two tails E.20c
sacred c. J.9f
sell the c. E.20a
shrewd c. E.20b
skittering c. E.20e
solemn as c. E.20a
sowter had eaten c. I.66c
stand like the dun c. K.26b
steal a c. H.5
suck at brown c. E.21c
that stuck herself with own horn E.20b
thrive as c. on wet clover E.19d
to every c. her calf E.21d
tune the c. died of F.1 1c
water that a c. drinks E.20f
Welshman’s c. E.20a
whiter the c. J.9b
who’s milking this c.? E.20e
with a holiday J.41b
with side pockets E.20d
with the iron tail E.20c
won’t have her calf till ready E.21a
would catch a hare E.20d
cowboy (n) E.19f
cowd see cold
cow-flap F.11a
cow-footed E.20a
cow-hocked E.20a
cow-lick E.21b
cowl (n) J.48
  though Reynard put on c. J.48
cowp see coup
cow-pat, born in J.48
cow-price E.20a
cow’s
  always behind like c. tail E.20c
  black c. milk E.22b
  breakfast E.19d
  crab in a c. mouth E.19d
  eat calf in c. belly E.21a
  foul as c. father E.19b
  grow down like c. tail E.20c
  husband E.19b
  meek c. breed F.11b
  pimple on c. arse E.19f
  rough as a c. tongue E.20a
  saddle becomes c. back E.20d
  strange c. welcome E.20b
  thumb E.20d
cows
  and calves E.21d
  boy gone by with c. I.87a
  Brown’s c. E.20a
  ca’ c. out o’ the kirkyaird F.11a
  come home E.20e
  curst c. have curt horns E.20b
  faraway c. have long horns E.20b
cow-sherny E.13d
cow-slaver E.19d
cowslip G.30b
cowt(e) see colt
cow-tail
  dyer E.20c
  show the c. E.20c
cow-tod, lighted in C.2c
cow-tongued E.20a
cow-trodden E.18
cow-turd
  humble-bee in c. G.33a
  fine as a c. E.13d
flat as a c. E.13d
Coxall job G.8a
coxcomb C.13d
Cox’s pig ×3 E.251
coy
  as a croker’s mare E.14c
duck (n and v) E.11e
coyote
  even a c. will fight C.17h
  howling c. C.17h
crab (v) E.9b
  catch a c. D.12
  find a c. E.30f
  going to jail D.12
  has sweet blossom G.28a
  in a cow’s mouth E.19d
  land-c. D.12
  no use plucking a c. G.28a
  sour as a c. G.28a
  walk straight D.12
  whole c. I.55b
crabbed as the cuckoo G.53
crabbing
  no use c. at smoke I.76d
  crab-harvest, near to G.28a
  crab’s arse D.12
  crabs
    come/turn out c. K.78
    cross as c. G.28a
    hatful of c. G.28a
    not best meat D.12
crab-tree
  dog on c. I.10c
  plant the c. where you will E.30b
crab-verjuice, sour as I.56e
crab-wise D.12
crack (a/the) (v) I.55k
  bell I.52c
  egg I.52f
  fair c. of the whip E.5c
  hard/tough nut to c. I.55k
  like a gun C.7c
  like a pea-gun/pen-gun K.72c
  nut I.55k
  nuts I.55k
  o’ yer own puddin’ I.70b
  shells I.55k
  sledge hammer to c. nut F.32c
  that nut ×2 I.55k
  the devil c. you! I.55k
  walk a/the c. K.22e
  was a good dog I.10c
words that c. jaw I.35f

cracked (adj) J.52c
  as a broken pot I.46b
  get it c. I.55k
  groat E.1a
  her pipkin(s) I.46c
  her pitcher I.46a
  pot lasts longest I.46b

  cracker
  not care/give/worth a c. I.71e
  sharp as a c. I.71e

  cracker-barrel E.2b

  cracking
  get c. H.19
  of a lop G.40
  crackling, bit of I.66e
  crack-pot I.46b

  cracks
  fall/slip through the c. I.82c
  paper over the c. I.39d

  cradda, lean as I.18c

  Craddock, crafty J.45

  cradle (n and v) I.2g
  rocked in stone c. I.2g
  shoed in c. I.2g
  straws I.2g

  cradles, two F.15b

  cradle-snatcher H.11c

craft, goldsmith of thy A.5b

crafty
  as a Kendal fox G.60a

  Craddock J.45

  knave H.4

crag, hang a long I.25a

cragget heron G.51

craggy character G.20b

craig, skart on D.7d

craik see crake

  Crail’s capon I.52a

crake (v) G.46b
  black as c. G.46b
  in the corn G.57
  pull a c. ower lugs G.46b

crame-mundle E.22c

cramp (v) A.1e
  in his fist I.34f

cranberry merchant E.30i

cran-craig(ie) G.51

crane
  at/the head G.51
  gut like a c. G.51
  steal egg from c. H.6g
crazed as a cuckoo G.53

crazy
   as (a/the) bed-bug G.42b
coot G.50b
fox G.60a
hagworm G.44b
hoot-owl G.48
loon G.50d

ship D.5
creaking
cart E.5b
doctor I.41b
gate E.5b
creaks
   wagon c. E.5c
worst spoke/wheel c. most E.5b
cream (n and v) I.53b
Aberdeenshire cats never drink c. I.15c
cat that sees c. I.15c
cat that stole c. I.15c
in skilly I.68
lick of c. E.22c
not all peaches and c. I.55g
of the well I.53b
off I.53b
on pilchards I.51b
put c. and sugar on a fly... I.69d
skim off c. E.22c
cream-jug
   pussy-baudrons thinking on c. I.15c
cream-mundle, lick the E.22c
creation, old as J.34b
credit
   Harlem c. card E.1c
keeps crown of causeway E.5a
let the c. go J.25b
lie to save c. I.32d
creek
   blown over the c. D.10b
up the c. D.2b
creel
   eggs with E.28c
have/hand in c. E.28c
in a c. D.14, E.25j
put adders in c. E.28c
put hand in c. F.7b
creels
   coup over the c. D.14
coup the c. upon F.33b
creep (v) I.2h
   bairns maun c. I.2h
first c. I.2h
into your mouth I.2h
like a thief H.1
love will c. I.2h
swift as pudding would c. I.70b
under the wire E.7b
up his sleeve B.6h
creepie, comb head with I.32h
creeping Jesus J.36
creep-mouse G.67
creepy G.44a
creesh
  his loof I.30e
  of louse G.41
creeshy, kamesters ay B.3b
creich wool E.22e
crescendo, reach a K.1d
cress, not care/give/worth a/the I.54d
cresses, eat well of J.16
crest
  on the c. of a wave D.9e
  vail the c. K.58b
crest-fallen K.58b
creuunns E.19b
crew, bomber K.62f
crib I.87a
cribbage-face K.79e
Crichton, admirable J.23
cricket
  merry as c. G.35d
  not c. K.33a
  peart as c. G.35d
  wick as a c. G.35d
cricket-ball, hard as K.33a
crickets, lively/merry as G.35d
cricket-team K.33a
cries
  five loaves I.87b
  lapwing c. most G.54a
  wine K.21a
crimble-i'-th'-poke G.3c
crime-wave D.6b
crined, mair c. than kebbuck I.53e
cripple (v) I.35e
  at a cross/door G.1
  go a year with c. G.1
  halt before c. G.1
  on a bridge G.1
crippled ciarog I.69e
cripple's beads, lift cross off H.3
cripples, crooking before G.1
crisp as fresh-pulled lettuce I.54d
Crispin’s holiday J.40b
criticise (a/the)

man’s gait B.9a
critics like brushers… E.6c
croak (v) G.46a
crock (n=wreck) E.14c

as soon part with c. G.3a
Crocker’s mare E.14c
crockie, Maggie Shaw’s I.4n
crocking, kettle is I.47e
crocklety-bur, stick like G.29f
crocodile (n) C.17k
shears/squeezer C.17k
tears J.2k
Croesus, rich as J.3a
croggan, small as D.12
croker’s mare E.14c

Cromwell
in petticoats C.16
one of the ruins that C… J.28d
Cromwellian solutions J.28d
crook (a/the)
black as c. I.75b
by hook or by c. F.24h
finger I.30g
in an old stick G.6a
in the lot K.77b
crooked
as (a/the) cammerel/cammeril G.6a
cammock K.35b
Crawley Brook G.8a
dog’s hind leg I.6a
gaff E.12
George Street West G.8a
grindstone handle F.31c
horn E.19a
huzzet J.20c
izzard J.20c
pretzel I.71e
rainbow G.14d
ram’s horn E.23b
Robin Hood’s bow J.3b
S J.20c
sickle F.26b
snake C.17k
Wembury steeple G.8a
Weston Brook G.8a
yoke-stick F.11b
but for the c. stick C.2a
come with c. oxter I.30c
furrows grow straight grain E.33b
has c. stockings B.6m
he couldn’t lie straight I.79f
more corn in c. rows E.33b
stick G.6a
stick, c. shadow G.6a
tree will never straighten G.6a
wood makes even fire I.72d
crooketh the tree ∗2 G.6a
crooking before cripples G.1
crookled
   as dog’s hind leg I.6a
   pin B.5b
crook-saddles, cadgers cracking o’ A.7a
croos(e) see crouse
croot
   as (a/the) tup horn E.23b
      uzzit J.20c
crop (a/the)
   and root F.24b
   and stump F.24b
  buckwheat c. E.33b
   feathers G.45c
   of… E.31c
   root and c. F.24b
   set up c. E.28a
   shake his/her c. E.28a
   take the c. as it grows E.31c
      up E.31c
cropper, come a E.29f
cross (n=affliction) J.36
   as (a/the) bag of cats I.16a
      bear with sore head K.56a
      crabs G.28a
      gallows H.21b
      pig-footed warp B.2d
      tongs I.72b
      two sticks I.72d
      weasel G.63e
      witch J.6a
      X J.20c
bridge till you come to it G.9c
cripple at a c. G.1
devil wears c. J.60b
everyone must bear own c. J.36
I win K.77d
lift c. off cripple’s beads H.3
nail to the c. J.36
no c., no crown J.36
old witch out J.6a
pocket contains no c. K.9c
put c. on wall K.28
Rubicon J.28b
sammed up c. stick I.72d
steal c. off ass’s back E.17a
stream where ebbest G.9a
Styx J.9b
swords C.4c
tracks I.85b
t’s J.20d
would not c. road to… G.7a
cross-bench C.21d
cross-buttock K.41b
cross-currents D.6a
cross-cut saw F.30a
crossed
get the lines/wires c. I.5o
he who has c.the ford G.9a
paths c. G.7f
too many dry gullies G.20a
crosses are ladders F.27
cross-eyed I.23b
cross-fertilisation G.26e
cross-grained A.1b
cross-handed D.2b
cross-hopple(d) E.15d
cross-legged knights J.51
cross-roads G.7a
dirty work at the c. G.7a
mind mice at c. G.7a
cross-row, plain as J.20c
cross-section A.4a
cross-swords, play K.72c
crouse
as (a/the) banty cock E.28e
cat I.14b
cock ×2 E.28a
fitchet G.63c
lop G.40
louse G.41
new-washed louse G.41
on own midden E.28a
croust-box, devil’s J.63b
crow (a/the)
(n) G.46b
as the c. flies G.46b
black as c. G.46b
blind man shot c. F.9c
cock left to c. F.14c
don’t c. so loud E.28a
draw the c. E.11b
eat c. C.16
gab and guts like young c. G.46b
good rooster will c… E.28
guts and gob like young c. G.46b
heard old cock c. E.28a
hoarse as c. G.46b
hungry as June c. G.46b
in a cage G.46b
in a gutter G.46b
is no whiter... G.46b
kill a c. E.11b
lean as c. G.46b
like c., like egg G.46b
make the c. a pudding G.46b
no carrion will kill c. G.46b
on other folk's middens E.28a
on the c. road G.46b
over K.58b
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    courage C.17a
    double-d. D.8b
    nightingale G.57
    oven×2 I.62a
    reckoning E.2c
    uncle C.17a

Dutchman (n) C.17a
  dull/dumb as D. C.17a

Dutchman’s
  anchor D.15b
  fart I.29c

dwabble/dwebble
  as (a/the) bent G.27d
    flail F.17a
    wallant leaf G.27d
    windlestrae G.4a


dwarf I.34a

dwarfed by I.34a

dwebble see dwabble

dwindle, rumped up like G.52b

dwindled down I.46c

dwindle-straw G.4a

dye, deepest B.3a

dyed in the wool B.3a

dyeing scarlet B.3a

dyer
  can make it black B.3a
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dying duck E.26b

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dynamite C.7a

Dysart, salt to F.21

E
eager beaver C.17h
eagle
  day the e. screams G.47a
  does not catch flies G.47a
  scream like wounded e. G.47a
  till the e. screamed E.1a
  with wren’s wings G.47a
eagle-eye of…., under the G.47a
eagle-eyed G.47a

eagle’s eye, surgeon have I.30e

eagles
  daren’t perch G.57
  fly alone G.47a
  gathered together J.35b

ear
  bite/chew his e. (off) I.5e
  bug in e. G.40
  build nest in your e. G.45d
  cold as Eskimo’s e. I.23c
  flea in his e. G.40
  full e. of corn E.33b
  get on his e. I.23c
  has tin e. for I.23c
  hears not in that e. I.34d
  heaviest e. of corn E.33b
  horse will lick e. E.14d
  in one e., out of the other I.23d
  lick e. I.8a
  nibble e. I.5e
  play it by e. K.1d
  put bug in his e. G.40
  stone in the e. I.23c
  thick as a bull’s e. E.19b
  thrown out on e. K.41b
  to the ground C.17a
  two sparrows on one e. of corn G.57
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earache, give him I.35a

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ear-biter I.5e

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Earl
  of Hell’s boots etc. J.63b
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earlier
  rising e. does not make it daylight I.79i

early
  bird gets worm G.45a
  don’t go early or late to the well I.49a
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  take an e. bath K.32a
  with your orders J.56a

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earn
  it like horses E.17a
  wings A.4e
  your corn/kail F.6a

earns salt to his kail I.54c
earphones, a short between K.62c
earring see earing
ears (n) I.23c
    and eyes of princes C.19b
    are burning I.23c
    ass waggeth e. E.17a
    belly has no e. I.29a
    bring storm about e. G.13e
    bursting out of e. I.23c
    cabbages behind e. F.20c
    camel lost e. J.2d
    coming out of e. I.23c
    cuff e. J.19
    donkeys’ e. E.17b
    dry behind e. I.2g
    gum-leaves growing out of e. C.17a
    hang his e. I.10b
    harvest e. E.33c
    head and e. F.12b
    hing thee. I.10b
    holds wolf by e. E.8d
    horn and e. F.12b
    lay e. back K.51
    little pigs have big e. E.25i
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    prick up e. E.14d
    set by the e. K.55
    so sour it twists e. back J.19
    steam coming out of e. I.23c
    swear his e. A.1b
    tickle his e. I.5h
    together by the e. K.55
    up to the e. D.9a
    walls have e. I.23c
    wash an ass’s e. E.17a
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earth
    build the dike F.18a
    burn the e. F.24d
    come down to e. K.45b
    feel the e. move G.22a
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    the best shelter G.4b
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earth-hunger F.6a
earthquake G.22a
earth-shaker/-shaking G.22a
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    brains of e. G.39b
earwig (v) G.35e
throttled/twichelled e. G.35e
ease the feet I.31f
easier
falling e. than rising I.3c
to build two chimneys… I.75c
eass, first bird, first G.45a
east
about e. C.17a
Indies for pippins D.15d
longer e. D.16c
safe from E.Indies D.9d
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Easter, egg at I.52e
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as (a/an/to) apple-pie I.70c
bowl downhill K.39a
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  away I.24i
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  cake and have it I.71b
  calf in cow’s belly E.21a
  carp-pie I.69a
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  cow I.66c
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  heart out I.241
  high of the hog I.66e
  horse F.6a
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  into I.241
  kernel/krindle I.55k
  leek I.69c
  like a hedger F.18b
    horse E.14b
    thacker I.40h
    thresher F.17a
  little fish D.13a
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  man off his horse F.6a
  meat with bitter sauce I.65c
  melder I.63b
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  out of her hand E.15b
  out of house and home I.65a
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    salt I.65c
  pumpkin through knot-hole I.69d
  rue-pie I.70c
  sand ×2 C.10f
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  stir-pudding I.70b
  toads I.36b
  toot C.17a
  vinegar I.56e
well of the cresses J.16
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won’t e. you C.17c
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young cat do but e. mice? I.13a
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    and spewed I.29e
    bread G.3d
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    by swine E.25c
    has e. a hen’s rump I.69b
    his bedstraw E.21f
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    snake G.3e
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    up with C.17c
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    and complaining E.28b
    proof of pudding in e. I.70b
eats (a/the/his)
    cock alone E.16a
    kail I.69e
    king’s goose C.13a
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    one wolf e. another G.59
    that never e. flesh I.65d
    up all at dinner G.3b
    up the goose E.27e
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eat-the-pack A.7a
eavesdrop G.8b
ebb
    after low e. D.15e
    and flow of D.15e
    at low e. D.15e
    away/down/out D.15e
    flow will have an e. D.15e
    go out with the e. D.15e
    lowest e. D.15e
    will fetch off D.15e
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ebbest, cross stream where G.9a
ebb-minded G.24b
ebb-tide D.15e
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ebony, black as A.1a
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under an e. G.18b
cstasy I.21d
edder, neither stake nor F.18c
edderer F.18c
Eden, Adamless J.34b
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blunt the e. of F.31d
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made with blunt whetstone F.31d
more e. than broken piss-pot I.29f
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by the tail×4 F.7b
clish like an e. F.7b
every man skin his own e. I.51b
fresh as an e. F.7b
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limber/lish/nimble as an e. F.7b
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eemocks in a clod G.35a
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een see eyes
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egg
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   better half an e. G.3e
   black hen can lay white e. E.28c
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   broken e. cannot be put together I.52f
   carry e. in two baskets E.28c
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   have e. on face I.52f
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in peace C.18
in that! I.52f
lay an e. E.28c, G.49a
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like crow, like e. G.46b
more you stir rotten e. I.52f
muckle bird oot o’ a wee e. E.28d
naked as e. I.52e
nor shell I.52f
not care/give/worth an e. I.52e
offer you an e. G.3e
or bird, never good G.45e
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shave an e. I.32c
show him an e. E.28c
spoil rotten e. I.52f
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elsin
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empty-nester G.45f
emu C.17j
encapsulate I.37c
enchant J.4a
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  at the e. of the day G.12e
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    game K.74
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as (a/the) bank etc. E.1c 
bussock H.6d 
church J.51 
church tied to holly J.51 
crow in a gutter G.46b 
dog can lick a dish I.8a 
dog can trot I.7b 
dog will eat whitpot I.8c 
egg-boiling I.61c 
grocer cutting butter I.87c 
hen picking bigg E.28b 
hops E.31e 
horse can trot E.16f 
houses I.39a 
lizard C.17k 
maid eats blackberries G.28f 
midge in treacle-pot G.37d 
mouse in cheese I.17a 
mouse in malt-heap/mill E.34d 
rebbat/rivet A.3f 
scalded cat… I.14d 
thief in a mill E.34d 
bind, f. find E.32d 
break f. in that house G.3a 
either feast or f. E.6d 
life in f. lane E.5d 
play f. and loose K.63 
pull/put f. one over K.33a 
fasted 
day is come that we f. for J.48 
long and worried on fly I.24i 
fasten 
on like clemmed leech G.42c 
out E.23e 
faster than shoes, feet are I.31e 
fasting, full or I.65a 
fat 
a bit of f. I.65d 
all behind like the f. woman I.31a 
and a lean G.64c 
and lean in 24 hrs. G.64c
as (a/the) bacon I.50e
bacon-hog E.25k
Big Ben I.85g
brawn I.50e
bull E.19b
butcher’s dog E.29a
butter E.22e
Chinky’s horse E.14e
con G.65
durgey E.7b
farmer E.13a
fitch G.30b
hen in the forehead E.28b
hog E.25a
maggot G.37b
match with brimstone off I.72c
mawk G.37b
mouldiewarp G.68c
mud E.31a
pig E.25a
poddy E.21c
porker E.25a
porpoise D.7b
quail G.57
snig F.7b
tailor’s goose E.27a
testie D.7d
town dog I.8a
tub of lard I.50e
young thrush G.52a
burnt out of the fire I.74c
cat I.15c
cheat the f. I.65a
curses mak’ the tod f. G.60a
cut it (too) f. I.66b
cut up f. I.66b
dog made f. I.8a
eat a f. bit I.65d
find fault with f. goose E.27g
flamms the f. sow’s arse E.25k
flits from his beard I.65d
grease the f. sow E.25k
hog I.60b
housekeeper E.6d
in the fire I.74c
is in the fire I.60a
lady sings K.62g
lick the f. I.65d
makes f. calves E.19d
makes one pig f. E.25c
miller’s pigs are f. E.34a
runs over I.60b
scraping off bones I.50g
squeeze f. I.60b
take f. with lean I.65d
thrushes I.87a

fate
is sealed C.21d
sure as f. J.9b

father (v) I.4c
(v—on to) I.2c
after your own f. E.1a
(and mother) of I.4a
confessor J.58c
for the f. and no for the son I.4c
goes to the devil J.63d
hasky f. I.53d
of truth I.4c
teach your f. I.1d
to the bough H.21a
to the thought I.4c
wait until f. turns I.79f

father’s
backbone I.18d
bacon E.25i
bastard on f. day I.3a
fill your f. bonnet B.6i

fathom (v) D.16f
(deriv.) I.1c
of forecast I.88c

fatness of neighbour F.6a
fats the horse E.15b
fatted
calf J.35d
show

faucet, spicket and K.18c
faugh, break F.15e
fault with a fat goose, find E.27g
faults
full of f. as an old shoe B.10a
not written on forehead J.20i
physicians’ f. I.36a

fause
as (a/the) bag of monkeys K.59c
boggart J.66c
Christian J.36
fox G.60a
owd tup E.23b
rat G.66
Scot G.8a
two folk I.4m
weasel G.63e
witches of Pendle J.6a

favour
curry f. F.10d
know by f. E.23e
favourite, beaten K.50c
favours (a/the)
   as if brought up on… F.6a
fairy on muck-midden J.5a
old barn owl G.48
   thin end of penn’orth of cheese I.53e
favver see favour
fawning as spaniel E.11f
fear (a/the)
   , beadle of the law H.13a
fire I.76c
   loss of bell J.52c
need not f. the wind E.32e
often meets us I.41g
ships f. fire D.17a
feared of a fart G.15b
fearth every bush H.6f
Fearnla boggart J.66c
fearnought D.8a
fears
   he that f. every grass E.32c
      leaves G.25b
feast
   death’s f. E.6d
end of f. C.10c
eyes on E.6d
   keep f. till f. day J.41b
not made of mushrooms I.69c
or a famine/fast E.6d
skeleton at the f. I.64a
feat as new preen B.5b
feather
   ask kite for f. G.47c
birds of a f. G.45c
broken f. in wing E.9a
by f. birds build nests G.45d
by f. the goose is plucked F.14b
   cut a f. C.2b, G.45c
dive like a f. G.21b
duster the next E.28a
in (a/the) cap C.17a
   fine f. K.58a
full f. G.45c
hand H.6f
hat B.6i
high f. K.58a
mouth G.45c
scale I.88a
into C.2b
knocked down with f. H.11c
light/nimble as f. G.45c
not care/give/worth cock’s/hen’s f. E.28a
not have a f. to fly with G.45c
on a hill G.45c
see neither f. nor bone of H.6f
shake the f. E.6b
stick down a f. H.5
stick f. in frog’s tail G.44e
strike with a f. G.45c
tickled with f. I.5h
use the f. I.5h
wag the f. E.6b
white f. K.58a
winning goose loses f. E.27b
won with a f. I.1b
your nest G.45d
feather-bedded I.79c
feather-brained/-edged G.45c
feather-fallen K.58b
feather-headed/legged/-pated G.45c
feather-poke H.5
    old woman shaking f. E.27g
feathers
    air full of f. E.28c
    all f. G.48
    bare as a frog of f. G.44e
    clear your f. G.45c
crop the f. G.45c
gain more f. G.45c
grow your f. G.45c
hammer of f. A.3d
hat full of f. B.6i
if every bird took back its f. G.45c
imped with false f. E.9a
kangaroo f. C.17h
known by its f. G.45c
lie in the long f. G.4a
make fine birds G.45c
make the f. fly K.58b
off a toad G.44d
off the cat I.11
on a duck I.26a
peacock has fair f. E.6b
plot where I find f. F.14c
plume of f. G.45c
pull off f. G.45c
ruffle f. G.45c
sack of f. E.27g
shot with own f. C.2b
singe his f. G.45c
sitting hen gets no f. E.28d
smooth ruffled f. G.45c
spit f. I.24k
two f. out of goose E.27g
wanted f. G.45c
where the doo roosts K.52
words and f. G.13c
February (n=brigadier) G.19b
feck it away I.62b
feckless
  as a hen E.28b
    willow wand G.27e
fed him with fire-shovel A.3d
fedder, cock out o’ K.58a
Federal case of it, make C.21d
fed-up with E.6d
feed (a/the)
  across E.19d
devil J.63d
  fishes D.13a
  friars G.3a
  into I.2e
  like a boar E.25d
    farmer E.13a
  on horse-nails E.15e
  who will not f. his cat I.15c
feedback A.6b
feeding buns to an elephant C.17f
feel (a/the)
  all mops and brooms I.83a
  cheap F.5
draught ×2 F.4c
  earth move G.22a
  his legs D.8a
  like (a/the) baby at a wedding J.56a
    boiled rag B.4d
duck in a stocking E.26c
  million dollars E.1a
  penny awaiting change F.1b
  stepchild I.4j
  warmed-up corpse I.38c
oats E.15b
  our/your way G.17, G.25b
peckish G.45a
pinch B.9b
pulse I.36c
shoe till it pinches B.9b
weight of I.88a
feelers, put out G.39a
feeling than a smoothing iron, no more I.84f
feet
  at the f. of J.18a
  back on our f. I.37a
  ball at f. K.32a
carry him off his f. I.31f
cast yourself at his f. C.11
cold f. G.4d
comes with leaden f. I.31f
dead men’s f. I.38c
doesn’t mind where he puts f. B.9d
drag your f. J.16
ease the f. I.31f
fall/let on f. I.11
find your f. I.31f
fit all f. B.9b
get f. muddy E.31a
get f. under table I.80a
get f. wet in K.67b
get under my f. I.3c
give the f. in alms J.37
have at f. F.34a
have leaden f. I.31f
head never saves f. I.31e
hold f. to fire H.16
horses’ f. not on donkeys E.17b
in Pimlico with f. I.89a
in the trough E.25c
lead off his f. G.7h
never speak to f. I.31f
o’ a shalder G.54d
of clay J.34s
on the ground G.7h
ower foul f. to come sae far ben I.41e
peacock has foul f. E.6b
run faster than shoes I.31e
set him on his f. I.3c
shuffling the f. I.5g
snares his own f. H.6d
stand on own f. I.3c
sweep off f. G.24c
think of the sore f. G.7h
think on your f. G.7h
throw yourself at his f. C.11
two left f. I.31f
vote with f. C.21c
feeze
into A.4a
up A.4a
feisty I.6a
fell (a/the)
  as (a/the) bull E.19b
    bull at a Scawby man E.19c
  belly-flought K.58c
catch a f. B.2h
flesh and f. E.29a
great oaks F.24e
if he fell overboard, he'd D.9b
into the river G.24d
never climbed, never f. K.44
never rode, never f. E.16e
out like two barm-women I.85g
out of the balloon E.5d
swoop E.9c
two dogs I.10b
web B.2e
felled, oak not F.24e
felling any tree, without F.24e
fellow-traveller G.7f
fells
if there were no f. G.20a
old as the f. G.20a
fell't me, streea wad hae F.17d
fell-teadd, hard as G.60a
felt, have your bumps I.36c
feltered foal E.14a
female (adj—ferrule etc.) I.20
(adj—sapphire) I.20
feminine I.20
femmer see femmur
femmur as musweb, spider-wob G.36b
fen, worth a hundred in the E.28d
fence
beyond the rabbit-proof f. E.7b
dog-leg f. E.7b
homely as a mud f. E.7b
horse will not see f. E.15b
make a Virginia f. E.7b
no f. against a flail F.17a
over the f. K.33b
sit on the f. E.7b
thin as a f. rail E.7b
with K.43
fences
crash f. E.8c
mend f. E.7b
rush your f. E.8c
fence-straddle E.7b
fencing wire, tough as E.7b
fend, no more I.2b
fen-nightingale G.57
ferlie mair, ye wad G.46b
ferment (v) K.16b
in a f. K.16b
fern
fire in f. ×2 C.17a
growing like f. G.29i
ferntickle G.29i
ferny-fire G.29i
ferret
  for/out H.6c
  rabbit-hunting with dead f. H.6c
  red as f. H.6c
  run the f. H.6c
ferret’s, eyes as red as H.6c
ferry
  over D.10b
  take the f. J.9b
ferryman, pay the J.9b
fert, duck’s E.26a
fert-worms, wriggle like one with I.35c
fescue G.31a
fess as Cox’s pig E.251
fester I.35c
  lilies that f. J.25a
festooned with K.23
fetch (a/the)
  ebb will f. off D.15e
  fire I.73c
  midwife I.2a
  over the coals H.16
  up with a round turn D.8b
fetches, dog that E.11f
fetish D.8a
fetter (v) H.19
fetters
  jailor’s conscience and his f. A.3a
  no man loves his f. H.19
fever
  in a f. I.35d
  jungle f. I.35d
  man in a f. I.37a
fever-chart I.36c
fevered brow, cool hand on I.37a
few are chosen J.35b
fey man E.14b
feyest, fall on the F.32c
fiasco A.5d
fibre G.26d
fiddle
  about K.3
  at a wakes K.2a
  at the door 1.41a
  dance without a f. K.9b
  face as long as a f. K.2a
  face made of f. K.2a
  far end of a French f. K.2a
  find a f. K.2a
  first f. K.2b
  fit as a f. K.2a
  hang up f. K.2b
harmony obtained by playing 2nd f. K.2b
have the f. but not the stick K.2a
least boy carries greatest f. K.2b
long as Jan Bedella’s f. K.2a
on an old f. K.2a
play first/second f. to K.2b
play the Scotch f. K.2a
Spode’s f. K.2a
spring o’ your ain f. K.2a
fiddler
dossed the f. over the bridge E.19c
drunk as (Gosport) f. K.2b
foaled the f. F.10g
pay the f. K.9b
fiddler’s
bitch K.2b
elevator K.2b
fare K.2b
foo K.2b
Green K.2b
money K.2b
news K.2b
pay K.2b
fiddlers
stop and rosin, as f. do K.2b
welcome as two f. K.2b
fiddlers’ dogs K.2b
fiddlestick (n) K.2a
fiddlesticks! K.2a
fiddle-strings K.3
fidget like angle-twitch G.39b
fidgety as worms… G.39b
fidding mare E.16a
fidus Achates J.26c
field (v) K.33a
always in the f. F.12a
bring/come back to the f. K.50b
cockle and corn in same f. E.33b
conquer the f. C.10f
don’t neglect own f. E.31a
fair f. K.50a
good f., no hit K.34
hold/keep/leave the f. C.10f
lion in the f. C.17c
mawkin in the f. F.9c
of crows G.46b
play the f. K.34
praise the ripe f. E.33b
put hook in a f. F.16a
rubbing-stoup in middle of f. E.19f
slept in f. G.4a
what you win on the f. K.35d
field-day C.14b
fieldfare G.52b
fields
distant f. greener E.32b
little f. have big gates G.10c
of heather G.29h
fiendish J.63a
fierce
as (a/the) buck rat G.66
cat I.11
Cotswold/Lammermoor lion C.17c
Cox’s pig E.251
dig [duck] E.26a
dog I.6a
geese E.27a, G.49b
hen-muck E.28b
maggot ×2 G.37b
Pentland Firth D.6a
pot-lion K.15c
ram E.23b
rat G.66
tiger C.17d
lion not so f. C.17c
fiery, fire’s good for the E.15g
fiery I.74a
fife-and-drum C.14a
fifteen and a bisque K.36
fifth wheel to a coach E.5c
fifty
cards in the pack K.79a
Heinz f. seven variety I.87c
shilling galloway E.15h
fig
not care/give/worth a f. I.55h
not from thorn tree J.35b
fig-fag, tough as E.29a
fight (a/the) (v) C.10c
at the leg K.43
back the tears C.10c
back to the ropes K.40b
between fox and steward D.4
dog, f. bear K.56d
even coyote will f. C.17h
in armour C.6c
like (a/the) alley-cat I.13b
Kilkenny cats I.13b
teggan G.58d
threshing machine E.33d
losing battle C.10g
not trumpeters that f. battles C.6b
rat will turn and f. G.66
shy of C.10g
space with hairpin G.18a
that cock won’t f. K.58b
with his own shadow K.40a
with skunk C.17h
wrens f. as sore as cranes G.57
your own corner K.40b
fight-dog-fight-bone I.8d
fighting
chance C.10c
fit C.10a
game as f. cock K.58a
live like f. cock K.58a
quarrel like f. cocks K.58b
fig-leaf J.34b
fig-tree J.34j
figure in the carpet I.80e
figure-dancer K.9a
figurehead D.1a
file (a/the)
bite the f. J.2k
house I.29d
Indian f. C.17a
rank and f. C.13g
rust needs rough f. A.7b
time is a f. A.3f
viper and the f. J.2k
widna f. my fingers I.30g
files
in a bucket A.3f
neighbour’s cog I.67a
filibuster D.18a
fill (a/the)
as well as F.Bayer kens her stake E.20a
bill K.59a
bucket/bushel E.33e
every pea helps f. sack E.31d
her pannier E.17a
in his coupon K.32b
not a sack E.33e
not the belly G.3a
ranks C.10e
someone in K.14c
spoon I.65b
vessel holds only its f. I.46d
filled
his pipe K.24
sell more if you f.’em I.88c
filling
Eldon Hole wants f. G.8a
in the f. of a pipe K.24
fillip K.75
fills the face with wrinkles F.1a
filly (n) E.14a
    ragged as f. foal E.14a
filly-fair E.15h
filter (v) J.30c
filth, pools gather G.23c
final gallop K.50b
finch, pull a H.6g
find (a/the)
    bean K.77e
    bearings D.16c
    bones in I.66b
    chink in armour C.5a
    common ground E.7a
dike G.1
elephant on moon J.30b
false prophet J.9a
fault with fat goose E.27g
fault with my shoon B.9a
feathers F.14c
fiddle K.2a
fish on fingers I.69a
flaws A.3c
footholds K.44
frost G.16c
grind or f. E.34f
his own level
home paddock C.17a
horse-nest J.2d
knot in rush G.31b
mare’s nest J.2d
never f. cat on cold hearth I.14c
take ford as you f. it G.9a
what o’clock it is I.81e
wicker’s nest H.6f
your feet I.31f
finding yourself E.1f
finds work for idle hands J.63g
fine
    a lad as ever… I.71b
as (a/the) Bartholomew babies K.60b
    buzzart G.38a
cow-turd E.13d
Dick’s hatband B.6i
fiddle K.2a
fiddler’s foo K.2b
fippence/fivepence E.1a
flying pigs E.25h
fool C.13d
fool at a fair K.60a
Forty Poke’s wife J.3c
frog’s hair G.44e
gallanty-show K.60d
hedge in May E.7b
horse in bells E.14b
Kerton B.1d
King’s candle J.60b
lord’s bastard C.13f
Mayday queen J.8d
maypole J.8d
mountebank’s fool K.60a
new-scraped carrot I.54g
Phyllyloo etc. I.4o
sallit I.54d
spice I.71f
cage won’t feed the bird C.17i
cut it f. B.5e
cut the face will not fill buttery E.22e
feathers, f. birds G.45c
get it to f. art K.15e
in f. feather K.58a
Italian hand J.42
ladies F.4b
market E.25j
point on it F.31d
print H.8
spin it f. B.1d
spun too f. B.1e
whore in f. dress I.41e
words butter no parsnips I.54h
fine-drawn B.1e
fine-spun B.1e
finest
cloth B.4a
lawn B.4d
shoe B.9b
fine-tooth comb I.32h
fine-tuning K.53
finger
and thumb I.30g
bairn’s f G.39a
better f. off I.35b
bishop’s f. J.43
broke her f. I.57c
dressed up like sore f. I.37d
ends/tips A.5a
every f. not the same length I.30g
go with f. in mouth I.3a
hook at every f. G.47a
if you want your f. bit E.8d
in every pie I.70c
in mortar I.40c
in pie I.70c
keep for a sore f. I.37d
lick honey with little f. I.65c
more courage in little f. 1.30g
never lifted a f. 1.30g
next my thumb 1.30g
not want to cut f. 1.16a
of clock 1.30e
of God 1.30g
on the pulse 1.36c
point the f. at 1.30g
pull your f. out 1.30g
put f. in dike 1.3c
put f. in fire 1.73d
put his f. on 1.36c
put on the long f. 1.30g
sit with f. up ass 1.30g
sore f. 1.35b
twist round little f. 1.30g
wet neither foot nor f. 1.33a
will not crook a f. 1.30g
with a wet f. 1.23
finger-blight E.30e
finger-ends
  get him on f. 1.30g
  have at f. A.5a
  suck out of f. 1.30g
finger-nail, finished to 1.32f
finger-nails
  dirt under f. 1.32f
finger-post (n) G.7d
  still as f. G.7d
fingerprint H.13b
fingers
  all thumbs 1.30g
  burn f. I.73d
  close to thumb 1.30g
  file f. 1.30g
  fish on f. I.69a
  German’s wit in f. C.17a
  green f. 1.30g
  hang like sore f. 1.35b
  have most f. 1.30g
  itch 1.35b
  look through f. at K.67b
  made of lime-twigs H.6f
  pick his f. 1.32f
  slip through f. H.6h
  snap your f. I.5f
  sticky f. 1.30g
  tar the f. D.8a
  why burn f.? I.72b
  with clean f. I.32b
  with f. in mouths I.3a
finger-tips, have at A.5a
Finglesham Church J.51
finish
  Aladdin's window J.2a
  in stockinged feet B.6m
finished to the finger-nail I.32f
finishing touches K.14c
Fionn MacCumhaill, brave as J.28c
fippence, fine as E.1a
fipple (n) I.24d
  down in the f. I.24d
  hang the f. I.24d
fire (a/the) (v) I.74a
  (n) I.74a
  and flax/tow I.76b
  and water are good servants E.6c
away! C.10b
  ball of f. K.69
  blanks C.8
  brand out of f. J.34v
  break off chess when house on f. K.74
  breathing f. J.1a
  burnt child dreads f. I.3a
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pluck the f., safety J.25a
pretty as a May f. G.26e
without perfume I.90e

flowers
fresh as f. in May G.26e
of speech I.90e
poetical as a bunch of f. I.90e
put f. round I.51
say it with f. I.51
tallest f. hide strongest nettles G.29g
welcome as f. in May G.26e
white f. on the fisherman’s garden I.90e

flowery I.90e
flowing G.23a

flown
bird is f. G.45b
fligged and f. G.45f
high f. F.11a
spoken words like f. birds G.45b
flows, as stream/river G.24b
fluctuate D.6b
flue, soft as I.75c
fluent G.23a
fluff G.45c
fluffy G.45c
fluid G.23a
fluke (n=liver-fluke) D.13b
flat as a f. D.13b
flatt-mouthede as a f. D.13b
Phelimy caught the f. D.13c
fluke-mouthed D.13b
flukes
peak/turn f. D.13b
thrang as f. E.23f
flummery 1.68
flung
aside like broken graip F.26c
ne’er a good aiver that f.×2 E.15a
out like auld bauchle B.10a
flunkey E.6c
flunter, out of I.18a
flurry G.13d
flush (a/the)
backhouse f. I.85c
busted f. K.81
out E.11d
wild duck E.11e
flushed and flied G.45f
flustered I.62b
flute
pig play on f. K.7c
play the f. K.7c
flutter (a/the)
  (n) K.52
  bird must f. G.45b
  cause a f. K.52
  dovecots K.52
flutters
  wounded bird f. E.11c
fluzzings B.2e
fly (a/the)
  among treacle G.37a
  as a jailer H.19
  at E.9c
  at high game E.9c
  blue pigeon K.52
  brass A.7b
  break f. on the wheel H.16
  , but wanted feathers G.45c
  canaries I.17f
  cannot f. on one wing A.4e
  coop E.28a
  cow needs tail in f. time E.20c
  don’t f. kite too high K.71
  free as a f. G.37a
  give it a f. G.45f
  has spleen G.37a
  have no feather to f. with G.45c
  high see high-flier E.9c
in (a/the) amber G.37a
  face of G.2d
  glue-pot G.37a
  ointment J.34p
  tar-box G.37a
kite K.71
kite when windy K.71
laich, f. lang G.45b
let f. C.2c
let that f. stick in the wall I.40c
light as a f. G.37a
like (a/the) eagle G.47a
  scooperil K.70
  stoops and rails E.7b
lose a f. E.12
not care/give/worth a f. G.37a
off at a tangent J.27b
off the handle F.30c
on a feather duster I.83a
  -on-the-wall G.37a
on the wheel J.21
pigeons K.52
pigs might f. E.25h
pride E.6b
put cream and sugar on a fly I.69d
rise to the f. E.12
round by Jackson’s end E.28d
short of E.9c
sparks f. upwards J.34m
spear to kill f. C.3b
spider and f. G.36a
swallow a f. K.22c
that plays too long in the candle G.38a
up with Jackson’s hens E.28d
use hatchet to remove f. F.30b
without wings G.45b
worried on a f. I.24i
would not hurt a f. G.37a
fly-blown G.37b
fly-by-night, fly-by-sky J.6a
flying
about like a necked cock E.29f
colours C.15a
fish D.13b
fox C.17h
has Baker f. C.10i
his kite K.71
keep birds from f. over G.45d
pig(s) E.25h
shoot him f. E.11c
start K.29a
Flynn, in like K.62f
fly-on-the-wall G.37a
flypaper, on the G.37a
fly-specker J.20h
foace see fause
foal
feltered f. E.14a
idle as a f. E.14a
spalder like a new-dropt f. E.14a
spean a f. E.14a
wean a f. E.14a
foaled of an acorn E.14a
foal’s share of the harrow F.15e
foam at the mouth I.35g
focus (n) I.75a
on I.23b
fodder, cannon E.15b
foe, never tell thy C.10f
fog
die in a f. G.14b
in the Channel D.5
not dispelled with a fan G.14b
plaiting f. G.14b
vague as a f. G.14b
foggiest, not the G.14b
fog-horn D.5
Fogo, cooper of F.11b
foil (n) A.5b
  (v) E.10c
go/run the old f. E.10d
foils, buttons off K.43
foist on to K.78
fold
  lawn B.4d
  return to f. E.23g
  sheep come to f. E.23e
  should be in the f. F.12a
  thick as sheep in f. E.23g
  up I.5m
  wander from E.23g
folded arms I.5g
foliage, wood will renew G.27d
folk, be two I.4m
folks of Token E.5c
follow (a/the) (v—argument etc.) E.23a
  about like an Anthony pig E.251
  black dockt sow F.13a
  dog act K.59c
  each other G.49a
  hard act to f. K.62b
  like sheep E.23a
  scent E.10c
  suit K.80
  their master I.7b
  through for sour apples E.30f
  trail E.10c
  your nose G.10a
follow-Dick, play K.67b
follows truth too closely F.10b
follow-through K.38
folly at the helm D.16b
foment (v) I.37e
fond
  as (a/the) bass G.28f
  besom I.82b
  billy-goat E.24a
  cart E.5b
  Dick’s hatband B.6i
  doornail I.41c
  Fadge E.10d
  fardin candle I.77a
  folks of Token E.5c
  gate G.10c
  goose E.27a
  goose nicked in the head E.27f
  horn E.19a
  men of Bolton H.21d
  yet G.10c
o’barter J.63d
of a raw place G.37a
fonder o’ cock birds G.48
food
  another’s f. tastes sweeter G.3b
  for thought I.50a
  God sends every bird its f. G.45a
  ravens must have f. G.46a
fool
  act the f. K.61c
  at a fair K.60a
  breakfast for a f. I.64b
  finds horseshoe E.15e
  fine as a f. C.13d
  laugh like a f. I.34b
  may roll a stone I.49a
  more know Tom F.J.3c
  mountebank’s f. K.60a
  no f. on the march C.14a
  parson’s f. J.46
  will not leave his bauble K.72c
  with a tumble-turd bug G.35b
foolish sheep J.44
fool’s
  bolt may hit K.46
  bolt soon shot C.2b
  come home by F. acre G.8a
  head I.32c
  paradise J.65
  tongue H.12b
  word is thorn in mud G.4b
fools
  everywhere F.14b
  heads of f. E.7c
  lade the water H.6h
  ravel B.1b
  schoolmistress of f. J.18a
foomert/foomet/foomurt see foumart
foor see fur
fooster, fun and E.27f
foot (n) I.31f
  acheth C.10f
  beyond blanket F.4c
  bishop has put f. in it J.43
  boot on other f. G.7h
  bull’s f. J.20c
  catch on the wrong f. K.36
  dig with both/same/wrong f. F.20a
  doesn’t mind where he puts f. B.9d
  every shoe fits not every f. B.9b
  fairest shoe may pinch f. B.9b
  fits not a little f. B.9b
flat as negro’s f. I.31f
for every old shoe B.10a
for f. G.7h
for leg I.31e
get off on right/wrong f. K.29a
give him the white f. I.7c
goes away on f. E.16d
good f. on the floor I.31f
horse and f. C.6a
in both camps C.19c
in the dish E.25c
   door G.1
   grave I.38a
   stirrup E.16b
itching f. I.35b
keep f. on throat C.11
keep for sore f. I.37d
kick from nag’s f. E.34a
know length of f. I.31f
longer than leg G.50c
lowss f. E.15c
master’s f. the best fulylie F.9b
measure another’s f. B.8b
measure self by own f. rule B.4b
misfortunes depart on f. G.45b
not put a f. wrong K.9a
on the back f. K.33b
out o’ the langel E.15d
over every doorstep I.41e
ox has trodden on f. F.11a
paut wi’ her hind f. F.11b
pinch the f. B.9b
Povey’s f. I.35b
put f. down I.31f
put f. in it G.10a
see the cloven f. J.63b
set f. in job I.40c
set f. on coal I.74h
set f. on neck C.11
set off on right/wrong f. K.29a
set on f. I.31f
shape of f. in old brog B.10a
shoot self in f. C.7c
slip I.31f
take the length/measure of f. G.2a
thorn out of your f. I.35e
under f. see underfoot
wet f. nor finger F.33a
young f. B.9e
football, Italian K.32a
footery G.39a
foot-folk go by, till I.85e
foot-hills I.31f
foothold K.44
footholds, find K.44
footing K.44
foot-loose E.15c
footprint G.10a
footsteps, tread in…’s G.10a
for all waters E.12
foray into, make C.10e
forbidden
   fruit H.4
   ground H.2a
force (a/the)
   driving f. A.4b
   of a steam hammer A.4b
   hand of K.79b
   open door H.2b
   spent f. D.5
   task f. C.10a
       the only physic for mad dogs I.10a
forced love I.73c
forcemeat ball I.66g
ford
   as you find it G.9a
   call through one f. F.11a
   he who has crossed the f. G.9a
   never praise a f. G.9a
   return from middle of f. G.9a
   roose the f. G.9a
fore
   raked f. and aft D.19e
   Street I.85b
forearmed C.19b
forecast, fathom of I.88c
forefoot I.31f
foregate, distrust in at I.41h
foreground (v) K.14b
forehammer to crack egg I.52f
forehead
   hard as the devil’s f. J.63b
   to graft on E.30c
foreheads, faults not written on J.20i
fore-horse
   by the head F.21
   ride the f. F.21
forelock
   pull the f. F.10b
   time by the f. F.10b
foreright as a horse E.14b
forerooms, lets out I.85a
forerunner C.20a
foreshadow (v) I.19
foresightedly, like Forsyth’s cat I.14b
forest (n) G.25b
down in f. something stirred K.11
go through the f. I.72d
pig E.25f
forestall I.86a
foretaste I.64a
fore-topsail, pay with D.3a
forewarned C.19b
Forfar, cow o’ H.15
forfeits his arrows C.2c
forge (v) A.3d
forget his dinner I.8a
forgets where he buried hatchet C.17a
forgotten, eaten bread is G.3d
forheet nowt but building churches J.51
fork
   better end of f. F.20b
   hit on head with f. I.67b
   in the beam D.19b
   low E.32e
   Morton’s f. C.21e
   out F.9b
   scatters E.32d
   writes account with f. F.20b
forked tongue, speak with G.44a
forkle-end F.20b
forlorn hope C.19a
form, run (true) to K.50b
formal as the Mount D.15a
formication G.35a
forpits, never comes to E.33e
forsake (a/the)
   lure E.9b
   market I.86b
forset H.13b
Forsyth’s cat I.14b
fort, hold the C.12b
Fortager, false as C.16
forte K.43
Forth Bridge job G.9c
   the gate G.7f
fortune
   given to change D.3b
   hostage to f. C.11
inch of f. I.88c
knocks once I.41c
pipes K.9b
smiles, frowns I.5d
forty
   foot pole D.10a
   miles of bad road E.5d
Poke’s wife J.3c
pounds of steam D.19a
sa’ one E.14a
fossick about E.3a
fossil G.22b
fossilised, become G.22b
foster I.4j
foster-mother I.4j
fother you for your muck E.13d
fou see foul
Foudland, glens o’ G.13d
foul
as (a/the) corn-boggart J.66c
cow’s father E.19b
devil J.63a
dolly tub I.84a
empty cupboard I.43b
empty gill-pot K.22b
fried foumart G.3e
Indiaman D.15d
porpoise pig D.7b
push-plow F.15a
ripped/busted clog B.10a
sin J.38
thunder G.15b
toad G.44d
Tunor I.6a
vixen G.60b
witch J.6a
clean water out of foul well I.49a
fall f. of D.15b
ower f. feet to come sae far ben I.41e
own nest G.45d
own riggin I.39h
play f. K.77a
unsent for as f. weather G. 11
water I.49e
water stockens fire I.76e
within B.5b
foul-beard I.32c
fouler will come out schone E.13d
fous its own nest G.45d
foul-tempered dog I.10b
foumart (n)
chant to dead f. J.61
foul as fried f. G.3e
stink like a f G.63c
strong as a f. G.63c
foumart-dog, hungry as G.63c
found (a/the)
penny F.1b
where Highlandman f. tongs I.72b
foundations
    lay the f. I.40b
    strike at f. C.7b
founded on I.40b
founder (v) D.17f
fout G.23b
    wrong f. J.22a
fountain G.23b
    fount G.23b
    fountains G.23b
    fountain-head G.23b
four
    bare legs I.1c
    bites at persimmon G.3f
    square I.40f
four-barrow moor F.2
four-flush K.81
fourpence
    cheese at f. I.87c
    get in his f. worth F.1b
    in the shilling E.1a
    near as f. to a groat E.1a
fours, on all G.58d
four-speed walking-stick G.6b
foursquare I.40f, J.27b
four-year old, lish as I.3a
fouter (n) G.63c
fow see foul
fowl, glad as G.45a
fowl-roost, start a F.14c
fowl-shit, flash of G.45d
fox (n and v) G.60a
    and grapes J.2g
    ay runs the f. E.8c
    barks not… G.60a
    beware f. in fern bush G.60a
    bit cock’s head off G.60a
    box the f. E.8c
    chicken to bring home f. G.60a
    crafty as a Kendal f. G.60a
    crazy as a f. G.60a
    cunning as a f. E.8c
    deceive the f. E.8c
    dies not in the dirt G.60a
    does not smell G.60a
    eating yellow-jackets G.60a
    fares best G.60a
    fause as a f. G.60a
    fight between f. and chief steward D.4
    flying f. C.17h
    from the fern bush E.27c
    gamesome as young f. G.60a
    grows grey but not good G.60a
has caught a f. E.8c
hunt f. down red lane E.8c
in a fern bush G.60a
in a hen-roost G.60a
lick a lamb G.60a
must pay his skin B.4e
old f. E.8c
pissed on the ice G.60a
play the f. E.8c
pregnant f. in a forest-fire G.60b
preys furthest from hole G.60a
ram/rank/red as a f. G.60a
run with the f. E.10d
should not be of a jury H.18b
smell a f. E.8c
stretch the f. E.8c
to guard hen-house G.60a
to keep geese G.60a
wily as a f. E.8c
when the f. dies E.28b
foxes
   of the sea G.60a
   smell their own hole first G.60a
take hares with f. E.10d
fox-farm, ready for B.4e
fox-fire G.60a
foxglove, hummo bee in G.33a
fox-hole G.60a
foxhound, hungry as E.10a
fox’s
   dark as f. mouth G.60a
goose comes to f. sermon G.60a
goose on message to f. den G.60a
   service F.34b
sleep G.60a
tail to lion’s skin C.17c
   thieving as f. snout G.60a
fox-tail, flap with E.8c
foxy ×2 G.60a
frame (v) K.14d
   in the f. K.14d
   like cat in pattens L.14b
   of reference J.30b
   short of super E.30j
framework A.1e
France, nearer ’t is to J.25b
frangy than a blood-foal, more E.15c
frank and gowdy G.44e
fraud, frost and G.16c
fraught D.15d
   with D.15d
fray
at a f. C.10c
start of a f. C.10c
frayed tempers B.6c
frazzle, worn to B.1b
freckled
like a gled G.47c
sky I.18f
free (a/the)
  as (a/the) bird G.45b
  fly G.37a
gift I.51
  hurricane G.13e
  mountain goat C.17h
  thought J.31
  wind G.13b
  wood-sawyer F.24i
cat I.16a
get f. ride F.8
no f. lunch K.26c
prick/threat a f. horse E.16j
ride a f. horse to death E.16e
trade or protection E.2a
free-lance C.19a
freeloader H.2b
freely as St. Robert gave the cow J.40b
free-wheel/freewheeling K.45a
freeze (v) G.16c
  askers G.44c
  balls off brass monkey K.15a
cats a-running I.11
  in the deep f. I.43a
  on to G.16c
  out F.4c
freight
  pay the f. for F.21
  pull f. A.4c
  subtle as f. train A.4c
freits fail, when all E.15g
frem as a radish I.54j
Fremantle doctor I.36a
fremd/fremit loanin/lonnin E.20e, E.21f
French
  leave C.17a
  look like F. fiddle K.2a
  screwdriver A.4a
  Tottenham is turned F.J.28c
frequent as bell on Sunday J.52c
fresh
  and salt G.23b
  as (a/the) April G.19b
  buttercup G.30b
daisy G.30a
dawn G.12a
dewy field G.10a
eel F.7b
egg from the farm E.28c
flower just blown G.26e
flowers in May G.26e
May gowan G.30a
meadow in a morn of May E.32c
paint I.39d
rose G.29b
sea breeze D.5
summer’s grass G.31a
young head of lettuce I.54d
break out in f. place I.35c
fish stinks in three days D.14
ground E.31a
haft on old blade F.30c
hand at the bellows I.73c
light on I.78d
freshen the hawse D.15b
fresh-pulled lettuce I.54d
fret
    in own grease I.60a
    like taffety B.4d
Freudian slip I.36c
friar’s mouth J.48
friars, feed the G.3a
friction (n) A.4a
Friday
    afternoon car A.4f
    face/look I.81b
    girl/man F.J.24
    Street I.85b
    wet F.I.81b
fried
    burn the paper he f. in I.60a
    foumart G.3e
    from f. eggs come no chickens I.61c
friend
    at court C.13d
    bosom f. I.4m
    coin is the best f. F.1b
diamonds a girl’s best f. I.4m
    hunger knows no f. I.4m
    old f. I.33e
    shake hands with f. I.5f
    soldier’s best f. is rifle I.4m
    true f. is like a privy I.85c
friendly
    as (a/the) black-kite/bramble bush G.29e
    puppy I.6d
    shadow I.19
friends
  like fiddle-strings K.3
  round the Wrekin G.8a
  some of my best f. are Jews J.9a
  spreads nets for f. H.6d
  tie their purses E.1f
friendship
  is like persimmons G.3f
  may be soldered A.3e
frigate on fire
fright
  away the mice I.17a
  wouldn’t give you a f. J.66b
frill/frilled lizard ×2 C.17k
frills
  and furbelows B.5j
  put on f. B.5j
frippery B.5a
frisk like a cat’s tail I.11
frisky as a kitlin I.12
frizzle a yan G.51
frock
  buy the baby a new f. I.2g
  thrown to the nettles G.29g
froe, dull as F.30e
froff
  as (a) carrot I.54g
    kail castocks E.31e
frog
  and mouse quarrel J.2k
  bare/clam/cold as a f. G.44e
  cannot tell from look of f. G.44e
  clammy as a f. G.44e
  fish and catch a f. F.7a
  hard as f. at harvest G.44e
  in a dump G.44e
  in a fit G.44e
  in the throat I.24h
  make f. jump into water G.44e
  naked as a f. G.44e
  on a chopping-block G.44e
  pert as a f. G.44e
frogging? how are you G.44e
frogman G.44e
frog-march G.44e
frog’s
  fine as f. hair G.44e
    stick feather in f. tail G.44e
frogs
  death to the f. J.2k
  kiss a lot of f. J.4a
  more spawn than two f. G.44e
frog-tail, memory like G.44e
frogwoman G.44e
froize I.70b
from (a/the)
  horse’s mouth E.14g, K.54
front
  change f. C.14b
  in f. of the hand E.10b
  knocker on f. door I.41c
  Queen Anne f. I.39a
  runner K.50b
  window E.2b
frontal, full K.14d
front-burner, put on I.58c
frosk, spanghewed K.58c
frost (n) G.16c
  and fraud G.16c
  born in a f. G.16c
  find a f. G.16c
  hunger in f. F.6a
  in a f. E.15e
  in harvest E.33c
  in the moonlight G.16c
froth
  blow f. off glass of beer K.20
  of water G.24a
frough see froff
frown, 14 ozs. of muscle to I.88b
frowns, fortune I.5d
frozen assets G.16c
frugal F.6a
fruit
  bear f. E.30b
  better the f. lost E.30b
  for the sideboard I.55a
  good tree, good f. J.35b
  he that would have the f. E.30b
  if you would enjoy f. E.30b
  known by f. E.30b
  mischief is a f…. E.30b
  more than in root G.26b
  no root, no f. E.30b
  no tree bears f. E.30b
  of loins E.30b
  redder the f. E.30b
  salad I.55a
  stolen f. is sweetest H.4
  such f. E.30b
  tree without f. E.30b
  when f. fails F.6a
fruit-bearing trees E.30b
fruitcake
tale from f. land J.4a
fruitful E.30b
fruition, come to E.30b
fruitless E.30b
fruits (n—of labour etc.) E.30b
deeds are f. E.30b
frummety see furmity
frumped up E.23d
frush
  as (a/the) bennel G.30b
  pipe-stapple K.24
fry
  has shot his f. G.43a
  in a f. I.60a
  in his own grease I.60a
  other eggs to f. I.61c
  other fish to f. I.61a
  small f. G.43a
frying-pan
  dog ate up f. I.10b
  gridiron grumbles at f. I.60b
  into the fire I.60a
  washed in f. I.84b
fub K.75
fuck
  at rolling doughnut I.71b
  like a mink C.17h
    rattlesnake C.17k
    stoat G.63d
  organise f. in brothel H.11e
fucking on a tin roof I.18c
fuel
  take away f. I.74c
  to fire/flames I.73d
fuff of haggis, first I.66g
full
  and by D.16a
  as (a/the) Baltic
    biled wulk I.61a
    blowed mouse G.67
    egg I.52e
    fairy’s phone book I.5o
    fitch G.30b
    pea-swad I.54a
    piper K.6b
    tick G.42a
    toad G.44d
    tun K.16b
  at f. throttle A.4d
  belly is f. F.6a
  come f. circle J.27b
  come to f. flower G.26e
cup I.48c
ear of corn E.33b
fair wind D.3b
frontal K.14d
go the f. distance K.40b
go the f. yard B.4b
have hands f. I.30e
he whose belly is f. F.6a
heart f. a-drip with kindness E.30k
in f. blast A.3c
in f. feather G.45c
in f. flow G.24c
in/under f. sail D.3c
marks J.18a
Monty B.8c
never talks till belly is f. K.6a
of beans E.6d
of bush-fire C.17a
of flannel D.19b
of shit E.27g
of sin I.11
of the door I.41a
or fasting I.65a
pigeons G.57
play with f. deck K.79b
sack can bear a clout E.33e
sack tied before f. E.33e
says his garner’s f. E.33f
tilt C.6c
up to dolly’s wax K.72a
weight without the wrapper I.88a
wheel has come f. circle J.14a
when pot is f. I.59b
when well is f. I.49a
woods are f. of them G.25b
full-blooded I.4f
full-blown I.90e
Fuller, very Old J.63a
fullest, when cup is I.48c
fullock
   with a f. K.75
       you won’t f. it through me K.75
fully fledged G.45f
fulmen brutum G.15b
fulminate G.15a
fulyie, master’s foot the best F.9b
fume G.5a
fummard/fummat see foumart
fun
   and fooster E.27f
   more f. than a nosebleed I.35c
to you J.2k
funeral
go to f. for the ride I.38f
slow as f. I.38f
that’s your f. I.38f
turn back a f. I.38f
funeral-scarf I.38f
funereal I.38f
funnel, drink like a A.4d
funny
as (a/the) barrel of monkeys K.59c
crutch I.37d
toothache I.36g
Fancy is f. dog I.8a
fur
coats and no knickers B.4e
hare’s f. G.64b
make the f. fly I.13b
out o’ f. F.15b
furbelows, frills and B.5j
fur-lined bath-tub K.60e
furmety see furmity
furmity
kettle I.47e
when it rains f. I.47e
furnace
sigh like a f. A.3c
that hardens clay K.15c
furniture, part of I.80a
furred hood B.6i
furrow
old ox makes straight f. F.15c
plow a lone f. F.15b
plow straight f. in crooked field F.15b
plow your own f. F.15b
furrowed F.15b
furrows
crooked f., straight grain E.33b
further
off from England J.25b
than Wednesday I.81b
trust no f. than E.19c
furthest
from God J.51
from his hole G.60a
from water I.49a
furtive H.1
furze, dance barefoot over K.9d
furze-bush, sweat like G.29d
fuse
blow a f. A.4d
has a short f. C.7b
fussock (n) E.17b
drunk as a f. E.17b
fussy as hen with one chick E.28d
fustian B.4d
   other in f. B.4d
futtle-the-pin K.15b
fuz see furze
fuzz-ball, soft as G.32
fuzzock see fussock
fuzzy as a turnip I.54i
futtle see file
G
   gab
      all g. and guts G.46b
      hauds up her g. G.1
      takes mair in his g. I.24a
gabbart, safe as D.10b
gabberatchets J.36
gaberlunzie’s
      coat G.4c
      meal-bags G.3c
gable-end, A from a J.20c
gablok, stiff as F.28b
   Gabriel’s hounds J.36
gadding, by too much E.28b
gadfly G.37c
gaff
      blow the g. K.77e
      crooked as g. E.12
      stand the g. K.58b
gag (v) (a/the) H.11d
      maggot G.37b
      make a maggot g. G.37b
gaga I.5e
gain
      ground C.10f
      more feathers G.45c
gaislin see goslin(g)
gait see goat
   criticise man’s g. B.9a
gaiter-button B.6o
gaiters, gas and J.24
galabieh, tighten B.61
galah, proper C.17i
galahs, gum-tree full of C.17i
galaxy G.18a
galching, snapping and I.24j
gale
   come in like g. of wind G.13e
   fart in a g. I.29c
   it’s not the g. D.3c
   of wind in cat’s tail D.5
gales—of laughter etc. G.13e
gall
- bitter as g. I.37b
- claw on the g. E.15g
- dips pen in g. J.20g
- heart of g. I.56d
- hit on the g. E.15g
- i’ the shuther E.15g
- neither gut nor g. I.28c
- neither nut nor g. I.55k
- old chains g. F.10c
- rub on the g. E.15g

gallanty-show K.60d

gallases see galluses

galled
- horse E.15g
- if ye be na g. E.15g


gallery, play to K.62c

gallery-hit/shot K.62c

galley-slave (n) D.2b
- work like g. D.2b

galliard, pavane has its K.9e

gallimaufray I.60c

galling I.35b
- their neck I.35b

gallop
- as if devil had holiday J.63e
- final g. K.50b
- kick in his g. E.16f
- put kick in his g. E.16e
- raise a g. K.50b

galloping (adj—consumption etc.) E.16f
- blind man on g. horse I.34c

galloway, 50/- E.15h

gallows
- buried/die under g. H.21b
- cross as g. H.21b
- refuse none D.9d
- save thief from g. H.1

gallowses H.21b

galluses, grip your B.61

galt first, try skill in A.5b
Galtey’s cat I.14b

galvanize A.6b

gamaliel J.35f


gambrel G.6a

game
- as (a/the) cockroach G.35c
- fighting cock K.58a
- Ned Kelly C.17a
- pebble G.21e
- piss-ant G.35a
beat at own g. K.67a
fair g. E.8a
fly at high g. E.9c
give g. away K.67a
have the g. by the throat H.12c
is up K.67a
name of the g. K.67a
new to the g. K.67a
not in the g. K.67a
not worth the candle K.73
of bowls K.39a
of hot cockles K.67b
only g. in town K.67a
pawn in the g. K.74
play a close g. K.74
play a waiting g. K.67b
play his/her g. K.67a
play the g. K.67a
routh o’ g. E.8a
see most of the g. K.36,
set and match K.36
start g. while others beat the bush E.11d
two can play at that g. K.67a
what’s the g.? K.67a
gamecock, brant as E.28e
game’s afoot E.8a
gamesome as young fox G.60a
gamp J.24
gamut K.1b
gander (n and v) E.27a
  beak of goose/g. E.27a
gaumless as g. E.27a
geekin’ at a bussa E.27a
no dew will rest on g. E.27a
wise as a g. E.27a

gander-bitten E.27c
gander-flank E.27a
gander-head E.27a
gander-hill, on E.27b
gander-hunting, send E.11e
gander-leg E.27a
gander-month/moon/mooner E.27b
gander-neck E.27a
gander-noped/pate E.27a
gandy-dancing A.4c
gang (a/the)
  back to pasture F.2
garbage gate G.7f
creep ere g. I.2h
mile to flit a cow F.13c
ower buss-taps G.4b
pack-thread g. B.5e
round by Lanark G.2d
to the bent G.10a
gang-busters H.13a
ganger like Willie Pigg’s dick E.17a
ganging, cart that’s ay E.5b
ganglion I.27
gangs
  early to steal H.3
  frae the jilt F.28b
  pig g. to the well I.46a
gangway, close aboard of D.19c
gangyls
  heron all g. G.51
  pyot all g. G.46f
gannet D.7d
gansel, good goose has ill I.69b
gap
  close the g. F.18a
  or to stile G.10b
gape (v) I.24c
  against red-hot oven I.62a
  for G.45f
  for gudgeons F.7a
  , gorbie G.45f
  like (a/the) oyster D.12
      young rook G.46c
gapes and hollers F.15b
gaps
  plug g. J.3c
  stop g. with rushes F.18b
  stop two g. F.18b
gar
  an ill weed/wood E.31b
  him scart I.30h
  his rumple reek I.31a
Garbett’s dog E.18
garble F.20b
Garcia, take message to C.20a
garden (n) I.90a
  as gardener I.90a
  back g. I.90a
  everything in the g. I.90a
  fairies at bottom of g. J.5a
  full of weeds I.90b
  many things grow in g. I.90b
  mule in the g. E.17c
  no g. without weeds I.90b
  put him in the g. I.49a
  rose g. strategy I.90g
  sitting in the g. I.90a
  up the g. path I.90a
  variety I.90e
weed in the g. I.90b
weed own g. first I.90b
gardener
    garden is as the g. is I.90a
lichtlied his ain leeks F.20c
gardener’s
    dog neither eats cabbage F.20a
dog with a nosegay I.6a
garden-hedge I.90a
Gargantuan J.24
gargoyle I.24h
gargoyles on a steeple J.52a
garland, fairest flower of J.8d
garlans bind his own hose B.6m
garlic, charge for E.27g
Garlick, deep as J.63a
garment, our last I.38d
garments
    borrowed g. never fit B.6a
    worse for wearing B.6b
garner (v) E.33f
garner’s full E.33f
Garnet, all Sir C.12c
garrak as unbroken colt E.15c
Garret
    deep as G.J.63a
    is unfurnished I.39g
    rats in g. I.39g
    up in g. I.39g
garreted, not rightly I.39g
Garrick
    deep as G.J.63a
    do as G. did K.61d
garron-bone, show E.14e
Garry, deep as J.63a
Garry-Warwick, deep as J.63a
garter
    barbwire g. K.60e
    hanged herself in I.82a
garters, wear green B.6m
gas (n and v) A.6a
    and gaiters J.24
    cooking with g. I.58c
    meter I.72f
    run out of g. A.4d
    step on the g. A.4d
gas-bag A.6a
gasket, blow a A.4d
gas-meter I.72f
gat see gate
gate
    and stoop G.10c
at the g. again I.90a
ay in the g. I.4k
bull at a g. E.19b
creaking g. E.5b
daft as a g. G.10c
devil dead by g. J.63d
dond as a g. G.10c
forth the g. G.7f
gang a black/grey g. G.7f
get tail in g. G.10c
go a grey g. G.7f
go his/her g. G.7f
go to the g. G.7f
go up the g. G.7f
hare to the hard g. E.10d
hold the g. I.90a
if you don’t like my g. G.10c
keep the cat oot o’ our g. E.28b
never out of your g. A.7a
old dog for a g. E.18
one g. for another G.10c
open the g. G.10c
out of g. G.7f
over the stile or through the g. G.10b
plank short of g. G.10c
rames of g. I.18c
speer the g. to Rome G.8a
thin as a g. G.10c
thrust through g. F.9a
wears belt his ain g. B.61
gate-crash H.2b
gate-post
bring ache to heart of g. G.10c
grave as g. G.10c
singing g. G.10c
gate’s shut G.10c
gates, little fields have big G.10c
Gateshead, get off at F.8
gateway G.10c
Gath
mighty in G.J.34i
prevail against G.J.34i
tell it not in G.J.34i
gather (a/the) (v) F.12a
corbies dinna G.46b
dust I.83a
harder to g. E.32d
haws F.6a
momentum E.5d
roses I.90g
strings together K.64a
up threads B.2f
ye rosebuds J.25b
gathering
  after the g. E.32d
clouds G.14c
ill g. of stones D.6a
gathers
  no moss G.21b
  rake g. E.32d
  wool on clothes F.12b
gaudy
  as (a/the) butterfly G.38b
    peacock E.6b
    tulip I.90i
gaudy's fall I.65a
gaumless
  as (a/the) brick wall E.7b
    fleg G.37a
    gander/goose E.27a
gaunt as a greyhound E.10a
gauntlet (n=challenge) C.5b
    of a hedging glove F.18b
    run the g. C.13h
gaup-a-liftie I.23b
gavelock
  cold as g. F.28b
  fit to starve a g. F.28b
  stunt as g. F.28b
gaw
  gut and g. I.28c
  in the back of another I.35b
  tree that has no g. E.30a
gawd
  come before the g. E.20e
  fling at the g. E.20e
Gawdelpus J.60c
  twopen'orth of G.J.60c
gay
  as (a/the) goldfinch G.57
    goose in a gutter E.27d
    king's candle J.60b
    lark G.56
    leopard C.17d
    coat E.6a
    light as g. I.48b
    Lothario 124
gayblock, stiff as F.28b
gazb, out of my I.24b
gaze at own navel J.9f
gear
  in high g. A.4d
  into bottom/high/top g. ×2 A.4d
  out of g. A.4d
geared to A.4d
gears
    hing in g. F.10c
    keep straight in g. E.16k
    shift g. A.4d
    taken in his g. B.2c
geavlick see gavelock
gee
    haw and g. F.10a
    nor hauve/woy F.10a
geekin’ at a bussa E.27a
    out of ivy bush G.48
geese
    all his g. are swans E.27e
    fox to keep the g. G.60a
    hear with their heels E.27c
    Jan Tresize’s g. E.27f
    Macfarlane’s g. E.27g
    man among the g., E.27f
    , many turds E.27f
    nicked i’ th’ heid E.27f
    old woman picking g. E.27g
    on a common E.27f
    plucking g. E.27g
    slurr on the ice E.27d
    stab g. E.27f
    summer’s g. E.27a
    teach g. to swim E.27d
    to water E.27d
    Tom Aylis among g. E.27f
    who steal g. H.5
    Widecombe folk are plucking g. E.27g
geevin E.20f
geld (v) E.13a
gellock, frae the jilt to the F.28b
gem (n) E.4c
    not polished without rubbing A.5b
gene
    hedgehog g. G.68d
    suicide g. I.38b
general
    caviare to the g. I.69a
    meeting place J.55
    post I.5k
generate more heat than light J.30b
genius without education E.3b
gentle
    as (a/the) falcon E.9e
    German’s bitch I.8a
    lamb E.23d
    maid I.3a
    hawk E.9b
heart B.1e
puddocks G.47c
though bear/mastiff be g. K.56b
gentleman
gay coat that makes the g. E.6a
give the g. a coconut K.60f
in black velvet B.6a
shoot like a g. E.11a
swear like a g. C.13g
that pays the rent E.7d
west wind is g. E.6a
will take a chance K.77e
without estate I.70b
gently, let down I.40i
gentry
don’t hunt with the g. E.8c
tail of the g. E.6a
genuine I.2b
Geoffrey’s day, on St. J.40b
gerometry, Japanese J.27b
Geordie
bad weather G.D.5
Potter of Sadberge G.25b
George
crooked as G. St.West G.8a
let G. do it I.4n
everything is G.I.4n
St. G. always in the saddle J.40b
George-a-Green E.23g
ger G.26a
German comb C.17a
germane I.4f
German’s
bitch I.8a
wit C.17a
germinal G.26a
gerrymander J.29
gerss (v) E.15b
turn to g. E.15b
geslin(s) see goslin(gs) E.27b
gestate I.1d
gesture I.5f
get (a/the/your)
act together K.62b
all your ducks in a row G.49a
all your water on E.34b
along like wagon E.5c
away with eye-teeth I.24f
away with murder H.17
axe F.24e
back to taws K.75
back up I.13b
best of both worlds J.36
bird K.62c
blood out of a turnip I.54i
bull down E.19c
bull’s feather E.19a
by the short hairs I.21a
card punched C.21f
charge out of K.25b
chop F.24e
coil in your feet I.74h
cracking H.19
cuckoo G.53
drop on C.10b
dud J.38
feet muddy E.31a
feet wet in K.67b
flavour I.65a
flower of G.26e
foot in the door G. 1
free ride F.8
goose E.27f
green gown B.6f
green malt in floor K.16a
greens I.69c
groats in kail E.31e
gruel I.68
guernsey K.32a
hang of F.25
him on finger-ends I.30g
him where you left him I.2h
hold of end of stick G.6b
hold of thick part of stick G.6b
hooks into H.6h
in his twopence/fourpence
worth F.1b
in my hair G.68b
in on the act K.62a
in the buggy E.5d
inside someone K.39a
into (a/the) bad bread I.63b
    bed with I.79f
cart F.2
deepe water D.9a
his stride E.16f
hank G.10c
pound E.23g
scrape K.44
thi looms B.2c
wrong swath E.32d
it across K.62a
it cracked I.55k
it in one K.38
it off his plate I.65a
it off your chest I.24k
it out of your system I.29d
it sewn up B.5f
it to a fine art K.15e
key of street I.42b
kitlin of good cat I.12
knife to grind F.31c
knotted I.6c
last dance K.9e
lease of B.2g
left-about C.14b
length of foot I.31f
load of D.15d
lug in loof J.19
mell K.50c
mitten B.6k
monkey up C.17e
my goat E.24a
needle B.5d
no change out of E.2b
oats E.15b
off at Gateshead/Hillgate/Redfern F.8
off bike K.45a
off on wrong foot K.29a
off the block K.29a
off the ground A.4e
off the hook E.12
on his ear I.23c
on like a bush-fire C.17a
on someone’s quince I.55g
on the stick K.8e
on with the washing I.84b
out from under F.24e
out of (a/the) bed I.79i
depth D.9a
his rink K.31a
kitchen I.58b
league K.32a
my hair I.32g
way of the wagon E.5c
out with eye-teeth I.24f
over the dog I.9a
over the left (shoulder) I.5f
pecker up K.58b
picture K.14b
pink slip F.34c
rag out B.6g
sack F.34c
screw out A.4a
shaft H.11c
shirled/sholled on K.31d
skates on K.31d
spike G.43e
spliced D.3a
spring K.6c
steam up A.4b
steel out of A.3c
stick E.18
stick and make a beetle F.32c
sugar I.56c
tail down I.10a
tail in gate G.10c
tail in well I.49a
tail-feathers up K.58b
teeth into E.10b
there from here G.7f
thief in the withy G.27e
through to I.5o
to (a/the) first base K.34
grips with K.41b
home plate K.34
leeward of D.3b
world’s end D.16e
your string’s end E.24b
tongue round E.19d
under (a/the/my) feet I.3c
neck of K.50b
skin G.37c
way D.16a
up a notch K.28
up my nose G.37a
up/over May Hill G.20a
up steam A.4b
upon the nest G.45e
upper hand F.24i
used to it I.51b
weather-gage of D.16a
weaving B.2b
wet D.9a
wind of E.10c
wind up I.29c
wissel of her groat E.1a
wooden suit B.6d
work into Friday St. I.85b
wrong end of tether E.24b
gotten (a/the) head F.32c
getting hot/warm K.73
ghastly J.66b
ghetto C.17a
ghost (n—image, picture, writer) J.66b
! K.61a
Cock Lane g. H.8
in the machine J.66b
lay that g. to rest J.58a
look as if you have seen a g. J.66b
looks liker a g. than J.66b
of a chance J.66b
Paddy’s g. J.66b
pale as a g. J.66b
town J.66b
walks K.61a
whisht as a g. at Hallowe’en J.66b
white as a g. J.66b
wouldn’t give you fright if a g. J.66b
ghost-train J.66b
Giant o’ Cernel J.5d
giant-killer J.4a
giants in those days J.5d
gib E.27b
gibberish J.13
gibbet H.21b
gib-cat, demure/melancholy as I.16a
giblets
  in alms J.37
  join g. I.52c
gib-nosed G.6a
Gibraltar, anniversary of siege of D.19f
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   beak of g. no longer than gander’s E.27a
   beat g. E.27f
     , bite not E.27f
   blind g. E.27c
   boo to a g. E.27f
   Christmas g. E.27g
   clatter-bones of a g. I.69b
   cook his g. I.61b
   could not graze after him E.27c
   cut in the head E.27f
   daft/dizzy as a g. E.27a
   dazed as g. with nail in head E.27f
   egg E.27b
   expects a g. E.26c
   fierce as a g. E.27a, G.49b
   find fault with fat g. E.27g
   fond/gaumless as a g. E.27a
   get a g. E.27f
   giddy as a g. E.27a
   give a g. E.27g
   give a g. hay E.27c
   go barefoot G.49b
   gone g. E.27g
   gone is the g E.27b
   good g., ill gaislin E.27b
   good g., ill gansel I.69b
   grandmother grope g. E.26c
   graze on your head E.27c
   grey g. G.49b
   hangs high E.27g
   harvest g. E.27c
   if you have a g. E.27f
   in a gutter E.27d
   is plucked F.14b
   kep a g. E.27f
   kill the g. J.4a
   king’s g. C.13a
   loose as g. E.27a
   mazed g. E.27f
Mooney’s g. E.27f
nicked in the head E.27f
noisy as a goose E.27a
on message to fox’s den G.60a
pet g. E.27f
pissed such a reason E.27a
pluck his g. for him E.27g
poor man’s g. I.69b
ride a g. a gallop I.3a
sauce for the g. I.69b
setting g. E.27b
shit through a g. E.27a
shod/shoe the g. F.14b
silly g. comes to the fox’s sermon G.60a
sound on the g. J.21a
steal a g., give alms J.37
steal a g., stick feather H.5
summer g. E.27a
tailor’s g. E.27a
tak tent o’ the g. G.60a
that lays golden eggs J.4a
that’s ay dropping E.27b
three women and a g. I.86b
to pluck I.52d
to ride on E.15h
tod worry the g. G.60a
two feathers out of g. E.27g
walking on grave E.27c
Walsall man’s g. I.69b
wild as a cock g. E.27a
wild g. chase E.11e
wild g., tame egg G.49b
Winchester g. E.27f
winning g. E.27b
wise as a g. E.27a
wise/witless as wild g. E.11e
without gravy I.69b
wolf eats g. E.27e

gooseberry
  bush E.30h
  eyes I.69d
  green as a g. E.30h
  not care/give/worth a g. I.55j
  play (old) g. E.30h
gooseberry-picker E.30h
goose-brained E.27a
goose-chick, innocent as E.27b
goose-down pillow I.79c
goose-drownder E.27d
goose-flesh I.52d
goose-giblet, hare’s foot against I.66f
goose-headed E.27a
goose-neck(ed) E.27a
goose-pimpl(ed) I.52d
goose-quill more dangerous E.27e
goose-quills, afraid of J.25a
goose-skin I.52d
goose-skins, good as E.27a
goose-turd green E.27a
goose’s
  bring the g. egg awa’ E.28c
eye E.27a
  great as g. egg E.27b
  whim-whams for g. bridle I.3a

goose-wing E.27a
goosey E.27a
gopher ball C.17h
gopher’s hole, pouring water down C.17h
gorbic, gape G.45f
Gordian knot J.3a
Gordons, tender I.35b
gorge (n) I.24h
  cast the g. at E.9d
  make the g. rise E.9d
gorged I.24h
gorgon J.1c
gorgonise (v) J.1c
gorilla C.17e
  6001b. g. C.17e
gorlin, naked as G.45f
gorling, gape G.45f
gorpin, naked as G.45f

gorse
  coarse as Hickling g. G.29d
  rough as g. G.29d
  set fire to green g. I.73b
  young g. G.4b
gorst, Babby’s ‘ood G.29d
goshawk beats not at bunting E.9e
goslin(g)
  gone g. E.27g
  gorse-going g. E.27b
  green g. E.27b
  ill g. E.27b
  kep g. E.27f
  midsummer g. E.27b
  wild goose never reared tame g. G.49b
goslin(g)s E.27b
  in the g. E.27b
  keep g. E.27f
  lead the geese E.27d
  shoe the g. F.14b
  teach the geese E.27d
gospel (n) J.35a
    leave before the g. J.57a
    take for g. J.35a
    true as g. J.35a

gospel-truth J.35a
Gosport fiddler, drunk as K.2b
gossamer (deriv.) E.27g
    light as g. G.36b
gossan wig E.3b
got (a/the)
    his knife in me H.12b
    his stripes back C.13g
    into dry cock E.32e
    something's g. to give D.17d
    T-shirt C.17a
gotch-eyed I.46d
Gotham, wise men of F.18a
go-to-meeting J.55
goul as whelp I.6d
gourd
    empty g., most noise F.24i
    green as a g. I.54d
gourds, saw F.24i
Gourock
    all on one side like G.G.8a
    ham I.50e
government
    job C.21d
    mule C.21d
    reins of g. E.16h
    sign-post G.7d
governor D.16b
gow, tak the G.18b
gowan
    clean as a g. G.30a
    cow the g. G.30a
    fresh as a May g. G.30a
    not care/give/worth a g. G.30a
    yellow as a g. G.30b
gowan-gobbit G.30a
gowany G.30a
gowd that glitters I.32g
gowden gown B.6h
gowdenie's eggs K.67b
gowk (n) G.53
    and titling G.53
    breed o' the g. G.53
    have ay but one song G.53
    hunt a g. G.53
    lazy as a g. G.53
    see the g. in sleep G.53
    then—hear the g. G.53
Gowk’s errand G.53
Gowkston, make John G.53
gown
  bode for silk g. B.6f
  burns I.76c
  get on the gren g. B.6f
  give her a green g. B.6f
  gowden g. B.6h
  is his/hers that wears it B.6f
  slasht g. B.6f
gowns, lawyers’ B.5h
gowp in the lift I.23b
gowpenful I.30f
Gozo, brother from D.19b
grab (v) H.11c
grabs, up for C.10g
grace
  meat before g. I.64a
  of a grey bannock I.62b
graceful as a cow E.20a
grade, make the A.4c
gradely a lad I.68
graft on E.30c
grain
  blown out with chaff E.33d
  by grain E.28b
  from the caff F.17a
  go against the g. A.1b
  guess the g. E.33c
  kindnesses, like g. E.33a
  of evil g. E.33a
  of mustard seed J.35b
  of oak A.1a
  of salt I.56b
  often came whole from the grinding E.34f
  one g. E.33e
  that takes sair wind to shake E.33d
graining in the horn E.19a
grains
  how many g. to a bushel E.33e
  out of her horns E.19a
graip
  ay sticking g. in neighbour’s midden F.26c
  flung aside like broken g. F.26c
  stuck her g. in the midden F.26c
graith, thrum in the B.2f
grampus (n) D.7b
  blow like a g. D.7b
  blow the g. D.7b
  tip the g. D.7b
gran turn in her urn I.38j
granary, lock the E.33f
Granby, Marquis of C.10c
grand
   as (a/the) steany E.14b
      Thornham rush-cart J.8d
   chain D.15c
      Old Man of I.4g
grandfadder hat B.6i
grandfather’s axe F.30c
grandmother (the) I.4g
   beats my g. I.4g
   blunt as g. knees I.4g
   come to stay I.4g
   cups I.4g
   devil is beating his g. J.63c
   shoot your g. H.12a
   teach your g. to grope ducks E.26c
   teach your g. to suck eggs I.4g
grandstanding K.34
grandstand view K.50a
grange, bring abbey to J.54
Grangerize J.28d
granite (n) G.21a
   bite g. I.65a
granite-headed/hearted G.21a
grannum’s cat I.14b
granny
   dig your g. out of her grave I.38j
   grinning at a puff-cake I.71b
   long and narrow, like the boy’s g. I.4g
   shoot your g. H.12a
   to lap ashes I.74i
   to sup milk I.74i
granted, take for C.13d
Grantham gruel I.57c
grape
   Irish g. I.55j
   not from thorn tree J.35b
grapes
   but few g. E.30g
   fox and g. J.2g
   on highway H.4
   sour g. J.2g
grapeshot, whiff of C.16
grape-vine E.30g
grapple with D.19e
grasp (a/the) (n and v) I.30f
   nettle G.29g
grasping as (a/the) toll-bar E.5a
grass (v) E.15b
   and hay E.32c
   at g. E.15b
   between hay and g. E.32c
cut g. from under feet E.32a
cut your own g. E.32c
every blade of g. G.31a
fresh as summer’s g. G.31a
give g. in the churchyard I.38j
go to g. E.15b
going to g. E.32b
green as g. G.31a
greener on other side E.32b
grow at heels E.32a
grow under feet E.32a
grows not in busy streets G.7a
grows not in the market-place G.7a
hainet g. E.32a
he that fears every g. E.32c
head for the long/tall g. C.17a
hear the g. grow G.31a
keep off the g. I.85e
kick into the long g. K.32a
out to g. E.15b
pluck the g. G.13c
sheep could eat g. through it E.23a
snake in the g. G.44a
turn out to g. E.15b
while the g. grows E.15b
widow C.20c
would roll on wet g. E.32a
grassede as mereswyne D.7b
grasshopper
   knee-high to g. G.35d
   mind G.35d
grass-lark G.56
grass-roots E.32a
grate
   on A.3f
   worth an old g. I.75a
grater, rough as I.56a
grating, afloat upon D.9b
gratton, make a F.16a
grave (v—on memory) I.38i
   as (a/the) judge H.18a
      old gatepost G.10c
      owl G.48
      undertaker I.38f
close/damp as g. I.38h
dig the g. of I.38a
dug g. with knife & fork/teeth I.38a
dug wife’s g. 3’ deep I.38h
general meeting place J.55
goose walking over g. E.27c
hungry as g. I.38h
near as the g. I.38h
one foot in g. I.38a
secret/silent/still as g. I.38h
turn in g. I.38j
white man’s g. I.38h
gravelled D.17c
gravel-pit, live in G.4a
gravel-throated G.21e
gravel-voiced G.21e
gravestone
  joyful as back of g. I.38i
  naked as g. I.38i
graveyard
  melancholy/quiet as I.38j
  shift I.38j
gravitate towards G.18b
gravity, center of J.30b
gravy (n) I.67c
  goose without g. I.69b
  if it rained g. I.67c
  meat without g. I.66g
gravy-boat/-train, board/ride the I.67c
gray-goose see grey-goose
graze (a/the) (v) E.15b
  beyond tether E.24b
  cow must g. where tied E.9f
  goose could not g. after him E.27c
  hopes to see goose g. on your head E.27c
  long acre E.7a
  send to g. E.15b
grease (a/the)
cat I.16a
  chafe/fret/fry/melt etc. in own g. I.60a
  fat sow E.25k
  for your ain cart-wheels F.21
gimlet A.1e
  hot g. I.60a
  in the fist A.4a
  melts his g. I.60a
  palm I.30e
  skids F.23b
  squeaky wheel gets the g. A.4a
  wheels A.4a, E.5b
greased
  quick as streak of g. lightning G.15a
  slippery as g. pig K.60e
grease-horn/pot F.21
greases
  he who g. his wheels E.5b
greasy (adj=unctuous) I.50b
  as a badger G.62
  pole K.60e
  scare dog from g. hide I.8a
spot on the road E.5d

great
  artist can paint g. picture K.14c
  as (a/the) devil and… C.16
  goose’s egg E.27b
  inkle-makers/weavers B.2a
  peat I.72e
  two beggars G.1

boast E.8a
Divide C.17a
doors of g. house I.41e
dowry G.4b
dragon J.34b
eat cherries with the g. I.69d
engines turn on… A.4a
fish eat the little D.13a
got the g. land F.26b
is Diana of the Ephesians J.35f
little spark light g. fire I.76a
little strokes fell g. oaks F.24e
man and river E.7e
marks are soonest hit K.46
oaks from little acorns E.30a
pearl of g. price J.35b
ship asks deep waters D.16f
shoe B.9b
shoot down from g. height C.10h
small spark makes g. fire I.76a
strokes K.2b
talkers are broken pitchers I.46a
torch I.77b
tree E.30a
weights A.4a
whipper-in E.10b
winds G.13d
greater the fall F.24e
greek E.25i
greedy
  as (a/the) dog I.6a
    fox in hen roost G.60a
    godless J.36
    hog E.25a
    otter G.63b
    rake F.26d
    ten cocks E.28a
  eating and complaining like g. hen E.28b
  pike caught the quickest F.7a
too g. to thole reech off porridge 1.68

Greek
  all G. to me J.26b
gift J.26a
Kalends J.26b
meets G.C.17a
merry as G.C.17a
green (adj=inexperienced) I.33d
apples better than none I.69d
as (a/the) bennel G.31b
  bottle glass K.19b
duckweed G.30b
emerald E.4c
gooseberry E.30h
gourd I.54d
grass G.31a
leek I.54f
lizard G.44c
May G.19b
sea D.6a
West India pickles I.56f
yellow cabbage I.54c
blade of grass E.14c
eye I.23a
faraway hills look g. G.20a
flourish like g. bay tree J.34n
gaislin E.27b
get g. bonnet B.6i
get/give g. gown B.6f
get on the g. gown B.6f
goose-turd g. E.27a
gorse bush I.73b
grey and g. B.3a
have g. fingers I.30g
if they do this in the g. tree J.35d
ill prizing of g. barley E.33b
in my eye I.33d
kindle g. one I.73b
land of g. ginger J.24
light E.5d
malt in floor K.16a
memory stays g. G.27d
moon of g. cheese G.18b
old age I.33d
rub of the g. K.38
rushes I.83b
see no g. cheese I.53e
shit g. I.29d
shoots F.24b
sleep with Mrs.G. I.4n
spit I.24k
tail I.54f
throw wand while g. G.6a
to piss in uncouth leys G.4a
too g. to burn I.72d
waistcoat B.6e
wear g. garters B.6m
wigs on the g. I.32i
wood I.74d
wound soon healed C.10d
greenacre H.21e
Greenbank buttie F.6a
greener
distant fields look g. E.32b
grass on other side E.32b
greenery yallery K.14c
green-eyed monster J.25a
greenhorn E.21f
greenhouse effect I.90c
greening E.7a
Greenland, cold as C.17a
green-room, go to K.61c
Green’s, sleep at Mrs. I.4n
greens, get his/her I.69c
greet
bairn may not g. I.3d
see woman g. G.49b
greeted like a bairn I.3d
gregarious E.23a
Greggles’s axe, time for F.24c
grew, hungry as a E.10a
grey
and green B.3a
areas K.14c
as (a/the) ass-cat I.14d
badger G.62
glass I.41i
grannum’s cat I.14b
inside of pewter dish I.48b
old Grissle E.14c
possum E.8d
blood shows on g. horse E.14g
cats in dark are g. I.11
fox may grow g. G.60a
gang/go a g. gate G.7f
goose G.49b
hairs I.38a
hen E.28b
mare ×2 E.14c
mare foaled fiddler F.10g
not care/give/worth a g. groat E.1a
pate G.44b
scant o’ g. cloth B.7b
wethers E.23b
yoads E.14c
grey-goose wing C.2a
greyhound
gaunt/thirl as g. E.10a
policy F.8
that starts many hares E.10d
greyhounds, sprinted like two E.10a
grike, tail of F.13c
grices, if ye kittle their wame E.25g
gridle
   hen on hot g. E.28b
   herring on g. I.61a
   steg on a hot g. E.27f
   thin as a g. I.60b
gridiron (n—street plan/ naval m.) I.60b
dried on g. I.84b
grumbles at frying-pan I.60b
on the g. I.60b
pancake on g. I.60b
gridironer I.60b
gridlock E.5d
grief F.33b
depth as g. I.38g
grief’s best music K.1a
grievance, air a I.84g
grig
   blithe/brisk/happy/lively as g. I.3a
   merry as a g. I.3a, I.34a, J.5a
   sour as a g. G.28b
grill (v) I.60b
grim death I.38a
grimed with same stick E.23f
grin
   like (a/the) basket of chips I.72c
      Cheshire/chessy cat G.8a
      clown K.60f
   dog at a bone I.8d
   fox eating y-jackets G.60a
   hungry bull E.19b
   my granny I.71b
   she-otter G.63b
   sowter B.8a
   street-knocker I.41c
   teeth of a rake F.26d
   weasel G.63e
make a lapstone g. B.8b
   together like gargoyles J.52a
grind (a/the)
   axe to g. F.31b
   faces of the poor J.34q
   knife to g. F.31c
   mill cannot g. E.34b
   my own scissors to g. F.31c
   one stone cannot g. corn E.34e
   or find E.34f
   other grist to g. E.34f
   to a halt A.4e
wind E.34f
grinding
  grain whole from g. E.34f
  tarry the g. E.34f
grindlestone, calf swallowed F.31c
grinds
  coarse and fine E.34f
  first E.34f
  God’s mill g. slow E.34f
  lower mill-stone g. E.34e
  more men’s corn E.34f
grindstone
  bite g. F.31c
  carry g. F.31c
  cow ate g. F.31c
  crooked as g. handle F.31c
  have g. on back F.31c
  Newcastle g. F.31c
  nose to g. F.31c
  round-shouldered as g. F.31c
  talk mill-wheel into g. E.34e
  tight hand at g. F.31c
grindstones, hard as F.31c
grip (a/the/your)
  galluses B.61
  ill to g. E.14e
  lose your g. K.41b
  of steel A.3b
  slid g. F.7b
  tak’ care o’ his g. G.27a
  tine the g. I.30f
  way to g. bird H.6f
gripe
  sliddery g. F.7b
    will hardly meet hedge F.19
gripped at the knickers B.61
gripping of fleas G.40
gripple as sin J.38
grips with, come/get to K.41b
Grisell, more mares in wood than E.14c
Grissle, grey as old E.14c
grist
  all g. that comes to mill E.34d
  all is not g. E.34d
  another g. to his mill E.34f
  horse carries all g. E.34d
  other g. to grind E.34f
  to the mill E.34d
  toll heavier/more than g. E.34g
grit (n) G.21e
  in the oil A.4a
  into the machine A.4a
your teeth I.24f
grizzling like a badger G.62
groat
cracked/slit g. E.1a
give a g. for an owl G.48
light as the Queen’s g. E.1a
near as fourpence to g. E.1a
not care/give/worth a g. E.1a
poor/thin as a g. E.1a
wissel of her g. E.1a
groats
blood without g. I.50g
get g. in kail E.31e
give g. for pease E.31e
ken my g. E.31e
Groby Pool with pancakes, thatch I.40h
grocer cutting butter I.87c
groceries, doesn’t buy I.87c
grockle K.59g
grog D.19b
grog-blossom D.19b
groggy D.19b
groomed for… K.50a
groove
in a g. A.4a
in the g. K.62e
groovy K.62e
grope H.3
teach grandmother to g. ducks etc. E.26c
gropes in the dark G.17
grosset, cock at a E.28a
grotesque K.14d

ground
beat over the old g. E.11d
break fresh g. E.31a
cover g. F.9b
cover more g. G.10a
down to the g. B.6d
ear to the g. C.17a
fall to the g. I.3c
feet on the g. G.7h
find common g. E.7a
floor opportunity/statement E.2b
forbidden g. H.2a
from under feet C.10f
gain g. C.10f
get off the g. A.4e
go over the g. E.7a
go to g. E.8c
hit the g. running C.10h
hold g. C.10f
in/on I.40b
in on g. floor E.2b
keep your g. C.10f
kiss the g. I.1b
lies on the g. G.4a
lose g. C.10f
make up lost g. C.10f
meet on his own g. E.7e
mucky as g. G.4a
no bad g. E.13b
on firm/solid g. I.40b
on slippery g. G.16c
out D.6a
prepare the g. F.9b
quiet as g. G.22c
run into the g. E.16e
run/set on g. D.17c
run to g. E.8e
shift g. C.10f
stand g. C.10f
take the high g. C.10f
Tom Tiddler’s g. K.67b
touch g. G.14a
grounded C.10h
    hard as g. toad G.44d
groundhog (n) C.17h
    case C.17h
    day C.17h
    slick as path to g. hole C.17h
ground-hop, catch on G.20a
ground-parrot C.17i
groundsel speaks not I.41b
groundsels, blow I.41e
ground-sweat about, take a I.40b
ground-swell D.6a
ground-toad, awkward/hard G.44d
ground-work I.40b
    of magpie’s bottom I.40b
grout
    sweet as g. I.56c
    thick as g. K.20
grouter K.77d
    come in on the g. K.77d
grovelling I.5g
grow
    apples will g. again E.30f
    backwards G.46b
down (wards) E.20c
    feathers G.45c
    ill weeds g. apace E.31b
    many things g. in the garden I.90b
    on trees G.27a
    out of E.30a
growing
  like (a/the) fern G.29i
    Matty Murray’s money E.1f
    young withies G.27e
  pains I.35a
  youth I.29a
grown at night G.6a
grows
  on you I.35c
  take crop as it g. E.31c
  through hood I.21a
grozer/grozet, cock at E.28a
grub
  dull as a g. hoe F.20b
  out/up F.20c
Grubber, ‘ware skins’ quoth G.41
grubs bite hard G.37c
grudges every drop of water… E.34b
grue as thunder(cloud) G.15b
gruel
  get/take g. I.68
  give him g. I.68
  take g. together I.68
  weak as g. I.68
gruelling I.68
guff
  and grunt E.25a
  as a bear C.17g
  say g. F.13b
gruffled up like an arrish pig E.25j
grumph frae a soo E.25b
gund-toad see ground-toad
Grundy, Mrs. 124
grunnelstone see grindstone
grunstan/grunstone see grindstone
grun
  can’t take g. out of pig E.25b
  gruff and g. E.25a
  like hog
  out of a pig E.25b
gruntled
  ring out of nose E.25g
gruntle, hanging your E.25g
grunts like old sow E.25i
grut, swede in the F.20c
G-spot, touch the I.1b
Guam, clear out for D.16e
guanner-/guano-bag F.9b
guard (a/the)
  ace K.80
  catch off g. K.43
  corporal’s g. C.13h
fox to g. hen-house G.60a
lower your g. K.43
Old G.C.13g
throw off g. K.43
Gud o’ Jamie’s throstle G.52a
gude
  a fellow as ever toomed a bicker I.48a
  aiver flung at the broose E.15a
  ale needs nae wisp K.26b
  as g. speak to the stone E.7b
  as g. to ye tak’ a millstane F.23b
  dog doesna ay get the best bane I.8d
  fishing in drumlie waters F.7a
toun but had a dub G.8a
  whittle C.3c
gudgeon (n) F.7a
    swallow a g. F.7a
gudgeons, gape for F.7a
guernsey, get K.32a
guess (the)
    eggs I.52f
    grain E.33c
    pudding I.70b
guesses within two tumbles… G.41
guff nor sty F.13b
guide (a/the) (v) G.10a
    gully E.29a
    part with g. B.9a
    tour g. E.5a
guide-lines, lay down A.1e
  guiding
    light D.16d
    of gully E.29e
    star D.16d
guild (n) E.1e
  every Preston G.E.1e
guilde, yellow as G.30b
guillotine H.22
  guinea, yellow as E.1a
Guinea-gold ×2 E.4d
guinea-pig J.30a
  guineas, scarce as E.1a
gulch, dry E.19f
gulf G.20c
gull (n and v) D.7d
  thirsty as g. D.7d
gullet I.24h
gullies, crossed too many dry G.20a
gulls, butter in the I.60e
gull-wing G.45b
gully
  go up a g. G.20a
guide the g. E.29a
guiding of the g. E.29e
lend his g. J.63d
sucking g. E.27b
gult as a whelp I.6d
gum
  auld g. broken oot I.24f
cannot walk and chew g. I.31e
gum-drop, sharp as I.71f
gum-leaves growing out of ears C.17a
gummed taffety B.4d
Gummidge J.24
gumption
devoid of g. G.44d
  of a cuckoo G.53
  kid E.24a
turkey cock E.28f
gum-shoe (n and v) B.9c
gum-tree
  fix the g. C.17a
  full of galahs C.17i
  has seen his last g. C.17a
  up a g. E.8d
gun
  all on one side like lock of g. C.7e
  better a loaded g. E.11a
  carries too big a g. C.7c
  crack like a g. C.7c
  fire a g. C.10b
  hollow as a g. C.7c
  jump the g. K.29a
  like the man’s g. E.11a
  moil g. E.20b
  reach for your g. C.10b
  shoot with silver g. E.11c
  smoking g. H.12a
  son of a g. D.19e
  sure as a g. C.7c
gun-boat diplomacy D.19e
gunner, gunless E.8a
gunner’s daughter, kiss D.19b
gunning for C.7c
gunpowder
  quick as g. C.7a
  sit on barrel of g. C.7a
  slake fire with g. C.7c
guns
  big g. C.9
  Quaker g. J.55
  run away from own g. C.9
  spike his g. C.7c
  stick to your g. D.19e
wonderful how they make g. C.9

gun-shot C.7c
  sudden as g. C.7c
gun-stick, straight as C.7c
Gunter, according to J.27a

gurgler, down the I.85c
gurnard, glaze like a D.13d
gurnet, sick as D.13d
gush (v) G.23b

gusset-house B.5c
gussock, fall a G.13d
gusts G.13d
gut (—issue etc.) I.28c
  (v) D.13c
  and gaw I.28c
  bust/rupture a g. I.35e
  give him the g. I.66g
  like a crane G.51
  nor gall I.28c
  your fish D.13c
guts
  and gangyls (heron) G.51
  and gangyls (pyot) G.46f
  and gob G.46b
  blood and g. I.28c
  carry g. to a bear K.56b
  devil’s g. J.63b
  of the wind G.13b
  rough as (mullet) g. D.13b
  Shy’s g. I.29d
gutter
  cats in g. I.13b
  crow in g. G.46b
  down his own g. F.19
  ducks in a g. G.49a
  goose in a g. E.27d
  loup a g. E.7b
guttermud, black/thick as G.23e
gutters, repairs not I.40i
guttersnipe G.54c
guy, fall K.41a
Guyhirn lighthouse D.10b
gypsy
  moth G.38a
  stew A.7d
gypsy-legged A.7d
gypsy’s
  curse A.7d
  warning A.7d
gyurd, everyone rooses I.51
H
haaves, thick as G.28e
habern, black as I.75a
habit of riding E.16j
habits are cobwebs G.36b
hack (n) F.24f
  and manger E.15a
  in the post F.24f
  of his best hunter E.8c
  writer etc. F.10f
Hackerston see Halkerston
hackle
  cock of a different h. K.58b
  show h. K.58b
hackles up K.58b
hackney(ed) F.10f
had
  on toast I.63b
  your chips K.77c
haddock
  deaf as h. D.13b
  let leap a h. D.13c
  not care/give/worth a h. D.13d
  to paddock D.13d
  white as a h. D.13b
Hades, black as J.62
haft
  see also heft
  golden h. E.4d
  judge blade by h. F.30c
  loose in the h. F.30c
  old h. when the blade’s gone F.30c
  on an old blade F.30c
  stick to the h. F.30c
  tight in the h. F.30c
  true as blade to h. F.30c
hafts in hand, have other F.30c
hag
  and trail F.24e
  at it F.24e
  give hallen a h. F.24f
  thee, I.69c
haggis (n) I.50g
  cat took will of h. I.15a
  first fuff of h. I.66g
  man may love h. I.66g
  tooomed on the midden I.66g
haggis-bag I.50g
haggis-headed I.50g
haggis-hearted I.50g
hag-knots J.6b
hag-ridden J.6b
hag’s teeth J.6b
hagstock, numb as F.30d
hagworm, bitter/crazy as G.44b
hail (the) (n) G.16c
  from D.16c
  on a pack-saddle E.16a
  rising sun G.12a
  thick as h. G.16c
hailstone, nose would split G.16c
hailstones, hard as G.16c
hail-storm
  blink like toad in h. G.44d
  pearl in h. E.4c
hain at the braird E.33b
hained
  has been on h. rig E.33b
  off the belly I.65a
  thrive like h. grass E.32a
hainet see hained
hains his dinner I.64e
hair
  across her arse I.31a
  against the h. G.58a
  and lime I.40i
  better hold by a h. E.24b
  brown h. I.21a
  building nests in h. G.45d
  by h. pull out the horse’s tail J.3a
  comb/stroke h. the wrong way I.32h
  curl your h. 1.21a
  dog of different h. I.6a
  fits to a h. in the water I.21a
  get h. in his neck J.17
  get in my h. G.68b
  grows through head/hood I.21a
  hang by a h. J.3a
  hay-seeds out of h. E.32e
  high as h. on cat’s back I.13b
  in the butter I.53c
  kamed to the lift I.32h
  keep your h. on I.21a
  lets h. down I.32g
  like birses o’ a hurcheon G.68d
  look like strained h. I.50b
  lose your h. I.21a
  make your h. curl I.21a
  mop of h. I.83a
  more h. than tit E.21f
  no h. so small I.21a
  not care/give/worth a h. I.21a
  not care/give/worth a singed h. I.32g
  not have h. on ass I.31a
  not turn a h. F.10b
  of a woman F.15c
of the dog G.2d
only needs a h. D.15c
out of my h. I.32g
pull h. and h. F.9a
put h. on I.21a
put h. up I.32g
shed of his h. I.32h
stand upon a h. I.21a
straight as a potato-crusher I.54l
straws in h. E.19a
tether of one h. E.24b
thick as h. on a dog’s back I.6a
tie her h. without whang I.32g
to a h. I.21a
to make a tether of D.15c
up ass I.31a
waiting for h. I.21a
whelp of the same h. I.6d
without turning a h. F.10b
wrong way of h. I.14b
hair-bag I.32h
hair-breadth escape I.21a
hairnet, win porcelain K.60c
hairpin
bend I.32g
fight space with h. G.18a
hair’s breadth I.21a
hairs
have by short h. I.21a
in the water F.7a
split h. J.30a
will be found E.14d
hair-splitting J.30a
hairy
about the heels E.14e
as puck-goat’s head E.24a
canary I.17f
run like h. goat E.24a
hairy-arsed I.31a
hait nor ree, neither F.10a
haka, dance the K.9c
hake
dry as a h. I.40d
lose in h. D.13c
sprat to catch a h. D.13c
up the chimney I.75b D.13c
hake’s teeth D.13d
halcyon days J.1c
half (a/an/the)
battle C.10e
dozen cracks B.8a
egg G.3e
loaf F.6a
nor h. a parish G.8a
silk B.4d
half-baked I.62b
half-blind I.34c
half-burnt, wood I.73b
half-cock, go off at C.7c
half-cocked C.7c
half-crown showls F.28a
half-cured, disease known is I.36c
half-dead hurcheon G.68d
half-done
   as Elgin was burnt C.16
   job h. J.50
half-drowned kitlin I.12
half-hanged H.21a
half-loaf, leap at J.8d
half-mast, at C.15a
half-moon G.18b
half-past five with him I.81e
half-peck, dance in K.9d
halfpennies, keep hand on F.1b
halfpenny
   and the gingerbread I.87b
   boiled h. I.64a
   chat like h. book J.20a
   egg and h. E.28c
   good silver F.1b
   have hand etc. on h. F.1b
   have hand on another h. F.1b
   head F.1b
   in the h. place I.87b
   knife F.30e
   rake hell for h. J.62
   talk like h. book J.20a
   weel-kent as bad h. E.2b
   would split h. in two F.1b
halfpennyworth
   of silver spoons I.44c
   of soap I.45b
   of tar D.1b, E.23f
   of treacle I.47b
half-pint I.88c
half-rocked J.7
half-seas over D.16e
half-shaven I.32c
half-way
   down the pike G.7f
   house E.5a
   meet h. E.5a
   over C.10a
Halgavor
summoned before Mayor of H. H.15
trial H.15
Halifax
door-handle G.8a
law H.15
Halkerston’s cow H.18c
hall
as you would in h. E.6b
binks are sliddery F.5
drive cow to the h. E.20d
house and h. E.6b
to the hatch F.34b
halleluja to day-nettles J.61
hallen a hag, give F.24f
hall-mark E.4d
Hall’s dog, lazy as I.7d
halo effect J.65
halse
and go to gody I.3c
hummo bee in h. G.33a
halt
before a cripple G.1
come to a screeching h. E.5d
cry h. C.14b
grind to a h. A.4c
halter (a/the)
better clean pair of heels than h. I.31g
blood-foal in h. E.15c
colt E.15c
coup himself to the toom h. E.16g
for h. E.15h
got nothing except the h. E.14c
has made a h. H.21c
horse that draws his h. E.16g
ill talking of h. H.21c
lose the h. K.77a
on a dead horse F.10h
round his neck H.21c
slip the h. E.16g
streek a h. H.21c
halting speech G.1
Halton Shields G.8a
ham
actor K.62b
buried with h. I.38g
Gourock h. I.50e
Haman, hang as high as J.34l
ham-bone (n) I.66b
dressed up like h. I.66b
hambuck, dry as E.31e
hambucks, legs like E.31e
hame
evening brings a’ h. G.12e
tak ain tale h. K.13
ham-fat, ham-fatter K.62b
ham-fisted I.50e
ham-footed I.50e
ham-handed I.50e
Hamlet J.25a
play H.K.61c
without the prince K.61c
hammer (n and v) A.1c
and pincers/pinsons/tongs A.3d
anvil fears not h. A.3d
between h. and anvil A.3d
blunt as h. A.1c
dead as a h. A.1c
down on him like a h. A.3d
into the floor A.1c
it out A.5d
Martin’s h. J.40b
on nail A.1c
suck the h. H.20c
toe A.1c
hammer-head, deaf as A. 1c
hammer-headed F.32c
hammering
into me A.1c
keep h. A.1c
hammers of hell, go like J.62
hammock (v) D.8a
face like a scrubbed h. D.8a
rows hurdies in h. D.8a
standing up in h. D.8a
tangle his h. D.8a
hamshackled horse, spur E.15d
hamstring C.10d
Hancock, John I.4n
Hancock’s mother I.4n
hand (n—of clock) I.30e
ahin(t) the h. F.33a
and glove B.6k
any h. afore F.33a
bare as my h. I.30e
behind/behint h. F.33a
bird in the h. H.6f
cap/hat in h. F.34b
chuck h. in/up K.8l
clean h. needs no washing I.32b
close h. I.30f
cool h. on fevered brow I.37a
dead h. of past I.38c
don’t stick h. in boiling water I.59b
empty h. is no lure E.9b
every man for his own h. C.16
feather in the h. H.6f
fine Italian h. J.42
fist stronger than h. I.30f
flat as h. I.30e
for niece with I.1b
force the h. K.79b
go h. in h. I.1b
hank in your own h. G.10c
heed whom you hold by the h. K.9a
hold h. I.1b
hold in the hollow of h. I.30e
in bear’s mouth C.17g
in cleft stick G.6b
in dinner-pail F.6a
in dog’s mouth G.2d
in glove B.6k
in h.×4 I.30e
in his accounts E.2c
in his checks/chips K.77c
in lion’s mouth C.17c
in the creel E.28c
in the dish G.3b
in the pie I.70c
in the turn of a h. I.30e
iron h. C.5b
it to… K.62c
kiss the h. H.7
know like back of h. I.30e
know what right h. does I.30e
lemon I.55c
light h. C.10d
new h. gets short rake E.32d
no bigger than a man’s h. J.34j
on a plate/tray E.6c
on another halfpenny F.1b
on heart I.5f
on the lamp I.78b
on the torch. K.29b
on your halfpenny F.1b
one h. for yourself D.8b
other hafts in h. F.30e
out of h. I.30e
over fist/h. D.8b
over head C.10f
overplay your h. K.79b
plain as loof of h. I.30e
play lone h. K.79d
put h. in creel F.7b
put h. up J.17
put in h. I.30e
show your h. K.79b
sow with the h. E.31b
surgeon must have lady’s h. I.30e
sweet as h. H.3
take a h. in K.79b
that feeds you I.8a
throw h. in/up K.81
tight h. at the grindstone F.31c
to mouth F.6a
to the plow J.35d
wash/washes another I.32b
water in his h. I.49c
will not wash the other I.32b
with heavy h. I.30e
with high h. C.4c
wren in the h. H.6g
handbag (v) C.21d
handbasket, go to hell in J.62
handcart, drunk/rusty as F.29
handcuffs, golden H.14a
hand-for-nieve I.1b
handful (n) I.30e
handicap (n and v) K.77e
handkerchief
in one hand C.4a
pocket h. B.6n
silk h. B.6n
throw h. to K.67b
handle
after the head F.30c
fly off the h. F.30c
give a h. to A.1e
make a h. of F.30c
of jug, all on one side I.46d
pump without h. I.49b
take by the smooth h. I.46b
tell depth of well by h. on pump I.49b
to his name A.1e
too hot to h. F.33b
(up) to the h. F.30c
with kid gloves E.6b
without gloves E.6b
handlebar moustache K.45a
handles (a/the)
he that h. honey E.30k
nettle G.29g
pot has two h. I.46b
things have two h. I.46b
thorns F.18b
hand-me-down I.5a
hand-painted doormat K.60e
hands
and feet like No.4 shovels F.28a
clay in h. of potter K.15c
down K.50c
God looks to clean h. I.32b
have h. full I.30e
have h. tied H.14a
in cookie-jar H.3
in huzzey-skep I.83g
in safe h. of I.2g
in till H.3
like half-crown showls F.28a
man with no h. I.34f
out of the tar-bucket D.8a
play into h. of K.33b
rubbing their h. I.5f
shake h. with friend I.5f
sit on h. I.31b
soil our h. F.9b
spit on h. F.33a
strengthen his h. F.33a
to the pump, all D.17e
wash h. of I.32b
wax in…’s h. K.65
with clean h. I.32b
wringing h. K.61c
hand-saw
know hawk from h. E.9a
sharpening of h. F.31a
handsome
as (a/the) bear picking mussels K.56b
devil J.63a
last year’s corpse I.38c
handspike, purser’s shirt on a D.19b
hand-to-mouth F.6a
handwriting (n) J.20d
just my h. J.20d
handy
as (a/the) gimlet A.1e
kitten I.12
handy-dandy (n) K.67b
hang (a/the/your)
about like fart in phone box I.5o
all bells on one horse E.16k
back for bets K.54
baker I.87b
boughs h. lowest E.30b
broom out of the window I.82b
by a hair J.3a
by a thread J.3a
by its own gills D.13d
by the breeirs of the een I.22a
by the same nail I.82a
by the wicks I.24c
cat I.16b
dirty washing out I.84e
dog on crab-tree I.10c
ears I.10b
enough rope to h. himself H.21c
fipple I.24d
fire C.7c
flep E.15b
for sheep as lamb H.21a
for yourself H.21a
from the rafters first E.29d
get the h. of F.25
halter to h. himself H.21c
harps on willows J.34n
hat on I.41a
heavy on B.6f
high as Haman J.341
his dog I.10c
in the (same) band F.16b
in the bell-ropes J.52d
in the wind E.9c
judges from York to h. folk K.58b
latch I.41d
latchpan I.60b
let it all h. out I.84e
like sore fingers I.35b
liver on I.28b
long crag I.25a
moon G.18b
nooks F.33a
on (a/the/his) bell J.52c
  bough E.30b
  by eyelids I.23b
  hedge I.84e
  slack rope D.8b
  sleeve B.6h
  thin wires A.4a
on to the coat-tails of B.6e
out I.85a
out more than they wash I.84e
out the besom/broom/ broomstick I.82b
out the laundry/washing I.84e
over G.20b
over the balk J.53b
soft cheese I.53e
together A.5b
together as pebbles F.32d
together like bats G.68b
up (a/the/his/your) axe C.3a
  by one leg E.29e
  fiddle K.2b
  hat I.41a
hatchet F.24f
  on the nail I.82a
  spoon I.44c
  upon the skirts of I.3b
  your wattles E.28f
hangar doors, close A.4e
hang-dog H.21d
hanged
  Berry h. Temple H.21a
  for leaving liquor H.21e
  for saying nothing H.21e
  in house of man that was h. H.21c
  rope supports h. man H.21c
  that left drink H.21e
  when sober H.21a
hangers, pothooks and I.43d
hanging
  by the neck since she was thirty H.21e
  concentrates the mind H.21a
  in the air G.14a
  matter H.17
  more ways of killing pig than h. him E.25k
  over his head J.3a
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    thistle on the h. G.12b
hearthstone talk I.74b
heart-of-oak A.1a
hearts of men E.4d
hearts-and-flowers I.5k
heart-searchings I.26a
heart-thirled F.5
heart-throb I.26a
heart-wood I.26a
hearty
    as (a/the) buck G.64a
    hare G.64b
    horse E.14b
heat (a/the)
    bear burden and h. of the day J.35b
    broth I.60d
    four bare legs h. in a bed I.1c
    generate more h. than light J.30b
    if you can’t stand the h. I.58b
    in the h. of A.3c
    no reek without h. G.5a
    take the h. out of A.3d
    that melts the wax K.65
    turn on the h. H.16
    white h. A.3c
heated, old porridge sooner I.60e
Heath-Robinson A.4a
heather
    coarse as h. G.29h
    fields of h. on fire G.29h
    rough as h. G.29h
    set h. on fire F.24d
    take to h. G.20b
heather-bell, red as G.29h
heather-cat G.63a
heather-cow, not get G.4a
heathery-headed G.29h
heats in the fire A.3d
heatwave from a bush-fire C.17a
heave-ho D.17f
heaven
    God is in h. J.33
    in a string J.65
    in a wheelbarrow F.29
    move h. and earth J.65
    road to h. well-signposted G.7d
    seventh h. J.9a
spits against h. I.5e
stink to high h. E.13d
heavier than grist E.34g
heaviest ear of corn E.33b
heavy
artillery C.9
as (a/the) boarding-house dumpling I.70a
lead A.3a
tin E.3b
carry h. rakes F.33b
fall h. I.18a
hang h. on B.6f
head I.79f
lie h. on F.33b
sledding F.23b
too h. F.33b
weather D.5
with h. hand I.30e
wound C.10d
heavy-hearted I.26a
heck
bark at h. I.9b
nor ree F.21
heckle (v) B.1a
be a h. B.1a
her her tow B.1a
heckle-pins, come over the B.1a
heckles, rough as B.1a
hector (v) J.1c
Hector, brassant as J.1c
Hector’s cloak, take/wear C.19c
hedge (v—a bet) E.7b
(v—prevaricate) G.10a
be hung/hang on h. I.84e
brustle along like h. sparrow G.57
common as the h. E.7b
gripe hardly meet h. F.19
in E.7b
in May E.7b
is whole F.18b
lean dog to get through h. E.10d
leap over the h. G.10b
made many a white h. black F.18b
on right side of h. H.2a
on sunny side of h. G.12b
only stick left in h. E.7b
or by stile G.10b
pull not down h. E.7b
pulled through h. backwards G.4b
rough as h. G.4b
round E.7b
shelter under old h. G.4b
sun not on both sides of h. at once G.12b
sun shines both sides of h. G.12b
sun will be our side of h. G.12b
take rag off h. J.8b
take sheet off h. H.3
where lowest H.2a
wrong side of h. H.2a
hedge-bottom attorney E.7b
hedgehog (n and v) G.68d
as the h. said to the Devil J.63h
deck a h. G.68d
gene G.68d
scrumped up like a h. G.68d
sharp as bristles of h. G.68d
hedge-priest E.7b
hedger, eat like F.18b
hedges, leap nine E.8c
hedge-stake F.18c
nor eldin F.18c
hedging
glove F.18b
wouldn’t touch with h. mittens F.18b
heed whom you hold by the hand K.9a
heeds see also heads
heel
Achilles’ h. J.1c
bring to h. E.11f
crush under iron h. C.5b
down at h. B.10a
flat as nigger’s h. I.31g
gnat’s h. G.37d
lift up heel against F.10b
of… I.31g
of an old stocking B.6m
of the I.31g
two spurs on the h. E.16j
under the h. of I.31g
up on the sore h. I.35b
heeled, clipped and K.58a
heels
back on my h. I.31g
beef down to h. E.22a
better clean pair of h. I.31g
bless the world with h. J.42
clean h., light meals F.2
clear my h. E.15d
cool your h. F.10b
dig your h. in K.42
don’t let flies stick to h. G.37a
drag your h. J.16
give h. to I.31g
hairy about the h. E.14e
hard on the h. of K.29a
haste trips its own h. H.13b
have pair of slope h. B.10a
have the h. of K.41b
hears with his h. E.27c
kick my h. I.31g
kick up your h. E.19f
lay by the h. H.20a
let grass grow at h. E.32a
neck and h. E.29f
nip at h. of E.18
rock back on h. K.40b
show clean pair of h. I.31g
tread on h. I.89b
turn h. over head K.59g
wear round h. B.9a
heels-ower-gourie/-gowdie K.59g
heal-tap B.8c
heft see also haft
    and blade to hadd F.30c
    at my h. F.33a
    done to th’ h. F.30c
    down i’th h. F.30c
    have no h. to your hand F.30c
    hold in the h. F.30c
    like h. and blade F.30c
    or blade F.30c
    stick to the h. F.30c
    up to th’ h. F.30c
heft-end F.30c
he-goat
    lecherous as h. E.24a
    milk h. into sieve E.24a
heifer
    Durham h. E.22a
    mountain h. E.21f
    Mullingar h. E.22a
    plow with another’s h. J.34h
    plow with the h. F.15c
heifer-dust E.21f
heifer-paddock E.21f
heifer-yard E.21f
height
    of (a/the) bob of coppers E.1a
        music K.1a
heights, scale the C.12b
Heinz 57 variety I.87c
heir to 1.41
heirs no land E.7a
held
    on like a miser E.1a
    spell-bound J.4a
up by the chin D.9c
hell
and chancery H.18c
bat out of h. J.62
between h. and high water D.15e
black as h. J.62
broke loose J.62
cat in h. J.62
false as h. J.62
five miles beyond h. J.62
go to h. in a handbasket J.62
hammers of h. J.62
hinges of h. J.62
hobs of h. I.75a
hot as. J.62
lead apes in h. J.7
let loose J.62
make him smell h. J.62
no h. like... J.62
or high water D.15e
rake h. for a halfpenny J.62
road to h. I.89a
snowball in h. J.62
would scorch a feather J.62
hell-cat 162
hell-for-leather E.16k
hell-kettles J.62
hell’s
Duke of H. boots J.63b
hobstone I.75a
helm
answer the h. D.16b
folly at the h. D.16b
take the h. D.16b
helmet, policeman’s H.13a
helotism J.28a
help (a/the)
lame dog I.7c
lame hares ill to h. G.64b
helper, dog’s I.7c
helpless
as (a/the) babe I.2b
cat in a trap I.16a
corpse I.38c
helps his fellows E.33e
helter see halter
helter-skelter E.19f
helve
after hatchet F.30c
axe to wood where it borrowed h. F.30c
meet as axe to h. F.30c
put axe on h. F.30c
send axe after h. F.30c
hem about/in B.5j
hemlock
  hollow as h. G.30b
  play pew on dry h. G.30b
hemp
  coarse as h. E.31d
  sigh/stretch a/the h. H.21c
hempen
  cravat B.6j
  quinsy I.35c
hemp-seed, caudle of I.57c
hen
  acts the white h. E.28c
  afore day E.28b
  as much use as h. for watch-fob E.28b
  bad h. E.28c
  black h. can lay white egg E.28c
broody h. E.28d
  can sit that cannot fly E.28d
  clocking h. ×2 E.28d
  Dame Hockaday’s h. E.28b
  drinking E.28b
  egg for the duck egg E.28c
  fat as a h. E.28b
  feckless as a h. E.28b
  fills her belly E.28b
  greedy h. E.28b
  grey h. E.28b
  have a h. lay E.28c
  if h. does not prate E.28c
  Jenkin’s h. E.28b
  laying h. E.28c
  let h. sit a bit E.28d
  mad/mopey as a wet h. E.28b
  must scrape E.28b
  no h. weeps E.28b
  not care/give/worth a h. E.28b
  on a hot griddle E.28b
  pecked by h. E.26c
  picking bigg E.28b
  pluck the old h. F.14c
  put hat on h. E.28b
  quiet as a sitting h. E.28d
  reveals her nest E.28d
  ruffled as h. with chicks E.28d
  sell h. on rainy day F.14c
  Shirelavat’s h. E.28b
  sit longer than h. E.28d
  sitting h. E.28d
  son of the white h. E.28d
swapped his h. F.14c

tappit h. E.28b

that cackles mosto E.28c

that can’t scrat for one chick E.28d

that lays away E.28c

wants both egg and h. E.28c

wet h. E.28b

when h. goes to the cock E.28b

white h. E.28c

with many chickens E.28d

with one chick ×2 E.28d

with the chicks E.28d

with the egg E.28d

hen-brained E.28b

hen-cackle E.28c

hencot

door E.28b

robbing a h. H.5

en-headed E.28b

en-hearted E.28b

en-house E.28b

fox to guard h. G.60a

more commotion than skunk in h. C.17h

Henknoll, swapped Belasye for J.28c

hen-muck, fierce as E.28b

Henny-Penny in the horn-book J.20c

henpecked E.28b

hen-roost E.28b

Henry Wynd C.16

hen’s

all of a h. dab E.28b

eaten h. rump I.69b

egg E.28c

hare in h. nest E.10d

noseful E.28b

not care/give/worth a h. feather E.28a

race E.28b

scarce as h. teeth E.28b

toes E.28b

tooth E.28b

hens

are free of horse-corn E.28b

by too much gadding E.28b

canna flee E.28b

fed her h. on thanks E.28b

in harvest E.28b

Nanny Panter’s h. E.28b

nest of h. E.28d

rin ay to the heap E.28b

hens’ teeth, rare/scarce as E.28b

henscartins/henscrattins etc. E.28d
hen-sit E.28d
hen-toed E.28b
hep(p)s, red as G.28e
heps
  keep h. before mouth I.41f
  ride the h. I.41f
herald (n and v) C.6b
herbs, give it the K.50a
Herculean J.1c
Herculem, ex pede J.27b
Hercules
  labour of H.J.1c
  Pillars of H.D.16e
herd (n) E.19f
  of turtles D.7e
  pale as h. B.1a
  ride h. on E.19f
herded together E.19f
herdwick tip E.23b
here
  can’t get there from h. G.7f
  for the beer K.20
here-be-I K.67b
Herefordshire weeds I.90b
hermetically J.13
hero to his valet E.6c
Herod, out-herod J.59
heron all guts and gangyls G.51
herring
  backbone of h. D.13d
  bag savour of h. D.13d
  barrel smells of h. D.13d
  dead as a h. D.13d
  draw h. off the brander I.61a
  hang by own gills D.13d
  have in h. D.13e
  like not barrel nor h. D.13d
  neither barrel better h. D.13d
  not care/give/worth a h. D.13d
  on a griddle I.61a
  pindert as a h. D.13d
  pull head off rotten h. D.13d
  red h./red as a h. E.10c
  salt as a h. D.13d
  shotten h. ×2 D.13d
  sprat to catch h. D.13c
  to catch a whale D.13c
herring-bone D.13d
herring-choker I.69a
herring-drewe, gone to D.13c
herring-dub/pond D.13b
herring-gutted D.13d
herring-ribs D.13d
herrings
  in a barrel D.13d
  thick as h. D.13b
herring-sue
  long/lanky as h. G.51
  thruff-gutted as h. G.51
hers that wears it, gown is B.6f
hesp see hasp
Hesperus, wreck of J.24
het see hot
  as Jenny nettle G.29g
  broth I.60d
  up I.32a
hettled broth I.60d
heugh, coup over H.12d
hew
  down the tree F.24e
  to the line A.1e
hews too high/above head F.24e
hex J.6a
hey-lads-hey I.5c
Hezekiah, proud as J.34j
hiccup (n) I.24j
hickle, snap like G.16c
Hickling gorse, coarse as G.29d
hickory, tough as A.1a
Hicks’s horses F.10c
hid, love and cough not I.35c
hidden
  fire cannot be h. in flax I.76b
  treasure D.18a
hide (a/the) (n) I.18f
  behind pretzel I.71e
  behind skirts I.3b
  carry h. to tanner E.29a
  eel in sack F.7b
  let horns go with h. E.29a
  let tail go with h. E.29a
  light J.35b
  more h. than Jessie I.91b
  nor hair of E.8b
  skelp the h. E.29a
  talents in napkin J.35d
hide-bound F.11c
hides
  (a/the/her) hook F.7a
  teeth G.58c
hiding to nothing, on J.19
higgledy-piggledy E.25j
  Malpas shot J.45
higghler, mean as A.7a
high
and dry D.17c
as (a/the) Boston Stump J.52a
   Gilderoy H.1
   hair on cat’s back I.13b
   Haman, hang J.341
   hog E.25a
   house I.39a
   kite K.71
   Marlin Tower J.52a
   mill-chimney B.1g
   six penn’orth of coppers F.1b
   steeple J.52a
   three horse-loaves E.15b
   three penn’orth coppers F.1b
at the h. port C.8
blow h. D.5
   blow h. as a kite K.71
   cockalorum K.67b
   devil in h. wind J.63g
   dirt-fly flies h. G.37a
   don’t fly kite too h. K.71
   feather K.58a
   fly at h. game E.9c
   for a buzzard E.9e
   hand C.4c
   hell and h. water ×2 D.15e
   hews too h. F.24e
   in h. gear A.4d
   in h. snuff K.25a
   in instep I.31f
   in the legs E.28b
   Jinks K.73
   off the hog I.66e
   on a h. pin K.3
   on her h. ropes K.59d
   on h. horse E.16e
   on the h. road to G.7a
   on the h. ropes D.3c
   on the wheel J.14a
   places G.20b
   rank h. C.13f
   reach for the h. apples E.30f
   ride h. horse E.16e
   run h. D.6a
   shelf is h. I.43c
   shift into h. gear A.4d
   shit in h. cotton C.17a
   stakes K.77a
   tail on end E.20c
   take the h. ground C.10f
   words C.10d
high-brow I.22a
higher (the)
    ape climbs C.17e
    climb h. K.44
    fly at h. game E.9c
    hill F.2
    key K.3
    than Gilderoy’s kite H.21e
    tree F.24e
    we rise… G.20a
highest
    branch G.45a
    flood D.15e
    when sun is h. G.12b
high-flier E.9c
high-flown E.9c
high-handed C.4c
high-hat (n, v and adj) B.6i
high-jump, for the K.29d, K.50b
Highland
    bail H.14b
Highlander
    breeks off a H.J.8a
    knee-buckles to H.J.8a
    proud as a H.G.8a
Highlandman found tongs I.72b
highlight (v) K.14c
highly
    charged G.15b
    strung B.6o
high-pooped D.1a
high-profile C.10b
high-ranking C.13f
high-stepper E.16f
high-tail (v) E.20c
high-water (n) D.15e
    mark D.15e
highway
    don’t leave h. G.10a
    robbery H.3
highwayman’s horse H.3
highwaymen, armour against F.4a
hill
    against a slack G.20a
    and dale G.20a
    beetles up a h. G.35b
    body going down h. G.20a
    call hogs to h. E.25f
    do on h. E.6b
    drive over the h. G.20a
    go down h. G.20a
    go over the h. G.20a
higher the h. F.2 
hop against h. G.20a 
mawkin is gaun up h. E.10d 
of beans E.31d 
other side of h. G.20a 
over the h. G.20a 
shout from highest h. G.20a 
sleepy as H. of Hoath G.8a 
street-walker H.11e 
top of h. G.20a 
up h. and down brae G.20a 
up h. and down dale G.20a 
up the wooden h. G.20a 
vale discovereth h. G.20a 
warsle up the h. G.20a 

Hillgate, get off at F.8 

hillock 
on gimmer h. E.23d 
stands on h. G.20a 

hills 
against slacks G.20a 
faraway h. look green G.20a 
gold in them thar h. E.3a 
great winds blow upon h. G.13d 
old as the h. G.20a 

hilltop 
literature G.7d 
sun on the h. G.12b 

hilt 
true as h. to blade C.4b 
up to the h. C.4b 
who has the h. C.4b 

Hilton Kirk J.58a 

hilts, loose in C.4b 

hind 
leg E.17b, G.1, I.6a 
teat/tit E.25i 

hindsight, twenty-twenty I.23b 

hing (a/the) 
by breeirs I.22a 
by ears/lugs I.10b 
by own shank E.29d 
ears/lugs I.10b 
in the britten/ gears F.10c 

hing-as-they-grow, left to E.30b 

hinge (n) I.41b 
on I.41b 
to his back I.41b 

hinges 
big doors on small h. I.41b 
creaking door hangs long in h. I.41b 
heard from the h. I.41b
of hell J.62
off the h. I.41b
hingin’ lug I.10b
hinnies, singin’ K.11
hip
    and thigh J.34h
    have on h. K.41b
    not care/give/worth a h. G.28e
    red as a h. G.28e
    shoot from the h. K.48
hipe at E.19c
hippinable G.9b
hips are ripe, till G.3f
hip-shooter C.10b
hirsdel see hirsdel
hired to fight for anyone C.19a
hires the horse, he that E.16e
hirsdel (n) E.23a
    smit the hale h. E.23f
history
    old as h. J.28a
    study the h. of the four kings J.28c
hit (a/the)
    bricks I.40d
    buffers A.4c
    bull in the arse E.19c
    ceiling I.39e
    deck D.8a
    fool’s bolt may h. the white K.46
    for six K.33b
    good field, no h. K.34
    ground running C.10h
    it off E.10c
    jack-pot K.81
    nail on the head A.1c
    oft ettle, whiles h. C.10b
    on all four cylinders A.4d
    on all six A.4d
    on the gall E.15g
    out at K.33b
    over the thumbs J.19
    panic button H.13a
    pay dirt E.3a
    pin/prick K.46
    right K.46
    roof I.39h
    silk B.4d
    skids F.23b
    spot I.37a
    wall H.19
    white K.46
    with a berm-stick I.57a
hitch (n=stoppage) D.8b
   horses together E.14d
   wagon to star G.18a
hitched
   get h. E.14d
   in/up E.14d
hitching post E.15a
hither-go-there F.34b
hits
   once C.2a
   you in the eye K.40b
hive
   of activity, industry E.30j
   off E.30j
hiving off E.30j
ho, out of all F.10a
hoar
   as a hawthorn G.27e
   head and green tail I.54f
hoarse
   as (a/the) crow G.46b
      cuckoo G.53
      raven G.46a
      young rook G.46c
Hoath
   sleepy as hill of H. G.8a
hob
   is a good anchor D.15b
      play/raise h. J.5c
hobble (v) E.15d
   in/into a h. E.15d
hobbly road G.7f
hobby K.72b
hobby-horse K.72b
hob-nailed B.9d
hob-nob K.22d
hobran D.7a
Hob’s
   hog E.251
      in H.’s pound E.23g
hobs of hell I.75a
Hobson’s choice J.3c
hobstone, hell’s I.75a
hock, from soda to K.79d
hockey sticks, jolly K.35b
Hockin’s
   cats I.14b
   ducks E.26c
hoddidod, dreaming like G.39a
hoddy-doddy G.39a
   shape G.39a
Hodge wife, firm as J.36
hodge-podge I.60c
Hodges, lucky Tom K.60g
hodman F.33b
hoe
  another rig to h. F.20b
dull as a h. F.20b
hard row to h. F.20b
  into F.20b
replying about h. F.26b
your own row F.20b
hog (n and v) E.25a
  all of a h. stog E.25e
  basteth the fat h. I.60b
  better my h. dirty F.13a
  dirty as a h. E.25e
  eat/live high off the h. I.66e
  fat as a h. E.25a
  go the whole h. J.9d
  greedy as a h. E.25a
  grunted ring out of nose E.25g
  high as a h. E.25a
  his own apple E.25c
  Hob’s h. E.25l
  in armour C.5a
  live with h. E.25a
  lose the h. E.23f
  lousy as a h. E.25a
  never looks up F.13b
  on ice E.25f
  pisseth E.25a
  root h. E.25c
  routing like a h. E.25a
  sick as a h. E.25a
  steal a h. J.37
  wash h. E.25e
  wilful as a h. E.25a
  worst h., best pear E.25c
  young h. grunts like old sow E.25i
hog-age E.25a
hog-back(ed) E.25b
hog-fat I.60b
hog-headed E.25b
hog-high, talk E.25a
hog-killing time E.25k
hog-leg E.25b
hog-reek E.23h
hog’s
  back E.25b
  leg E.25b
  trough E.25c
  within a h. gape E.25b
hogs
black h. E.25b
call h. to hill E.25f
Essex h. E.25l
in harvest E.25f
root with the h. E.25c
run with the h. E.25e
to a bad/wrong market E.25j
hog-score K.31a
hogshead of, the whole K.18b
hog-tied E.25j
hog-trough, dance in K.9d
hog-wash E.25c
hog-wild, go/run E.25a
hog-yoke F.13c
ho-hum I.5e
hoist
   pennants D.19d
      with his own petard C.7b
hoisting my pennants D.19d
Holborn Hill H.21a
hold (a/the/his)
   all the aces K.79b
      at the long saw F.24i
         staff's end G.6c
baby I.2g
bag E.15b
brief for H.18c
buckle and thong C.5c
by a hair E.24b
by the masthead D.17f
candle for the devil J.63d
candle to A.5a
candle to the fire/sun A.5a
court C.13d
dog to h. H.6b
down C.10f
eel by the tail F.7b
either h. or plow F.15b
fast E.9a
feet to the fire H.16
field C.10f
fort C.12b
gate I.90a
get h. of thick part/wrong end of stick G.6b
ground C.10f
hand I.1b
hank in own hand G.10c
heed whom you h. by hand K.9a
him in the heft F.30c
hook and line F.7a
horn in his mouth C.6b
hot potato I.61d
in his nook I.39c
in hollow of hand I.30e
in hot water I.32a
in leash I.7a
kail hot I.61d
latch I.41d
Lawrence has h. of him J.40a
meal in mouth I.24b
mirror up to I.33e
nor h. the candle K.9e
nosebag E.15b
of the cat by the tail I.14b
on by monkey-tail C.17e
on h. I.5o
on like grim death I.38a
or cut bowstrings C.2a
pistol to head H.12a
pudden reeking I.59b
purse-strings E.1f
put on ‘h.’ A.4g
ring K.40a
scales even I.88a
serpent by tail G.44a
shall h. the candle K.9e
some trumps K.80
stage K.61c
stick in wood man’s eye I.35e
sticks to/with G.6b
tail in water E.12
to ransom C.11
together as men of Marsham F.2
torch for I.78c
two eggs in one hand E.28c
up fox’s tail F.34b
up head again I.21c
up poke E.25j
water G.5b
with bill in water G.45a
would not h. with loukin’ tongs F.9a
your horses F.10b
your kedge D.15b
your water I.29f
holding (a/the/his/her)
  breath I.24b
  in a h. pattern A.4c
  left h. baby I.2g
  left h. bag H.4
holds (a/the)
  as good h. the stirrup E.16b
  no h. barred K.41a
  up her head E.14b, E.28b
  wolf by the ears E.8d
hold-thee-by-the-wall I.89b

hole

  ace in the h. K.81
  and corner H.14a
  burns h. in pocket I.76c
  calls the thief H.2b
  climb out of own h. G.2a
  foxes smell their own h. first G.60a
  if badger leaves h. G.62
  if you are in h., stop digging G.2a
  in a h. G.2a
  in (a/the) ballad K.11
    coat B.7a
    doughnut I.71b
    ground G.2a
    head ×2 I.35e
    house I.39a
    water D.9b
  make a h. in B.6c
  mouse with one h. I.17a
  nineteenth h. K.38
  out in one K.38
  pick h. in coat B.6c
  put in a h. G.2a
  rat with only one h. I.17b
  shit his h. full I.29d
  square peg in round h. A.1c
  stop one h. in a sieve F.20b
  stops one h. A.7b
  swear h. in iron pot I.46b
  tod keeps h. clean G.60a
  tod winna scrape his ain h. G.60a
hole-in-the-wall I.39b

holes

  in a scummer I.47a
  pick h. in B.6c

holiday

  blind man’s h. I.34c
  busman’s h. F.8
  cow with a h. J.41b
  Crispin’s h. J.40b
  devil had h. J.63e
  Roman h. J.8g

holler

  see also hollow
  like a thatcher
  worm should not h. G.39b
hollerhorn, bored for E.19f
hollin buss G.27e
hollin’s green G.27e
holloa till you are out of the wood G.25b
Holloper found ratton bones I.66g
hollow (adj—laugh etc.) I.46d
   as (a/the) cambuck G.30b
   churn E.22d
   cuckoo G.53
   drum K.7a
   gun C.7c
   hemlock G.30b
   kex G.30b
   puckfice G.32
   shoe G.4d
   go up a h. log F.24h
   hold in h. of hand I.30e
   to the toes K.15c
hollow-hearted I.26a
holly, church tied to J.51
holly’s green G.27e
Holmby
   shine like H.E.7c
   shine like H. mudwalls F.3
holme bush, boar in G.61
Holt, go to K.50a
holy
   as a horse E.14b
   devil likes h. water J.63e
   not all saints that use h. water J.40b
   writ J.35a
Holyrood not built in a day C.12a
homage to, pay C.13b
home
   all his chairs at h. I.80b
   anchor comes h. D.15b
   and dry D.15a
   at h. I.4o
   at h., like sprat in pickle jug I.56f
   bring h. to I.4o
   come h. I.2b
   come h. to I.4o
   come h. to roost E.28d
   come h. with Penny Liggan I.4n
   come h. with your knickers torn I.1b
   cows come h. E.20e
   dirty linen at h. I.84b
   drive h. A.1c
   find your h. paddock C.17a
   get to h. plate K.34
   going h. I.4o
   in on A.4e
   living at h. E.1f
   long h. I.39a
   nearer h. I.4o
   nearest way h. D.16c
   no one at h. I.78e
nothing to write h. about I.5k
on A.4e
on the h. stretch K.79c
on the pig’s back E.25g
ram the point etc. h. C.12b
spring h. I.2b
strike h. C.1a
tries to get h. on 3-base hit K.34
women best at h. I.14c
home-brew K.16b
home-court advantage K.36
homely as mud fence E.7b
home-made thing I.51
Homer nods J.26a
Homeric laughter J.26a
homespun B.1e
homeward-bound stitching D.8a
homework, do your J.23
homing pigeons, lead K.52
hommel-corn see hummel-corn
hone F.31c
honest
a man as ever broke bread G.3d
sun shone on G.12b
trod etc. B.9a
a woman as ever burnt malt I.58a
as (a/the) cat… I.15a
looking-glass I.33e
mirror I.33e
priest J.44
sun G.12b
man and a good bowler K.39a
miller E.34g
to be an h. man A.5a
honesty in a penny E.1a
honey
a h. I.56d
all h. and muck I.56d
and nuts I.56d
bee sucks h. G.33a
broom yields h. I.82b
daub yourself with h. G.37a
dear-bought F.6a
flies taken with h. I.56d
for hurson I.56d
he that handles h. E.30k
in a bee’s mouth E.30j
is not for ass’s mouth E.30k
is not got by squeezing E.30k
is sweet E.30j
lick h. with little finger I.65c
milk and h. J.34g
no h. in his pot I.56d
old bees yield no h. E.30j
or all turd I.56d
sell h. to buy something sweet E.30k
shares h. with bear K.56b
sweet as h. I.56d
sweet as h. bee E.30j
tongue I.56d
too good for bear K.56b
virgin h. I.1a
wasp caught by h. I.56d
honeycomb (n) E.30j
    heart full as h. E.30k
work E.30j
honeycombed E.30j
honeyed words etc. I.56d
honey-fall E.30j
honey-flow, in full E.30j
honeymoon
    is over I.1c
snakes’ h. G.44a
honey-mouthed I.56d
honey-pigs K.67b
honey-pot (=attraction) I.56d
    (=children’s game) K.67b
honey-tongued I.56d
honour
    and profit H.4
buys no beef E.22a
maids of h. C.13c
without profit E.4c
hoo
    draw on my h. I.5j
in a h. I.59b
hood
    above a caul B.6i
hair grows through h. I.21a
have a h. on B.6i
makes not the monk B.6i
may not wear a furred h. B.6i
two faces in one h. I.33a
hoodwink H.11d
hoof
    black as dule’s h. J.63b
neither horn nor h. E.19a
on the h. E.29c
pebble in the h. E.15g
under the h. E.19f
hoofer E.14d
hook (a/the)
    above your h. D.13d
and eye B.5i
angle with silver h. E.12
at every finger G.47a
bait hides the h. F.7a
bait the h. F.7a
bight D.15b
finger before the h. F.16a
hold h. and line F.7a
ill shearer never gets good h. F.16a
Jack F.24h
let off the h. E.12
lift off the h. I.87a
, line and sinker D.13c
on his own h. I.43d
on my h. F.7a
on the h. E.12
or crook F.24h
put h. in field F.16a
sling/take your h. E.33c
someone into E.12
well-lost E.12
with h. at the end H.10
hooked E.12
hookey
blind h. K.79d
play h. F.24h
hook-fingered G.47a
hook-nosed I.43d
hooks
big fish caught with little h. F.7a
drop off h. I.41b
get h. into H.6h
off the h. I.41b
slip off the h. I.41b
hool to the house E.28d
hoolet see howlet
hooligan K.62d
hoop
cock-on-h. K.18c
go through h. K.59c
one knock on h. K.18b
round as a h. K.18b
shaly as rusty iron h. E.5b
thirteen staves and never a h. K.18b
hoops, go/jump through the K.59c
hoop-willow, pliant as G.27e
hooter, hen for a F.14c
hoot-owl, crazy/drunk as G.48
hop (a/the)
against the hill G.20a
around like dried peas I.54a
catch on the h. K.32a
go on the h. H.6f
in his neck C.10d
it H.6f
last rattler A.4c
like a parched pea I.54a
like steg on hot griddle E.27f
off the perch G.45a
o’ my thumb J.5b
play the h. H.6f
strike ball when on h. K.67b
twig H.6f

hope
and red rag D.13c
is (a/the) as cheap as despair F.1a
good breakfast F.6a
grief’s best music K.1a
lover’s staff G.6c
poor man’s bread F.6a
lives in h. K.9b
ray of h. G.12d
hopes

to see goose graze… E.27c
wreck on rock D.17d
Hopkins, don’t hurry E.2a
hopping like roach in skillet G.35c
hopple (v) E.15d
lops G.40
hop-pole E.31e
marriage J.8c
hop-poles, rain E.31e
hops, fast/thick as E.31e
hop-skip-and-jump pudding K.29d
horizon (n) G.10a
cloud on h. G.14c
low h. G.10a
on the h. G.10a
horn (n) E.5c
and ears F.12b
around the H. D.16e
auld toot on new h. E.8a
bear away the h. K.60e
blow a good h. E.8a
blow the buck’s h. G.64a
blow your own h. C.6b
button B.6b
cow stuck herself with own h. E.20b
crooked as a h. E.19a
doaf in the h. E.19a
dry as a h. E.19a
fond as a h. E.19a
graining in the h. E.19a
hard as a h. G.58c
have too much h. E.19a
hunters that blow the h. E.8a
in E.24a
in a h. E.19a, J.63h
in his mouth C.6b
in on E.20b
in your eye E.19c
ken spune frae stot’s h. I.65b
loud as a h. E.8a
lug and h. F.12b
make a blow-h. E.8a
neither h. nor hoof E.19a
neither tail nor h. E.19a
nick in/on the h. E.19a
nicked in the h. E.19a
out at little end of h. C.6b
ower many nicks in h. E.19a
round the H. D.16e
sleep sound as h. E.8a
soft h. E.19a
spoil a h. I.44c
spoon I.65b
too many nicks in her h. E.19a
toot on another h. E.8a
toot on his ain h. E.8a
wear a h. E.8a
horn-book
break h. J.20c
Henny Penny in h. J.20c
horner’s dead I.65b
hornet (n) G.34b
mad/mild/spiteful as a h. G.34b
hornets go free, let G.36b
hornets’ nest ×2 G.34b
horn-mad E.19a
hornpipe
dance the h. K.9a
dance the blanket h. K.9a
horns
auld stots hae stiff h. E.19a
blow devil’s h. off J.63b
blow three h. and bugle K.7b
caught on the h. E.19a
curt h. E.20b
draw(s) in h. G.39a
faraway cows have long h. E.20b
give h. for charity H.5
has got h. out now G.39a
has hay on h. E.19a
head and h. E.19b
in his bosom I.25b
let h. go with hide E.29a
lock h. E.19b
of a dilemma E.19a
off the kye E.19a
show h. J.63b
snail shoot out h. G.39a
take bull by the h. E.19c
takes grains out of h. E.19a
write on devil’s h. J.63b
hornswoggle E.19f
horn-top, slow as K.70
horn-wood E.19a
hornywinky G.54a
horologe, devil in J.63f
horrid G.58a
horse
all bells on one h. E.16k
and foot C.6a
and h. K.50b
and man C.6a
back the wrong h. K.54
badger’s h. E.34a
, Ball E.14b
best-shod h. doth slip E.16f
Black Jack rides good h. E.16d
blind h. fittest for mill E.34d
blood shows on grey h. E.14g
boisterous h. E.16i
brewer’s h. ×2 K.16c
broken-winded h. E.14g
buy a white h. E.15h
capel rides a good h. E.16d
cart before the h. E.5b
catch h. E.16g
Chinky’s h. E.14e
choke a h. E.15b
come for h. and harness F.10c
dark as inside of h. E.14b
dark h. K.50a
don’t look a gift h. E.14g
dressed up like h. marine D.19b
eat a h. F.6a
eat a man off his h. F.6a
eat like a h. E.14b
fadges like old h. E.14g
fart from dead h. F.10h
fast as h. can trot E.16f
find h. nest J.2d
fine as a h. E.14b
flog a dead h. F.10h
foaled of an acorn E.14a
for a sick h. E.15g
for the course K.50a
foreright as a h. E.14b
from ragged colt E.14a
galled h. E.15g
go mad on a h. E.16e
godmother E.14b
good h. needs good spur E.16j
good h. that never stumbles E.16f
grey mare the better h. E.14c
halter on dead h. F.10h
has neither h. nor cart F.21
he that hires h. E.16e
hearty as a h. E.14b
high h. E.16e
holy as a h. E.14b
hot as h. piss E.14b
hungry as a (lyle) h. E.14b
hungry h. makes clean manger E.15a
hurdles round a jumping h. E.15a
if two ride a h. E.16e
impatience is the h. E.16a
in a mill E.34d
in bells E.14b
judge h. by harness E.16k
kicking h. F.10b
lay load on willing h. F.10b
lead h. to water F.10e
lick his ear E.14d
like a kicking h. F.10b
like Jan Keat’s h. F.10g
live, h. E.15b
locking stable-door after h. E.15a
mad h. and rotten harrow F.15e
make running h. of jackass E.17a
man that rides the white h. E.16d
man that sought the h. E.16d
master’s eye fats the h. E.15b
mettle dangerous in blind h. E.14f
miller’s h. E.34a
more money than h. can shit E.14b
muckle h. E.15b
nail worth a h. E.15e
Nan o’ Roger’s blind h. E.14f
next the mill E.34d
nod as good as wink to blind h. E.14f
now you’re shaping—like wooden h. K.72c
of another colour E.14e
off thi h. E.16d
old h. for hard road E.14g
recognises chaff F.10e
slips quicker E.14g
that winna nicker E.15b
on high h. E.16e
one may steal h. H.5
play h. with E.14d
prick a free h. E.16j
proud as a h. E.14b
put no more on old h. F.10b
put plow before h. F.15b
quick h. F.10g
rather be your bible than your h. J.34a
rein up h. for it E.16h
resty h. E.16j
ride a free h. to death E.16e
ride the dead h. F.10h
ride the dun h. E.16e
ride the wooden h. K.72b
rides a wild h. E.16d
rub h. heels E.16e
run before h. to market E.16e
runaway h. ×2 E.16e
saddle for every h. E.16a
saddle his h. alone E.16a
saddle on the right h. E.16a
said the cock to the h. J.2j
scabbed h. abides no comb E.15g
scabbed h. is good enough E.15g
see a man about a h. I.7a
shoe the h. E.15e
short h. soon wispit E.15f
sick as a h. E.15g
slow h. reaches mill E.34d
sold a h. F.10f
spit for white h. J.8d
spur the willing h. E.16j
stalking h. E.8b
stop runaway h. E.16e
strong as a h. E.14b
tail of a h. E.17a
talk h. K.50a
that draws his halter E.16g
that is on its way E.15a
that wins doesn’t lose reins K.50c
that won’t bear his own provender F.10e
three on one h. K.60b
to spare F.21
tough as an old h. E.14b
Trojan h. J.26a
turd E.30f
wakken a dead h. F.10h
walking with h. in your hand E.16e
wary as a blind h. E.14f
wheezle like a h. E.14e
when h. is starved E.15b
where h. lies down E.14d
white h. C.16
who hath noon h. G.6c
will see the corn E.15b
Willy Wood's h. E.15b
win the h. K.77a
without a bridle E.16i
witty will buy a h. G.27e
won't break wild h. E.15c
wooden h. K.72b
work for a dead h. F.10h
work like a h. E.14b
horse-... E.14b
horse-and-buggy E.5c
horseback
   angels/devils on h. J.65
   beggar on h. G.7g
   man on h. K.15a
   sickness comes on h. E.16d
   tar on h. E.16e
horse-beans/horse-corn E.32f
horse-breaker E.15c
horse-collar, mouth like F.10c
horse-corn, hens free of E.28b
horse-feathers E.14b
horseflesh
   skill in h. E.15h
   tomtit on quarter of h. G.57
horse-kiss E.14b
horse-laugh E.14b
horse-leech G.42c
   daughter of h. J.34o
   for blood G.42c
horse-load F.21
horse-loaves E.15b
horse-nail of, make E.15e
horse-nails E.15e
   feed on h. E.15e
   knock into h. E.15e
horse-nest (n)+find a h. J.2d
horse-play E.14d
horse's
   big as h. head E.14b
   head swollen E.15b
   pull out h. tail J.3a
   straight from h. mouth E.14g, K.54
   ugly as h. head E.14b
horses
   beggars would ride h. G.7g
   cannot set their h. together E.14d
   change/swap h. in mid-stream E.16e
   earn it like h. E.17a
   for courses K.50a
Hicks’s h. F.10c
hitch/put/set h. together E.14d
hold your h. F.10b
skin off all dead h. F.10h
stampede the h. E.5c
white h. E.14b
wild h. would not… H.16
wildest colts make best h. E.14a
horses’ feet not on donkeys E.17b
horse-seed, eat F.10e
horse-sense E.14b
horse-shoe
fool finds h. E.15e
mouldy/rusty as h. E.15e
wear like h. E.15e
horse-swapper, swear like E.15h
horse-trading E.15h
hose
garlans bind his own h. B.6m
heart in h. B.9a
see back-seams of h. B.6m
shipman’s h. B.6m
sole my h. B.7b
soling the minister’s h. B.7b
wear yellow h. B.6m
Welshman’s h. B.6m
hosed and shod B.6m
hosepiping I.76e
hospitality, Newcastle G.8a
host (n) E.6d
reckon without h. K.26c
hostage to fortune C.11
hot
air I.74a
and heavy E.27a
as (a/the) black pudding I.66g
coals I.74a
fire I.74a
fire-cracker K.69
ginger I.56i
hell/hinges of hell J.62
horse piss E.14b
if he had bellyful… G.34a
mare’s piss E.14b
pone cake I.63a
quail G.57
three-dollar pistol H.12a
toast I.63b
Turkish wrestler’s j.-s. K.41c
volcano G.20c
awl A.1e
blow h. and cold J.2a
button issue K.72a
carry h. water with you I.59d
cat on h. bricks I.14d
cat round h. milk I.15c
cockles K.67b
cup of tea I.48c
enough to melt snakes C.17k
enough to roast ox I.60b
from the mill-eye E.34f
going h. K.73
go like h. cakes I.71b
grease I.60a
has had more...than h. dinners I.64e
have h. pudding for supper I.70b
head is so h. I.59c
hen on h. griddle E.28b
hold a h. potato I.61d
hold in h. water I.32a
hold the kail h. I.61d
in h. blood I.26c
in h. water I.84b
knife through butter I.53c
make it h. for H.16
needle ×2 B.5e
off the backstone I.62b
potato I.61d
seat I.74b
soon h. soon cold I.74d
steg on h. griddle E.27f
too h. F.33b
too h. to handle F.33b
trod H.13b
under the collar I.25a
water under ice D.6c
hot-bed I.90c
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  swear hole in i. pot I.46b
  talk leg off i. pot G.1
  teach i. to swim D.9c
  will A.3b
  with i. hands I.31f
  work in i. lung I.37d
ironbark (n) C.17a
  solid as i. stump C.17a
  tough as i. C.17a
ironbound coast A.3b
iron-grey A.3b
irons
  die in i. H.22
  in the fire A.3d
  new off the i. E.1b
  ower many i. in fire A.3d
  put i. in the fire A.3d
i’s, dot the J.20d
is
  nothing sacred? J.9a
  there no balm…? J.34r
isaac, throttled G.57
Isis, lift veil of J.9e
island (n) D.16e
  hounds on an i. E.10c
speech i. D.16e
Isle of Wight parson J.46
issue
  at i. H.15
  join i. H.15
Italian
  fine I. hand J.42
  football K.32a
itch (n) I.18f
  bear the i. I.30h
  fingers i. I.35b
  old as the i. I.35c
  scrat where it doesn’t i. I.30h
  slow as 7-year i. I.35b
  where you can scratch I.30h
itches, where it I.30h
itching (adj= eager) I.18f
  foot I.35b
  palm I.30e
Ithuriel’s spear J.24
ivory
  black i. E.4a
  leaden sword from i. scabbard C.4a
  tower E.4a
  white as i. E.4a
ivy
  cling like i. G.29h
  not care/give/worth an i. leaf G.29h
  pipe in an i. leaf K.6b
ivy-bush, owl in, geeking out of G.48
Ixion’s wheel J.1c
izzard, crooked as J.20c
J
jabber like bunch of blackbirds C.17j
jabble D.6b
Jack
  Adam’s devil J.63b
  bad J. J.4b
  ball the j. A.4c
  Cade’s chimney I.75c
  Chumley, ‘Sharply, too!’ F.17a
  come ashore, J. D.19b
  cousin J. I.4i
  hook J. F.24h
  in the morning I.4n
  like j. that is run down I.60b
  play the J. I.4n
  Rice couldn’t jump over K.50c
  up A.4a
jackal (n and v) C.17c
Jack-a-lent J.8d
Jack-a-making-pancakes I.60a
jackass I.4n
  makes no progress E.17a
  running horse of j. E.17a
Jack-at-a-pin A.5a
jack-boot C.5b
jack-bowl I.4n
jack-block I.4n
jackdaw G.46d, I.4n
  in peacock’s feathers G.46d
jacket
  dust his j. B.6e
  lace his j. B.5j
  red-laced j. C.15b
  straighten his j. B.6e
jacket-and-waistcoat B.6e
Jack-in-the-cellar K.18a
jack-knife (v and n) I.44b
jack-merlin I.4n
jack-pike I.4n
jack-pot, hit the K.81
jack-rabbit I.4n
  (=motorist) G.64c
jack-rafter I.4n
jacks, upon their K.39a
jack-snipe I.4n
Jackson, jammed like D.16b
Jackson’s
  end E.28d
  hens E.28d
  pig E.251
jack-weaver B.2a
Jacky Lingo’s sheep E.23a
Jacob Dawson’s wife I.1e
Jacob’s ladder J.34b
jade F.10f
jaded F.10f
jag, stepmother I.4j
jailor, fly as H.19
jailor’s conscience A.3a
jam
  in a j. D.10b
  money for j. E.2b
  on it I.63d
  put on j. I.63d
  tomorrow I.63d
jammed like Jackson D.16b
Jan
  Keat’s horse F.10g
  Lobb’s eyes I.35e
  slippery as J. Jakes G.39a
  Tresize’s geese E.27f
Jane
Hanoi J. K. 62f
straight J. from the workhouse I. 4n
Janet Harris’ shearsers’ meat F. 12b
jangle, if you don’t like J. 52c
January
and May G. 19b
bare as J. G. 19b
chickens E. 28d
molasses in J. I. 56l
Janus-faced J. 9c
Jap on Anzac Day C. 16
Japanese geometry J. 27b
jar
woodpecker j. head G. 57
jarbles drop off B. 7a
jargon G. 45a
jar-necked I. 46d
Jarrow, bump against D. 10b
jaundiced I. 35d
jaup (the)
(n) K. 19b
water F. 7a
Javanese brothel H. 11e
jaw
let the j. gae by F. 7a
like a sheep’s head, all j. I. 50g
words that crack/dislocate the j. I. 35f
jaw-bone I. 24c
jay (n) G. 46e
bad/peart as a j. G. 46e
skrike like a j. G. 46e
with a bean G. 46e
jay-bird (n) G. 46e
naked as j. G. 46e
jay-birds
don’t rob own nests G. 46e
jay-walker G. 46e
jazz I. 1b
jealous as three Bartelmy dolls K. 60b
Jedburgh
cast/justice H. 15
rain J. staves C. 3a
Jeddart justice H. 15
Jeffries, bad as H. 18a
jejunе J. 41a
Jekyll and Hyde J. 24
jell (v) I. 70e
together I. 70e
jell-poke, slower than D. 10b
jelly
damson into sweet j. I. 70e
nail j. to wall I. 70e
quiver/shake/tremble/wobble like j. I.70e
jellyfish (n) D.7c
  soft as a j. D.7c
jelly-roll I.71b
jemmy (v) H.2b
  Rule’s larks H.6g
Jenkin’s hen E.28b
jeremiad J.34r
jeremiah J.34r
Jericho
  at J.J.34g
  go/send to J.J.34g
  old as J.J.34g
jerk (a/the/his/her)
  chain K.59c
  circle j. I.5i
  each other off I.5f
jerkin, old coat makes new B.7b
jerk-water A.4c
jeroboam J.34j
Jerry berrin’ I.38g
jerrymander see gerrymander
Jerusalem cuckoo G.53
jess E.9b
Jesse, give J.34q
Jessie, more arse/cheek/hide than I.91b
jest breaks no bones C.10d
jesting with edged tools F.25
Jesus
  creeping J.J.36
  factor J.36
  nut J.36
  rob J.Christ… J.35c
jet, black as E.4c
jettison D.17f
jew (v) J.9a
  drop his bundle J.9a
  false as a J.J.9a
  look like a J.J.9a
  rich as a J.E.2a
  shave a J.J.9a
  wander like a lost J.J.9a
jewel (n) E.4c
  every j. needs a setting A.5b
  silence is a j. E.4c
  you had not found j. J.3a
jewels
  crown j. C.13b
  family j. E.4c
Jewish
  flag C.15a
  lightning G.15a
penicillin I.37b
piano K.8b

Jew’s
bowels I.29b
eye J.9a

Jews
some of my best friends are J.J.9a
two J. on a pay-day J.9a
jewshop, Ballarat C.17a
Jezebel J.34j
jib (v)+at E.14d
cut of his j. D.3a
jibby-horse K.59b
jig
is over/up K.73
Moll Peatley’s j. K.9a
jigs and reels, between the K.9a
jig-saw K.73
jihad J.9d
Jill, good J.4b
jilliver I.90i
jill-poke, slower than D.10b
jilt, gangs frae F.28b
jim see gim
Jim
give you J.Smith K.40a
jump J.Crow K.9a
jimmers
hung i’ t’ j. I.41b
loose i’ t’ j. I.41b
out of j. I.41b

Jimmy
Broadstock’s turkey-cock E.28f
Glover’s cat I.16
up the meadow E.32d
jink K.32a
jinks, high K.73
jinx J.7
Joan, merry as Pope J.39
Joan’s silver pin E.4e
job half-done J.50
Job
Orton E.2b
patience of J.J.34m
poor as J.J.34m
Job’s
comforter J.34m
poor as J.’s turkey E.28f
Jock
and his mother I.79g
, laird’s brother C.13f
Needle and J.Preen K.63
Tamson’s bairns I.4n
Webster J.63g
jockey (n) K.50a
   for position K.50a
   out of E.15h
jockey’s tail-end, tough as K.50c
jock-strap, Turkish wrestler’s K.41c
Joe, the marine, lazy as D.19b
jog (the)
   along with K.29a
   memory I.5i
jog-trot E.14d
John
   at night I.4n
   Audley K.60f
   Dear J.I.5k
   Doe and Richard Doe H.17
   Hancock I.4n
   Noble K.7a
   put your neck in the nick, J.H.21c
Tamson’s man+news F.34c
Tamson’s wallet K.11
Toy K.60g
John-a-Duck’s mare E.16b
John-and-Joan 1.20
Johnny
   at the rat-hole I.17c
   old J.I.4n
   rubber j. I.4n
   Uncle J. said quietness best noise I.4h
   up the meadow E.32d
John’s wife, braw as I.4n
Johnson’s end, go up F.3
Johnstone’s tippet B.6j
join (a/the)
   flats K.61b
   game of bowls K.39a
   giblets I.52c
   issue with H.15
joint
   out of j. I.35f
   put nose out of j. K.40b
joker (n) K.79a
   in the pack K.79a
jolly
   as sand-boy D.11
   hockey sticks K.35b
   pin K.3
   Robins K.11
jolt E.5c
jolterhead, as big a J.61
Jonah J.34w
Jonathan, David and J.34i
Joneses, keep up with K.29a
jostled about I.29f
jot J.26b
jouk and let jaw gae by F.7a
journey
  of a thousand miles G.7f
    shorter at one end G.7f
    snail deserves end of its j. G.39a
jovial J.14c
jowl, cheek by I.1b
joyful as back of gravestone I.38i
Judas
  goat J.35b
  kiss J.35b
judge (a/the)
  blade by haft F.30c
  car by paint job A.4f
  don’t j. man by coat B.6e
  grave as a j. H.18a
  horse by harness E.16k
  knowledge of racehorses by... K.50a
  not book by cover J.22a
  Rhadamantine j. J.1c
  say 'please' to the j. H.21a
  sober as a j. H.18a
  tree by bark G.27b
judgement
  Daniel come to j. J.25a
    of Solomon J.34j
judges coming to York K.58b
jug
  all one side like handle of j. I.46d
    less there is in a j. I.60e
    put it in your j. I.60e
    Ratcher’s cream j. K.22d
Juggernaut J.9f
juggins K.54
juggle with K.59f
juggle-meer, plum as G.23d
juggler’s box, round/sure as K.63
jug-handle (n) I.46d
    off like a j. I.46d
jug-handled I.46d
jug-head I.46d
jugular, go for C.3c
jugulate I.36e
juice
    stew in own j. I.60c
    sweeter the j. I.55j
juicy I.55a
Julius Caesar, dead as J.28b
jump (a/the)
  (n) G.40
  above my persimmon G.3f
  all over... C.10g
  and skip about like utick G.57
  around F.34b
  at I.7b
  besom J.8c
  cat won’t j. I.16a
  down throat C.10f
  gun K.29a
  high see high-jump
  if goat would not j. around E.24a
  Jim Crow K.9a
  like a cock at a grozet E.28a
  like a parched pea I.54a
  make frog j. into water G.44e
  of cock on dungheap E.28a
  one j. ahead E.10d
  out of skin I.18f
  over besom/broomstick J.8c
  round F.34b
  ship D.15e
  tell how far frog will j. G.44e
    rabbit can j. G.64e
  through hoops K.59c
  to conclusions K.29d
  when the wave is on the swell K.30b
jumped at it E.28a
jumping horse E.15a
jumping-off place D.15e
jumps
  choose how the cat j. I.16a
  way the cat j. I.16a
  way the maggot j. G.37b
  when the monkey j. C.17e
jump-start A.4d
jumpy
  as (a/the) bag of fleas G.40
    Mexican bean I.54b
June
  crow G.46b
  duck over J. bug E.26a
  happy as J. bug G.35b
  lazy/long as day in J. G.19b
jungle C.17b
  fever I.35d
juniper lecture G.28e
junk D.8b
juped B.61
jury (v) D.1a
  at a goose’s trial H.18b
still out H.18b
Westmorland j. H.18b
just (my/the/your)
barrow F.29
enough F.12b
glassy K.75
handwriting J.20d
harvest E.33c
job—for my brother... D.19b
thing I.1e
justice
Cupar j. J.54
even-handed j. J.25a
Jedburgh/Jeddart j. H.15
poetic(al) j. K.12
Jy, ragged as B.6g
K
kae (n) G.46d
ill company quo’ the k. G.46d
kae-witted G.46d
kaik about like a pet goose E.27f
kail
better k. in my cog F.6a
earn your k. F.6a
earns salt to his k. I.54c
froff as k. castocks E.31e
get k. through reek I.69c
groats in k. E.31e
het again I.61d
hold the k. hot I.61d
in riven dish I.69c
lose thi k. I.69c
make milk k. I.54c
of own groats E.31e
old k. sooner warmed I.61d
other folk’s k. E.31e, I.69c
rains k. F.6a
reek of k. I.69c
salt his k. I.54c
save wind to blow k. I.69c
seethe k. in his loof I.61d
sup k. I.69c
swine has gone through k. F.13c
tarrows on k. I.69c
tired o’ lang k. I.8a
water k. I.69c
wersh as k. custock I.69c
kail-blade, caller as F.30e
kail-pot’s callin’ yetlin smutty I.46b
kail-seed, sow wild F.15f
kail-worm G.38c
kailya(i)rd
feathers fly in k. E.28f
keep brock out o’ k. F.20c
not worth calling out of k. E.13a
kaim see kame
kaimt (adj) E.23b
as a tup-horn E.23b
kain see cain
kale see kail
kaleidoscopic K.72c
kalends, Greek J.26b
kame
rippling k. B.1a
sindle I.32h
kamed
cat when fleas are k. off her I.14b
to the lift I.32h
kamesters ay creeshy B.1a
kamikaze C.17a
kangaroo
closure/court/election/
feathers/freight/justice C.17h
kookaburra swallowed k. C.17j
loose in the top paddock C.17h
petrol/ship C.17h
kaput K.79d
Kate Mullet, knowing as I.4n
Kathleen Mavourneen K.11
Katie-bar-the-door H.2b
katzenjammer I.11
kebbuck
broken k. I.53e
mair crined than k. I.53e
whang off new-cut k. I.53e
kebbuck-heel I.31g
keck F.21
keckling see cackling
keck-meg G.46f
kecksy, dry as old G.30b
kedge, hold your D.15b
keek at his tail E.8c
keel (v) E.23f
on an even k. D.16a
over D.16a
keelack, witch in F.9b
keel-hauling D.19c
keen
as (a/the) cross-cut saw F.30a
gavlick F.28b
mustard I.56h
otter G.63b
razor I.32e
scythe F.26a
wamp G.34a
man of k. nose I.23e
o’ clockin’ E.28d
keen-bitten to make balk…too F.15b
keep (a/the/his/your)
abreast K.29a
afloat D.6a
ain grease F.21
anchors on D.15b
at arm’s length I.30c
at the stick’s end G.6c
ball rolling K.32a
banker’s hours E.1c
bant in the nick B.1d
beak/pecker up G.45a
beans in the sack E.31d
bill under wing G.45a
boiler clear A.4b
bone I.8d
cattle of the causey E.5a
cap on bottle K.19b
cart on wheels E.5b
cat in wheelbarrow F.29
channels open D.15a
chickens in back-yard E.28d
close tack to D.3c
cork on K.19c
country abroad F.23a
crown of the causey E.5a
decks clear D.8a
door open I.41g
dry rubs I.541
ear to the ground C.17a
end up D.9a
eye on the ball K.32a
feast till feast day J.41b
field C.10f
fish-guts D.13c
flag flying D.19d
foot on throat C.11
for rainy day G.14d
for sore finger/foot/leg I.37d
geese G.60a
ground C.10f
hair on I.21a
hand on halfpennies F.1b
hank in own hand G.10c
head above water D.9a
heps before mouth I.41f
in background K.14b
in blinkers E.16k
in cotton-wool E.6b
in front of the hound E.10b
in his own nook I.39c
in leading-strings I.3b
in line D.8b
in right path G.7f
in touch C.14b
in tow-line D.8b
it dark G.17
it in E.28a
it no longer than... F.29
it under your hat B.6i
kettle boiling I.59b
kinches with D.8b
lee-gauge of D.3b
locks clear D.10b
low profile C.10b
mell in shaft F.32c
nestling G.45f
no need to k. a cat I.13a
nose clean I.32d
nose in front K.51
nose to grindstone F.31c
off the grass I.85e
old man’s mill going E.34b
on a split yarn D.8b
on taking the tablets I.37c
on the trot C.6a
on tow-line D.8b
on trucking F.21
on your toes K.40a
out of kitchen I.58b
out of the rain G.11
oyster J.2h
pace with K.29a
pants on B.61
pants zipped B.61
pecker up G.45a, K.58b
pike in the thatch C.3b
place warm I.47d
plates in the air K.59f
pot boiling I.59b
powder dry C.7c
pudding hot I.59b
putt good K.29e
rake near scythe E.32d
ring K.40a
seats J.60c
shaft in mell F.32c
sheep by moonlight F.12a
shirt on B.6g
staff in own hand G.6c
steeks B.5e
straight in gears E.16k
swannery E.27e
tabs on E.2c
tail in water E.12
tail up I.10a
thumb up I.30g
tight rein on E.16h
to your own line E.8a
toe in pump B.9a
tongue prisoner H.19
track of E.10c
up with K.29a
up with own shadow 1.19
weather-eye open D.5
weather-gage of D.16a
wheel in nick B.1d
wig cool I.33i
wind to blow kail I.69c
wolf from the door I.41a
wolf to k. sheep E.23i
wool E.23h
wrapping paper on 1.5m
keeper wi’ varmint E.11a
keeping
best side out 1.46d
in/out of k. K.14b
keeps
another in the scabbard C.4a
coble head down stream D.10b
coming back like a song K.11
company with the Lambtons E.6a
company with wolf G.59
his locks clear/clean D.10b
play for k. K.75
up barrow-steel F.29
keffel E.14g
keg, powder C.7a
Kelsey’s arse, cold as I.31a
Kelso convoy G.7f
kelty, give him K.22e
kempers, corn’s no shorn by F.16a
Kemp’s shoes J.8d
kemsters ay creeshy B.1a
ken (a/the)
by my cog F.11b
my groats E.31e
spune frae stot’s horn I.65b
to soop the ice K.31a
whaur a blister may licht I.35b
which side of the penny K.77d
kench (n and v) A.3d
Kendal fox G.60a
kennedy (n and v) H.12a
kennel
  back to k. E.10a
  of hounds E.10a
  up E.10a
  who kicked your k.? E.10a
Kennetside-heads folk hae it before E.33c
kens (a/the/her)
  how to butter a whiting I.51b
  loan frae the crown o’ the causey E.26b
  mavis frae a howlet G.48
  selgh frae a salmon D.7b
  stake E.20a
  well k. the mouse I.13a
kenspeck(le) J.52b
kent (n) F.12b
  K. capon I.52a
  lass of K. G.8a
Kentish
  oyster D.12
  pippins D.15d
Kentucky windage C.8
keoup/keout I.9b
kep I.29e
  goose/goslin E.27f
kept
  bird in bosom H.6f
  like amber G.37a
  on tight crub E.16i
  to your cake and milk I.71b
kerchief, white as B.6n
kern, sweet as I.55k
kernel (n) I.55k
  he that will eat the k. I.55k
  play with the k. I.55k
  rough husk and fair k. I.55k
  sweeter the k. I.55k
kernels count the I.55k
Kerton, fine as B.1d
kesh, dry as G.30b
Keskadale yak F.24j
kest, give the E.32d
kestrel E.9e
kestrel-kites E.9e
Keswick, Ned o’ I.4n
ket I.50f
Ketherick’s pie I.66g
kettle
  always needs mending A.7b
  bear and k. J.2c
  boil the k. I.59b
brass k. I.46b

call each other pot and k. I.47e

crocking I.47e

furmitry k. I.47e

however black the k. I.47e

keep the k. boiling I.59b

lid to match k. I.47e

must stand on own bottom I.45b

of fish E.12

pot calls k. black I.47e

rattles most I.59b

scrape/scour k. I.47e

stir k. of sour broth I.60d

to his mare E.14c

kettle-hole I.47e

kettles, deep as divel’s J.62

ketty I.50f

keveller F.23b

kex, dry/hollow/light as G.30b

key (n) I.42b

(adj—industry) I.42b

church k. J.51

cold as k. I.42b

does not fit H.2b

for every lock I.42b

golden k. E.4d

in low k. K.3

in/out of k. with K.3

in the cat-hole I.42b

lower/higher k. K.3

major/minor k. K.3

of beggary I.42b

of the house I.42b

of the street I.42b

seek for the k. I.42b

to beggary I.42b

to poverty I.42b

under the door I.42b

used k. I.42b

key-cold I.42b

keyed up K.3

keyhole

surgery I.42a

whistler I.42a

keynote K.3

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<td>lower-deckers, open D.19e</td>
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<tr>
<td>lowest</td>
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<tr>
<td>ebb D.15e</td>
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<tr>
<td>swath E.32d</td>
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<tr>
<td>where dam is l. G.24c</td>
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<tr>
<td>where hedge is l. H.2a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lownde’s tup E.23b</td>
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millstane oot o’ Penan F.23b
millstanes, unbored E.34e
millstone
  corn under a m. E.34e
  hard as nether m. E.34e
  lower grinds as well… E.34e
  round neck I.35b
  see into/through m. E.34e
  trust no further than could fling m. E.34e
millstones
  between upper and nether m. E.34e
  weep m. E.34e
mill-wheel
  big as m. E.34b
  talk m. into grindstone E.34e
  wet as a m. E.34b
miln-posts/stoops E.34c
milsie, stringing the F.11b
Milton’s feast, Mrs. I.64a
mim
  as (a/the) Betty Martin I.4n
  dog without tail I.6a
  if butter wouldn’t melt I.65d
  lamb E.23d
  May puddock G.44e
  moudie G.68c
  mouse G.67
  pussy baudrons I.14b
mince words I.50g
mincemeat I.50g
mind (a/the)
  at back of m. I.85a
  boggles at E.14d
  corn pickles E.33e
  hanging concentrates m. H.21a
  like a sink I.85c
  load off/on m. F.33b
  mice at cross-roads G.7a
  month’s m. J.57a
  of a weak man D.5
  P’s & Q’s K.9a
  set m. at rest I.79g
  shop/store E.2b
  woman’s m. and winter wind G.13b
  your eye I.23b
    own duck-house E.26c
    own knitting B.5f
    step I.31f
    worm G.52d
mind-bender I.21d
mind-boggling E.14d
mind’s eye I.23b
mine (n—of information) E.3b
  his own seam F.23a
Mendip m. E.3b
silver in m. E.3b
minefield C.7b
miner, merry as F.23a
Minerva
invita M. J.9c
send sow to M. J.9c
ming miller’s eye out E.34b
minister’s
face J.47
hose B.7b
ministers, shadow I.19
mink (n) C.17h
  fuck like m. C.17h
minnie’s milk I.2d
minnow, Cyclops J.26a
minnows
  better than nae fish F.7a
  Triton among m. J.9b
mint (—condition etc.) E.1b
  devil’s m. J.63f
  of E.1b
  rich as the m. E.1b
miracles, saint that works no J.40b
mirage C.17a
mire
  at one end of it G.8a
  drag through the m. G.23d
  draw Dun out of m. K.42
  Dun is in the m. F.10g
  in the m. G.23d
  into the m. F.23d
  other in the m. F.10g
  pull horse out of m. F.10g
  stick in the m. G.4b
  tread in the m. C.6a
  when my mare was in the m. F.10g
mired F.10g
mire-snipe G.54c
  catch/meet with m. H.6g
  neb of a m. G.54c, H.6f
mirk night I.78b
mirked G.14c
mirlygoes, in the G.12b
mirror (v) I.33e
  best m. I.33e
  hold m. up to I.33e
  honest as m. I.33e
  image I.33e
mirth, ounce of I.88b
miscarry, ill vessels seldom D.15d
mischief
comes by the pound I.88b
has swift wings G.45b
is a fruit… E.30b
mise en scène K.61b
miser o’ Reston I.40h
miserable
  as (a/the) bandicoot C.17h
  half-drowned kitlin I.12
  pig in pattens E.25g
  rat in tar-barrel D.17f
  shag on rock D.7d
miserd to his bag E.1a
misers, like swans… J.2j
misfire C.7e
misfortunes G.45b
misguided G.10a
miss (a/the)
  as good as mile H.13b
  boat D.15e
  bus F.8
  catches K.33a
  charnle-pins I.77b
  cushion I.80c
  doesn’t m. a beat K.1d
  inch in a m. C.2c
  mark K.46
  never m. a trick K.80
  on all cylinders A.4d
missed
  by a whisker I.21b
  by the water G.27e
  your mother’s blessing I.5b
missionary position J.47
Missouri
  I’m from M. C.17a
  mule E.17e
mistake
  do not m. goat’s beard for… E.24a
  good sailor may m. D.16b
mistaken of the stuff B.4d
mistakes
  doctors’ m. I.36a
  more m. than haystacks E.32e
mistress
  if you can kiss the m. E.6a
  kiss the m. E.6a
mite (n) I.53e
  widow’s m. J.35c
mither (a/the)
  nest of rats I.17c
mithridate J.28a
mitten
better a wet m. B.6k
dead as a m. B.6k
get the m. B.6k
glack the m. B.6k
mittened cats catch no mice I.13a
mittens, claw up B.6k
Mitty, Walter 124
mix (a/the)
bottle I.37b
moggans B.6m
mixed
bag E.33c
sugar and sand H.8
mixen
marry the m. E.13d
wed over the m. E.13d
mixture
as before I.37b
rich m. I.40c
shotgun m. E.11a
moa, dead as C.17j
Mobberley
clock G.8a
Mode o’ M.G.18b
Moby J.24
mocassin, soft as C.17a
mocking-bird C.17i
mockish mare, ride/shoe the K.67b
Mode o’ Mobberley G.18b
modoc K.60f
moggans, mix B.6m
mogul C.13e
mohair suit B.6a
Mohammed to the mountain J.9d
Mohammed’s tomb/coffin J.9d
moil gun E.20b
moisten clay G.22c
moity, web o’ life very B.2e
molasses
in January/December/winter I.561
slick/sweet/thick as m. I.561
mole (n) G.68c
blind as a m. G.68c
gone to the m. country G.68c
out G.68c
slick/soft as a m. G.68c
Molechx G.68c
molehill, mountain out of G.68c
molehills, perform G.68c
molern G.51
Moll
at a christening J.56b
heron G.51
Peatley’s jigx G.51
Mollie went to church J.51
Moloch J.34d
momentum, gather/run out of J.34d
mommets, talks to J.9d
Mona Lisa K.14e
Monday
  Black Lad M. J.41a
  cobbler’s M. B.8a
  love on a M. morning I.1c
  morning quarterbacking K.32a
  not up to M. I.81b
  thrang as cobbler’s M.B.8a
Mondegreen, Lady J.25b
money
  begets m. I.1d
  burns hole in pocket I.76c
  cheese and m. I.1b
  coin m. E.1b
  comes like drops of blood I.26c
  eggs for m. I.87c
  fiddler’s m. K.2b
  for jam E.2b
  for old rope E.2b
  God never pays debts with m. E.2c
  has no smell I.23f
  in (a/the) both pockets D.19b
    letter I.5k
  in old m. E.1a
  is an eel in the hand F.7b
  is welcome G.4c
  licence to print m. E.1b
    , like muck F.9b
  made of m. E.1a
  makes mare go E.14c
  man without m. C.2a, D3c
  marries for m. F.34a
  Matty Murray’s m. E.1f
  Monopoly m. K.73
  more m. than a horse can shit E.14b
  my m. is on… K.54
  no m. in purse E.1f
  no m., no Swiss C.19a
  put m. on barrel-head E.2b
  put your m. where your mouth is K.77a
  run for your m. K.50b
  shake the m. tree E.30b
  sink m. in D.9b
  spend m. like sailor D.15a
  still has confirmation m. J.56c
  talks I.5a
tell m. E.1a
throw good m. after bad E.1a
throwing his m. about I.34f
to burn E.1a, I.74g
where there’s muck there’s m. E.13d
will make the pot boil I.59b
without love I.51b
money-box, would not trust with F.1a
mongrel I.6d
monitor (v) J.17
monk
  have a m. on B.6i
  hood does not make the m. B.6i
  runaway m. J.48
monkey (n) C.17e
  around C.17e
  bleed the m. C.17e
  chipping in K.8c
  cold enough to freeze… K.15a
  drive tin-tack with ton m. A.1c
  get m. up C.17e
  make a m. of C.17e
  melancholy as sick m. C.17e
  on a stick K.8c
  on the chimney I.17d
  on your back K.8c
  painted tail blue K.8c
  parrot and m. time C.17i
  put m. up C.17i
  softly, softly catchee m. C.17e
  Solomon’s m. I.17d
  ugly as a dead m. C.17e
  when I want m…. K.8c
  when the m. jumps C.17e
  with… C.17e
    (a/the) bandwagon K.1d
    buzz-saw C.17e
    mutch on C.17e
monkey-board K.8c
monkey-business C.17e
monkey-man C.17e
monkey-paw (v) J.7
monkey-puzzle tree C.17e
monkey-run C.17e
monkey’s
  breakfast C.17e
  fistx C.17e
  wedding K.8c
monkeys
  bag of m. K.59c
  barrel of m. K.59c
  barrow-load of m. K.59c
in glass shops C.17e
lead the blind m. I.91b
look goats and m. at E.24a
wagon-load of m. K.59e
you’ll get m. C.17e
monkey-see, monkey-do C.17e
monkey-tail, hold on by C.17e
monkey-trap C.17e
monkey-tricks C.17e
monkey-wrench in works, throw A.4a
monk’s hood, bean in J.48
Monmouth
        Macedon and M.J.25a
        St. finery I.86d
monolithic A.2
Monopoly money K.73
monster, green-eyed J.25a
Montezuma’s revenge C.16
month, flavour of I.71f
month’s mind J.57a
Monty, the full B.8e
monument, Patience on J.25a
monumental I.38i
mony a tod hunted I.38i
mool
        in wi’ a moudie G.68c
        more and m. F.24c
moolins, blow your F.24c
mools, married to I.1c
moon (n and v) G.18b
        above the m. G.18b
        aim at m. G.18b
        bark/bay at the m. I.9b
        beyond the m. G.18b
        blind dog will not bark at m. I.9b
        blue m. J.1a
        changeable as the m. G.18b
        cloak for the m. B.51
        cry for the m. I.3d
        does not heed… G.18b
        elephant on the m. J.30b
        hang the m. G.18b
        in flock-bed I.79c
        is a m….. G.18b
        look at them. G.18b
        made of green cheese G.18b
        man in the m. J.4b
        over the m. J.4b
        over the m. or down in the midden G.18b
        round as the full m. G.18b
        saw the new m. in the morning G.18b
        shoot the m. C.8
shoots at the m. G.18b
stare up at the m. G.18b
thinks it the m. G.18b
to spite the m. I.76d
ture as plantage to the m. I.90c
moonbeam, mild as a G.18b
moon-calf J.7
moon-eyed G.18b
Mooney’s goose E.27f
moonlight (v) G.18b
keep sheep by m. F.12a
moonlight-and-roses G.18b
moonlight-flit/-walk G.18b
moon-rakers F.9b
moonshine (n=nonsense) G.18b
bag of m. G.18b
in can I.47b
in mustard pot I.66h
in water G.18b
moonstruck I.34b
moor
bare m. G.4a
running of hound on m. E.10b
moorhen, Wauchope’s I.69b
moorland, poor as F.2
moose, snore like C.17h
moot (n) F.24b
point H.15
mop
Dame Partington and her m. I.83a
drunk as a m. I.83a
left sucking the m. E.6c
of hair I.83a
up I.83a
mopey as wet hen E.28b
mop-head I.83a
mops and brooms, all I.83a
mop-stick, death on a I.83a
morass G.23d
Moray man melting brass A.3c
mordant I.24g
more
and mool F.24c
belongs to marriage… I.1c
clout than pudding I.70b
fish in the sea D.13a
in the fruit G.26b
in the window E.2b
know Tom Fool J.3c
light a torch gives I.78c
mistakes than haystacks E.32e
of Samson J.34h
on the floor F.17a
pigs than dills E.25i
poke than pudding I.70b
royalist than the king C.13a
sacks to the mill E.34d
sauce than pig I.66e
says m. than his prayers J.60c
squeak than wool F.12b
strings to your bow C.2a
than a dish to wash I.83f
than meets the eye I.23b
than nits G.41
than parish churches J.51
ways to kill a dog I.10c
whistling than redd land F.15b
you stir E.13d
Moresby Hall folk E.6a
morfradite I.20
morgye D.13d
Morley’s ducks E.26c
morning
eyes bright as m. dew G.10a
for a m. rain G.14d
Jack in the m. I.4n
morning’s rain K.9a
mornings in one day, two I.81b
morns, man of many I.4n
Morpheus J.1c
morphrey I.20
morrow, good I.4o
Morse caught the mare F.10a
morsel
bitter m. I.65c
with one m. I.2e
mortal, grass and hay, we are all E.32c
mortar
beat water in m. I.36h
finger in m. I.40c
rich mixture, gude m. I.40c
thack and m. I.40h
mortarboard I.40c
mortified J.38
Morton’s fork C.21e
Mort-stone, may remove D.6a
Morva(h)
downs G.8a
fair K.60b
mosaic K.15d
Moses
basket J.34c
God made M.J.34c
meek as M.J.34e
mosquito
   kick eye out of m. G.37d
   ribbed like m. G.37d
Moss
   caught his mare F.10a
   nor sand F.19
   of one and sand of the other F.19
   stone gathers no m. G.21b
moss-back G.43e
moss-crop, white as G.31a
mosshorn E.19a
moss-wether E.23b
mossy G.43e
mossy-back G.43e
most
   men have a thorn I.41a
   things have two handles I.46b
mote in another’s eye J.35b
motes
   gets m. I.83g
   long straws no m. F.11b
   rank as m. I.83g
moth (n=one tempted) G.38a
   and rust J.35b
   cloth may have a m. B.4a
   gipsy m. G.38a
   lively as m. G.38a
moth-ball (v) B.4e
moth-balls, put into B.4e
moth-eaten B.4a
mother (n) I.4b
   bishop’s m. J.43
   good man’s m. I.4k
   Hubbard J.4b
   idleness is m. of I.4a
   ignorance is m. of I.4b
   killed his m. J.1e
   Machree K.11
   necessity is m. of I.4b
   never had a song but… K.11
   of (a/the) arts and trades I.4b
     corn I.4b
     counsel I.4b
     lovex I.4b
     meal-ark I.4b
     success I.4b
   sell m. for old bones A.7c
   take m. for a maid I.1a
   thinks sun rises on her child I.3b
   was cutting bread on you I.44b
mother-gate I.4b
motherhood, apple-pie and I.70c
mother-in-law’s breath I.4k
mother-of-the-mawkins F.9c
mother-of-the-mine I.4b
mother’s
  apron-strings I.33c
  babe is m. anchor D.15b
  black over the wife’s m. I.4k
  blessing×2 I.5b
  bran-bag I.57a
  child on m. breast I.2d
  go over m. thumb I.4b
  mild as m. milk I.2d
  milk I.2d
  milk in the nizz I.2d
  smock I.2b
  twinkle in m. eye I.5d
mothers-in-law, cats are like I.14c
mother-wit, ounce of I.88b
moths will eat cloth A.3b
motion, all of a G.44d
motions, go through C.14b
motley B.3a
motor bike, ash-tray on K.24
motty
  put in his m. F.1b
  shift your m. K.76
moudie
  mim as m. G.68c
  mool in wi’m. G.68c
moudiwarp
  skin soft as m. G.68c
  slike/smooth/snod as a m. G.68c
mould
  break the m. A.3c
  cast in…m. A.3c
  like wax K.65
  mouth full of m. F.6a
  on A.3c
  thick as m. butter E.22c
mouldiewarp, blind/fat as G.68c
mouldy I.50a
  as an old horse-shoe E.15e
moult, in the E.28b
moulter, miller got never better E.34g
moulwarp, nimble as G.68c
mount
  ancient as the M.D.15a
  ass J.8d
  formal as the M.D.15a
  white charger J.3b
mountain
  canary I.17f
come to Mohammed J.9d

goose C.17h

heifer E.21f

in labour J.2i

is good mustard I.56h

large m. to climb K.44

lion C.17c

murder on the m. H.12a

of G.20a

old man of the m. G.20a

out of molehill G.20a

oysters E.6d

mountain-chain D.15c

mountains

old man of the m. G.20a

promise m. G.20a

move/remove m. J.35b

road through m. G.20a

snow on the m. G.20a

mountebank’s fool K.60a

mouped manners E.34d

mourners, crowd the I.38g

mournful

as (a/the) curlew’s cry G.54b

  scrub dingo C.17h

mourning weed, black as I.38f

mouse (n and v) G.67

  back G.67

  bold m. I.13a

  cast a shadow G.67

  cat and m. I.13a

  cat watches m. I.13a

  chowed m. G.67

  dead m. feels no cold G.67

  drowned m. G.67

  drunk/dun as a m. G.67

  escaped m. I.17b

  frightened at a m. J.63d

  frog and m. J.2k

  full as blowed m. G.67

  girl in cotton stockings sees not m. I.17a

  hungry as church m. J.53c

  in (a/the) cheese×2 I.17a

  churn I.17a

  malt-heap E.34d

  milk I.17a

  pitch I.17a

  pot G.3e

  kitten bring m. I.13a

  lion beholden to a m. J.2b

  looks out of meal-barrel I.17a

make man or m. I.17a
make yourself a m. I.17a
mim/mum/mute as a m. G.67
poor as a church m. J.53c
produced a m. J.2i
proud m. I.13a
quiet as a cat waiting for a m. I.13a
quiet as a m. G.67
sarry m. (with but one hole) I.17a
shy/still as a m. G.67
tied with thread I.17a
timid as a m. G.67
tomorrow a m. G.67
trig as a m. G.67
trot on tea I.17a
wee m. G.67
well kens the m. I.13a
whisht/whist as a m. G.67
will bite in two a cable D.15c
wily m. I.13a
with only one hole I.17a
mouse-neeze/-nest G.67
mouse’s ear-’ole G.67
mousetrap I.17b
bait am. I.17b
every man to his m. I.17b
kittle as a m. I.17b
smell of blood I.17b
snappy as m. I.17b
moustache
handlebar m. K.45a
walrus m. D.7b
mouth (n—of river etc.) I.24a
as wide as oven I.62a
carry bone in m. I.8d
closed m. I.24c
creep into m. I.2h
don’t open m. I.65a
don’t open m. so wide I.24c
feather in m. G.45c
finger in m. I.3a
fish not caught if it kept m. shut F.7a
foam at the m. I.35g
from the horse’s m. E.14g, K.54
full of moulds F.6a
gift horse in m. E.14g
hand in bear’s m. C.17g
hand in dog’s m. G.2d
hand to m. F.6a
hang by the wicks of m. I.24c
hard in the m. E.16i
has large m. I.24a
have spoon at m. I.65a
heart in m. I.26a
heps before m. I.41f
honey in m. I.56d
in the wolf’s m. E.23i
like (a/the) bottom of baby’s pram I.2g
   bottom of crow’s nest G.46b
   bottom of p/c’s cage C.17i
horse-collar F.10c
keddle-maul D.13b
loop-hole C.12a
parish oven I.62a
torn pocket B.7a
Turkish wrestler’s jockstrap K.41c
vulture’s crutch C.17j
limeburner’s m. F.23b
of a bad dog I.8d
open m. wider I.24c
out of one side of his m.... I.5a
put your money where your m. is K.77a
put m. into small letts B.4d
put sugar in his m. I.65c
ready m. I.69d
scat abroad D.13d
screwed up like duck’s ferta E.26
short sack has wide m. I.24a
spoon in another’s m. I.65b
tongue too large for m I.24e
water I.65a
wouldn’t spit in m. I.24k
mounds
   stand with fingers in m. I.3a
   stop two m. I.2e
mouton enragé E.23a
move (a/the)
   goal-posts K.32a
   heaven and earth J.65
   mountains J.35b
   stakes E.3a
   Tottenham Wood F.24b
movement at the station J.25b
moving, would bring ache to gate- post G.10c
mow
   down E.32c
   nearest the m. [mouth] I.26a
mowed up E.32e
mown, thin meadow soon E.32c
moyle, stubborn/wicked as E.17c
Mrs.
   Grundy J.24
   Milton’s feast I.64a
much
cry F.12b
matter I.48a
smoke G.5a
too m. on your plate I.65a
muck
and nettles E.13d
bag of m. F.9b
cheap/common as m. E.13d
die in the m. E.13d
does no good till it’s spread F.9b
drunk as m. E.13d
duck to m. F.14a
for the sake of the m. E.13d
fother for your m. E.13d
honey and m. I.56d
laal/little set by as m. E.13d
mad/mean as m. E.13d
or nettle(s) E.13d
pig in m. E.25e
rich/sick/soft as m. E.13d
riches are like m. F.9b
sow in m. E.25e
there’s money E.13d
throw m. at G.2b
to the midden E.13d
wet as m. E.13d
muck-fork, bear with K.56b
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nickels, don’t take any wooden E.2b
nicker (v) E.14b
like a cursour E.15b
old horse that mauna n. E.14b
old nag that winna n. E.15b
nicks in horn ×2 E.19a
nick-stick, has lost his F.24f
niece with, hand for I.1b
niffers wi’ old Nick J.63d
nigger
girl’s left tit I.25b
in woodpile F.34a
work like a n. C.17a
nigger-head C.17b
nigger’s
dark as inside of n. pocket B.6n
flat as n. heel I.31g
niggers in snow-storm C.17b
night
all right on the n. K.61b
black as n. G.17
brings crows G.46b
close as n. G.17
come to ae door at n. I.41a
Dilly-Dally brings n. I.82a
grown at n. G.6a
is a pup I.6d
John at n. I.4n
mother of counsel I.4b
nothing done at n. E.25b
of long knives C.16
on the yarnwinds B.1f
owl G.48
ships that pass in the n. J.24
silent as n. G.17
thief in then. H.1
two-dog n. C.17a
watch in the n. D.19b
night-cap B.6i
night-hawk G.57
nightie, bride’s I.1c
nightingale
and cuckoo G.57
Cambridgeshire n. G.57
Dutch n. G.57
fen-n. G.57
nightmare J.5c
night-owl G.48
night-watchman A.4f
Nile, serpent of old J.25a
Nim nor Doll H.1
nimble
as (a/the) bee in tar-barrel G.33a
blind cat I.13a
cat I.11
cat on hot backstone I.14d
cow in cage E.20d
eel (in sandbag) F.7b
feather G.45c
flea G.40
moulwarp G.68c
new-gelt dog I.10a
ninepence E.1a
squirrel G.65
stone trough F.10e
hare is n. E.10d
nimmel see nimble
nine
go the whole n. yards I.40c
lives, like a cat I.11
no bread in n. loaves I.63a
on cloud n. J.9a
pigs in a rat E.25i
ways for Sunday I.81b
with the tail cut off J.27a
nine-bob note, queer as E.1a
nine-holes, in the K.39b
ninepence
in the shilling E.1a
neat/nice as n. E.1a, K.76
nimble as n. E.1a
noble to n. E.1a
pay old woman her n. E.1a
pig at n. E.25j
right as n. E.1a
shilling to n. E.1a
to nothing E.1a
ninepins, go down like K.76
nines, up to the J.27a
nineteen bits G.3f
nineteenth hole K.38
nip (a/the)
and tuck K.41b
at the heels of E.18
brier in bud I.90g
clean as n. I.90i
curn in two I.57a
in the bud E.30d
near/nice/tight/white as n. I.90i
nip-lug, at K.55
nippen, dead as J.66c
nipping the pies I.62a
nit (n) G.41
dead/poor as a n. G.41
nit-picking G.41
nits
and lice in his head G.41
will be lice G.41
nitty now G.41
Nixon (n and v) C.21d
nizz, mother’s milk in I.2d
no
bird can sing without seed H.6f
bread in nine loaves I.63a
carrion will kill crow G.46b
cherry without its pip I.55i
cock een out K.58b
cross, no crown J.36
door! K.60f
dumb man gets no land E.7a
fit to draw a herring… I.61a
flies on… G.37a
free lunch K.26c
garden without its weeds I.90b
hell like a troubled conscience J.62
holds barred K.41a
land without laugh/stones E.13b
larder but has its mice I.43a
lock will hold… I.42a
longer pipe J.35b
make no bones about I.66b
man loves his fetters H.19
man’s land F.2
mill, no meal E.34d
money, no Swiss C.19a
more feeling than a smoothing iron I.84f
more like than fletcher and bolt I.84f
more sark than will cover his back B.6g
more to him… E.19d
more wit than a stone G.21b
stool I.80b
names, no packdrill C.13h
need has no law H.15
oil-painting K.14d
penny, no Paternoster J.57b
Placebo J.57a
pipe, no pudding K.6c
point of no return C.10h
reek without heat G.5a
root, no fruit E.30b
rose without thorn I.90g
show without Punch K.60d
small drink K.22c
smoke without fire G.5a
song, no supper K.11
sunshine without some shadow G.12b
tickee, no washee I.84h
tomorrow I.81b
tree bears fruit in autumn… E.30b
two ways about it G.7f
venom… G.44a
way to run a railroad A.4c
wheat E.33d
wool so white B.3a
Noah’s ark J.34b
nobility without ability I.70b
noble
   as John N. said K.7a
   as the race of Shenkin C.13a
   plant E.31a
   to ninepence E.1a
   yellow as a golden n. E.1a
nobody tries trap I.17b
nod (v) I.5g
   from a lord I.64b
   give n. towards I.5g
   /wink to blind horse E.14f
nodding at the sexton I.38a
Noddy, Tommy I.4n
nods, Homer J.26a
no-frills B.5j
noise
   balloon makes loudest n. K.72c
   empty drums make most n. K.7a
   megrim wants n. I.35a
   more n. it makes coming out of jug I.60e
   more n. than a sheep-shouter F.12b
   stars make no n. G.18a
   to waken the dead J.66a
noisy as (a/the) goose E.27a
   nest of pianets G.46f
   tinkler A.7b
none
   knows weight of another’s burden F.33b
   so deaf… I.34d
nonplussed J.32
non-starter K.50a
nood, thick as G.25b
noodle, sharp as wet I.70a
nook
   do your n. I.39c
   far n. I.39c
   hold him in n. I.39c
   in the n. I.39c
   keep him in n. I.39c
   stand your n. I.39c
nooked I.39c
nooks, hang your F.33a
nook-shotten I.39c
noonday
   bright/clear as n. G.12b
   sun at n. G.12b
noontide, wakken as G.12c
noose, run head into H.6d
Nora’s ear, whisper in G.20a
north
   as far n. K.60b
   Crawley G.8a
deep as the n. D.16d
眼 I.23b
gone n. about D.16c
hard as n. toad [=tod] G.60a
too far n. K.60b
wind×2 G.13d, I.82b
northern star, constant as D.16d
Norway bull, voice like E.19b
Norwegian steam D.4
nose (v) E.10c
(n) I.23e
ahead K.50b
around E.25c
better snotty child than n. wiped off I.2g
bite/snap n. off G.2d
break my n. I.3c
camel gets n. in tent C.17h
Cleopatra’s n. J.28b
cost as much to paint I.85a
cut off n. to spite face I.23e
didn’t blow it out of n. I.23e
ding on the n. K.40b
fit for a mazzard-picker G.28c
follow your n. G.10a
get up n. G.37a
have a good n. for E.10c
have beans up your n. I.54b
have ring through your n. E.19b
he that has a big n. I.23e
in every man’s turd I.29d
in the air I.5d
in the manger E.15b
into every man’s pot I.8a
is closest to eyes I.23e
keep n. clean I.32d
keep n. in front K.51
lead by then. F.11a
liberty ends where nose begins I.23e
like (a/the) bubblycock’s neb E.28f
   coulter of plow F.15a
Halifax door-handle G.8a
look down n. at I.23e
make bridge of n. G.9c
make his n. swell I.35e
man of keen/long n. I.23e
narrow in the n. E.25j
needs a good n. F.13b
no skin off my n. I.23e
not lose droppings of n. I.32d
of wax K.65
on his own sleeve I.32d
on sleeve to save handkerchief I.32d
on the n. K.62e
out E.25c
out of joint K.40b
pay through the n. F.34a
pepper in the n. I.66h
plain as the n. I.23e
poke n. into E.25c
put beans up your n. I.54b
ring in n. of pig E.25g
rub n. in it I.7b
see to the end of n. I.34c
shoot through the n. C.10b
snatch from under n. H.3
snotty n. I.23e
so red it would ripen cucumbers F.20c
stocking on man’s n. B.6m
sun-tan on your n. B.6m
take snuff in n. I.77e
to grindstone F.31c
to light candles at I.77b
to stab geese E.27f
turn up n. at E.19d
under his (very) n. I.23e
wash its n. off I.2g
well down E.10c
would not make shoeing-horn B.9a
wipe the n. of I.32d
nosebag, hold the E.15b
nosebags E.15b
nosebleed, more fun than I.35c
nose-dive C.10h
noseful, hen’s E.28b
nosey E.25c
nostrils, stink in I.23f
nostrum I.37b
not (a/the)
bat an eyelid I.23b
care a…for see not worth
care if cow calves… E.21b
carved in stone J.34c
cricket K.33a
dry behind the ears I.2g
fit to turn a dog out in I.10a
give a…for see not worth
have both oars in the water D.2b
God above J.33
in the race to K.29a
in the same street as I.85b
know from see under know
more royalist than the king C.13a
on your tin-type K.14f
only pebble D.11
penny the better/worse F.1b
put a foot wrong K.9a
rightly garreted I.39g
say cheese I.53e
say quack E.26b
so much a programme K.62e
straw between them F.17d
to be sneezed at I.5d
waving but drowning J.25b
windle G.4a
with a bang but a whimper J.25b
word of Penzance C.16
worth (a/an/the) apple I.55b
  band’s end B.5i
  bawbee F.1b
  bean I.54a
  blackberry G.28f
  blue point B.5i
  bodle F.1b
  bottle of hay E.32e
  brass button B.5i
  brass farthing F.1b
  bristle of swine E.25b
  bucket of warm spit I.24k
  bumper K.24
  button(-top) B.5i
  cackling (—eggs) E.28c
  calstock=castock E.31e
  candle K.73
  castock E.31e
  cherry I.55i
  chip A.1b
  chuckstane A.1b
  clod F.19
  cobbler’s curse B.8a
  continental E.1a
  cracker I.71e
  cress I.54d
  crumpet I.71c
  cuckoo-spit G.35d
  cup of cold water I.49c
  curse I.5e
  cutty-spoon I.44c
  dad of a bonnet B.5k
  damn I.5c
  docken leaf F.20c
  dodkin F.1b
  dog-louse G.41
  doit F.1b
dump F.1b, K.75
egg I.52e
fart I.29c
farthing F.1b
farthing-dip I.77a
fig I.55h
flea G.40
flip/flirt I.5f
fly G.37a
gnat G.37d
gooseberry I.55j
gowan G.30a
groat E.1a
haddock D.13d
hair I.21a
Harrington F.1b
hatful of crabs G.28a
haw G.28e
hen E.28b
herring D.13d
hill of beans E.31d
hip G.28e
his salt E.6d
ivy-leaf G.29h
leek I.54f
louse G.41
lungs of flea/louse G.40
maravedi F.1b
needle B.5d
nut G.28h
nutshell G.3f
onion I.54e
pea I.54a
pear I.55d
peeled codling I.55b
peg I.84e
pin B.5b
pinch of coon shit C.17h
plack F.1b
plugged nickel F.1b
point B.5i
potato I.54l
powder and shot E.11a
preen B.5b
pudding-prick I.57b
rap F.1b
red cent F.1b
rope’s end for… D.3a
rotten apple E.30f
row of beans E.31d
row of pins B.5b
rush G.31b
salt to poddish I.60e
shelled pea-cod I.54a
shoe-buckles B.8c
shuttle-cock K.37b
singed hair I.32g
sloe G.28d
snap of fingers I.5f
straw I.79b
three halfpence F.1b
three louse-skips G.41
thrum B.2f
tinker’s curse/damn A.7b
traneen G.31a
turd E.13d
two straws I.79b
twopenny ticket F.1b
worthy to carry books J.22a

notch (a/the)
  first C.7c
  get up a n. K.28
  up C.7c
notches out of the scythes F.16a
note
  make a n. J.23
  strike a false/the right n. K.1b
nothing
  comes out of sack E.33e
  dries sooner... I.23b
  like leather B.4e
  sacred? J.9a
  sharpens the sight I.23b
  to write home about I.5k
  turns sourer than milk E.22b
  without trouble I.74g
nourish (a/the) (v) I.2e
  viper J.2k
now
  nitty n. G.41
  up, n. down I.49a
nowt
  is never in danger F.1a
  ’s impossible F.31c
  to wed with E.15d
nowt-horn, cold enough to pierce E.19a
nudge
  give a n. I.5i
  way into I.5i
nugget E.3a
numb I.35e
  as (a/the) beetle F.32c
  hagstock F.30d
post F.18c

number
  back n. I.5n
  eating the n. off his plate F.6a
  have his/her n. C.13g
  is up/ written on bullet C.10b
  opposite n. K.32a
  take his n. C.13g

numberless as the sands D.11

numbers (a/the)
  by penny n. J.24
  waves D.6b

nun
  chaste as veiled n. J.49
  in a knocking shop J.49
  pregnant n. J.49
  weeding asparagus I.90c

Nunc dimittis, sing J.57a

nun’s hen, nice as J.49

nurse (n and v) I.2d
  cat I.14b
  valued I.2d

nursed in cotton E.6b

nursery (n) I.2d
  slopes I.2g

nurses at christening J.56b

nurse-tree I.2d

nuss (n) I.2d

nut (n) G.28h
  crack that n. I.55k
  deaf n. G.3f
  guess at the n. I.55k
  hard n. to crack I.55k
  he who would eat the n. I.55k
  heart of the n. I.55k
  Jesus n. J.36
  lost with a n. I.55b
  neither n. nor gall in you I.55k
  not care/give/worth a n. G.28h
  screw the n. A.4a
  sledge hammer to crack a n. F.32c
  sound/sweet as a n. I.55k
  sweet is the nut, but… I.55k
  thou can crack that n. I.55k
  tough n. to crack I.55k
  when ripe G.28h
  you are a sweet n. I.55k

nut-brown G.28h

nutmeg-grater I.56a

nutmegs, don’t buy any wooden I.55k

nuts
  and bolts of A.4a
crack n. I.55k
deaf n. G.3f
dry as n. I.55k
from soup to n. I.64a
gods send n. I.55k
honey and n. I.56d
no bushes, no n. G.28h

nutshell
heart in a n. G.3f
in a n. G.3f
not care/give/worth a nutshell G.3f
piss in one n. G.3f

notting-bag/-poke J.63b

O
oaf as Bull’s dog I.7d

oak

and the rind F.24g
close as grain of o. A.1a
cut down o. E.30a
hard as o. A.1a
heart of o. A.1a
is not felled×2 A.1a
Keskadale o. F.24j
oil of o. I.37e
strong as o. A.1a
towel I.32a
try shaking another o. F.13b
wedge of o. F.32a
within a mile of an o. G.10a

oak-bottomed D.1a

Oakley, Annie K.48

oaks
fell great o. F.24e
from little acorns E.30a
may fall G.27e
storms make o. root deeper G.27e

oakum boy, Adam was D.19b

oar
chained to o. D.2b
in another’s boat D.2b
pull at the o. D.2b
pull/ply the labouring o. D.2b
pull the stroke o. D.2b
put/shove your o. in D.2b
row with one o. D.2b
tug at the o. D.2b

oars
choice of o. D.2b
not have both o. in water D.2b
rest on your o. D.2b
with such o. D.2b
work the o. D.2b
oater E.15b
oath-sicker I.5b
oatmeal
  all the world is not o. I.68
  give him o. I.68
oats
  everyone swale his own o. E.33e
  feel your o. E.15b
  get/have your o. E.15b
  off his o. E.15b
  other o. to thresh F.17a
  sow wild o. F.15f
  you bring him o. E.15b
Obitch’s colt E.14a
object G.2c
  of the exercise C.10e
obliterate J.20e
obscene J.11
obsession C.12b
obsessive C.12b
obstinate as a mule E.17c
obstreperous G.2d
obstruct C.12a
obviate G.10a
obvious G.10a
Occam see Ockham
occasion for all C.21c
occasion’s head is bald I.33a
occur I.5g
ocean (n) D.6a
  drop in the o. D.6a
oche, off the K.73
Ockham’s razor I.85f
o’clock it is, find/know what I.81e
October
  leaves in O. G.25b
  wasp G.34a
octopus D.7c
odd
  as Dick’s hatband B.6i
  as Oliver’s behind I.31a
  fish D.13d
odds
  against (all) o. K.54
  are against K.54
  makes no o. K.54
  shout the o. K.54
odour (n) I.23f
  die in the o. of sanctity J.40b
  in bad o. with I.23f
odyssey J.26a
Oedipus complex J.1c
oestrus G.37c
off (a/the/his/your)
  at the nail F.31c
  base K.34
  beam A.4e
  beaten track G.10a
  block(s) K.29a
  charts K.62e
  chest I.24k
  course D.16b
  cuff J.21b
  eggs E.28d, I.52f
  fang I.49b
  for a loiter-pin K.15b
  get o. the block K.29a
  gilt is o. I.71d
  gley I.34c
  guard K.43
  hinges I.41b
  hooks I.41b
  like a jug-handle I.46d
    long-dog K.51
    star-shot G.18c
  map J.29
  nail K.3
  oats E.15b
  oche K.73
  on a different tack D.3c
  onions F.20c
  own bat K.33b
  pannikin F.12b
  pin/wire A.4a
  plate I.65a
  rails A.4c
  rate-book C.21e
  reel×4 D.16a
  right o. the bat K.34
  rocker I.80b
  stick-end G.6b
  stob I.40h
  thi horse E.16d
  top of his head I.21c
  track A.4c, G.10a
  trolley F.23a
  turf K.33b
  wall I.39d, K.37a
  we go again J.63h
offal
  and boiling pieces I.50f
  well E.29a
off-base K.34
off-beam A.4e
off-beat K.1d
off-colour I.33d
offed I.78e
offend (v) G.10a
offer
   sporting o. K.54
   you an egg G.3e
office
   piano K.8b
offing, in the D.16a
off-key K.3
off-net C.10i
off-ox F.15c
   not know from Adam’s o. F.15c
   poor as God’s o. F.15c
   stubborn as Adam’s o. F.15c
offscourings I.83f
off-scum I.83f
offshoot G.26c
off-sider F.15c
off-target C.5a
off-white I.33d
oft ettle C.10b
often to the wall I.46a
oggin F.13b
oil (a/the)
   and vinegar/water I.56k
   grit in the o. A.4a
   his lug I.37g
   if there’s no oil in lamp I.78b
   in/out I.78b
   knocker 1.41c
   of birch/hazel/oak/strap I.37e
   on troubled waters D.6a
   out I.78b
   palm I.30c
   palm o. I.56k
   pouring o. on fire I.73d
   slape as o. I.78b
   smell of o. J.23
   smooth as o. I.78b
   strike o. E.3d
   sweet o. comes to the top I.56k
   to fire/flames I.73d
   to my lamp I.78b
   tongue I.56k
   wheel(s) A.4a
   wig I.32i
   your tongue I.53c, I.56k
oil-bottle in pocket A.4a
oil-butt D.15d
oiled
as a diesel train A.4c
slippers B.9e
oil-painting, no K.14d
oil-rag, live on smell of A.4a
oily (adj) I.56k
as middle of cart-wheel E.5b
talking to engineer, not the o. rag A.4a
ointment, fly in the J.34p
ointments
precious o. in small boxes I.37e
old
Adam J.34b
apes have o. eyes C.17e
as (a/the) Abraham’s mother J.34b
Adam J.34b
age of stone J.30d
Aldgate G.8a
ark J.34b
Atty Hayes’ goat E.24a
Charing Cross G.8a
circus jokes K.59g
creation J.34b
Eggardon Hill G.20a
Eve J.34b
defalls G.20a
Glastonbury Tor G.20a
grandfadder hat B.6i
hills G.20a
history J.28a
itch I.35c
Jericho J.34g
Killylea bog G.23d
Knock Cross G.8a
man J.30d
Methuselah J.34b
Pandon Gate G.8a
Paul’s J.51
Paul’s steeple J.52a
Pendle Hill G.20a
poverty F.1a
serpent J.34b
Walker Broo G.8a
be o. dog at E.18
bees E.30j
beeswing G.33a
better shelter under o. hedge G.4b
birds with chaff H.6f
bottles J.35b
Brigade C.13g
buy o. boots B.10a
cat I.15c
cat die I.16b
cat to an o. rat I.13a
cat will not burn himself I.14d
chains F.10c
claw an o. man’s pow I.30h
cloak makes new jerkin B.7b
clothes J.35b
cock crows, as the E.28a
cocks don’t like it E.28a
cross o. witch out J.6a
dog bites sore G.2d
dog does not bark I.9b
dog for agate E.18
dog new tricks I.7b
easy as o. shoe B.9a
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  stupid as o. G.48
  to Athens D.15d
  to be frightened by o. G.48
owl-show/-taxi/-train G.48
own
  christen o. child first J.56b
  if you don’t o. a mount E.8c
  is in o. clothes B.6a
own-goal K.32a
ox (n=fool) E.19e
  black ox F.11a
  clumsy/dumb as ox F.15c
  fling-at-the-brod ne’er a good ox E.20e
  hot enough to roast an ox I.60b
  in war C.18
  is never wo F.15e
  muzzle not the ox J.35g
  old ox, straight furrow F.15c
  plow with ox and ass F.15d
  steal an ox H.5
  strong as an ox F.15c
  swallow an ox I.66c
  when ox is down E.29a
ox-bow F.15c
oxen
  helps his o. E.5b
  plow before o. F.15c
  plow with such o. F.15c
  team of o. F.15c
  ten o. F.15c
ox-eye(d) E.19e
oxter
  come with crooked o. I.30c
  head under o. I.5g
oyster (n) D.12
  choking o. E.6d
  close as a Kentish o. D.12
  gape like an o. D.12
  keep the o. J.2h
  no more like than apple to o. I.55b
  open o. with bus ticket E.6d
  stopping o. E.6d
  undone like an o. E.6d
  world is mine o. E.6d
  Yorkshire o. G.8a
oyster-catcher, loan of J.2j
oyster-part D.12
oysters
  drink to your o. E.6d
  dumb as o. D.12
  mountain o. E.6d
  would be profitable I.51a
P
P’s and Q’s K.9a
pace
go the p. K.29a  
keep p. with K.29a  
set the p. K.29a  
stay the p. K.29a  
paced like an alderman E.6d  
pace-egger, drunken J.8d  
pace-maker/-setter K.29a  
paces, put through K.59b  
pack (a/the)  
awls B.8b  
diamonds in packing cases I.5m  
every pedlar carry own p. A.7a  
fifty cards in p. K.79a  
for England C.17a  
go to the p. G.59  
joker in the p. K.79a  
lead the p. E.10b  
loose/lowse the p. A.7a  
many can p. cards K.79a  
no p. without a knave K.79a  
of cards K.79a  
open the p. A.7a  
pedlar praises own p. A.7a  
punch K.40a  
runt with the p. E.10b  
send to the p. G.59  
them I.29d  
to the pins A.7a  
up awls B.8b  
up pipes K.6b  
package I.5m  
tell what’s in a p. I.5m  
packages, best things in small I.5m  
pack-drill, no names, no p. C.13h  
packed  
like cigarettes K.24  
like cops in skip B.1d  
like sardines I.51a  
packet  
sell a p. K.60c  
take the Dublin p. D.15e  
packet-boys A.7a  
packing, send E.6c  
pack-merchants A.7a  
pack-needle B.5d  
pack-rat (v) C.17h  
pack-saddle  
hail on p. E.16a  
plain as p. E.16a  
proud of a new p. E.17a  
steeple E.16a  
pack-staff, plain as A.7a
pack-thread (n) B.5e
   bull not tied with p. E.19b
   gang B.5e
   talk p. B.5e
pad
   in the straw E.33d
   ride on p. E.16c
padding B.5h
Paddington Fair K.60b
paddle own canoe D.2b
paddock
   blate as May p. G.44e
   cold as a p. G.44e
   find your home p. C.17a
   gleg as a p. G.44e
   haddock to p. D.13d
   kangaroo in top p. C.17h
   leap like a p. G.44e
   long p. E.13b
   mim as May p. G.44e
   reeden p. G.44e
   saddling p. K.50a
   skin a p. G.44d
   to the harrow F.15e
paddock-cheeks G.44e
paddock-loup G.44e
paddocks abroad in, weather to set G.44e
paddock-stool G.32
paddy I.4n
   when the p. wagon comes H.11e
Paddy’s
   blanket I.79d
   ghost J.66b
   pig E.251
   plank A.1b
pad-foot race, run the J.66c
padlock H.19
page (n) J.22b
   doesn’t know what p. he’s on J.22a
   out of...‘s book J.22b
page-turner J.22b
paid to, put E.2c
paigle, blake/yellow as G.30b
Paignton pudding I.70b
pail
   empty p. most noise I.45b
   fits like cock and p. I.49c
pain in the arse/neck I.25a, I.31a
pains, growing I.35a
paint (a/the)
   black/bleak/gloomy picture K.14c
   broad-brush picture K.14c
fresh as p. I.39d
good face needs no p. I.33a
great picture K.14c
him warts and all K.14c
in bright colours K.14c
in proper colours K. 14c
into a corner I.39d
judge car by p. job A.4f
lily K.14c
lion C.17c
nose cost as much to p. I.85a
picture K.14c
pretty as p. K.14d
send blind man to buy p. I.34c
thick as tin of p. I.39d
town red I.85a
watching p. dry I.39d

painted
  black as devil’s p. J.63a
  lion not so fierce as p. C.17c
  pictures K.14d
  sepulchre J.35b
tail blue J.2h
  woman and cherry both p. I.55i
painter, cut the D.2a
painting (a/the)
in K.14c
  pump I.49b
paint-remover I.39d
paints, woman that E.7c
pair
  blindfold a p. K.73
  bonny p. G.46b, J.63b
  of shears between them B.5c
  of tongs I.72b
  pigeon p. K.52
pairing, sma’ sorrow at E.14c
pakapu ticket, look like K.77e
Pal Hall, silly as I.4n
palace, put a pig in E.25f
palaces F.3
  raining p. C.13f
palatable I.24e
pale
  as (a/the) ashes I.74i
  clay E.3c
  clout I.83c
corpse I.38e
curd cheese E.22f
death I.38b
deusan E.30f
ghost J.66b
herd B.1a
lead A.3a
linen B.4d
marble G.21d
parchment J.20h
parsnip I.54h
parson J.46
pellet C.1b
sheet I.79e
turnip I.54i
whey I.53d
witch J.6a
beyond the p. E.7b
break/leap the p. E.7b
into insignificance K.14c
palette (n) K.14c
calisade tissue C.12a
pall (n) I.38f
called wine K.21a
cialiative B.6e
calm (n) I.30e
bear the p. J.8f
grease the p. I.30e
itching p. I.30e
off K.63
oil I.56k
oil the p. I.30e
spit in his p. F.33a
tickle in the p. I.5h
calmy days J.8f
pan
and spoon I.44c
buy a new p. I.47b
cry cock and p. C.7c
flash in the p. C.7c
out E.3a
Peter P. J.24
savour of the p. I.64a
spider in p. of milk E.22b
washed in frying p. I.84b
panache C.5b
pancake (v) I.60a
fit as a p. J.41a
flat/limber as a p. I.71a
on a gridiron I.60b
turd as good as p. E.25c
pancaked I.71a
pancakes, thatch Groby Pool with I.40h
pancake-turner I.60a
pancheon-wise, lie I.45b
pandemonium J.62
pander to J.24
Pandon
Gate G.8a
daft as P. Yats G.8a
Pandora’s box J.1c
panhandle (n and v) I.47b
panic J.9c
    bells ringing H.13a
    hit/press the p. button H.13a
    push the p. button C.9
pan-loaf I.63a
panmug, Buckley I.45b
pannier
    fill her p. E.17a
    pig of the worse p. E.25j
panniers, ass with two E.17a
pannikin
    off his p. F.12b
    roll p. in another shed F.12b
pannock, bring pinnock to G.57
pan-pudding, stand to I.70b
pansherd, in a I.46a
pansy (n) I.90i
pant (v) I.24b
    for E.8b
panther-sweat C.17d
pantiling (v)+streets I.14c
pantofles, stand on B.9e
pantomime K.62h
pants
    bore the p. off B.61
    caught with p. down B.61
    keep your p. on B.61
    keep your p. zipped B.61
    kick in the p. J.19
    scare the p. off B.61
    seat of your p. B.61
    take in slack of p. B.7b
pap (n) I.25b
    boil not the p. I.2a
    easy/soft/wet as p. I.2e
    with a hatchet I.2e
paper
    bag E.33e
    burn the p. he fried in I.60a
    cut out p. dolls K.72a
    dry as p. J.20h
    fairer the p. J.20h
    fits like p. on the wall I.39d
    man with p. ass I.31a
    never refuses ink J.20h
    over the cracks I.39d
    pop like p. bag I.87a
punch way out of p. bag K.40b
scrap of p. C.20b
tiger C.17d
white p. J.20h
paper-bag E.33c
draw a
parent
company/language/ship/etc. I.4a
of all vice I.4a
pariah C.17a
paring and apple I.55b
parings
king’s cheese goes in p. C.13a
of nails I.32f
of pippin I.55b
parish
dumb priest never got p. J.44
lantern I.78b
mad p. J.44
not all the world nor half a p. G.8a
oven I.62a
world is his p. J.51
parish-church, plain as way to J.51
parish-churches, more…than J.51
parishes
  land in two p. G.3c
  stockings of two p. J.51
parish-pump I.49b
park
  on wrong side of p. I.91a
Parkgate, all on one side G.8a
parlour
  out of the p. I.85a
  pig in the p. E.25f
Parnell I.57c
parochial I.49b
parritch
  clauts o’ cauld p. 1.68
  cook the p. I.60e
  little p. in your caup I.68
parrot (n=repeater) C.17i
  and monkey time C.17i
  crow won’t talk like p. G.46b
  melancholy as a sick p. C.17i
  must have an almond C.17i
  prate like a p. C.17i
  sick as a p. C.17i
  with the toothache C.17i
parrot-fashion C.17i
parrot’s cage, mouth like bottom of C.17i
parry (a/the)
  question K.43
  thrust and p. K.43
parsley, needs a little I.38j
parsnip, pale as a I.54h
parsnips
  butter no p. I.54h
  look p. I.54h
parson (n=signpost/dungheap/ rabbit) J.46
  Isle of Wight p. J.46
  make a p. swear J.46
  pale as a p. J.46
  Saddleworth p. J.46
parson’s
  big as/like p. barn J.46
  cow J.46
  fool J.46
  leman J.46
  long as p. coat J.44
  nose I.23e
  pig J.46
  side J.46
part
  brass rags D.19b
  of him in Pembrokeshire G.8a
  of the furniture I.80a
parted
cable has p. D.15c
horse and harrow p. F.15e
Parthian shot J.3a

Parthian shot J.3a

partridge
brown as a p. E.11c
if you had not aimed at the p. E.11c
plump/pubble as a p. E.11c
spring a p. E.11d
parts bearing equal strain D.4
party is over K.23
Pasca’s ducks, Jan E.26c

pash
at the piggin I.49b
rotten/soft/wet as p. E.30f

pass (a/the)
as/for… E.1a
as a watch in the night D.19b
away like dream I.79g
away like summer cloud G.14c
bottle of smoke K.22d
buck K.81
by on the other side J.35a
cup p. J.35b
hat G.1
head off the p. H.5
in checks/chips K.77c
in dinner-pail F.6a
in his marble K.75
make a p. at K.43
muster C.14b
out of the picture K.62f
pikes C.3b
Rubicon J.28b
sell the p. C.19c
ships that p. in the night J.24
through St. Peter’s needle J.40b
wet sponge over J.20b

passage
bird of p. G.45b
of arms C.10c
rough p. D.5
the worse the p. D.15a
work your p. D.4

passed through the fire E.4d
passenger E.5a
passion, man in a p. E.16d
passionate men E.10c
passport E.5a

past (a/the)
clocking time E.28d
come p. the smithy A.3d
cure, p. care I.37a
dead hand of the p. I.38c
first p. the post K.50c
lambing time E.23c
praying for J.58a
river p. C.10a
wouldn’t put it p. him to… J.38

paste (v) H.13b
makes p. I.57a
pastor F.12a
pastry, tasty I.70c

Pasture

pasty, too many at the F.6a

pat (a/the)
as a dinner of broth I.67a
as thieving to a tinker A.7b
dog’s head I.7c
on the back I.5f
on the head I.7b
stand p. K.81

pat-a-cake, play J.4b
pat-ball K.67b

Patch (a/the)
best p. B.7c
fox’s tail C.17c
in with B.7c
marrow to the p. B.7c
not a p. on B.7c
on old clothes J.35b
purple p. B.7c
up B.7c

patched
as a whaleman’s shirt D.13b
up B.7c
patchwork B.7c
pate, grey G.44b
patent C.13b
Paternoster (n=angling tackle) J.57b
  ape’s P. J.57b
  no penny, no P. J.57b
  old wives’ P. J.57b
  say the devil’s P. J.63e
  saying P. to a post J.57b
  while J.57b
path
  blaze a p. C.17a
  has puddle G.10a
  keep in right p. G.7f
  lion in the p. J.34o
  on an unknown p. G.10a
  primrose p. J.25a
  slick as p. to groundhog hole C.17h
  smooth his p. F.22
path-breaker G.7b
path-finder G.7b
paths crossed G.7f
patience
  conquers C.18
  great physician I.36a
  has fat thrushes I.87a
  is a flower… I.90e
  is a plaster I.37d
  of a saint J.40b
  of Job J.34m
  on a monument J.25a
  time and p. G.21b
patient
  as Willy Wood’s horse E.15b
  hen with egg is least p. E.28d
patina K.14d
Patrick’s needle J.40b
Patsy I.4n
pattens
  calf wi’ yalla p. E.21b
  cat in p. ×2 I.14b
  cock upon p. E.28a
  like as two p. B.9c
  runs on p. B.9c
  snow p. B.9c
pattern K.15e
  in a holding p. A.4e
pattick, goggle like I.34b
Paul, to pay J.35a
Paul’s
old as P. J.51
old as P. steeple J.52a
pauper soup F.6b
paut wi’ hind foot F.11b
pavan E.6b
pavane has its galliard K.9e
pave the way I.89a
paved with×2 I.89a
pavilion G.38b
paw (v) I.7a
cat’s p. J.2h
pawn (v) E. 1c
in the game K.74
into the same bag K.74
pawnbroker economics E. 1c
pawnbroker’s
sign E.1c
smile E.1c
pawnshop
dowly as a p. E.1c
takes it all in like a p. E.1c
pax-wax, tough as E.29a
pay (a/the)
bap I.87b
beard won’t p. for the shaving I.85f
bill at sight E.2a
butcher I.36a
cain F.5
dividends E.1d
dues J.32
ferryman J.9b
fiddler K.9b
fiddler’s p. K.2b
for a thacker I.40h
for whistle K.72c
freight for F.21
homage to C.13b
in own coin E.1a
it out! D.8b
love doth p. F.33a
off old scores K.26c
old woman her ninepence E.1a
on the nail E.2a
piper K.6c
respects I.5a
scot and lot C.21e
spring to p. K.6c
through the nose F.34a
tribute C.21e
washerwoman F.4a
with a roll on the drum C.14a
with the fore-topsail/topsail D.3a
pay-dirt, hit E.3a
pay-off (line) K.77c
pays (a/the)
  debts with money E.2c
  gentleman that p. the rent E.7d
  piper calls the tune K.6c
pea (n) K.77c
  birsled p. I.54a
  Darling p. C.17a
  every p. helps fill sack E.31d
  for a bean F.6a
  hop/jump like a parched p. I.54a
  in a barn E.13c
    colander I.54a
    rattle I.54a
  not care/give/worth a p. I.54a
  on a drum K.7a
  parched p. on shovel I.54a
  pig with a p. E.25c
  raining p. soup I.67b
  thick as p. soup I.67b
pea-brain I.54a
peace
  egg in p. C.18
  hangs them H.1
  I’m for p. and quiet I.4n
  soldiers in p. I.75c
peaceful as a church J.51
peach (n) I.55g
  ripest p. hangs highest E.30i
  smooth as a p. I.55g
peaches
  if you don’t like our p. E.30i
  not all p. and cream I.55g
peaches-and-cream I.55g
pea-cloise, silly as E.31d
peacock
  coal E.6b
  engine E.6b
  fly pride says the p. E.6b
  gaudy as a p. E.6b
  has fair feathers… E.6b
  horse E.6b
  make p. out of frog G.44e
  proud as a p. E.6b
peacock’s feathers, jackdaw in G.46d
peacocks, gim as E.6b
pea-cod, not worth a shelled I.54a
pea-gun, crack like K.72c
pea-head I.54a
peak (a/the) (n) G.20a
  flukes D.13b
over the perch E.9a
peaked and pined J.55
peal, ring him a J.52d
peanut-roaster I.55k
peanuts! C.17e
if you offer p. C.17e
pea-patch, tearing up the F.20c
pea-pudding faced I.54a
pear
not care/give/worth a p. I.55d
of another tree E.30i
rotten/roxy as a p. I.55d
worst hog, best p. E.25c
pearl
from a piper’s eye K.6b
hidden in ugly shell E.4c
in a hail-storm E.4c
of great price J.35b
on nail K.22c
round as a p. E.4c
pearl-diver D.12
pearls before swine J.35b
pearmonger K.60c
pears
ask elm for p. G.27e
other p. to pull E.30i
pear-shaped A.5d
peart
as (a/the) bird on bough G.45a
bullspink G.57
cricket G.35d
gladdy G.57
jay G.46e
lop G.40
maggot G.37b
pyet/pynot G.46f
rabin urdick G.55
robin G.55
sparrow G.57
spoon I.44c
peas
above sticks F.20c
hop like dried p. I.54a
like as p. in a pod I.54a
not say p. I.5a
road to the p. F.20c
shelling p. I.54a
thick as p. in a shell I.54a
pease
groats for p. E.31e
set at a p. I.54a
pease-field, goes to the E.31d
pease-kill see pea-skill
pease-straw, pig in E.25f
pea-shell
not care/give/worth a p. I.54a
pea-skill of, make I.67b
pea-souper I.67b
pea-splitting I.54a
pea-swad
days I.54a
full as a p. I.54a
peat
heart as great as a p. I.72e
sick as a p. I.72e
peat-pot, out of F.23d
pea-time is past/the last of F.20c
Peatley’s jig, Moll K.9a
peats, turn the I.74c
peat-stack, deaf as I.72e
peau de chagrin I.24
pebble (n) G.21e
and a diamond E.4b
game as a p. G.21e
in hoof hurts E.15g
on the beach D.11
ripples mill-pond E.34b
pebbles in a withe F.32d
pech see pegh
peck (a/the)
(n=kiss) G.45a
dead lion C.17c
for yourself E.28b
him out of nest G.45f
measure a p. E.33e
of apples I.88c
of dirt I.24i
of malt K.16a
of salt I.65c
of troubles I.88e
out his own eyes E.9b
scrat before you p. E.28b
them that canna get a p. I.88c
pecked to death by a hen E.26c
pecker
down in the p. G.45a
get/keep your p. up G.45a, K.58b
pecking
if let out E.28a
order E.28b
peckish, feel G.45a
pecks, knows how to scrat before she E.28b
Pecksniff J.24
peculation E.19f
peculiar E.19f
ped-belly D.14
peddle the bull E.19b
pedestal
  many have lived on p. K.15a
  put/set on p. K.15a
pedestrian G.7h
pedigree
  (derivation) G.51
  (personal history) I.41
  Welsh p. I.41
pedlar
  must carry own pack A.7a
  praises own pack A.7a
pedlar’s
  mare A.7a
  news A.7b
Pedley’s mare E.14c
pee
  in same pot/each other’s pockets I.29f
  in your own poke-nook G.3c
  pot to p. in I.29f
peekle in your own poke-nook G.3c
peel (a/the)
  eggs I.52f
  kirk J.53a
peeled
  come to p. egg I.52f
  egg I.52f
  not worth a p. codling I.55b
peeling (a/the)
  hard-boiled egg I.52f
  his wands I.45a
  of an injan I.54e
peenie, blush like/red/smart as I.90i
peerie, sound as K.70
peeries, spinning around like K.70
peewit see peewit
peewit
  keep a p. F.2
  laughing like a p. G.54a
peg (n) K.29d
  at present level K.29d
  away at C.1b
  not care/give/worth a p. I.84e
  out I.38h
  put the p. in I.41d
  rise a p. K.3
  square p. in round hole A.1c
  take down a p. K.3
  to hang on I.43d
  too low K.22d
peg-down A.4b
Peggy
  behind Margit E.16e
  kilty-coat P. B.6e
  with her lantern J.7
Peggy-tub bottom I.84a
pegh
  like a broken-winded horse E.14g
    miller’s aiver E.34a
peg-out/peg-up A.4b
pelcher, deader than I.51b
Pelham, lives like E.6a
pelican shit, long streak of C.17j
Pelion on Ossa J.1c
pelled rool E.14a
pellet, pale as C.1b
pellick, round as D.7d
pelt, spill and K.62h
Pelton, pigs o’ E.251
Pembrokeshire, part of him in G.8a
pen (n) G.45c
  and ink J.20g
  in gall J.20g
  mightier than sword C.4a
  no ink in p. J.20g
  pullet in the p. E.28d
  taking them out of our p. now E.23g
Penan, millstone oot o’ F.23b
pence
  look after the p. E.1a
  want some p. of the shilling E.1a
pencil
  don’t write before p. is sharpened J.20h
    in J.20d
  more meat on butcher’s p. E.29a
  ore J.20h
  put lead in p. J.20h
  sharpen your p. J.20h
Pendle
  Hill G.20a
  witches J.6a
pendulum, swing of I.81e
Penelope
  chaste as P. J.26a
    web of P. J.26a
Penelope J.26a
pen-feathered E.28b
penguin
  lady p. C.17j
  suit C.17j
penguin’s backside C.17j
pen-gun, crack like K.72c
penicillin, Jewish I.37b
penis, pulled into church by end of J.56a
penk at her piggin I.49b
penknife, cut Falkland Wood wi’ F.24e
pennant, Irish D.19d
pennants, hoist(ing) my D.19d
pennies
  from dead men’s eyes I.38c
two p. in a purse F.1b
penn’orth
  of cheese I.53e
  sell him a p. I.87a
two p. of eels K.22a
penny
  bad p. E.2b
  clean as a p. F.1b
  found a p. F.1b
  give cat a p. I.14b
  good silver F.1b
  has dropped K.77e
  honesty in a p. E.1a
  in for a p. H.2b
  know both sides of p. K.77d
  Liggan I.4n
  no p. no Paternoster J.57b
  no p. no Placebo J.57a
  numbers J.24
  pie I.87b
  play p. pool K.79d
  short E.1a
  smith and his p. A.3d
  soul F.1b
  talk like a p. book J.20a
  the better/worse F.1b
  touch p. I.87a
  two a p. J.35b
  two sides to every p. K.77d
  waiting for change F.1b
  wheep gude enough for muslin- kail I.69c
  which side p. is up K.77d
  wise F.1b
penny-farthing bike F.1b
pennyweight of love I.88b
pennyworth of poker I.87a
pennyworths, Robin Hood’s J.3b
pens may blot J.20g
pent up E.23g
Pentland Firth D.6a
penumbra G.12d
Penzance, not a word of C.16
people’s love C.13a
Peoria, see how it plays in C.21c
pep (n) I.56g
pepper (v and n) I.56g
  in the nose I.66h
  no p. in the soup I.67b
  salt and p. I.56b
pepper-and-salt I.56g
peppercorn rent I.56g
Peppergate, close I.85c
peppermint, soft as I.71f
peppy (adj) I.56g
  as Durham mustard I.56h
pep-talk I.56g
perch
  come/drop/fall/get/hop off the p. G.45a
  knock off the p. G.45a
  peak over the p. E.9a
  pitch/throw/tip/turn over the p. G.45a
  safest p. G.45a
percolate G.21a
perdrix, toujours perdrix E.6d
perfection the ellwand B.4b
perfume
  flower without p. I.90e
perfumes in pigsty E.25d
period G.7b
peripheral G.18c
periscope
  at p. depth D.19a
  leave the p. up D.19a
perish in the sands D.17d
perk (v) G.45a
  stand the p. B.3b
permit E.5a
perplex I.32g
Perran singers J.40b
Perraner, drunk as J.40b
persecute E.10b
persimmon
  above huckleberry G.3f
  four bites at p. G.3f
  huckleberry over/to his/her p. G.3f
  longest pole knocks p. G.3f
  never a p. except G.3f
  pucker like p. G.3f
  that’s (all) p. G.3f
  that’s the ripe p. G.3f
persimmons
  friendship is like p. G.3f
  jump above my p. G.3f
  rake up p. G.3f
  shake down the p. G.3f
person K.61c
perspective, in K.14b
pert
  see also peart
  as (a/the) frog G.44e
  jay G.46e
  pearmonger K.60c
Perth doctor I.36a
pest I.35d
pestle, eat ate I.15a
pet for a bairn, lion is no C.17c
petard, hoist with own C.7b
Peter
  Cockerel I.4n
  make a P. of I.4n
  out E.3a
  Pan 124
  rob P. J.35a
  tickle the p. J.35a
  where P. pitched his waistcoat J.62
Peter’s needle, go/pass through St. J.40b
petrel, stormy D.7d
petrified kidneys I.28d
petrify G.20c
pettericks, scatter like E.11c
petticoat
  lass in the red p. B.61
  red as a p. B.61
  regime B.61
petticoats, Cromwell in p. C.16
pew
  play p. on/to K.6b
  upon a dry humlock G.30b
pewter
  bright as a p. pot I.46d
  grey as a p. dish I.48b
  rear like London p. A.3a
  scour the p. I.83f
  stiff as London p. A.3a
phantom limb J.66b
Pharaoh, hardened as J.28a
Pharaoh’s daughter, story of J.34c
Pharaonic J.28a
Pharsalian J.28b
pheasant
  Billingsgate p. I.86d
  flying by H.6g
  shoot sitting p. E.11c
  Spithead p. D.15a
Phelimy caught the fluke D.13c
Phibbie, dance the K.9a
Philadelphia lawyer, would puzzle a H.18c
Philip drunk to Philip sober J.3a
Philippi, meet at J.25a
philippic J.28a
philosopher’s stone J.13
phlegmatic I.29i
phoenix, rare as J.1c
phone
  fart in p. box I.5o
  full as fairy’s p. book I.5o
phony I.5o
  as three-dollar bill E.1a
Phyllyloo, fine as I.4o
physic
  bad taking, good p. I.37b
  before sick I.37b
  to puzzzen a swine E.25g
physician, heal thyself J.35d
physicians, three great I.36a
physicians’ faults I.36a
physics himself, he that I.37b
pianet see peenie and pynot
piano
  Aunt Emma’s p. K.8b
  Jewish p. K.8b
  office p. K.8b
  play the p. K.8b
  player in a brothel H.11e
  throw a p. K.8b
  try that on your p. K.8b
Piccadilly Circus, lights of I.89a
piccolo, play the K.7c
pick (a/the)
  and mell F.32c
  bad apple E.30f
  black as p. D.1b
  bone to p. ×2 I.8d
  brains 1.21d
  crow to p. G.46b
  dark as p. D.1b
  his fingers I.32f
  hole(s) B.6c
  hole in threadbare coat B.6c
  of the basket I.86c
  of the bunch I.55a
  out crows’ eyes G.46b
  over the bones of I.66b
  rose I.90g
  straws F.17d
  to pieces D.3a
up (a/the)
  ball and run with it K.32a
  check I.87b
  cheese K.60e
crumbs I.64a
knife F.30e
one end of stick G.6b
pieces I.48b
tab I.87b
threads B.2f
pick-a-back see piggyback
picken-rod B.2c
picket-fence, eat corn-on-cob through I.69d
picking geese×2 E.27g
picking-rod, straight as B.2c
pickings, drunk as I.64a
pickle
  have rod in p. J.19
  in a p. I.56f
  in/out of your own poke-nook G.3c
  mony a p. maks a muckle E.33e
  out of one poke G.3c
  rods in p. J.19
  sprat in p. jug I.56f
pickled I.56f
pickle-herring K.61c
pickles
  corn p. E.33e
  West India p. I.56f
pick ‘n’ mix I.71f
pickpocket
  abuse like a p. H.3
  chitter like a p. H.3
pickpockets in a fair H.3
picks
  scrat afore he p. E.28b
  up crumbs I.64a
Pickwickian×2 J.24
picnic (n=awkward situation) K.23
  no p. K.23
  sandwich short of p. K.23
  Teddy bears’ p. J.4b
picture (n—of health etc.) K.14d
  black/bleak/gloomy p. K.14c
  broad brush p. K.14c
  draw a p. J.18a
  draw king’s p. K.14a
  every p. tells a story I.37a
  get the p. K.14b
  great artist can paint p. K.14c
  out of the p. K.14b
  paint a…p. K.14c
  pass out of p. K.62f
  postcard—scene etc. I.5k
  pretty as a p. K.14d
  put in the p. K.14b
reverse of p. K.14d
sheriff’s p. frame K.14d
pictures, painted K.14d
piddle down his back I.29f
pie (n) I.70c
and roast I.70c
blackberry p. I.70c
cake and p. I.71b
cold p. ×2 I.70c
cut a p. I.70c
easy as p. I.70c
finger in every p. I.70c
finger in p. I.70c
good as p. I.70c
have hand in p. I.70c
in the p. I.70c
in the sky I.70c
like p. I.70c
make a p. of I.70c
merry as a p. I.70c
next time you make a p. I.70c
nice as p. I.70c
none of a p. G.3d
right/safe as a p. I.70c
Saturday p. I.70c
sparrow-bill p. I.70c
sweet as p. I.70c
warm as a (penny) p. I.87b
pie-biter I.70c
piece
have woven my p. B.2b
of cake K.9e
piece-of-string question J.27a
pieces
fall into place K.73
fall to p. I.48b
pick/pull to p. D.3a
pick up the p. I.48b
shoot top. C.10b
pie-crust I.70c
plum as a p. I.70c
pie-crusts I.70c
pied a terre K.44
Pied Piper J.3c
pie-eater I.70c
pie-faced I.70c
pierce a nowt-horn E.19a
pierk see perk
pie’s heel I.70c
pies, nipping I.62a
pig (n=glutton) E.25a
(n=ingot) E.25i
Anthony p. E.251
at a tatur E.25c
at ninepence E.25j
bleed like stuck p. E.25k
can’t take grunt out of p. E.25b
child’s p. E.25i
cold p. E.25k, I.70c
common as p. tracks E.25f
Cox’s p. ×3 E.251
cunning as a dead p. E.25k
dead p. E.25k
dirty as a p. E.25e
draw p. on bacon/pork E.29e
drunk as a p. E.25a
every time p. squeals… E.25b
fat as a p. E.25a
flying p. E.25h
forest p. E.25f
give cold p. I.70c
Goodyer’s p. E.251
greased p. K.60e
gruffled up like an arrish p. E.25f
grunt from a p. E.25b
hard driving a black p. E.25g
if p. had wings E.25h
in (a/the) ginnel E.25j
harvest field E.25f
muck/mud E.25e
parlour E.25f
pattens E.25g
pease-straw E.25f
poke E.25j
shit E.25e
straw-heap E.25f
well E.25f
with E.25d
Irishman’s p. E.25l
is broken I.46a
it E.25d
Jackson’s p. E.25l
kill his p. E.29e
killing a p. E.25k
lazy as a p. E.25a
lie like a p. E.25a
lousy as a p. E.25a
loves marjoram E.25c
make p. fat E.25c
make p. of yourself E.25a
more sauce than p. I.66e
never ring a p. E.25g
no good alive E.25k
no good till cut up E.25k
of own sow E.25i
of worse pannier E.25j
on your back E.25g
parson’s p. J.46
Potter’s p. E.25l
proffered E.25j
put p. in palace E.25f
quiet p. eats cabbage E.25c
red/sandy p. for acorn F.13b
rooting in the ground E.25c
rude as a p. E.25a
St. Anthony’s p. E.25l
sick as a p. E.25a
sleep like a p. E.25a
snore like p. in muck-midden E.25e
squealing like a stuck p. E.29e
stare like a stuck p. E.29d
subtle as a dead p. E.25k
Tamworth p. E.251
tantony p. E.251
that turns up the ground E.25g
to be killed E.25k
to be shaved! E.25g
to play flute K.7c
to the well I.46a
together E.25d
used to dirt E.25e
weighing a p. E.25j
wilful as a p. E.25a, E.25g
with a pea E.25c
wrong p. by the lug F.13c
young p. grunts… E.25i
pig-chafted E.25b
pigeon (n and v) H.6g, K.52
clay p. K.49
dead p. F.14a
fly the blue p. K.52
is never woe K.52
milk a p. K.52
pair K.52
pluck/pull a p. H.6g
shoot at a p. E.11b
stool p. E.11b
voice of p. in the pot I.61b
wise as dockyard p. D.15d
pigeon-chested K.52
pigeon-hearted K.52
pigeon-hole(s) (n) K.52
(v) K.52
pigeon-necked K.52
pigeons
cat among the p. I.15c
catch two p. H.6g
fly the p. K.52
full p. G.57
lead homing p. K.52
pigeon-toed K.52
pig-footed E.25b, B2d
piggin
  pash at p. I.49b
  swine at p. E.25c
piggyback (v) I.3c
  heart I.3c
pig-headed E.25b
pig-in-the-middle K.67b
pig-jump E.25a
pig-market
  been down to the p. E.25j
  silence in the p. E.25j
pigmy J.28a
Pigott (v) H.9
pig-pens, build E.25d
pig-ring, safe as E.25g
pig’s
  arse F.13c
  breakfast E.25c
  cigar/whistle of p. tail E.25b
  ear F.13c
  home on the p. back E.25g
  ignorant as p. muck E.13d
  marrow I.66e
  on the p. back E.25g
  quirk of p. tail E.25b
  shaft of p. tail C.2b
  tail going all day E.25b
  whisper/whistle E.25b
  yok K.60g
pigs
  carry/drive p. to market E.25j
  cherries to p. E.25c
  drive the p. through my game F.13c
  flying p. E.25h
  go to p. and whistles I.46d
  Goodyer’s p. E.251
  ignorant as p. of Dublin E.251
  in clover E.25f
  in Shudehill G.8a
  in the blanket E.25f
  kitter p. E.25i
  little p. have big ears E.25i
  little p. in new straw E.25i
  marry the p. J.56a
  might fly E.25h
miller’s p. are fat E.34a
more p. than dills E.25i
o’Pelton E.251
please the p. J.7
ran through it F.13c
to a bad/bonny/fine/wrong market E.25j
won’t follow empty bucket E.25c
pig-shit
  mean as p. E.13d
  stronger than p. E.13d
  thick as p. E.13d
pig-sticker E.29e
pigsty
  brass knocker on p. door E.13c
doors E.25d
  licks p. door F.13a
  mucky as a p. E.25d
  perfume in p. E.25d
    who kicked your p.? E.25d
pig-sweat E.25b
pig-tail (n and v) E.25b
candle E.25b
pig-trough
  best end of p. E.25c
cast iron p. E.25d
dance in a p. K.9d
pike
  greedy p. is caught the quickest F.7a
  half-way down the p. G.7f
  hawks don’t p. E.9d
  head of a p. G.43c
  keep p. in thatch C.3b
  straight as a p. C.3b
pike-fork, wouldn’t touch with F.26c
pikelets, rains F.26c
Pike’s Peak or bust E.3a
pike
    agree like p. in a pond G.43c
    pass the p. C.3b
pikestaff, plain as J.40a
Pilate voice J.59
pilchards
  cream upon p. I.51b
  take sturgeons with p. D.13c
  wives are like p. D.13d
pilcher, dead as a salt I.51b
pilchers
  in starry-gazy pie G.18a
  salt without p. I.51b
pildert as an old apple I.55b
pile
  come up from bottom of p. F.20c
cross or p. K.77d
Pelion on Ossa J.1c
pile-driver F.23b
pilgarlic I.54e
pilgrimage J.40a
pill
  bitter p. to swallow I.37c
  gild the p. I.37c
  sugar/sweeten the p. I.37c
pillar (n—of church etc.) J.53a
  to post H.20a
Pillars of Hercules D.16e
pill-box I.37c
pillie-winkie wi’ the gowdnie’s eggs K.67b
pillilew, fine as I.40
Pilling Moss G.8a
pillory (v) H.20a
  in the p. H.20a
pillow
  clear conscience a good p. I.79c
  devil’s p. I.80c
  goose-down p. I.79c
  lava I.79c
  no p. soft as God’s promise I.79c
  nor bolster I.79c
  structure I.79c
  take counsel of p. C.21b
  takes world for his p. G.4a
  white as a p. I.79c
pillows under elbows I.79c
pills, gilding I.37c
pilot (v) D.16b
  (n—chute/engine/fish/light etc.) D.16b
  drop the pilot D.16b
  on automatic p. A.4e
  send up p. balloon E.5d
Pilsen-pen G.8a
Pimlico
  in p. order I.89a
  in P. with my feet I.89a
  walk in P. I.89a
pimple on bull’s/cow’s arse E.19f
pimples, easy over the I.85f
pin (a/the) (n) B.5b
  (v—faith etc. on) B.5b
  basket I.86c
Billy has found a p. I.3a
Bristol p. merchant E.2a
crookled p. B.5b
could have heard p. drop B.5b
down p. K.76
down to B.5b
faith/soul on another’s sleeve B.5b
hang hat on some ither p. I.4 1a
hit the p. K.46
in his nose E.19c
jolly p. K.3
mean as a p. B.5b
merry p. K.3
neat as a p. B.5b
new p. B.5b
not care/give/worth a p. B.5b
off the p. o’ the wheel A.4a
on a high p. K.3
pull the p. A.4c
put in the p. I.41d
put on another p. K.3
put to the p. of the collar F.10c
shoot nigh the p. K.46
silver p. B.5b
so has a p. I.21c
strait the p. B.1d
turn on a little p. A.4a
pin-basket I.86c
pincer movement A.1e
pinchers, hammer and A.3d
pinch
at a p. I.5i
better cut shoe than p. foot B.9b
fairest shoe may p. the foot B.9b
feel the p. B.9b
like a snudge E.1f
on the parson’s side J.46
take with p. of salt I.56b
Pinchbeck A.5b
pinches
boot p. B.9d
where the shoe p. B.9b
pinch-hitter K.34
pinching, whose shoe is B.9b
pinder-green E.23g
pinder’s right E.23g
pindert as a herring D.13d
pine
away like a toad G.44d
overcoat B.6e
straight as a p. G.27e
wishes herself a shrub F.24e
pineapple, (n)+rough end of I.55l
piney, red as I.90i
pin-feathered E.28b
ping-pong (v) K.73
pinhead B.5b
pinion (v) E.27f
pink
  get p. slip F.34c
  in the p. I.33d
pinkeen swims, the longer G.43e
pink-slip F.34c
pin-money I.33b
pinnacle E.7c
pinnock to pannock, bring G.57
pin-point (v) B.5b
  target B.5b
pin-prick B.5b
pin’s
  fee B.5b
    look for p. head in hay E.32e
pins
  and needles B.5b
  be on p. G.4b
  in the plow F.15a
  like as two p. B.5b
  pack to the p. A.7a
  row of p. B.5b
pinsons, hammer and×2 A.3d
pint pot, quart in I.88c
pintle G.10c
pint-sized I.88c
pinwire, tough as A.3b
pioneer (n and v) C.10a, G.7b
pip
  give me the p. E.28b
    no cherry without p. I.55i
pipe (n) K.24
  dance to someone else’s p. K.9b
    down D.19c
  every reed won’t make a p. K.6a
  fill p. K.24
  filled his p. K.24
  filling of a p. K.24
  in ivy leaf K.6b
  lay p. I.85c
  no longer p. J.35b
  no p., no pudding K.6c
  put p. out K.24
  put that in p. K.24
  Queen’s (tobacco) p. K.24
    up D.19c
pipeclay (n and v) C.15b
pipe-course K.24
pipe-dream K.24
pipe-laying I.85c
pipeline (n) E.3d
  in the p. E.3d
piper
drunk/full as a p. K.6b
ill p. that lacks upper lip K.6b
mad as a p. K.6b
pay the p. K.6c
tinker and p. K.6b
wants nether chafts K.6b
who pays the p. K.6c
piper-faced K.6b
piper’s
  bitch K.6b
dog ate p. bag K.6a
luidin K.6b
news K.6b
  take pearl from p. eye K.6b
pipes
  fortune p. K.9b
  lay p. for I.85c
  pack/put up p. K.6b, K.60b
  tune his p. K.6a
pipe-stapple
  frush as a p. K.24
  pith o’ a p. K.24
  snap like a p. K.24
pipe-stapples, rain K.24
pipe-stem, plain as K.24
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    crow G.46b
    Crowborough F.2
    God’s off-ox F.15c
    groat E.1a
    Job J.34m
    Job’s turkey E.28f
    Lazarus J.35d
    louse G.41
    moorland F.2
    nit G.41
    owls G.48
    pauper soup F.6b
    piss I.29f
    rake/rake-stale F.26d
    rat G.66
    winter G.19a
but hearty, like parson’s pig J.46
  deal p. deck K.79a
  dog that is not worth whistling for I.7b
  dog that knows not ‘come out’ E.8c
  grind faces of p. J.34q
  hen that can’t scratch… E.28d
  luck K.60g
  man may sing F.5
  man’s bread F.6a
    cow F.5
    goose I.69b
    pride F.5
    sow F.13b
  not too p. to sing K.1 1
  relation 1.41
  serves the p. G.2c
  sow by the lug F.13c
  woven out of p. piece B.2b
poorly, live I.17a
pop (a/the/his/your)
about I.54a
clogs B.9c
cookies I.7 1e
cork K.19c
like a paper bag I.87a
pop-bottle, cold as inside of K.19b
Pope
  merry as P. Joan J.39
  of Rome J.42
  striving with the P.J.42
Pope’s
  bull B.4c
eye I.23a
popinjay (n) C.17i
  proud as a p. C.17i
poplar, brant/tall as G.27e
popple about E.19f
poppy, tall I.90i
porcelain hair-net, win K.60e
porch
  clean around your own p. I.82c
  have p. light out I.78e
porcupine (n) C.17h
  have more points than p. C.17h
pork
  chop in synagogue J.9a
  cobbler’s p. B.8a
  I mean p. I.70b
pork-barrel E.29e
porker, fat as E.25a
pork-pie hat I.66g
Porlock, man from J.24
porpoise (n) D.7b
  fat as a p. D.7b
  foul as a p. pig D.7b
  playing before a storm D.7b
porridge
  begin on p. I.68
  better than no p. I.67a
  bottled p. I.68
  chip in p. I.53a
  cook the p. I.60e
dule’s had all the p. I.68
  everything tastes of p. I.68
  give him his p. I.68
give p. another stir I.60e
  if it should rain p. I.68
  ladle for p. pot I.60e
  marigold in the p. I.68
  no use making p. I.2a
  old p. is sooner heated I.60e
  part with p. G.3a
plain as p. I.68
poke neb into p. I.68
salt to the p. I.60e
save breath/wind to cool p. I.68
scald lips in another’s p. I.68
supped all his p. I.68
taste your p. I.68
thick as p. I.68
thole the reech off p. I.68
too many at the p. pan F.6a
warm up old p. I.60e
porridge-dish I.68
port
	any p. in a storm D.15a
	at the high p. C.8
	Millaquin p. E.33e
	of call D.15a
	run into p. D.15a
	welcome D.15a
portcullis, let down C.12b
porter, drunk as F.34b
portholes in your coffin D.4
portmanteau word E.5a
posh D.4
position, missionary J.47
poss, wet as I.84a
poss I.84a
possessed
	man p. J.35b
	whatever p. him to… J.35b
posset, sneck I.41d
posset-curd, broke finger in I.57c
possum (v) E.8d

climb like a p. E.8d

grey as a p. E.8d

play p. E.8d

stir the p. E.8d

to eat persimmon G.3f

up a gum-tree E.8d

possum-belly E.8d

possum’s mouth, finger in E.8d
possums
	all p. up one tree E.8d
post

beaten at the p. K.50c
deaf/dull as a p. F.18c

first past the p. K.50c
genral p. I.5k

kiss the p. K.29a

left at the p. K.50b

make hack in p. F.24f

nick in p. F.24f
numb as a p. F.18c
parcel p. I.5m
pillar to p. H.20a
pipped at the p. K.50c
run head against p. F.18c
saying Paternoster to a p. J.57b
stiff/still as a p. F.18c
post-and-rail tea F.18c
postern, love out at 1.4 1h
post-haste I.5k
post-holes, load of F.18c
postman’s sister I.5k
post-mortem I.38c
posts, score between the K.32a
pot
all piss in a p. I.29f
as if the p. was on I.59a
boil the p. I.59b
broken ×2 I.46b
call p. and kettle I.47e
calls kettle I.47e
can’t rub on black p. without I.47e
cracked as a broken p. I.46b
cracked p. lasts longest I.46b
earthen p. I.46b
fair words won’t make p. boil I.59b
get off the p. I.29d, I.29f
go to p. I.60c
has two handles I.46b
he that lends his p. I.61d
keep the p. boiling I.59b
leg of a p. I.47e
lid for every p. I.47c
little p. soon hot I.46b
lose both p. and water I.46b
make the p. boil I.59b
money will make p. boil I.59b
mouse in the p. G.3e
must seethe F.6a
must stand on own bottom I.45b
no honey in p. I.56d
o’ one B.1a
of pottage I.51 c
old p. I.60d
pair of p. dogs K.15c
piss in the same p. I.29f
pisses by the p. I.29f
put her p. on I.59a
put his p. on H.20e
put the p. on I.59a
sets another boiling I.59b
shits in the right p. I.29d
simper like p. I.59b
stupid as p. mule K.15c
throw it in the p. I.60c
to pee in I.29f
to pipkin I.46c
to the cauldron I.47e
too many cocks in the p. I.61b
touch p. I.87a
trot in the p. E.12
wash the p. I.47e
watched p. I.59b
when p. boils over I.59b
when p. is full I.59b
white K.73
will boil over I.59b
workhouse p. I.46b
young sheep to p. E.23e

potato (n) I.541
  clean p. I.541
  eye of p. I.23a
  hold a hot p. I.61d
  hot p. I.61d
  not care/give/worth a p. I.541
  one bad p. F.20c
  pig at a p. E.25c
  quiet as a p. I.541
  skins on the table I.69c
  small p. I.541

potato-crusher, straight as I.541

potatoes
  big p. come to top I.86a
  meat-and-p. I.66g
  on p. I.52f
  strain the p. I.61d

potato-head I.541
pot-belly K.19a
pot-boiler I.59b
pot-doll, quiet as K.72a
Potemkin village C.13e
pot-hat I.90c
pot-hooks
  and hangers/ladles I.43d
  counting the p. E.6c
pot-hunter K.29a
pot-ladle I.47a
potle-bell, ring J.52d
pot-lion, fierce as K.15c
pot-luck, take I.64a
pot-massager I.37h
pot-sure K.22b
pottage
  mess of p. J.34b
of a flint I.60d
old p. sooner heated I.60e
pot of p. I.57c
rain p. 1.68
scald lips in another’s p. I.67a, 1.68
potted (=abridged) I.90c
potter
clay in hands of p. K.15c
drunk as p. A.5d
Potter’s pig E.251
potty=putty I.41i
pouk, in/on the E.28b
poultice
on wooden leg I.37d
sweat like a p. I.37d
pounce on E.9c
pound
away at F.22
eighteen bob in the p. E.1a
foolish F.1b
get into a p. E.23g
in for a p. H.2b
in Hob’s/Lob’s p. E.23g
mischief comes by the p. I.88b
of butter E.10a
candles I.77a
care I.88b
clergy I.88b
flesh J.25a
law I.88b
long twelves I.77a
sorrow I.88b
tea I.87c
wool B.4c
tearing up p. notes E.1a
pounded E.23g
unless clay is well p. K.15c
pounds
honesty in five p. E.1a
look after themselves E.1a
ten p. of shit F.9b
pour (v) G.23a
(v-scorn etc.) C.12a
brains into thimble B.5d
cold water on I.6c
oil on fire I.73d
oil on troubled waters D.6a
short sweetening… I.56c
water into sieve F.20b
water on drowned mouse G.67
pouring oil on fire I.73d
pours
never rains but it p. G.14d
water down gopher’s hole C.17h
poverty
  in at door I.41h
  key to p. I.42b
  mother of p. I.4a
  mother of... I.4b
  old as p. F.1a
Povey’s foot I.35b
pow
  old man’s p. I.30h
  needs a clean p. G.41
powder (n) C.7c
  horn C.7c
  keep p. dry C.7c
  not worth p. and shot E.1 1a
  put more p. into it C.7c
  smell of p. C.7c
  spark in p. magazine C.7a
  take a p. I.37b
  without ball C.7c
powder-keg, sit on C.7a
power
  behind throne C.13a
  corridors of p. C.21d
  threats without p. C.7c
powerful lens, examine under J.30a
powerhouse, if he owned the A.6b
powfagged I.80d
pown
  hound E.10a
  mule E.17c
pox, welcome as I.35d
pox-doctor’s clerk I.36b
pozzie, stick like I.79d
prairie-dogging C.17h
prairie-fire C.17a
prairie-schooner D.10b
praise (a/the)
  bridge G.9c
  ford G.9a
  from Sir Hubert J.25b
  is a burden F.33b
  is not pudding I.70b
  ripe field E.33b
  roots and spreads G.26b
praises
  his own broth I.58a
    pack A.7a
  praising of green barley E.33b
pram
  bottom of baby’s p. I.2g
get out of p. I.2g
prate
  if hen does not p. E.28c
  is p. E.26a
  like a parrot C.17i
prawn, come the raw I.51b
prawn-headed mullet D.13b
pray
  no more D.8a
  to God A.1c
  to learn to p. D.8a
prayer-book, California J.58a
prayers
  said my p. in other corner J.60c
  say p. backwards J.6a
  says more than his p. J.60c
praying
  for fine weather E.23b
  past p. for J.58a
prays, pirate D.18a
preach
  out of own pulpit J.58b
  to the converted J.58b
preacher, Methody J.55
preaches
  tod p. G.60a
  war J.63e
precarious J.58a
precious ointments in small boxes I.37c
precipice, on the brink/edge/verge of G.20b
precipices, high places have G.20b
precise A.1b
precocious E.30b
precursor C.14a
pre-empt I.86a
preen see pin
  himself on G.45c
pregnant
  fox in forest fire G.60b
  nun J.49
  wife is p. I.1d
prejudice H.17
preliminary I.41e
prelude K.1d
premium E.1d
prent book J.22a
preoccupied C.12b
prepare the ground for F.9b
preposterous E.5b
preserve of H.6a
preserves, trespass on H.6a
press (a/the)
button A.6b
into service D.19c
panic button H.13a
presses, time I.89b
press-ganged D.19c
pressure-cooker I.47b
prest as a sperhauke E.9e
prestige K.63
Preston
   and his mastiffs K.56c
   bride of P. J.56a
   every P. Guild E.1e
pretext B.6d
pretty
   as (a/the) beans I.54b
      May flower G.26e
      paint K.14d
      picture K.14d
   Fanny’s way J.25b
   fellow I.3a
   horse-breaker E.15c
   kettle of fish E.12
pretzel
   big p. I.71e
   crooked as p. I.7 1e
pretzel-bender I.71e
prevail against Gath J.34i
prevaricate F.15b
prevent C.20a
previous G.10a
prey
   hawk that has lost its p. E.9c
      on the mind G.58d
      on wolves G.59
      to G.58d
   wrens may p. G.57
price
   of coals at Brentford I.73c
   of love I.87a
   pearl of great p. J.35b
prick (a/the) (v) G.4b
   all p. and ribs E.18
   bubble of G.23a
   free horse E.16j
   his fingers F.18b
   hit the p. K.46
   louse G.41
   of conscience I.18f
   spare p. at a wedding J.56a
   stiff p. knows no conscience I.1b
   to your blanket G.4a
   up ears E.14d
will eat the p. I.57b
prick-eared J.55
pricketh betimes G.29c
prickles
  barefoot folk not walk on p. G.4b
  reap p. E.33b
prickly (adj) G.4b
  as a prickly-back G.68d
prickly-back urchin G.68d
pricks
  kick against p. J.35f
  up ears like sow in beans E.25f
pricky as an urchin G.68d
pride
  daughter of p. I.4d
  fly p. E.6b
  in saddle E.16c
  is a loud beggar G.1
  is the sworn enemy… C.6c
  pocket p. F.34b
priest
  dumb p. never got parish J.44
  honest as the p. J.44
  mad p. J.44
  took plums J.44
priest-ridden E.16f
priest’s coat J.44
prima donna K.62g
prime the pump I.49b
primrose
  in a casson G.30b
  path J.25a
primroses, cow-turd stuck with E.13d
prin see pin
prince
  Alberts C.13a
  before you find a p. J.4a
  Hamlet without p. K.61c
  happy as a p. C.13a
  learning in p. I.35g
  sword against p. C.13a
princely (adj—sum etc.) C.13a
princes, ears and eyes of C.19b
print
  clean/neat as p. E.22e
  fine/small p. of H.8
  licence to p. money E.1b
  plain/true as p. J.22a
printed book J.22a
Priscian’s head, break H.11c
prison for dreaming H.17
prisoner
God’s p. H.19
keep tongue p. H.19
prison-house, reveal secrets of H.19
prits, more rattle than a bag of K.75
privy, true friend is like I.85c
prizing of green barley E.33b
probe I.36e
procession, ill J.60b
proclaim from housetops I.39h
procrastination H.1
Procrustean J.1c
bed J.1c
Procrustes, stretch in bed of J.1c
prod I.5i
proddled cat I.16a
Prodger’s job, Tom A.7b
produce E.16b
profane J.9c
proffer a candle to the devil J.60b
proffered, pig is E.25j
profile K.14a
high p. C.10b
keep a low p. C.10b
profit
honour and p. H.4
honour without p. E.4c
programme, not so much a K.62e
prolix I.49a
proll thumbs I.5f
prologue, salad is I.69c
prolong the agony H.16
Promethean man J.1c
prominent G.20b
promise
lick and p. I.5b
mountains G.20a
youth’s p. G.24a
promises
are pie-crusts I.70c
cheap as p. I.5b
prong, dog at a E.18
proof
armour of p. C.5a
of pudding I.70b
proof-shot C.7c
prop I.40g
propagate F.20c
proper
as apple-pie I.70c
colours K.14c
galah C.17i
prophesy on velvet B.4d
prophet, find...a false J.9a
prophets, Saul among the J.34i
propolis C.12b
propping up with stocking needle I.40g
props from under, knock I.40g
prosperity lets go bridle E.16i
prostitute (v) H.11e
prostrate (v) C.10f
Protean J.1c
Proteus J.1c
protocol J.22a
proud
as (a/the) apothecary I.36h
  ass of new pack-saddle E.17a
  bull beef E.22a
  cock E.28a
  cow with two tails E.20c
  devil of his tail J.63b
  dog in a doublet K.59c
  dog with side-pockets I.7d
  dog with tin tail K.59c
  dog with two tails I.6a
  gardener’s dog I.6a
  Government mule C.21d
  hen with one chick E.28d
Hezekiah J.34j
Highlander G.8a
horse E.14b
horse in bells E.14b
king C.13a
limestone F.23b
lord’s bastard C.13f
louse G.41
Lucifer J.63a
magpie G.46f
old Cole’s dog I.7d
peacock E.6b
popinjay C.17i
Punch K.60d
Queen of Sheba J.34j
thrush G.52a
toad with a side-pocket G.44d
  horse F.10e
tod G.60a
proudest nettle E.13d
provender, won’t bear F.10e
provide (v) D.16b
province C.21a
provoke I.85a
Prufrockian J.25b
prune (out) E.30d
  wrinkled as a p. I.87c
prune-face I.87c
prunella, leather and B.4e
P’s and Q’s, mind K.9a
psalm, sing the black J.57a
psalms to a dead duck/horse/taffrail J.61
pubble as a partridge E.11c
pucker like a persimmon G.3f
puck-fice, hollow as G.32
puck-fyst, dry as G.32
puck-goat’s head E.24a
puckish J.5c
pudden/puddin’
  crack o’ yer own p. I.70b
  in the p. club K.23
  reeking I.59b
pudding
  see also pudden
  (n) I.70b
  better some of a p. G.3d
  big as a Paignton p. I.70b
  bluidy p. I.8c
  clawed the p. I.70b
  fit as p. for dog’s mouth I.8c
  fit as p. for friar’s mouth J.48
  guess p. I.70b
  have hot p. for supper I.70b
  hooting p. G.48
  hop-skip-and-jump p. K.29d
  hunter’s p. E.8a
  if ever you make a good p. I.57b
  if it won’t p. I.70b
  in the oven I.62b
  keep the p. hot I.59b
  know how many eggs in everyone’s p. I.57b
  make p. according to plums I.57b
  make the crow a p. G.46b
  more poke than p. I.70b
  no pipe, no p. K.6c
  over-egg the p. I.57b
  owes a p. to the gled G.47c
  praise is not p. I.70b
  proof of p. in the eating I.70b
  rotten egg spoils p. I.52f
  soft as a p. I.70b
  solid p. for empty praise I.70b
  thinks p. dainteth I.70b
  time I.70b
  too much p. will choke a dog I.8c
  too much salt in p. I.57b
  whispering p. I.5a
  without suet ×2 I.70b
  would creep I.70b
you mean p. I.70b
pudding-bag (n) I.57b
road/street I.57b
pudding-elout, white as I.57b
pudding-face I.70b
pudding-head I.70b
pudding-in-a-poke I.70b
pudding-prick
  mill-post to a p. I.57b
  not care/give/worth a p. I.57b
puddings, dirty I.8c
puddle
  big toad in small p. G.44d
  every path has its p. G.10a
  thin as p. G.10a
puddock see paddock
puddocks, gentle G.47c
puff
  like a grampus D.7b
    pair of bellows I.73c
puff-cake, grinning at I.71 b
puffed up as bladder of lard I.50e
puffin, plump as D.7d
puggy, spained E.23d
pug-nosed I.6a
pull (a/the/your)
  at both ends of the band E.33e
  at the same rope D.8b
bedclothes over head I.79f
caps B.6i
cat from bacon I.15a
chain K.59c
check-string E.5c
chestnuts out of fire J.2h
chocks away A.4e
chord K.4
clocker off her nest E.28d
coat I.5j
crake G.46b
crow with G.46b
dead lion’s beard off J.2b
dead lions by the beard J.2b
death by the tail J.63h
devil, p. baker K.64a
down E.8b
down your hat B.6i
fast one over K.33a
feathers off G.45c
finch H.6g
finger out I.30g
forelock F.10b
freight A.4c
gig E.14b
hair and hair F.9a
have craw to p. G.46b
him by the sleeve I.5j
I’l p. the string K.8c
in E.16h
it off K.50c
labouring oar D.2b
leg I.31c
Lynn from Warburton J.50
ner scawd I.54a
not down your hedge E.7b
oar D.2b
other pears to p. E.30i
out all the stops K.8a
out of the fire I.76d
out the horse’s tail J.3a
out the plug I.38a
over the rolls B.3b
pigeon H.6g
pin A.4c
plover H.6g
plug out I.38a
punches K.40b
rabbit out of hat K.63
ropes K.64a
rug from under…/out I.80d
socks up B.6m
string K.64a
string when I want monkey K.8c
strings K.64a
strings together K.64a
stroke oar D.2b
teaches through armpits I.36g
thorn out of your foot I.36g
threads together B.2f
together D.2b
to pieces D.3a
train A.4c
trigger C.7b
up E.16h
up by bootlaces B.9a
up drawbridge C.12b
up socks B.6m
up stakes E.3a
weight D.2b
wires K.64a
wisdom teeth I.36g
wool over eyes E.23e
wraps off C.10h
your weight D.2b
yourself together K.64a
pulled
  into church by penis J.56a
  through hedge G.4b
  through knothole A.1b
  who p. your chain? K.59c
pullet in the pen E.28d
pulling (a/the)
  down with bar ire I.40g
  right string? A.1b
  up roots… I.90c
pulls on long rope D.8b
pulpit (n) J.53b
  preach out of own p. J.58b
pulse (n) I.36c
  feel the p. I.36c
  finger on the p. I.36c
  on the p. J.25b
pulverize F.23b
pum K.35c
pumice, fire out of I.73a
pummel (v) C.4c
pummel-head K.35c
pummy, beaten to K.16b
pump (v) I.49b
  brant as a p. I.49b
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  gauntlet C.13h
  go with a r. D.8b
  head against 1.21c
  head against a brick/stone wall H.19
  head against a post F.18c
  head into a noose H.6d
  high D.6a
  hog-wild E.25a
  in his beard C.10c
  in the long r. K.29a
  into port D.15a
  into the ground E.16e
  into the sands F.19
  it up the flag-pole C.15a
  lets imagination r. away with him E.16e
  like a black C.17a
    deer E.8b
    hairy goat E.24a
    long dog E.10a
    redshank G.54d
    scopperil K.70
skeiner B.1f
skitty G.57
whitneck G.63d
mad enough to r. sheep E.18
of his teeth G.3b
off his legs F.33a
off the rails A.4c
off the reel D.16a
old foil E.10d
on ground D.17c
out of gas A.4d
momentum E.5d
steam A.4b
over G.10a
over shoes G.9a
pad-foot race J.66c
rabbit G.64c
railroad A.4c
rings round K.32a
riot E.10b
round in circles G.25b
ruler over J.20d
rusty E.14g
sheep, r. K.67b
ski the last r. K.31d
small circles… K.32a
straight E.16f
swine has r. through it J.7
tether/tether-length E.24b
to earth E.8c
to end of rope/tether E.24b
to form K.50b
to ground E.8c
to seed I.90f
to waste F.19
ture to form K.50b
upon rocks D.17d
walk before r. I.2h
whelk-stall ×2 D.12
wild E.15c
with (a/the) fox/hare E.10d
hogs E.25e
pack E.10b
would r. a mile (not) to H.13b
young dog E.18
your tether/tether-length E.24b
runaway
horse ×2 E.16e
monk J.48
run-down A.5c
rung, bottom F.27
runner
front r. K.50b
—quoth deil to lobster J.63f
runneth away with shell on head G.54a
running
dog I.7b
fire C.7c
fuck at rolling doughnut I.71b
hit the ground r. C.10h
in the r. K.29a
make r. horse of jackass E.17a
make the r. K.29a
of hound on moor E.10b
on the wrong road G.7f
out of the r. K.29a
plowing not done by r. F.15b
river never freezes G.24b
sands are r. out I.81d
side-dykes wi’ you F.15b
sore I.35b
up and down your father’s backbone I.18d
run-of-the-mill B.1g
run-of-the-mine F.23a
runs
ay r. the fox E.8c
before wit I.24e
in dark H.13b
like tup i’ the wind E.23b
man who r., falls I.31e
on pattens B.9c
on wheels E.5b
round the garden I.31e
writ r. C.21d
rupture a gut I.35e
rush
how much did they r. you? H.8
if you r. the woman I.61d
knot in a r. G.31b
not care/give/worth a r. G.31b
point of r. would draw blood G.31b
straight as a r. G.31b
your fences E.8c
rush-cart, Thornham J.8d
rush-cartin’, caps J.8d
rushes
and reeds G.31b
stiff as bunch of r. G.31b
stop gaps with r. F.18b
strew green r. I.83b
, there is water G.23d
rushing about G.37a
rushlight I.78a
eye twinkling like r. I.78a
thin as a farthing r. I.78a
rusky, twined I.45a
Russel’s wagon, big as E.5c
Russian
    roulette K.77c
    scandal K.73
rust (n) A.3b
    eats like r. A.3b
    idleness makes the wit r. A.3b
    knap the r. A.7b
    moth and r. J.35b
    needs r. file A.7b
    out A.4a
    will fret iron A.3b
rustle up H.5
rustles is not silk, all that B.4d
rusty (adj=inactive) A.3b
    as (a/the) anchor D.15b
    handcart F.29
    old horse-shoe E.15e
    ride/run r. E.14g
    sword H.17
    throttle as r…. E.13c
rut
    get wheel out of r. F.21
    in a r. F.21
rye
    good r. E.33b
    image of r. dough J.8a
S
    crooked as S. J.20c
    plain as the letter S. J.20c
sab, sour as G.30b
sabotage F.8
sabre-rattling C.6a
sabre, rattle C.6a
sack (a/the)
    bund s. E.33e
    collier’s s. F.23a
    covers himself with wet s. G.4c
    eel in a s. F.7b
    every pea helps fill s. E.31d
    full s. E.33e
    get meal from empty s. E.33e
    get/give the s. F.34c
    give the s. a turn E.33e
    good words fill not a s. E.33e
    grain does not fill a s. E.33e
    heaviest F.17c
    honour and profit not in one s. H.4
    keep beans in s. E.31d
    know s. by handful E.33e
like s. of wind G.13b
long as a wet s. E.33e
measure peck out of own s. E.33e
nothing out of s. E.33e
of wind G.13b
old s. is ay scaling E.33e
poke is as good as s. E.33e
rides like s. of flour E.34h
short s. I.24a
soss like a wet s. G.4c
sow not with the whole s. E.31b
stands on own bottom E.33e
that will abide no clouting E.33e
tied up E.33e
wankle as a s. E.33e
sackcloth and ashes J.34l
sacken gown, get the J.38
sackless as a boat-horse D.10a
sacks
    more s. to the mill E.34d
    rough as s. E.33e
sacred
cow J.9f
    is nothing s.? J.9a
sad
    as (a/the) liver I.50g
        weaver’s clog B.9c
dog I.10b
    pirn B.1f
saddest dog I.7b
saddle (n-of hill) E.16a
    always in the s. J.40b
    beside the s. ×3 E.16c
    blame upon E.16a
doesn’t s. when he pleases E.16a
    his horse alone E.16a
    in the s. E.16c
    lean forward in s. E.16c
    lose the s. K.77a
    marriage leapeth upon s. E.16c
    on cow’s back E.20d
    on right horse E.16a
    on sow(’s back) E.25g
    pride in the s. E.16c
    seats of the s. E.16c
    set in the s. E.16c
    to fit every horse E.16a
today E.16a
    with E.16a
saddleback E.16a
saddlebow, say it to your E.16a
saddler of Bawtry H.21e
saddles
doesn’t ride when he s. E.16a
where s. lack E.16c
Saddleworth
gloves B.6k
parson J.46
saddling paddock K.50a
safe
as (a/the) bank E.1c
Bank of England E.1c
brandy K.21c
caged K.59c
Chelsea G.8a
child on mother’s breast I.2d
church J.51
crow in a gutter G.46b
eggs E.28d
gabbart D.10b
houses I.39a
koala C.17h
mouse in cheese I.17a
mouse in malt-heap E.34d
mouse in milk E.34d
pie I.70c
pig-ring E.25g
rat in a trap I.17c
sardine I.51a
stocks H.20a
trippet/trivet I.47a
wall of brass A.3a
bind E.32d
from E. Indies D.9d
God promises s. landing D.5
in the s. hands of I.2g
not s. wading D.9a
riding in a good haven D.15a
safest perch/roost G.45a
safety
play for s. K.73
pluck the flower, s. J.25a
sit on s. valve A.4b
valve A.4b
safety-net K.59d
saffron (v) I.57a
bag of s. I.79h
dear/yellow as s. E.6d
saga J.24
sage-bush rebel G.29h
sagging D.8a
said prayers in other corner J.60c
sail (v) (a/the) D.3c
all in one ship D.2a
bear low s. D.3c
bear s. D.3c
before the wind D.3b
carry too much s. D.3c
close to wind D.3b
come with wet s. D.3c
crowd (on) the s. D.3c
in/into D.19e
in full s. D.3c
in troubled waters D.13c
leg-/shoulder-of-mutton s. I.50d
like a haystack E.32e
witch J.6a
long course D.3c
lower your s. D.3c
make not s. too big D.3a
near to the wind D.3b
on another board D.3c
on the same tack D.3c
quoth the king D.3b
set of the s. D.3c
set your s. D.3b
ship without s. D.3c
shorten s. D.3c
sticks to the mast D.3b
strike s. D.3c
take in s. D.3c
under easy s. D.3c
under false colours D.18a
under full s. D.3c
will not s. D.3b
with every (shift of) wind D.3b
with wind D.3b

sailing
plain/smooth/straight s. D.16c
under s. orders D.15e

sailor
drunken s. D.15a
on a water-cart I.85c
on horseback G.7g
spend money like s. D.15a

sails
put wind into s. D.3b
trim your s. D.3c
wind out of s. D.3b

Saint (n) J.40a
all round S. Paul’s I.85g
Anthony’s pig E.25l
at home with S. Michael J.40b
burn a candle to S. Michael J.40b
Crispin’s lance J.40b
dine with S. Giles E.6a
dragon on S. George J.40b
George, always in the saddle J.40b
Giles’s sweat J.40b
Hugh’s bones J.40b
Johnstone’s tippet B.6j
lame as S. Giles J.40b
light as S. Luke’s bird J.35d
make s. swear J.40b
Mary’s knot J.40b
Michael’s Mount D.15a
on S. Geoffrey’s day J.40b
Patrick’s needle J.40b
Peter’s needle J.40b
plaster s. J.40b
rides out with S. George J.40b
Robert gave his cow J.40b
such shrine, such s. J.40b
tempt a s. H.2b
Tibb’s eve J.40b
try the patience of a s. J.40b
vex a s. J.40b
who works no miracles J.40b
saints that use holy water, not all J.40b
sair
  time I.17a
  wind E.33d
sair-dung bairn I.3d
sairiest dung H.20d
sair-stressed
  stringing injans F.20c
    the milsie F.11b
saiseamh, lose at the K.35d
salad
  cut like a s. I.54d
  fine as a s. I.54d
  fruit s. I.55a
  good s. I.69c
  lamb and s. ×2 I.66d
salad-days I.54d
salamander (n and v) J.1c
salami fraud/tactics I.66g
salient I.1d
Salisbury, plain as G.8a
salivate (at prospect) I.24e
sallet/sallit see salad
Sally
  Aunt S.K.60f
    dressed like S. Hatch B.6a
salmon
  hook well-lost to catch s. E.12
  kens selgh frae s. D.7b
not for everyone to catch a s. E.12
trout in pot better than s. in sea E.12
salt (v) (a/the) I.56b
    above/below the s. E.6d
    accounts I.56b
    and pepper (skipping) I.56b
    and spoons I.65c
    as (a/the) brine D.6a
        herring D.13d
        lick E.19d
        Lot’s wife J.34b
    Attic s. J.26b
    away I.56b
    back to the s. mines F.23c
    books I.56b
    collop I.66c
    dead as a s. pilcher I.51b
    earns s. to his kail I.54c
    eat peck of s. I.65c
    fish I.51b
    his kail I.54c
    in s. I.56b
    neither sugar nor s. I.56c
    no more fish than you can s. D.13c
    not worth s. to the poddish I.60e
    of the earth I.56b
    put s. on tail H.6f
    quoth the sowter I.66c
    row up S. River D.10b
    rub s. in D.19c
    throw s. on tail H.6f
    to Dysart F.21
    too much s. in the pudding I.57b
    white as s. I.56b
    with grain/pinch of s. I.56b
    without pilchers I.51b
    worth his s. E.6d
salt-and-pepper I.56b
salt-and-spoon I.65c
Saltash luck D.15a
salt-box I.56b
salt-pie I.56b
salts, dose of I.37b
salty as the sea D.6a
salve (n and v) I.37e
    anoint with birchen s. I.37e
    for every sore ×2 I.37e
    seek your s. I.37e
salves, different sores, different s. I.37e
Samaritan, Good J.35d
same
    always the s. way, like bottle- jack I.60b
animal with different spots J.34r
dance the s. dance K.9b
dig with s. foot F.20a
from the s. smithy A.3d
grimed/tarred with s. stick E.23f
in the s. boat D.2a
box I.5n
breath I.24b
knife I.44b
old (two and) sixpence E.1a
spit on s. stone J.8d
tarred with s. brush E.23f
think/work on s. lines A.4c
sammed the cross-stick up I.72d
Sammy Liark’s lapstone, big as B.8b
Samson J.34h
sanctity, die in odour of J.40b
sand (n) E.28a
build on s. J.35b
draw line in s. K.67a
eat s. ×2 C.10f
head in s. J.3b
house built on s. J.35b
in craw E.28a
make rope from s. D.11
moss of one and s. of the other F.19
mucking with s. F.19
neither moss nor s. F.19
raise s. C.10f
ropes of s. D.11
sinking s. D.17c
weave rope of s. D.11
write in the s. J.20i
sand-bag (v) H.11c, K.29a
eel in a s. F.7b
rough as a s. E.33e
sand-bed (n) A.3c
dry as a s. A.3c
sand-boy, happy/jolly/merry as D.11
sand-glass, careful as I.81d
sandpaper (v) A.1b
dry/rough as s. A.1b
sands
leave/put him to the long s. F.15b
numberless as the s. D.11
perish in the s. D.17d
plow the s. F.15b
run into the s. F.19
running out I.81d
shifting s. D.17c
sink a ship D.17c
sand-shoe, face like twisted B.10a
sandwich I.63d
  one s. short of a picnic K.23
sandy
  as a Tamworth pig E.25l
  bowrocks K.67a
  pig for acorn F.13b
sandy-mill, big a K.67a
sanguine I.29i
sanitize I.36e
sap (n=vital spirit) G.26d
  (v—energies etc.) A.1a
  (v—foundations etc.) C.7b
Saracen, false as J.9a
sarcasm G.2d
sardine, safe as I.51a
sardines
  close as s. I.51a
  packed like s. I.51a
sardine-tin I.51a
sardonic G.30b
sare as a kyle I.35c
Sargasso Sea D.16e
sark
  alone B.6g
  has no more s. B.6g
  near is my s. ×2 B.6g
  off naked back B.6g
sarkless B.6g
sark-tail in his teeth B.6g
sarry
  collop I.52a
  cook I.58a
  mouse I.17a
  wood G.25b
saster, stiff as stappit I.70b
sat on K.41b
Satanic J.63a
satellite (=moon, subordinate) C.6b
  (=space vehicle) G.18b
satin
  shine like s. B.4d
  slick as s. B.4d
Saturday pie I.70c
saturnine J.14c
satyr J.9b
sauce (n) ×2 I.56j
  better than the fish I.69a
  for goose as gander I.69b
  hunger the best s. I.56j
  lobster s. E.6d
  make not your s. I.51b
  more s. than pig I.66e
serve the same s. I.69a
sour s. I.50g
sauced I.56j
saucepan
boils over I.59b
on the fire I.59a
saucepans, bright as I.47b
saucer
eyes I.48c
shallow as a s. I.48c
saucered and blowed I.48c
saucers, round as I.48c
saucy I.56j
saugh, soople as G.27e
Saughton swine E.25l
Saul among the prophets J.34i
sausage (n) E.29a
doghouse no place to keep s. I.8a
like a s. E.29a
machine E.29a
tell s. by its skin E.29a
tight as a s. E.29a
sausages, turkey hung with I.69b
sauter, reculer pour mieux K.29d
savage
as a meat-axe E.29a
tiger C.17d
save (a/the/your)
bacon I.50e
breath to cool crowdy/poddish/porridge I.68
cork K.19c
for a rainy day G.14d
from the wreck D.17f
snuff I.77e
something for man on white horse E.16d
thief H.1
wind to blaw kail I.69c
saved (a/the)
bird in bosom H.6f
by the bell K.40c
himself a rake E.32d
saving, no alchemy like J.13
savin-tree, had bairn under I.2a
savour (n) I.65a
of the pan I.64a
savours of first fill K.18c
saw
see also salve
caught by circular s. F.24i
gourds F.24i
hold at the long s. F.24i
wood F.24i
sawcum, hask as F.24i
sawder see solder
sawdust F.24i
saw-edge, rough as F.30a
sawr-hoil, stink worse than I.85c
saw-tooth (+roof) F.31a
saxon, have no J.52c
say
   boo to a goose E.27f
   it to your saddlebow E.16a
   it with flowers I.51
   neither gruff nor sty F.13b
   not s. cheese I.53c
   peas I.5a
   quack E.26b
   treacle I.56l
says more than his prayers J.60c
scab, catching as the E.23f
scabbard
   blade wears out s. C.4b
   golden s. C.4a
   stricken with s. C.4a
   keeps another in s. C.4a
   throw away the s. C.13a
scabbed
   as a cuckoo G.53
   head easy to bleed I.36f
   horse abides no comb E.15g
   horse is good enough E.15g
   sheep E.23f
scabby heads I.32h
scald (a/the)
   devil I.58a
   head C.10d
   lips in other folk’s kail I.69c
   lips in pottage I.67a
   lips with another man’s porridge I.68
   poo/pull ner s. I.54a
   squire E.15g
   youself with ladle I.58b
scalded
   as ill as burnt I.58b
   cat ×3 I.14d
   dog I.10a
scalding tears I.58b
scalds daws, cauld water I.58b
scale (a/the)
   (n=ladder) F.27
   (v=defraud) H.9
   (v=divulge) F.9b
   bees’ byke G.33a
   feather in the s. I.88a
heights C.12b
sword into s. C.4a
tip/turn the s. I.88a
scales
  from eyes G.45a
  hold the s. even I.88a
  throw into s. C.4a
scaling, old sack ay E.33e
scalp of…, take C.17a
scalps, out for C.17a
scaly back/fish D.13d
scandal (n—deriv.) C.12a
  Russian s. K.73
Scanderbeg’s sword J.3b
scant
  o’ clean pipes K.6a
  o’ grey cloth B.7b
  o’ wind K.6a
scapegoat(ing) J.34d
scaplins, brought up on F.6a
scar, slander leaves C.10d
Scarborough warning G.8a
scarce
  as (a/the) drops of fat on… I.67a
    guineas E.1a
    hen’s teeth E.28b
scar (a/the)
  dog from greasy hide I.8a
  seven bells out of D.19b
    up E.11d
scarecrow (n) F.9c
  ragged/ugly as a s. F.9c
scarecrows (n) F.9c
scarf as warm as daughter’s arm B.6j
scarify K.14a
scarlet
  fever I.35d
    dyeing s. B.3a
    woman J.35h
scars of, bear the C.10d
scart (n) E.28d
  gar him s. I.30h
    my arse/breech I.30h
scarts, count upon I.14b
scat abroad, mouth D.13d
scatter
  harder to gather than s. E.32d
    like caff F.17b
    like pettericks E.11c
    to the winds G.13d
scatterbrained as a child I.3a
scattering, after the gathering the E.32d
scattershot E.11e
scaurs at windlestrae E.14d
Scawby man, fell as bull at E.19c
scawd see scald
Scazza men’s ducks E.26c
scenario K.61b
scene (n) K.61b
appear on the s. K.61b
change of s. K.61b
is set for K.61b
make a s. K.61b
set the s. K.61b
split the s. K.61b
scenery (n) K.61b
chew up the s. K.62a
melt into the s. C.17k
part of the s. K.61b
scenes, behind the K.61b
scenic route, take G.10a
scent
be on the (right) s. E.10c
false s. E.10c
follow the s. E.10c
have good s, for E.10c
lose the s. E.10c
overrun the s. E.10c
put off the s. E.10c
put on a false s. E.10c
throw off the s. E.10c
sceptre is one thing I.47a
scerrick, not care/give/worth a F.1b
scheme, pilot D.16b
schemy, those who can’t F.33a
schmaltz 1.61b
scholar as my horse Ball E.14b
school (v) J.17
as ever I came from s. J.17
American as the s. bell J.16
experience keeps a dear s. J.18a
lunch money from s. J.16
tales out of s. J.19
schoolboy knows that, every J.17
schoolgirl, blush like J.16
schoolma’am/schoolmarm J.18a
schoolmaster J.18a
schoolmistress of fools J.18a
schoolroom in July J.17
schooner
on the rocks D.17d
prairie s. D.10b
schooner-rigged D.1a
scintillate K.69
scion G.27a
scissor-bill D.7d
scissors
and paste K.73
give s. B.5c
to grind F.31c
scither-mouth B.5c
scold
from her badge H.10
like (a/the) butter-whore I.71c
butterwives I.71c
cut-purse H.3
wych-waller F.23c
scolding wife I.1e
scone (n) I.71c
ba’ o’ S. K.32a
of the/that baking I.62b
sour s. I.71c
scone-hot, go him I.71c
scoop (a/the)
pool K.79c
scoop-shovel, hit bull with E.19c
scope (n) K.46
scopperil (n) K.70
dance/fly/run/spin/whip about like s. K.70
skirl(ed me) round like a s. K.70
wacken/wick as a s. K.70
worse than a s. K.70
scorch (v) (a/the) I.84f
feather 162
scorched, stay-tape is B.5h
score (n) K.28
(v) K.32a
between the posts K.32a
bull C.8
go off at s. K.29a
know the s. K.28
off K.33b
point off K.33b
twice B.8c
scores
pay off s. K.26c
quit s. K.26c
scorn not the bush G.4b
scornful dogs I.8c
scorpion, rock C.17k
scorpions, lash/scourge of J.34j
Scot
fause as a S. G.8a
pay s. and lot C.21e,
rat and Newcastle grunstan F.31c
Scotch
bait F.6a
play the S. fiddle K.2a
put s. on his wheel E.5b
put s. on/to E.5b
woodcock I.69b
scot-free C.21e
Scotland, plucking geese in E.27g
Scottish warming-pan I.47d
scour (a/the)(v) I.83f
kettle I.47e
pewter I.83f
scourge (n) H.20d
of scorpions J.34j
scoutmaster, balls like J.18b
scow (n) D.1a
scowdered I.62b
scowl of brow I.22a
scrab G.27a
scrabble F.6a
scrae, sorrow comes to B.9d
scraffles up liker a terrier I.6a
scrag, neck and E.29f
scrag-calf E.21b
scramble I.52f
scrambled eggs I.52f
scrap of paper C.20b
scrape (a/the)
acquaintance with C.13e
barrel I.43a
get into a s. K.44
he that comes of a hen must s. E.28b
kettle I.47e
rake and s. E.32d
scraped (a/the)
as a bath-brick I.32a
have tongue s. I.32e
porridge-dish I.68
scrapes, cat purrs before it I.14b
scrap-heap (n) A.7c
throw on the s. A.7c
scraping an ounce of fat I.50g
scraped, ought to be A.7c
scrat (n and v) E.28b
afore he picks E.28b
before she/you peck(s) E.28b
chick to s. for old hen E.28d
for one chick E.28d
granny out of her grave I.38j
till the cat s. him I.14b
where he doesn’t itch/yuke I.30h
scratch (a/the)
..., and you’ll find… K.14d
bring up to s. K.40a
come up to s. K.29a
dressed like Sal S. B.6a
elbow I.5f
his back I.30h
itch where you can s. I.30h
my back I.30h
my breech I.30h
start from s. K.29a
surface A.3f
team etc. K.14a
where it itches I.30h

scratched
expect to be s. I.14b
face H.17

scratches
one mule s. another E.17c
with a bear K.56b
scratchin, burnt to a I.66e
scratching gets cat with kitten I.13b
scratching-post E.19f
scratchy I.14b
scratter, good E.28b

scratting
daft as s. tup-head F.12b
difference between s. head and I.30h

scream (a/the)
he’s a s. K.62c
like a gleany E.28e
wounded eagle G.47a
place down I.2f
screaming from the tart-shop I.87b
screams
bluejay never s. C.17j
day the eagle s. G.47a
screech like a whitneck G.63d
screeching halt E.5d
screen (n) I.36e
screening F.23a
screw (a/the)
down on A.4a
get his s. out A.4a
him up A.1e
loose A.4a
nut A.4a
put the s. on H.16
to the neb of the mire-snipe H.6f
turn of the s. H.16
up courage K.3
screwball K.34
screwdriver

Birmingham/FrenchIrish/ Yiddish s. A.4a
screwed
  mouth screwed up like... E.26a
  on right A.4a
  too tight K.3
  up A.4a, J.32
screws on, put the H.16
screwy K.34
scrim K.61b
scrimply up to standard B.4b
Scrooge J.24
scrub (v) (a/the) D.19d
  bull C.17h
  bull in bog C.17h
  slate clean K.26c
scrubber
  mazed/wet as a s. I.82b
scrubs another, one mule E.17c
scruff B.9a, I.50b
scrum E.30f
scrumpted up like a hedgehog G.68d
scruple (n) G.21e
scuddick/scuddock, not care/give/ worth F.1b
scruff B.9a
scull around D.2b, K.31d
scum I.50b
  over the eyes I.34c
  rises to the top I.50b
scummer, holes in a I.47a
scunner
  at cauld steerie I.69c
scupper (n) D.19a
scuppered D.19a
scurrick, not care/give/worth a F.1b
scutcheon, blot on C.15a
scuttick see scuddick
scuttle (v) D.19e
  pull at the s. D.8a
scuttlebutt (n) D.8a
scuttled ship, as ever D.19e
Scylla and Charybdis J.26a
scythe
  keen as a s. F.26a
  keep rake near s. E.32d
  man with cow doesn’t need s. F.26a
scythes, take notches out of F.16a
sea (n) D.6a
  anchor always at s. D.15b
  and gallows refuse none D.9d
  at s. D.8a
  better/more/other fish in the s. D.13a
  bottomless D.6a
  cast water into the s. D.6a
complains D.6a
deep as the s. D.6a
deep blue s. J.63f
does not wait D.15e
foxes of the s. G.60a
fresh as a s. breeze D.5
go to s. to learn to pray D.8a
in a calm s. D.16b
green as the s. D.6a
of… D.6a
old man of the s. J.2a
pissed in the s. D.6a, J2j
refuses no river D.6a
rivers do what they can for the s. D.6a
salty as the s. D.6a
send you to the s. D.11
throw him in the s. D.9b
throwing water into s. D.6a
water in the s. D.6a
wind changes less often… D.5
wine drowns more than the s. D.9d
worse things happen at s. D.8a
sea-beef I.50c
sea-boot, face like D.8a
sea-change J.25a
seagull (n) D.7d
loan of oyster-catcher to s. J.2j
seal (a/the) (v) C.21d
hear a s. bark D.7b
leaks D.1b
set the s. on C.21d
trained s. K.59c
sea-lawyer D.8a
sealed
book J.22a
fate is s. C.21d
lips are s. I.5m
off J.13
with butter I.5m
sea-legs, get D.8a
sealing-wax, string and I.5m
sealskin, Alaskan B.4e
seam
back on the old s. F.23a
mine his own s. F.23a
stitch your s. B.5g
seaman
good s. known in bad weather D.5
sea-mark D.17f
sea-mews D.13c
seamless web B.2e
seam-rent B.10a
seams
  bursting at s. B.7a
  caulk the s. D.1b
  come apart at the s. B.7a
seamy side B.5g
sear B.6b
  and yellow leaf J.25a
search me! H.14a
search-engine A.4d
Sears-/& Roebuck E.2b
seas, admiral of narrow D.19b
season, open E.8a
seasonable as snow… E.33c
seasoned (adj=experienced) A.1a
  (adj=spiced) I.56a
seasoning too fine, chop I.56a
  seat
  hot s. I.74b
  in the catbird s. C.17j
  in the driver’s s. E.5d
  of the pants B.61
shithouse s. I.85c
  take back s. C.21d
seats
  keep your s. J.60c
  of the saddle E.16c
seave, straight as G.31b
sea-weed, shiny as D.7a
Sebastianist J.28c
seben-sleeper, slept sound as G.67
seck see sack
second
  base K.34
    by playing s. fiddle K.2b
  fiddle K.2b
  mate D.8a
  nail A.1c
  shoot s. arrow C.2c
  steal s. base K.34
  string C.2a
  wind K.29a
second-rate D.19a
secret
  as (a/the) grave I.38h
    night G.17
secrets of the prison-house H.19
security blanket I.79d
seduce I.1b
seductive I.1b
see (a/the)
  back of I.30a
  back-seams of their hose B.6m
beyond end of nose I.34c
bottom G.24d
chaplain D.19b
cloven foot J.63b
danger-light D.16c
day H.19
daylight G.12a
down the sleeve B.6h
elephant C.17f
eye to eye I.23b
gowk in sleep G.53
how the bowls would row K.39a
how the land lies D.16b
how we apples swim E.30f
in a new light I.78d
in true colours I.23b
into millstone E.34e
it coming a mile off G.10a
it rain G.14d
lay of the land D.16b
light G.12a
light of day G.12b
lions I.85e
man about a dog/horse I.7a
most of the game K.74
neither feather nor bone of H.6f
no green cheese I.53e
not s. the light of day to G.12b
not what sits on our shoulder J.7
red K.57
red light E.5d
through a brick wall E.7b
ladder I.34c
milestone E.7b
millstone ×2 E.34e
turnpike gate E.5a
to bed I.79f
to the end of his nose I.34c
trust no further than s. him F.5
way the wind blows D.3b
what makes wheels go round A.4a
which way the cat jumps I.16a
wolf G.59
woman greet G.49b
wood for the trees G.25a
your way (clear) to G.7f
seed (v) E.31b
go/run to s. I.90f
ill s. E.31b
in the teeth I.32e
no bird sings without s. H.6f
sow the good s. J.35b
swallow watermelon s. I.69d
seed-bed I.90c
seed-corn E.33a
seed-grain, next year’s F.15f
seeding E.31b
seeds
  carry the s. of I.1d
  nor meal E.33a
  sow the s. E.31b
seedy I.90f
seeing-glass I.33e
seek (a/the)
  break F.18b
  for a key I.42b
  for stubble E.31c
  hare in a hen’s nest E.10d
  hot water under ice D.6c
  knot in ring D.8b
  knot in rush G.31b
  water in the sea D.6a
  wool on an ass E.17a
  your saw I.37e
seeks motes I.83g
seen (a/the)
  has s. his last gum-tree C.17a
  look as if you have s. a ghost J.66b
  merry dancers K.9c
  wouldn’t be s. dead in it I.38d
sees
  bad dog never s. the wolf E.18
  miller s. not all the water E.34b
see-saw (v+adj) K.68
seeter, thin as B.6b
seethe
  pot must s. F.6a
  with anger I.59c
seg, roar like a bull E.21f
segregate E.23a
seg-root, bittern at G.50c
seize (up) A.4d
seizing, no knife to cut the D.8b
self away on him, throwing E.13d
self-denying ordinance C.21d
self-flagellation J.38
selgh frae a salmon, ken D.7b
Selkirk bannie, face like I.63a
sell (a/the) (v) E.2b
  after rates of market I.86b
  bear skin E.2a
  boomerangs to the blacks C.17a
  cow E.20a
  dummy H.8
for a song K.11
hen on rainy day F.14c
honey E.30k
life dear E.2b
more if you filled ‘em I.88c
mother A.7c
packet K.60c
pass C.19c
penn’orth I.87a
pup I.6d
purse to wife E.2a
your ass E.17a
yourself short I.86b
sells
  he that s. lawn B.4d
  liberty F.34a
  vinegar K.21a
selvedge
  neither side nor s. B.2e
  worst part of web B.2e
seminal G.26a
semmant as a willow wand G.27e
semmit as a lady’s glove B.6k
send (a/the)
  away with dog in sleeve G.2d
  axe after helve F.30c
  baby on an errand I.2h
  back bags F.17c
  balloon up C.10a
  blind man to buy paint I.34c
  gander-hunting E.11e
  goose to fox’s den G.60a
  her down, Hughie J.7
  her to Temple Moors J.51
  him ben to the tongs I.72b
  husband into Cornwall I.1e
  in his checks/chips K.77c
  packing E.6c
  sow to Minerva J.9c
  thy dog E.18
  to Coventry C.11
  to Dingley Couch G.8a
  to graze E.15b
  to Jericho J.34g
  to the cleaners I.84h
  to the deep six D.9b
  to the pack G.59
  to the right-about C.14b
  to the showers K.32a
  up a pilot balloon E.5d
  you to the sea D.11
sends to the E. Indies D.15d
sense
   as much s. as the chuckies E.28d
   nae mair s. than a turkey E.28f
   no more s. than a sucking gander E.27b
   to ca’ the cows F.11a
   to keep brock out of kailyard F.20c
senseless as a clod E.31a
sentry-box, fits like C.12c
separate wheat from chaff F.17b
sepulchral I.38h
sepulchre, painted/whited J.35b
sequins, sewing on the B.5j
seraphic J.34q
Serbonian bog C.17a
serc and yellow leaf J.25a
serendipity J.4a
sergeant, white C.13g
sergeant-major C.13g
serious as a cold chisel A.3f
sermon (n) J.58b
   dry as a s. J.58b
   good example the best s. J.58b
   goose to fox’s s. G.60a
sermons in stones J.25a
serpent (n) J.34b
   Aaron’s s. J.34c
   hold a s. by the tail G.44a
   in bosom J.2k
   of old Nile J.25a
   old as the s. J.34b
   old s. J.34b
serpentine wisdom J.35b
serpent’s head, strike C.17k
serrated A.1e
servants
   fire and water good s. E.6c
   if the s. could eat the orts I.51a
serve (a/the) (v+tables) F.34b
   same sauce I.69a
   two masters J.35b
serves the poor G.2c
service
   bear’s s. J.2c
   enlist into s. D.19c
   fox’s s. F.34b
   press into s. D.19c
   yeoman’s s. C.13g
sesame, open J.2a
set (a/the) (v) K.40b
   a-broach/abroach K.18c
   afloat D.6a
   at a pease I.54a
at a pie’s heel I.70c
at a pin’s fee B.5b
at your heart I.26a
ball rolling K.32a
beside the cushion I.80c
beside the saddle E.16c
by the ears K.55
candle to the devil J.60b
cap at B.6i
cock-a-hoop K.18c
down the barrow F.29
easy as to s. dogs on sheep E.18
‘em up in other alley K.76
fair G.11
foot in the job I.40c
foot on a coal I.74h
foot on neck C.11
forth the sun I.77c
fox to keep geese G.60a
good face on it I.33a
hand to the plow J.35d
hare-pie/hare’s foot/hare’s head I.66f
heather on fire F.24d
her ribbons for B.6i
herring… D.13e
high on the wheel J.14a
hills against slacks G.20a
him a cap B.6i
him his supper I.64f
him on his feet I.3c
horses together E.14d
house in order I.83g
house on fire… I.76d
in concrete I.40c
in saddle E.16c
kiln on fire K.16a
make a dead s. E.11f
mind at rest I.79g
net after fish have gone by F.7a
not house on fire I.76d
not your loaf in I.62b
of the sail D.3c
off on right/wrong foot K.29a
on a course to D.16b
on broach K.18c
on foot I.31f
on ground D.17e
on pedestal K.15a
out to G.8a
pace K.29a
rent F.3
saddle on right horse E.16a
scene K.61b
seal on C.21d
shoulder against K.41b
sieve on fire E.34h
sights higher C.8
sights on C.8
spell up on end K.35c
sprat D.13c
spurs to E.16j
staff up/down G.6c
stall out I.86b
sun is s. G.12e
teeth I.24f
temse on fire E.34h
Thames on fire D.15a
thief to catch a thief H.1
up crop E.28a
up rest K.79d
up shop D.17c
up squawk C.17i
up your comb E.28a
wolf to keep sheep E.23i
sets (a/the)
 anything s. a good face C.17e
 low to her own tow B.1a
 up her chaff I.24c
 you well to slaver I.65a
setting
 goose E.27b
 jewel needs a s. A.5b
 star is s. J.14b
 sun G.12e
settle (a/the)
 account E.2c
 his hash I.50g
 let dust s. K.59a
 on the lees K.21a
settles, dust K.59a
seven
 bells in a wig-box D.19b
 chuck a s. K.78
 knock/scare s. bells out of D.19b
 on cloud s. J.9a
 throw a s. K.78
 ways for Sunday I.81b
 years’ heat I.2d
seventh
 heaven J.9a
 wave D.6b
seven-year itch I.35b
Severn capon I.52a
sew (a/the)
eyes with red thread B.5e
it up B.5e
pillows under elbows I.79c
up his stocking B.6m
sewed
   see also sewn
   get/have it s. up B.5f
   with sour milk B.5e
   with white thread B.5e
sewell, break E.8b
sewer, town I.85c
sewer-rats I.85c
sewing
   machine B.5e
   on the sequins B.5j
sewn
   see also sewed
   get/have it s. up B.5f
   with red-hot needle B.5e
sex, locker-room K.32a
sexton
   has shaken/thrut his shool/spade at I.38a
   nodding at the s. I.38a
shabby F.4a
shachled shoes B.10a
shackle H.19
shade
   cast into the s. K.62a
   in the s. G.14c
   of… J.66b
   put in the s. K.62a
   sundial in the s. I.81c
   throw into the s. K.62a
   without light and s. K.14d
shades
   of meaning K.14c
   test all s. K.14c
shadow (n and v) I.19
   afraid of s. H.13b
   bark at own s. G.59
   box with a s. K.40a
   cast a long s. ×2 I.19
   casts the least s. G.12b
   catch at s. C.10f
   coming events cast their s. I.19
   crooked stick, crooked s. G.6a
   dog and his s. J.2e
   fight with own s. K.40a
   flat/friendly as a s. I.19
   grows shorter I.19
   hair has s. I.21a
   in/under the s. of G.25b
keep up with own s. I.19  
like an elephant G.67  
ministers I.19  
no sunshine without s. G.12b  
of old self I.19  
pass away like s. G.14c  
quiet as s. I.19  
runt after a s. I.19  
soft as a s. I.19  
step over own s. I.19  
thin/whist as a s. I.19  
worn to a s. I.19  

wrangle for the s. of an ass J.3a  
shadows will fall behind I.19  
shadowy I.19  
shady (adj) G.14c  
 lane breeds mud G.7f  

shae, muckle skaith to B.9d  
shaft (n—of wit etc.) C.2b  
 (v)  H.11c  
dark as s. E.5b  
get/give barbed/maroon/purple s. H.11c  
in mell F.32c  
mell in s. F.32c  
not in s. for F.10c  
of pig’s tail C.2b  
or a bolt C.2b  
out of mell F.32c  
Parthian s. J.3a  
 thinks whittle is in the s. E.29a  
shaft-alley news, rumours D.4  
shafts, few will gather C.2b  
shag  
 lonely/miserable as a s. D.7d  
on a rock D.7d  
sick/wet as a s. D.7d  
shaggy and rough E.14a  
shails like sheep-louse G.42a  
shairney  
cog F.11b  
wecht F.17b  
shake (a/the)  
 barrel I.86b  
bull-ring K.57  
cloth in the wind D.3b  
dew off lily I.90d  
down G.3f  
down the persimmons G.3f  
feather E.6b  
fleece E.23h  
hands with old/wife’s best friend I.5f  
his crap/crop E.28a
his tree G.27a
lead out of pants A.3c
like a chickchacker G.57
like a jelly I.70e
like a leaf G.27d
loose leg I.31c
money tree E.30b
more than you can s. a stick at E.20e
of the bag E.25j
off as dew-drops C.17c
off the yoke F.15a
shaken
  shovel I.38a
  to the core I.55b
shake-poke F.17c
shakes
  in a brace of s. K.78
  no corn s. E.33b
shaking
  like a chickchacker G.57
  of ass’s/cuddy’s lug E.17b
  quit s. our tree E.30i
  tree a long time s. G.27a
  try s. another oak F.13b
shalder, red as feet of G.54d
shales see shails
shallow (adj—mind etc.) G.24a
  as a saucer I.48c
  streams make most noise G.24a
  where water is s. D.16f
shallowest, water is G.24a
shaly as an iron hoop E.5b
sham Abraham I.35g
shambles E.29a
  sending sheep to the s. E.23e
shame
  burning s. I.22b
  doesn’t s. his pasture E.32b
  is past the shed I.32h
  what would s. him… I.38f
shamed
  as of I had stolen H.3
  like a thief in a mill E.34d
shand F.1b
shangelt dog I.10a
shanghai (v) D.15a
Shangri-La J.24
shank
  hang by own s. E.29d
  of the day A.1e
shanks up, limber your F.10c
Shank’s mare/pony E.16e
Shannon, dipped in J.8b
shape (a/the)
course to D.16b
good s. in the shear’s mouth B.5c
lick into s. J.2c
like a whore at a christening J.56b
of foot in old brog B.10a
our bairns’ wyliecoat B.5c
shoon by own shauchled feet B.8c
take s. K.15a
shaped her own cloth B.6a
shapes the back for the burden F.33b
shaping
like a basket of wet whelks D.12
like a wooden duck K.72c
shards
let the s. lie I.46a
of Tom’s pitcher I.46a
share
lion’s s. J.2b
of the cake I.71b
shares honey with a bear K.56b
shark D.7a
wouldn’t give a shout if s. bit him D.7a
shark-bait D.13c
sharks D.7a
box of s. D.7a
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  like shit off a s. F.9b
  put in his/her s. F.28a
  put out on the s. I.2c
  put to bed with s. F.28a
  shaken his s. at him I.38a
  shit against tide D.15e
  shot out of s. F.22
  toad on a s. G.44d
shovel-head F.28a
shovels, No.4 F.28a
show (a/the)
  best side to London I.85e
  brush E.8c
  bull-horn E.19a
  cards K.79b
  cat the way to the dairy I.15c
  clean pair of heels I.31g
  cloven hoof J.63b
  cow-tail E.20c
  don’t show your skin B.6a
  fatted calf E.21f
  flag D.19d
  for s. and not for blow I.5j
  garron-bone E.14e
  get the s. on the road K.59a
  give the s. away K.63
  hackle K.58b
  hand K.79b
  him an egg E.28c
  horns J.63b
  leg I.31c
  no s. without Punch! K.60d
  one to s. I.5j
  ropes D.3a
  steal the s. H.3
  sun with a lantern I.78b
  teeth I.24f
  white feather K.58a
  white rabbit-scut G.64c
  yellow streak K.14c
show-case (n and v) J.30e
show-down K.81
shower (v) G.14d
  bee never caught in s. G.33a
  come down in last s. G.14d
  falls soft G.14d
  hat not made for one s. B.6i
many drops make a s. G.14d
weeds after a s. I.90b
shoers
  after sharp s. G.14d
  head-to-tail s. E.20e
  send to the s. K.32a
  soft as s. G.14d
showing, slip is B.61
showls, half-crown F.28a
shows (a/the)
  cauliflower I.54c
  her teeth G.58c
shram a cat I.11
shrapnel C.16
shred of evidence B.6c
shreds, tear to B.6c
shrew G.68a
  better s. than sheep G.68a
  every man can tame s. G.68a
shrewd G.68a
cow a short horn E.20b
Shrewsbury clock G.8a
shriek (v-of…) H.11c
shrift, short J.58c
shrimp D.12
shrimps learn to whistle D.12
shrine, such J.40b
shrink (n) C.17b
shrinking violet G.30b
Shropshire sharp-shins I.31c
shroud (n) ×3 I.38d
  white as a s. I.38d
shrouded I.38d
Shrove Tuesday J.41a
shrub, pine wishes herself F.24e
Shrubbs’s copse G.8a
shrug
  of the shoulders I.5g
  off I.5g
shuck I.54a
  don’t s. your corn… E.33d
  light a s. for E.33c
shucks! I.54a
  gone to s. I.54a
Shudehill, pigs in G.8a
shuffle (a/the)
  cards K.79a
  out of G.7h
  them up K.79a
shufflemuck F.9b
shuffling the feet I.5g
shun the bait, better F.7a
shunt
  into a siding A.4c
  somewhere else A.4c
Shurat weaver B.2a
shut (a/the)
  cost as much to get s. on it I.86b
  door on/upon I.41f
  doors against setting sun G.12e
  fish not caught if it kept mouth s. F.7a
  gate’s s. G.10c
  hatch I.41f
  have your knife s. F.30c
  his eyes to I.23b
  leave it s. H.6d
  look s. out I.41f
  nature out of door I.41h
  plows F.15a
  trap H.6d
  up like a clam D.12
  up shop E.2b
  your knife F.30c
shutters
  put up s. E.2b
shutting stable door E.15a
shuttle
  as a rabbit G.64c
  diplomacy B.2c
  life is a s. B.2c
shuttlecock (v) K.37b
  battledore and s. K.37b
  existence K.37b
  not worth a s. K.37b
shuttle-gabbed/-gobbed/-witted B.2c
shy
  as a mouse G.67
  away/off from E.16f
  fight s. C.10g
  have a s. at K.60f
  of a trap E.8c
  once bitten, twice s. G.2d
Shylock J.25a
Shy’s guts I.29d
Siamese twins I.34a
sib
  as sieve and riddle F.20b
  to the king C.13a
sick
  as (a/the) blackfellow’s dog I.6a
  cat I.11
  cushion I.80c
  dog I.6a
gissy E.25a
gurnet D.13d
horse E.15g
muck E.13d
mud E.31a
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peat I.72e
pig E.25a
rat G.66
shag D.7d
devil was s. J.63e
kitten on hot brick I.12
monkey C.17e
of... I.29e
of the mulligrubs I.29b
parrot C.17i
shoulder of mutton for s. horse E.15g
two men gone s. C.10d
sicken a snipe G.54c
sicker in the bite I.7b
sickle
asking about a s. F.26b
bent/crooked as a s. F.26b
got the ill s. F.26b
in corn E.33c
sickle-feather F.26b
sickle-shins F.26b
sickness comes on horseback E.16d
side
all on/to the one s. see sub all
face like s. of house I.39a
hears not on that s. I.34d
ken which s. of penny K.77d
let the s. down K.33a
neither end nor s. J.27b
neither s. nor selvedge B.2e
on the s. K.26c
on the s. of the angels J.65
on the windy s. of E.10c
on the wrong s. of the hedge H.2a
on the wrong s. of the park I.91a
on your s. of the bread I.63c
other s. of the hill G.20a
out of one s. of his mouth I.5a
over the s. ×2 D.9b
pass by on the other s. J.35d
put on s. K.73
read on one s. of leaf J.22b
thorn in the s. I.35e
sidearms C.3c
side-blow K.40b
sideboard, fruit for the I.55a
side-door
  come through s. I.41a
dealings etc. I.41a
side-dykes wi’ you, ill running F.15b
sideline (v) K.32b
sidelines, sit/stand on the s. K.32b
side-pocket
dog has need of s. G.44d
  proud as toad with s. G.44d
toad has need of s. G.44d
side-pockets
cow has use for s. E.20d
  proud as dog with s. I.7d
sider, some hang F.13a
sides
  all ends and s. J.27b
  of a penny K.77d
  on both s. the blanket I.79d
two s. to every penny K.77d
sideshow run away with circus K.59a
side-slip A.4e
side-step K.32a
side-swipe K.40b
side-track A.4c
sideways, knock I.89b
side-wind D.5
sidewinder C.17k
sidewipe(r) K.40b
siding, shunt into A.4c
siege
  lay s. to ×2 C.12b
  mentality C.12b
sieve (n) F.20b
  (v—evidence etc.) I.50b
  another holds under the s. E.20f, E.23b, E.24a
  carry water in s. F.20b
  go through the small s. F.20b
  head/memory like a s. F.20b
  leak like s. F.20b
  milk cow in s. F.11b
  milk he-goat into s. E.24a
  pour water into s. F.20b
  set s. on fire E.34h
  sib as s. and riddle F.20b
  stop one hole in s. F.20b
sift (v—evidence etc.) I.50b
sigh (a/the)
  hemp H.21c
  like a furnace A.3c
sight
  for sore eyes I.35b
  in/within s. of G.7f
Pisgah s. J.34f
  sharpens the s. I.23b

sights
  in your s. C.8
  lower your s. C.8
  raise your s. C.8
  set s. higher C.8
  set s. on C.8

sign (a/the)
  coal-warrants D.15d
  ill s. G.60a
  Indian s. C.17a
  of cat’s foot K.26b
  your own death-warrant H.22

signature tune K.62e
sign-post G.7d
  government s. G.7d

signposted, road to heaven well G.7d
Silas Wegg to drop intp poetry K.12
silence
  in the pig-market E.25j
  is a fine jewel E.4c

silent
  as (a/the) death I.38b
    father confessor J.58c
    grave I.38h
    night G.17
    tomb I.38h

silhouette C.21e
silk
  all that rustles not s. B.4d
  bode for s. gown B.6f
  break horse with s. thread E.15c
  dance wearing a s. stocking K.9d
  dress on a goat E.24a
  fairest s. B.4d
  half s. B.4d
  handkerchief B.6n
  hit the s. B.4d
  leg not healed by s. stocking I.37d
  purse B.4e
  shot s. in sunshine B.4d
  skein of s. B.4d
  smooth as s. B.4d
  soft as s. B.4d
  stocking neighbourhood B.6m
  stop runaway horse with bridle of s. E.16e
  turn mulberry leaf into s. B.4d

silken snood B.6i
silks and satins I.62a
silkworm B.4d
siller, buys wi’ own E.2a
siller-clean E.4e
sillocks, sour D.13d
silly
    as (a/the) bauson G.62
curlew G.54b
giddy sheep E.23f
hatful of worms B.6i
mawk G.37b
Pal Hall I.4n
pea cloise E.31d
stunned mullet D.13b
two-bob watch A.5c
wet hen E.28b
wheel E.5b
    goose to fox’s sermon G.60a
silver
    bright as s. E.4e
hook E.12
in the mine E.3b
Joan’s s. pin E.4e
lining B.5h
pin B.5b
    shoot with s. gun E.11c
spoon E.4e
spoons I.44c
tail G.58b
    think farthing/halfpenny good s. F.1b
weapons C.1a
    white as s. E.4e
simmer (down) (on) ×3 I.59c
’simmon, longest pole takes G.3f
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simper
    like a bride I.1c
    furmity kettle I.47e
mare E.15b
    pot ready to run over I.59b
riven dish I.48b
simple
    as a halfp’orth of cheese I.53e
soap/treacle I.45b, I.47b
    oak F.24e
Simpson’s sow E.251
sin
    as full of s. I.11
black/clever/foul/gripple as s. J.38
hate like s. J.38
ugly as s. J.38
work like s. J.38
sindle
    kame s. I.32h
ride s. E.16j
sindry, fall I.48b
sinews of war I.27
sinful as a witch J.6a
sing (a/the)
  another tune K.1c
  at deaf man’s door G.1
  before breakfast I.64b
  before thieves F.5
  bird that can s. I.17f
  black psalm J.57a
  devil’s Paternoster J.63e
  enough to make a lapstone s. B.8b
  for your supper K.11
  in one month G.57
  kyrie eleison to J.57a
  Lachryma J.57a
  like a Bromwich throstle G.52a
    canary I.17f
    lark G.56
    linty G.57
  low in a bad tune K.11
  Magnificat at matins J.57c
  not too poor to s. K.11
  Nunc dimitis J.57a
  Placebo J.57a
  raincrow don’t s. tune C.17j
  small K.11
  without seed H.6f
singe his feathers G.45c
singed
  cat I.14d
  hair I.32g
  his wings G.38a
singing
  don’t start s. J.61
  halleluja/whillaluja 161
  hinnies K.11
  man E.2b
  off…’s hymn-sheet 161
  thick as curns in a s. hinny I.62b
single
  ride at s. anchor D.15b
  track mind A.4c
sings
  inwardly G.52a
  when the cuckoo s. G.53
sinister J.11
sink (a/the) (v) D.9b
  battleship D.19a
  didn’t you s. the Emden? D.19f
  little leak will s. a ship D.17c
  mind like a s. I.85c
money in D.9b
of iniquity I.85c
or swim D.9c
so low as to... D.9c
teeth into E.10b
sinking
sand D.17c
ship D.17f
sins, multitude of J.38
sip by sip I.67a
siphon off K.21a
sire, trot E.14d
siren J.1c
sister (n—arts/ships/schools etc.) I.4f
of the Charterhouse 149
postman’s s. I.5k
pulling a soldier off your s. I.1b
weak s. I.4f
Sisyphean labour J.1c
Sisyphus, labour of J.1c
sit (a/the)
beside the saddle E.16c
bodkin F.15a
down hard on I.31b
down under C.11
eggs E.28d
heavy on I.31b
high on the wheel J.14a
in own light I.78d
in the stern D.16b
in tight boots B.9b
let the hare/hen s. a bit E.10d, E.28d
light on I.31b
like (a) bean in a monk’s hood J.148
crows in the mist G.46b
koala C.17h
mumchat K.67b
toad on shovel/ch.-block G.44d
wire-drawer A.5d
wooden hullet K.72c
longer than a hen E.28d
make...sit up J.17
many a hen can s. E.28d
market I.86b
near the door I.74e
next the chumley I.74e
on I.31b
on another’s coat-tail/lap I.5j
on bag of (hen-)fleas G.40
on barrel of gunpowder C.7a
on blister I.35b
on cigarette paper K.24
on fence/rail E.7b
on hands I.31b
on own coat-tails B.6e
on powder-keg C.7a
on safety-valve A.4b
on sidelines K.32b
on skirts I.5j
on thorns G.4b
on volcano G.20c
still for I.31b
under vine and fig tree J.34j
up and beg I.7b
up like sore thumb I.35b
upon coals I.74b
with finger/thumb up ass I.30g
sits
  full still F.4a
  wind s. G.13b, I.31b
sitting
  by Nellie I.4n
  down like a duck E.26a
  duck H.6g
  hen gets no feathers E.28d
  in (a/the) garden I.90a
    Rome J.42
    row G.57
  pheasant E.11c
quiet as s. hen E.28d
sitting-time, steg in E.27b
six
  feet of earth I.38h
  hit/knock for s. K.33b
  hit on all s. A.4d
  hundred pound gorilla C.17e
  o’clock I.81e
  penn’orth of coppers F.1b
  send to the deep s. D.9b
sixes and sevens K.78
sixpence
  Brummagem s. E.7c
  lucky as a bent s. E.1a
  Mapplewell s. E.1a
  same old s. E.1a
  split tongue with silver s. I.24e
    with a hole in it H.12a
sixpences, spit white E.1a
sixpenny dagger, lose C.3e
sixty four thousand dollar question K.62e
size
  cut down to s. J.1c
  don’t go by s. E.20d
try it (on) for s. B.6a
whittle down to size K.15b
sizel about like geese... E.27f
sizzle I.60a
like bacon...  I.60a
skailing see scaling
Skairsburn warning G.8a
skaitie comes to the shea B.9d
skavitie, play K.67a
skart on top o’ craig D.7d
skate (v) K.31d
on thin ice K.31d
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skate-rumple D.13d
skates on, get your K.31d
skating rink K.31d
skeener see skeiner
skedaddle F.11b
Skeed, lie like Tommy I.4n
skeer your own fire I.74c
skein
of silk B.4d
ravel the s. B.1b
ravelled/rumpled/tangled s. B.1b
skeiner, go/run like B.1f
skeleton (n—crew/key/plan etc.) I.18c
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skeletons fucking on tin roof I.18c
skelly (n and v) I.34c
skelp the hide and tallow E.29a
sken like a trapped weasel G.63e
skens
at her like a soft lad I.34b
worse than a wisket of whelps I.6d
skep (v) E.30j
black as s. I.73c
at the castin’ E.30j
in with E.30j
open as a s. I.45a
skep-bonnet I.45a
skerryman, meet the D.16e
sketch in K.14a
sketchy K.14a
skew-gobbed I.34a
ski last run K.31d
skice about like pisky J.5b
skid (v) A.4d
Road/Row F.24h
skid-marks E.5d
skids
grease the s. F.23b
hit the s. F.23b
on the s. F.23b
put the s. under F.23b
skies, break in the G.14c
skill
  in gilt first A.5b
  in horseflesh E.15h
skillet
  bacon in a s. I.60a
dried peas in hot s. I.54a
roach in s. G.35c
tote your own s. C.17a
skilly, cream in I.68
skim off the cream E.22c
skimmer E.22c
  brassen s. I.47a
skim-milk conversation E.22c
skimming E.22c
  o’ a bowie E.22c
skimmy-dish E.22c
skin (a/the) (n) I.18f
  (v) G.3e
  and birn E.23f
  and blister I.35b
  as soft as Leominster wool B.4c
  mowdiwarp G.68c
between brows I.22a
blow s. flute K.7c
cat G.3e
change s. I.18f
cool in s. I.66g
die in s. G.59
don’t show your s. B.6a
eel by the tail I.51b
Ethiopian’s s. J.34r
fairy J.5a
fire in your s. I.74a
fit to leap out of her s. I.18f
flay two devils for one s. J.63h
flint I.44a
fox must pay s. B.4e
get under s. G.37c
gnat for its hide G.37d
good sleeping in a whole s. I.18f
he’d s. a lop G.41
his own eel I.51b
his own skunk C.17h
jump out of s. I.18f
lamb E.29d
lamb’s s. E.29d
louse G.41
nearer my s. B.6g
of teeth J.34m
off a rice pudding I.70b
off a snake G.44a
off all dead bones F.10h
off my nose I.23e
old sheep’s s. E.29d
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paddock G.44d
play s. flute K.7c
tell sausage by its s. E.29a
toad G.44d
turd I.29d
under the s. J.25b
what more of a cat than her s.? B.4e
wrinkled s. I.18f
skin-deep I.18f
skinflint I.44a
skink, spoil potful of I.60d
skinned eel I.51b
skinning
  lucky eel that escapes s. I.51b
  this cat I.16b
skinny
  as a rail E.7b
    toothpick I.32e
skins than an onion, more I.54e
skint G.3e
skin-the-louse G.41
skip (v) K.67b
  cops in s. B.1d
  it K.67b
skipper’s daughter D.19b
skips
  like hail E.16a
    of a louse G.41
skirl
  round like a scopperil K.70
  to death K.31d
skirling, woo’s no worth the E.23h
skirt (n=edge, shore) B.51
  (v) B.51
skirts
  hang upon s. of I.3b
  hide behind s. I.3b
  of straw I.76c
  sit on s. I.5j
skitogs are flung C.1c
skitter, spoonful of I.60d
skittering cow E.20e
skittle over/out K.76
skittles
  down like s. K.76
not all beer and s. K.76
skitty, run like a G.57
skreigh when you’re strucken J.19
skrike
  like a jay G.46e
  pianet G.46f
skull
  dead man’s s. B.4c
  out of your s. I.21d
skunk (n and v) C.17h
  eat arse out of dead s. C.17h
  fight with s. C.17h
  in a henhouse C.17h
  skin his own s. C.17h
sky
  blue as the s. G.12f
  freckled s. I.18f
  if the s. falls G.12f
  is the limit G.12f
  pie in the s. I.70c
sky-high G.12f
  blow s. C.7a
skylark (v) G.56
skylarker G.56
sky-pilot A.4e
Skyreburn see Skairsburn
skyscraper G.12f
skyclthers, death on F.24i
slab as butter I.53c
slack
  coals or s. F.23a
  cut a little s. B.5c
  drawn-on B.2c
  give some s. D.8b
  hang on s. rope D.8b
  hill against a s. G.20a
  in the girse-nail F.26a
  let tow run s. D.8b
  of my belly I.29a
  rein E.16h
  sling on s. rope D.8b
  take in s. of pants B.7b
  take up the s. (of belly) I.29a
  take up the s. (of rope) D.8b
slack-baked I.62b
slacken your yorks F.4a
slacks, set hills against G.20a
slack-spun B.1e
Slaidburn, kick one in J.3c
slake (v) F.34b
  fire with gunpowder C.7c
  lick and a s. I.5b
wrath I.74g
slam door in face I.41f
slamdunk K.34
slamp
and wobbly as corn-boggart J.66c
wambly and s. B.2f
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flings stones at itself C.1b
leaves a scar C.10d
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slap (a/the)
in the face I.5i
label on E.2b
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slape (adj) I.78b
as (a/the) ackron G.35b
eel/eel’s tail F.7b
glass I.41i
greasy pole K.60e
needle B.5d
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plow-slipe F.15a
snot I.24k
pair of s. heels B.10a
slape-clogs B.9c
slapstick K.62b
slare/slary I.83e
slart/slather/slaum/slaurie G.2b
slash (v) C.17b
slash-and-burn C.17b
slashed gown B.6f
slasht see slashed
Slatchcock’s bannock, Kitty I.63b
slate (v) J.19
  clean (the) s. ×2 K.26c
  has a s. off I.39h
  reckoning without s. J.27a
  wants cleaning J.20b
slates
  away for s. I.40i
  ball’s in the s. K.67b
  buy s. for a neighbour’s I.40h
slather G.2b
slatter E.22b
slaughter
  lamb to the s. J.34q
  lambs led to s. house E.29d
slaum/slaurie G.2b
slave
  cylinder F.34a
  old s. F.34a
slave-driver F.34a
slaver, sets you well to I.65a
slavering/slaverment I.24e
slavishly F.34a
slay (v) H.12a
sleck-trough A.3d
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money no good till s. F.9b
toils H.6d
wings G.45f
spread-eagled C.15a
spread-eaglism C.15a
spreads
more you trample, more it s. E.13d
nets H.6d
true praise s. G.26b
sprig G.26c
spring (n=source) G.23b
cauliflowers’ style I.54c
chick E.28d
colt in s. E.14a
from pure s. G.23b
from the same s. G.23b
home I.2b
it on… H.6d
like ha’penny knife F.30e
o’your ain fiddle K.2a
of a/the stone G.21b
partridge E.11d
play a s. K.6a
rivers need a s. G.23b  
to pay K.6c  
up like mushrooms G.32  
where did you s.from? C.17d  
spring-board K.30a  
springe to catch woodcock H.6g  
spring-head G.23b  
springs, muddy G.23e  
spring-tide D.15e  
sprinted up the broo E.10a  
sprout (n=youngster) G.27a  

antlers G.64a  
wings J.65  

sprung of (a/the) stone G.21b  
spry as a robin herdick G.55  
spuds will be hard I.61d  
spuggies, flock of G.57  

spun  

from the winch D.15c  
that which will not be s. B.1c  
thread is s. B.1e  
too fine B.1e  

spune see spoon  
spunk I.73a  

spun-yarn trick D.8b  

spur (a/the) (n)  

see also sparrow (n) E.16j  
and bridle E.16i  
hamshackled horse E.15d  
in head E.16j  
needs a good s. E.16j  
of the moment E.16j  
on E.16j  
sharp s. for resty horse E.16j  
willing horse E.16j  

spur-leathers/whangs E.16j  

spurred  
booted and s. E.16b  
good horse seldom s. E.16j  
kick till you’re s. E.16j  

spurs  

forgets the s. E.16j  
gilt s. C.6c  
in his side E.16j  
set s. to E.16j  
tine the s. E.16j  
win his s. C.6c  

spurtle, run for the L.60e  
spurtle-legs L.60e  

spy out the land D.16b  
squab G.57
squabble
  like bargees D.10a
  fish-wives D.14
squab-job G.57
squab-pie of, make I.61b
squail at H.3
squails at, throw H.3
squall D.5
squalls, look out for D.5
squander G.64b
square (a/the) (v) J.27b
  (adj=fair) J.27b
  account(s) E.2c
  back at/to s. one K.73
  break no s. J.27b
  circle J.27b
  deal K.79a
  his loom B.2c
  peg A.1c
  shoulders up to K.40a
  toes I.31h
  up like a bottle of piss I.36c
  wheel F.29
  yard-arm/yards D.19e
squares
  all accounts E.2c
  break no s. J.27b
  break s. with J.27b
  how the s. go K.74
  in a load of whins G.29d
  inch breaks no s. J.27b
square-toed I.31h
squaw winter C.17a
squawk (v) C.17i
  put/set up a s. C.17i
squeak
  more s. than wool F.12b
  not heard a s. out of I.17a
  until the pips s. I.55c
  young one s. F.13c
squeaking wheel never wears out A.4a
squeaky
  clean I.83f
  wheel gets the grease A.4a
squeal (v) F.13c
squealing
  like a nestle-tripe E.25i
  round like stuck pig E.29e
squeals
  every time pig s. E.25b
squeeze (n and v) (a/the) I.89b
  fat out of I.60b
quarter E.1a
  to the wall I.89b
squeezed
  orange I.55c
  out at little end of horn C.6b
squeez-me-tight I.1b
squeezing, best honey not got by E.30k
squench see quench
squib (n and v) E.14e, K.69
damp s. K.69
squint (n) I.34c
  good eye s. I.34c
  like a bag of nails A.1c
    goanna C.17k
squint-eyed I.34c
squire, scald E.15g
squirm (v) G.39b
squirrel (n and v) G.65, I.17e
  away G.65
  crozzled up like a s. G.65
  lish/lively/nimble as a s. G.65
  ruddy as a s. G.65
  shoot the s. E.8d
    tall tree makes s. saucy G.65
squirrel-cage I.17e
squirrel-headed G.65
squirrels, hunt E.8d
squoyles see squails
squozen rotton I.17c
stab (n) H.12b
  in the back H.12b
    make a s. at H.12b
    nose to s. geese E.27f
    with a rose G.45c
stabbed with a Bridport dagger H.12b
stable
  head too big to come out of s. E.15b
  out of the same/good s. K.50a
  shut s. door E.15a
stable-companion/-mate K.50a
stack (a/the)
  blow her s. D.10b
    deck K.79a
  stripped the cat F.11b
stacked against/in favour of K.79a
stacker, put in G.7h
stack-prop, windlestraw for G.4a
staff
  and baton/burdon C.13f
    argue from s. to corner G.6c
    beat with own s. C.1c
  beggar’s s. G.6c
better/worse end of the s. G.6b
for his own head C.1c
give a knave a s. G.6c
into a stake G.6c
keep s. in own hand G.6c
lover’s s. G.6c
out of his cog F.11b
part with s. G.6c
put down/up a s. G.6c
ride on a s. G.6c
set down/up a s. G.6c
stands next the door G.6c
staff-end, keep at G.6c
Stafford
clad in S. blue H.15
law H.15
staff’s end G.6c
stag (n and v) E.8b
stage
(v) K.61a
hold the s. K.61c
is set for… K.61b
leave the s. K.61b
next s. E.5c
occupy centre s. K.61c
stages, by slow E.5c
stagged in the mud F.10g
stagger K.40b
like drunken man K.22c
staggerer G.7h
stag-headed G.64a
stag-month see steg-month
stagnant G.23c
stag-turkey, strouty like E.28f
staigs, corn’s no for F.10e
stain
on character I.84b
true blue will never s. B.3a
will smear white stockings B.6m
stained, lawn/silk soonest B.4d
stair-rods, rain I.80d
stake (a/the)
at s. K.77a
bear goes to the s. K.56d
claim E.3a
eat a s. F.18c
Fill Bayer kens her s. E.20a
have a s. in K.77a
low s. E.7b
nor edder F.18c
stiff/still as a s. F.18c
swallow a s. F.18c
tie to the s. K.56d
turn staff into s. G.6c
water a s. I.90d
wouldn’t go to the s. for J.40a
stake-and-ether/-hether/-yedder F.18c
stakes
  drive your s. E.3a
  move s. E.3a
  play for high s. K.77a
  pull up s. E.3a
  stick your s. E.3a
  the…s. K.54
  up s. E.3a
stale
  as (a/the) custom J.8a
    old beer K.20
    ship’s biscuit D.8a
  cry s. fish D.14
  have by the s. F.30c
stalemate K.74
stalking horse E.8b
stalks, eyes on I.23a
stall out, set I.86b
stalled E.5d
  as a dog I.6a
stallion’s tail E.24a
Stamford, baiting bull of K.57
stamp (n and v) E.4e
  down on C.17k
  out F.24d
  work like a s. F.23b
stampede (n and v) (a/the) E.19f
  horses E.5c
stamping ground E.14d
stamps like a ewe E.23c
Stamshaw nanny-goat E.24a
stance K.38
stand (a/the/your)
  as stiff as a stookie B.5k
  askew on steddle E.30j
  backwater E.34b
  bar of… K.1d
  bough that you s. upon F.24f
  by with folded arms I.5g
  by your tackle/tackling C.2c
  easy to s. your ground C.1c
  empty bags cannot s. upright F.17c
  every sack s. E.33e
  gaff K.58b
  ground C.10f
  if you can’t s. the heat I.58b
  in another man’s shoes B.9a
in his light I.78d
in own light I.78d
in the breach C.12b
in the way of H.3
in white sheets J.38
kirk s. in kirkyard J.51
know where you s. G.10a
like (a/the) bog-stalker H.6f
dun cow K.26b
image of rye-dough J.8a
Mumphazard H.21e
teddie-bogey F.9c
not a leg to s., on I.31c
on I.31b
on (a/the/own) bottom I.45b
coat-tails B.6e
feet I.3c
legs I.3c
my head to K.59g
one leg I.31d
pantofles B.9e
rolling stone G.21b
sidelines K.32b
stepping stones G.9b
thorns G.4b
top step I.39f
volcano G.20c
one-night s. K.62a
out C.14b
pace K.29a
pat K.81
perk B.3b
rack-ups F.10e
stour G.13d
thick as sheep E.23g
to be shot at C.10b
to your own pan-pudding I.70b
traffic will s. F.8
trig K.29a
up and be counted C.21c
up for C.10a
up to the rack F.10e
up to your lick-logs E.19d
upon hair I.21a
with fingers in mouths I.3a
your nook I.39c
standard, raise C.15a
standing (—army/dish/colours etc.) I.31d
dish I.64a
do it s., on head K.59g
leave s. K.29a
like a jack… I.60b
on forkle-end F.20b  
on one leg K.36  
pools G.23c  
tak’ a s. drink H.15  
take s. I.31d  
up in a hammock D.8a  
standpatter K.81  
standpoint G.20a  
stands  
  condemned H.17  
  cow that s. still F.11b  
  his house s. E.7c  
  lie s. on one leg I.31d  
  mill s. E.34b  
  near to barn door E.13c  
  on head I.21c  
  on hillock G.20a  
  out like a mustard plaster I.37d  
  out like a shithouse I.85c  
stane  
  cauld as a curling s. K.31a  
  sliddery s. F.5  
  to break an egg I.52f  
staned in, cheswell he was E.22f  
stang o’ the trump K.5  
stangs to my heart H.12b  
stank  
  loup s. dikes E.7b  
  loup the s. E.7b  
  stap out of his bicker/cog I.48a  
stappit saster I.70b  
staps, go all to I.48a  
star  
  bright particular s. J.25a  
  constant as northern s. D.16d  
  doss in S.Hotel K.26a  
  guiding s. D.16d  
  hitch wagon to s. G.18a  
  is in the ascendant/setting J.14b  
  o’th’ ee G.18a  
  turn K.62a  
starch (n) I.84d  
  take the s. out of I.84d  
Star-chamber H.17  
starchy I.84d  
stardust G.18a  
stare  
  at the moon G.18b  
  like (a/the) Bowse beass J.5d  
  choked throstle G.52a  
  stuck pig/sheep E.29d  
  terrier dog… I.6a
throttled cat I.16b
earwig G.35e
isaac G.57
twichelled earwig G.35e
someone in the face I.23b
staring, difference between… I.34c
stark blind/mad I.34c
starn o’ th’ ee G.18a
starry-eyed G.18a
starry-gazy pie G.18a
stars
above/beyond the s. G.18a
are not seen G.12b
gang withershins G.18a
he that looked at the s. G.10a
in their courses J.34h
make no noise G.18a
two s. in one sphere G.18a
walk and look at s. G.18a
star-shot, off like G.18c
start (a/the)
don’t s. singing J.61
false s. K.29a
flying s. K.29a
fowl-roost F.14c
from scratch K.29a
game E.11d
good s. is half the race K.29a
hare ×2 E.10d
new hare E.10d
of a fray C.10c
panic-bells ringing H.13a
stone rolling G.21b
starter, beat the K.29a
starter’s orders, under K.50a
starters, for I.64a
starting
at the end of the book J.20a
be left/stay at the s. line K.29a
starts (the)
as a thread B.1e
at straws E.33c
greyhound that s. many hares E.10d
hare E.10d
starve (a/the)
gavelock F.28b
in cook’s shop I.58a
one bee E.30j
otter to death G.63b
starved
of F.6a
when the horse is s. E.15b
starves, steed E.15b
starving dog carries fleas I.10a
state of China, worse than C.17a
state-of-play K.33b
state-of-the-art K.15e
static K.62e
station, movement at J.25b
statue
   mute/still/white as s. K.15a
   will never have a s. when dead K.15a
staunch B.8c
stave
   off C.1c, K.56d
   out of my cog F.11b
stave’s end G.6c
staves
   ding/go to sticks and s. I.80a
   of the ladder F.27
   thirteen s. & never a hoop K.18b
staw a dog, plenty of butter would I.8b
stay (the) (n) I.40g
   at the starting line K.29a
   course K.50b
   out of the kitchen I.58b
   pace K.29a
   till lame messenger come C.20a
stays
   in the valley G.20a
   memory s. green G.27d
stay-tape is scorched B.5h
steady
   as (a/the) buggin J.66c
      church J.51
      plummet D.16f
      rock G.21a
      stithy A.3d
steak, one-eyed I.50c
steal (a/the)
   acorns F.13b
   arrow, horse H.5
cow H.5
cross off ass’s back E.17a
egg H.5
egg from the crane H.6g
for others H.21a
gangs early to s. H.3
geese H.5
goose and give… J.37
goose and stick… H.5
heart H.3
hog, and give… J.37
horse H.5
limelight K.62a
liver H.3
march C.14a
second base K.34
sheep and give trotters J.37
show H.3
thunder K.61c

steals
fox s. lamb G.60a
steam
age A.4b
ahead/along A.4c
blow off s. A.4b
coming out of ears I.23c
gear A.4b
forty pounds of s. D.19a
get up s. A.4b
hammer A.4b
head of s. behind A.4b
let off s. A.4b
like s. A.4b
lose s. A.4b
Norwegian s. D.4
radio A.4b
run out of s. A.4b
that blows whistle A.4c
under your own s. D.4
steamboat course D.4
steamboating D.4
steamed up A.4b
steaming, even A.4c
steam-roller A.4b
light and speedy as a s. A.4b
steamy I.58b
steany, grand as E.14b
steedle, stand askew on E.30j
steed see stone
stee-hopping F.27
steek, clean B.5e
steeks
keep s. B.5e
put in hard s. B.5e
steel (adj and n) A.3b
(v) A.3c
balloon K.72c
give the s. out of A.3c
good knife of bad s. F.30e
in needle-point B.5d
in needle’s eye B.5d
nerves A.3b
sharp/smart as s. trap H.6d
steeve as s. A.3b
to the back/rig A.3b
tongue not s. C.4a
true as s. A.3b
true s. as Ripon rowels C.6c
worthy of s. K.43
steelbowed E.13b
steel-pen coat J.20g
steely A.3b
steep (a/the)
  so s. that chain-lightning… G.15a
too s. for a crow… G.46b
withies I.45a
your brains I.84b
steeped in I.84b
steeple
  bats in s. G.68b
  bears the bell J.52c
  Chesterfield s. G.8a
  fear loss of bell more than s. J.52c
  go round church to find s. J.52a
  high as a s. J.52a
  old as Paul’s s. J.52a
  pack-saddle s. E.16a
  plain/tall as a s. J.52a
steeple-crowned hat J.40a
steer (a/the)
  away from D.16b
  bum s. E.21f
  clear D.16b
  course to D.16b
  do what the s. did E.21f
  fart like a s. E.21f
  in calm sea D.16b
  middle/narrow course D.16b
  red s. E.21f
steerie, scunner at cauld I.69c
steeve as steel A.3b
steg
  lonely as a s. E.27b
  on a hot griddle E.27f
  swan G.50a
  teethe as a s. in a gate E.27f
  tough as an old s. I.69b
  with egg E.27b
steg-month E.27b
steg-necked E.27a
  ligger E.27a
steik, tak’ up B.7b
stele see stale
Stella Maris D.16d
Stellenbosched C.16
stem (a/the) (n) G.26c
  from G.26c
  from s. to stern D.1a
tide D.15e
stem-winder/stem-winding A.5c
stench, fox smells own G.60a
stentorian J.26a
step (n) I.31f
  after s. F.27
  by s. I.31f
down I.31f
false s. K.44
hardest s. is over threshold I.41e
into the breach C.12b
  net H.6d
  shoes of B.9a
mind your s. I.31f
on each other J.2j
on the gas A.4d
out of line C.14b
out of s. C.14b
over own shadow I.19
slippery s. at every door I.41e
stand on top s. I.39f
starts with a single s. G.7f
take the first s. G.7f
up A.6b
  watch your s. I.31f
step-and-fetch-it E.6c
step-child, feel like a I.4j
stepminny, never tell C.10f
stepmother (n) ×2 I.4j
  jag I.4j
stepmother’s blessing/breath ×2 I.4j
stepney G.8a
stepping
  stand on s. stones G.9b
  stones G.9b
steps
  in the s. of G.10a
  retrace s. G.10a
stereotype J.22a
sterilize I.36e
sterling E.4e
  children E.1b
stern
  from stem to s. D.1a
  sit in the s. D.16b
stew (n) I.60c
don’t make s. till you catch… H.6c
gipsy s. A.7d
in a s. I.60c
in own juice/grease I.60c
lower deck s. D.19b
steward about, a good F.34c
stewed
owl I.61b
to the gills I.61a
stey brae G.20a
steyk to bonny side of door I.41d
stick (n=stitch) B.5e
after him with sharp s. F.34a
and stump F.24b
awl(s) in wall B.8b
bent s. I.72d
big s. policy H.13a
break eggs with s. I.52f
carrot and s. F.10e
cleft s. G.6b
crook in old s. G.6a
crooked s. ×2 G.6a
cut your s. E.2a, F.5a
dirty end of s. G.6b
don’t let flies s. to heels G.37a
down a feather H.5
down like the s. K.69
drink on a s. I.71f
dry as an old s. I.72d
feather in frog’s tail G.44e
for your own back H.20d
get a s. F.32c
get/give a s. E.18
get on the s. K.8c
grimed with same s. E.23f
hand in a cleft s. G.6b
have fiddle, but not s. K.2a
if I lose the s. G.6b
in the briars/clay/mire G.4b
in the gills D.13a
in the wood man’s eye I.35e
knaggy as thorn s. G.6a
let fly s. in the wall I.40c
like (a) bur G.29f
cleg G.37c
cocklety-bur G.29f
flea in a fleece G.40
leech G.42c
pozzie to a blanket I.79d
remora D.7c
wax I.5m
like shit off a s. F.9b
to a blanket I.79d
shovel F.9b
look as if stirred with s. E.13d
make it s. G.2b
more than you can shake a s. at E.20e
neck out E.11e
no butter will s. to his bread I.63c
off the s. end G.6b
on a/the s. K.8c
only s. left in the hedge E.7b
out like bulldog’s bollacks I.6a
sore finger/thumb I.35b
pick up one end of s. G.6b
poke in eye with burnt s. I.35e
putty won’t s. I.41i
quickly found to beat dog with E.18
right end of the s. G.6b
some mud will s. G.2b
spoon in wall I.44c
stakes E.3a
, stock and stone F.24b
take your s. G.6c
tarred with the same s. E.23f
thick end/part of the s. G.6b
thrown s. G.6a
to beat dog with E.18
to each other K.72c
to haft F.30c
to his diggings F.23a
to make a thivel I.60e
to your guns D.19e
to your knitting B.5f
to your last B.8b
together (like burs) G.29f
tough s. G.6a
up your s. E.2a
would not have him on a s. K.8c
wrong end of the s. G.6b
sticking goes not by strength E.29e
stick-in-the-mud G.4a
stickle for C.6c
sticklebutt E.19b
stickler C.6c
stick’s end, keep at G.6c
sticks
beat all to s. I.80a
break eggs with s. I.52f
chuff as two s. I.53e
cross as two s. I.72d
cut s. E.2a
ding to s. and staves I.80a
fall off the s. G.45a
go to s. I.80a
hold s. to/with G.6b
in crap/craw/gizzard/throat I.65a
in the gills D.13a
in the s. G.25b
knacks like rotten s. I.72c
like s. a-breaking I.72d
little s. kindle the fire I.73b
March sun s. G.19b
out a mile G.10a
out like dog’s balls I.6a
peas above s. F.20c
quick s. E.7b
two dry s. I.73b
up his riggin I.17c
up s. D.3c, E.3a
where the water s. F.19

sticky
as a dough pan I.57a
bat on s. wicket K.33b
fingers I.30g

sticky-beak (n and v) G.45a

stiddy, hard as A.3d

stiff

and sticky I.56l

as (a/the) Barker’s knee I.35e
board A.1b
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by the face I.22c
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  good physic but bad t. I.37b
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  make him tell another t. K.13
  of a tub J.4a
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  out of school J.19
  tell t. out of the Queen’s coach C.13c
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  all t. and no cider K.22d
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  hind legs off… G.1
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  great t. like broken pitchers I.46a
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  ill t. of halter H.21c
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  gold t. E.4d
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  as (a/the) hop-pole E.31e
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his hammock D.8a
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  into K.18c
  on t. K.18c
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  drunk as a t. K.27
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taut (adj) D.8b
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tavern
bitch K.26c
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bring to t. K.75
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and a horse to spare F.21
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crocodile t. J.2k
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Tees, escape G.24d
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chattering like cankervells G.16c
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cut your t. I.2f
ding in the t. K.40b
dragon’s t. J.1c
drop my t. I.24f
dug grave with t. I.38a
fling in the t. I.5i
get t. into ×2 E.10b
gnashing of t. J.35b
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hen’s t. E.28b
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seed in t. I.32e
set his t. I.24f
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    another tale K.13
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terrier
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test (a/the)
  acid t. E.4d
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tester, three slips for a H.9
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  as (a/the) broody hen E.28d
  cat with wet tail I.16a
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  give length of t. E.24b
  go to length of t. E.24b
  graze beyond t. E.24b
  hair to make a t. D.15c
  in one t. E.24b
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  put t. to his tongue E.24b
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texture B.2e
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Thames
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  fed hens on t. E.28b
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tharcake, thodden as I.71b
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  empty barns need no t. E.13c
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  in t. and rope E.33c
  keep pike in t. C.3b
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  quire J.53a
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  thick/wet as t. I.40h
thatched with old straw I.40h
thatcher
  eat/go like a t. I.40h
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thaw (n and v) G.16c
thawing like a snowball… I.74b
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theat, out of F.15a
theave E.23d
thecker see thatcher
theek the quire J.53a
theeking snow I.40h
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and thin E.8a
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quire see theek
spinning B.1d
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thicken, plot begins to J.24
thicker
  than long I.54e
  than water I.26c
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thief
  fast as t. in mill E.34d
  for the widdy H.21a
  get t. in the withy G.27e
  hole calls the t. H.2b
  in the night H.1
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  of time H.1
  out of a hedge H.1
  rope for a t. H.21c
  save a t. from the gallows H.1
  say cat was t. I.15c
  shamed like a t. in mill E.34d
  to catch at. H.1
thief’s pocket H.1
thieves
  sing before t. F.5
  that dogs bark at H.1
thick as t. H.1
war makes t. H.1
wood full of t. G.25b
thieving
  as a fox’s snout G.60a
  pat as t. to a tinker A.7b
thig wool E.24a
thimble
  brains into t. B.5d
  deep as tailor’s t. B.5d
  quart out of t. I.88c
thimble-rigging K.77e
thin
  as (a/the) Banbury cheese I.53e
  bubble-skin G.23a
cap-paper B.5k
cat-lug I.11
farthing rushlight I.78a
gate G.10c
gnat’s piss G.37d
griddle I.60b
groat E.1a
herring D.13d
hurdle F.18c
lantern lights I.78b
lath/lat I.40e
Mapplewell sixpence E.1a
milkin’ stool leg F.11b
natamus I.18c
puddle G.10a
rail E.7b
rake/rake-stale F.26d
rames I.18c
rasher of wind I.50g
seeter B.6b
shadow I.19
shotten herring D.13d
thread-paper B.1e
toothpick I.32e
wafer I.71e
whipping-post H.20d
willow rod G.27e
witch’s tit J.6a
bush G.4b
cake is getting t. I.71b
end of the wedge F.32a
ice K.31d
meadow soon mown E.32c
thick and t. E.8a
wear t. B.6b
wires A.4a
things fall apart J.25b
think (a/the)
calf a muckle beast E.21d
every bush a boggard J.66c
no carg D.13d
of the sore feet G.7h
on the same lines A.4c
on your feet G.7h
thinks (his/the)
   bear t. one thing… K.56b
farthing/halfpenny good silver F.1b
shit doesn’t stink I.29d
sun shines out of arse J.2a
whittle is in the shaft E.29a
thinning ranks C.10e
thin-skinned I.18f
thirk see thatch
thirl
   as a conger D.13d
      greyhound E.10a
thirst (n+v−for knowledge etc.) F.6b
   little stream will quench t. G.24a
thirsty F.6b
   as a gull D.7d
      sponge I.32a
      sun-struck bone G.3e
thirteen staves and never a hoop K.18b
thirteepence halfpenny E.1a
thirtingill as a child I.3a
thirtover as a mule E.17c
thirty, hanging by neck since she was H.21e
thistle
   kneel to a I.144
   on the hearth G.12b
thistledown (n) G.29e
thistles
   ass eats t. E.17a
   brain plants t. E.31b
   content with some t. E.33b
   he that sows t. E.33b
   lilies don’t spring from t. I.90i
   mare eats t. E.15b
   thick as t. G.29e
thivel
   lick t. I.60e
   queer stick to make t. I.60e
thodden as (a) leather B.4e
   tharcake I.71b
thole reech off his porridge I.68
tholed the span I.88c
Thomond’s cocks, all on one side K.58b
Thompson’s colt E.14a
thong
   buckle and t. C.5c
cut your t. B.4e
no shorter for having been in water B.9a

thongs
  broad t. B.4e
  buckle and t. C.5c

thorn
  at their door I.41a
  blackest t. G.29c
  honey licked off t. F.6a
  hunger sharper than t. G.29c
  hurdle F.15e
  in the flesh/side I.35e
  in the mud G.4b
  no grape or fig from t. J.35b
  out of your foot I.35e
  plant t. in the breast I.35e
  rose without a t. I.90g
  sharp as a t. G.29c
  stick G.6a
  where the t. pricks G.4b
  will be good t. G.29c

thorn-bush, certain as J.46

Thornham rush-cart J.8d

thorns
  bed of t. I.90g
  dance on t. K.9a
  handles t. F.18b
  on t. G.4b
  plant t. F.4b
  sit on t. G.4b
  tread upon t. G.4b
  truths and roses have t. G.29b
  upon t. G.4b

thorny G.29c

thorough-paced E.15c

thought (a)
  free as t. J.31
  he had got a goldfinch H.6g
  lie E.251, I.17d
  quick/rapid/swift as t. J.31
  wish is father to the t. I.4c
  wrong E.251

thousand
  death of a t. cuts H.12b
  farthing from a t. pounds E.1a
  mile journey G.7f
  pounds and a bottle of hay E.32e
  pounds of law I.88b

Thousand Island dressing D.16e

thrail dog K.51

thrang
  as (a) Beck wife I.82a
bummely G.33a

cobbler’s Monday B.8a

fair K.60a

flukes in a sheep liver E.23f

ehencote door E.28b

inkle-weavers/-makers B.2a

Knott Mill fair K.60b

skep at the castin’ E.30j

three in a bed I.79f

Throp’s wife I.82a

wakes K.60b

woman’s tongue I.5a

ay t. B.7b

trash

around E.19b

out F.17a

thrasonical J.24

thraves, in E.33c

throw (a/the)

in a widdy G.27e

pin in his nose E.19c

wand while green G.6a

thrown

as (a/the) leg o’ a cuddy E.17b

widdy/withy G.27e

stick G.6a

thrown-faced bairn I.2c

thraws, heeds and I.79g

thread (a/the) (n—of argument etc.) B.2f

always on tailor B.5a

and thrum B.2f

break the t. B.1e

breaks B.1e

easy t. B.1e

eye of golden doughnut I.71b

first t. B.1d

follows needle B.5e

hang by a t. J.3a

her B.5e

hot needle and burnt t. B.5e

is spun B.1e

knotless t. B.5e

know from t. to needle B.5e

leave a loose t. B.5e

lose the t. J.1c

needle B.5e

nick the t. B.1e

sew eyes with red t. B.5e

sewed with white t. B.5e

slender as a t. B.1e

spin a fair t. B.1d

spun fine B.1e
starts as a t. B.1e
take up t. B.2f
told it from t. to needle B.5e
twine t. could have tied him B.1e
way through B.2f
threadbare (adj—arguments etc.) B.7a
cloth is armour F.4a
friend B.7a
when man’s coat is t. B.6c
Threadneedle St. I.89a
threadpaper, thin as B.1e
threads
gather/pick/take up the t. B.2f
pull t. together B.2f
threats without power C.7c
three
blue beans K.59g
chips A.1b
flittings I.76d
generations B.9c
horse-loaves E.15b
in a bed I.79f
on one horse K.60b
penn’orth of coppers F.1b
scats behind K.1d
sheets in the wind D.3b
skips of a louse G.41
slips H.9
strikes K.34
tries to get home on t. base hit K.34
tuppence t. ha’pence F.1b
turns round the long-boat D.8a
women and a goose I.86b
three-dollar
phoney/queer as t. bill E.1a
pistol H.12a
threepence
and twopence F.1b
not care/give/worth t. F.1b
threepenny duck E.28d
three-legged
dog I.10a
mare E.14c
stool I.32h
threepence, smart as F.1b
threepenny planet J.14c
three-point landing, Chinese A.4e
three-ring circus K.59a
thresh
in another’s barn E.33d
in other folk’s corn E.33d
other oats to t. F.17a
out F.17a
over old straw F.17a
straw F.17a
threshed in cloak F.17a
thresher, work like F.17a
threshes down acorns F.13b
threshing
machine E.33d
yield well in the t. F.17a
threshold (n) I.41e
hardest step is over t. I.41e
of the Fleet F.31c
on the t. I.41e
threw
at his wife B.8b
him a word I.8d
if you t. him against a wall G.2b
thrift
at a fray C.10c
philosopher’s stone J.13
thriﬄes on, have the E.5b
thrive
as cow on wet clover E.19d
like (a/the) breckan G.29i
fish G.43a
hainet grass E.32a
thrifts, good rye E.33b
throat (n) I.24h
belly thinks t. is cut H.12b
cinder in t. 1.74h
cobweb in t. G.36b
cuts his own t. H.12b
frog in t. I.24h
have by the t. H.12c
jump down t. C.10f
keep foot on t. C.11
shop in t. E.2b
spark in t. A.3d
sticks in t. I.65a
take by t. H.12c
thief cut t. H.1
thrust down t. I.65a
throats, cut each other’s H.12b
throes of, in I.2a
throne, power behind the C.13a
throng
see also thrang
(v) I.89b
thropple, bone in the I.35e
Throp’s wife I.82a
throssen down E.33e
throstle
  Bromwich t. G.52a
  choked t. G.52a
  Gud o’ Jamie’s t. G.52a
throttle
  as rusty E.13c
  at full t. A.4d
throttled
  cat I.16b
  earwig G.35e
  isaac G.57
through (a/the)
  bear-land with C.17g
  get t. to I.5o
  go/take t. the bows C.2a
  thick and thin E.8a
throw (a/it/the) (v) K.41a
  away dirty water I.49c
  away the scabbard C.13a
  baby out I.2g
  balls in the air K.60f
  book at H.17
  bouquets at K.62c
  cap after B.6i
  cap against wind B.6i
  cap in first I.41g
  cap over windmill E.34c
  cold water on I.6c
  crumbs on the fire J.63d
  deuces K.78
  dirt/mud enough G.2b
  don’t t. out old clothes B.7a
  down glove C.5b
  dust in their eyes C.10f
  first stone J.35e
  for a loop A.4e
  fresh light on I.78d
  frock to nettles G.29g
  good money… E.1a
  hand in/up K.81
  handkerchief K.67b
  handle after head F.30c
  hat into ring K.40a
  hat over workhouse wall F.4a
  hatchet K.47
  helve after hatchet F.30c
  herself away on him E.13d
  house out of the window I.41i
in (a/the/your) checks/chips K.77c
  hand K.81
  lap of I.2c
  pot I.60c
sea D.9b
sponge/towel K.40c
teeth I.5i
weight K.42
widdy G.27e
into (a/the) relief K.15a
scales C.4a
shade K.62a
last t. K.78
light on I.78d
long tome F.7a
map J.29
muck/mud (at) G.2b
mud at clock I.81e
off his/the guard K.43
mask K.9f
scent E.10c
stride E.16f
on the scrap-heap A.7c
out of gear A.4d
over D.15d
overboard D.15d
property out through door I.41h
rattlin’ cart not easy to t. over E.5b
rope after bucket I.49a
rubbish I.42c
salt on tail H.6f
seven K.78
spanner in the works A.4a
squails at H.3
stone at every dog G.2d
stone at the door I.85a
stone in pack of dogs G.2d
stones at G.2c
stour in his eye G.13d
straws against the wind G.13c
sword into scales C.4a
to the dogs I.8a
winds E.9c
wolves G.59
tub to a whale D.13c
up the/your cards K.81
drumsticks C.14a
hand K.81
sponge K.40c
veil over J.60a
watering pot away I.90d
weight about K.41a
yourself at his feet C.11
throwing water into the sea D.6a
thrown
aside B.10a
bonnet over the windmills E.34c
he that is t. K.41a
out of desk J.53b
out of window I.411
out on his ear K.41b
over balk J.53b
stone C.1b
to the wall I.89b
throws (the)
  away candles I.77e
  poke off his shoulders F.17c
thuff-gutted G.51
thrum
  in the graith B.2f
  not care/give/worth a t. B.2f
  thread and t. B.2f
thrum-head B.2f
thrummy-thrum B.2f
thrum, leave lang B.2f
thrun/thrunk see thrang
thrush (n) G.52a
  fat as young t. G.52a
  proud as a t. G.52a
  sweet as song t. G.52a
  thinks mate sings sweetest G.52a
thrushes
  fat t. I.87a
  if wishes were t. G.3e
thrust (n) A.4e
  and parry K.43
  cut and t. C.4c
  down his throat I.65a
  through the gate F.9a
thrut
  have a t. at it G.6b
  shovel/spade I.38a
thrutching, most I.89b
Thule, Ultima D.16e
thumb
  above my t. I.30g
  blacker the cobbler’s t. B.8a
  bring...about the t. I.4b
  clap t. on I.30g
  cow’s t. E.20d
  cracks of cobbler’s t. B.8a
  fash your t. I.30g
  finger and t. I.30g
  finger next my t. I.30g
  fingers close to t. I.30g
  go over his mother’s t. I.4b
  green t. I.30g
  in eye I.35e
keep t. on I.30g
kiss my t. I.5e
lick t. to the elbow I.5f
miller has golden t. E.34g
miller’s t. E.34g, G.43e
nose at I.5f
out of his mouth K.41b
put t. on I.30g
rule of t. B.4b
sore t. ×2 I.35b
under her t. I.4b
under the girdle I.5f
up ass I.30g
wet t. I.5f
whistle on his t. I.5e
thumb-nail sketch K.14a
thumbprint H.13b
thumb’s snitting I.32d
thumbs
all t. A.5a
count t. I.30g
fingers are all t. I.30g
has ten t. I.30g
hit over the t. J.19
lick t. to the elbow I.5f
lick t. upon I.5f
proll t. I.5f
suck her t. I.30g
twiddle t. I.5f
wet t. I.5f
thumbs-down/thumbs-up, give J.28b
thumb-tack, sharp as A.1c
thumb-tied H.14a
thump (a/the)
  drum C.13g
  on back with stone C.1b
  serves poor with t. G.2c
Thump o’ Dolly I.84a
thunder (n) G.15b
  against G.15b
  black as t. G.15b
  cocks eye up like duck at t. E.26b
  dour as t. G.15b
  duck quacking against t. E.26b
  escape the t. G.15a
  fart against t. I.29c
  foul/grue as t. G.15b
  rooster in t. shower E.28a
  should never hear t. G.15b
  steal his t. K.61c
thunderbolt G.15b
  smooth as oiled t. G.15b
thunderclap G.15b
thundercloud, black/glum as G.15b
thunderous G.15b
thunderstorm
  duck in t. E.26b
  fart in t. I.29c
  useless as dry t. G.15b
thunderstruck G.15b
thwitten a mill-post I.57b
thyme, rue and I.90i
Tibb’s eve, St. J.40b
tick
  see also thick
(n) G.42a
  full as a t. G.42a
  in a sheep-dip E.23f
  over A.4d
  taut/tote as a t. G.42a
  tight as/tighter than a t. G.42a
  what makes him t. A.5c
tickee, no washee, no I.84h
ticket
  for soup ×2 I.87b
  mucky his t. F.34c
  pakapu t. K.77e
  write your own t. F.34c
tickets on herself/on… E.2b
ticking
  busy as a t. clock I.81e
  stop t. A.5c
tickle (a/the) (adj) I.17b
  dragon’s tail J.40b
  ears I.5h
  in the palm I.5h
  peter J.35a
  ribs I.5h
tickled with a feather I.5h
ticklish I.17b
tick-tack-toe K.73
tidal flow D.15e
tiddlywinks, play K.73
tide
  another t. in the sea D.15e
  bait gathered when t. out D.13c
  brings in D.15e
  go with the t. D.9c
  going out with the t. D.15e
  lose not a t. D.15e
  maiden t. I.1a
  never goes out so far D.15e
  over D.15e
  row against the t. D.2b
sail with the t. D.3b
shipping on yar t. D.15e
shovel shit against t. D.15e
stem the t. D.15e
turn the t. D.15e
turn with the t. D.15e
turns D.15e
waits for no man J.3b
will have an ebb D.15e
tide-mark D.15e
tide-rip D.15e
tides, work double D.8a
tie (a/the/your)
  can on/to I.10a
down H.14a
  he that doesn’t t. a knot B.5e
  her hair without a whang I.32g
  in knots I.5m
my shoes B.9a
that!? K.28
  that bull outside/to ash-can E.19c
to the stake K.56d
up the ends B.5f
up the poke F.17c
up with E.14d
with St. Mary’s knot J.40b
tied (a/the) (=committed) H.20a
  browse where t. E.24b
by the leg E.15d
could have t. him with a straw F.17d
dog t. up E.18
hair without whang I.32g
hands t. H.14a
house F.3
knot with your tongue I.24e
navels together I.29a
sack t. up E.33e
to mother’s apron-strings I.33c
to sour apple E.30f
up I.5m
up with I.5m
with an easy thread B.1e
tie-up E.14d
tifle (v) I.79g
tift
  in a t. C.20a
  jarbles drop off quicker than t. B.7a
tiger
  brave as Bengal t. C.17d
  buck (against) the t. C.17d
  fierce as a t. C.17d
for... C.17d
have t. by the tail C.17d
he who rides on a t. C.17d
inside out like a t. C.17d
paper t. C.17d
savage as a t. C.17d
toothless t. C.17c
tiger-cat C.17d
tiger’s
clipping t. claws C.17d
tooth C.17d
tiger-sweat C.17d
tight
as (a/the) bottle K.19b
   bull’s/cow’s arse E.19b
clicket-nail I.41c
crab’s arse D.12
cup I.48c
damp clothes line I.84e
drum K.7a
duck’s arse E.26a
fish’s arsehole G.43a
mouse’s ear-‘ole G.67
newt G.44c
nip I.90i
rat-trap I.17c
sausage E.29a
tick G.42a
tuppence in market-woman’s trashbag I.86b
twopence in a rag F.1b
wax I.5m
hand at the grindstone F.31c
in a t. corner G.2a
in the haft F.30c
kept on at. crub E.16i
on t. ropes K.59d
rein E.16h
ship D.8a
sit in t. boots B.9b
sit t. K.81
so t. you couldn’t drive tin-tack A.1c
will tear B.6b
wrapped t. I.5m
tighten (a/the)
   belt/galabieh B.61
   his tether E.24b
tighter (a/the)
   burden strap... F.33b
   string K.3
   than a tick G.42a
   witch’s cunt J.6a
tight-fisted I.30f
tight-laced B.6o
tight-lipped I.24d
 tightly wrapped I.5m
 tight-rope
   dance on t. K.59d
   walk the t. K.59d
Tijuana bible J.34a
 tile (n=hat) I.39h
   loose I.39h
   wash a t. I.39h
tiled house, drive top over K.70
tiles, on the I.14c
till, hands in H.3
tiller, giddy man at the D.16b
tilt (a/the)
   argument I.88a
   at C.6c
   at windmills J.24
   run full t. C.6c
timber! F.24e
   break/strike for the tall t. G.25a
   knotty t. F.24j
timbers, slip D.15c
timber-trees E.30a
time
   and patience B.4d, G.21b
   and tide I.64a, J.3b
   by forelock F.10b
   daughter of t. I.4d
   for Greggles’s axe F.24e
   is father of truth I.4c
   is file A.3f
   is great teacher J.18a
   is physician I.36a
   is rider E.15c
   kill t. C.10f
   know the t. of day I.81e
   mark t. C.14b
   nick of t. K.46
   presses I.89b
   stitch in t. B.7b
   to catch bears E.8d
   to fish D.13c
   to gley I.23b
   to part with guide B.9a
   to skreigh when strucken J.19
   to yoke E.5b
time-bomb C.7b
time-honoured C.15b
timely crooketh the tree G.6a
timid as a mouse G.67
tin
bent as a t. spoon G.3b
bullikers in t. can K.75
god J.9a
has t. ear for I.23c
heavy as t. E.3b
hot t. roof I.14d
knocker on dirty door I.41c
know t. E.3b
lid I.47c
new t. under dresser I.80a
opened another t. I.51a
put t. hat on C.5b
up to t. E.3b
tin-arsed I.31a
tin-back I.30a
tin-can, every alley its own I.89a
tinder
dry as t. I.72c
like t. I.72c
rotten as t. I.72c
useless as damp t. I.72c
tinder-box (n) I.72c
dry as a t. I.72c
tine (a/the)
bottles F.17d
fang I.49b
grip I.30f
halter K.77a
he may t. a stot… E.21f
needle, t. darg B.5d
spurs E.16j
tursses F.17d
twopenny belt B.61
whinger C.3c
tinged with K.14c
ting-tang J.52c
tin-horn K.78
shit through t. K.78
tinker
about/at/with A.7b
and his budget A.7b
and piper K.6b
Bell J.24
black/drunken as a t. A.7b
father’s a t. A.7b
lazy as the t…. A.7b
pat as thieving to a t. A.7b
quarrelsome as a t. A.7b
stops one hole A.7b
swear like a t. A.7b
tinker’s
budget A.7b
curse/damn A.7b
elbow A.7b
news A.7b
pot A.7b
tinkers
  Banbury t. A.7b
  merry as t. A.7b
tinkler
  noisy/raffy as a t. A.7b
  tongue like a t. A.7b
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<td>come out in the w. I.84b</td>
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<td>dirty linen I.84b</td>
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<td>hang out more than they w.</td>
<td>I.84e</td>
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<td>head I.32g</td>
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<td>hog E.25e</td>
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<td>make one hand w. the other</td>
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<td>nose off I.2g</td>
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turn the w. G.63a
wild-cats, whip weight in G.63a
wilder shores of J.24
wilderness
  manna in the w. J.34c
  out in the w. J.35b
  political etc. w. J.35b
  voice in the w. J.35b
  wandering in the w. J.35b
wildest colts E.14a
wildfire, spread like C.7a
Wildmore tit E.14b
wile
  flounders out of the sea D.13c
    lugs frae cuddy E.17b
wilful as a pig E.25a, E.25g
wilk, close as a D.12
wilky, blown up like G.44e
will
  bend w. F.34a
  iron w. A.3b
  lean w. E.6d
  on his nail F.1a
  take w. of it I.15a
  with as good w… K.56d
willey wand G.27e
Willgill I.20
Willie Pigg’s dick E.17a
willing
  lay load on w. horse F.10b
    spur the w. horse E.16j
  willingly as dog to whip I.10b
williwaw D.5
willock
  mad as a w. D.7d
    stood like a mazed w. D.7d
will-o’-the-wisp J.7
willow
  see also withy
  bend like a w. G.27e
  branch of w. breaks not G.27e
  feckless/limber/semmant as w. wand G.27e
  thin as a w. rod G.27e
  wear the w. J.8b
willows, hang harps on J.34n
willow-stick G.27e
willowy G.27e
Willy Wood’s horse E.15b
wily
  as (a/the) fox E.8c
  mouse I.13a
wimble
  as a hummo-bee G.33a
  gleg as a w. A.1e
  will let in auger A.1e
wimple in a lawyer’s clue B.1e
win (a/the)
  barbwire garter etc. etc. etc. K.60e
  by a street I.85b
  hands down K.50c
  horse/mare K.77a
  in a walk K.50c
  mell K.50c
  spurs C.6c
  what you w. on the field K.35d
  whistle K.60e
  you can’t w. them all K.78
wince, galled horse E.15g
winch, spun from D.15c
Winchester goose E.27f
wind (a/the)
  all of a dead w. D.3b
  all w. and woo A.3d
  and piss I.85f
  as the w. blows D.3b, G.4b
  at that door? I.41a
  beat the w. G.13c
  behind you D.3b
  bend with the w. G.27a
  between w. and water ×2 D.19a
  bloweth not down the corn E.33b
  blows cold I.74b
  bonny pirn B.1f
  burn the w. F.24d
  catch the w. in a net H.6d
  close to the w. D.3b
  cloth in the w. D.3b
  comes with the w. G.13c
  cut the w. G.13c
devil in high w./gale of w. J.63g
down A.5c
down in the w. D.3b
down the w. E.9c
dry w. E.32d
eat the w. out of a ship I.24i
every w. ill to a broken ship D.5
free as the w. G.13b
full fair w. D.3b
give a fair w. D.3b
God tempers the w. E.23h
gone with the w. G.13d
hang in the w. E.9c
has blown in I.41i
have in the w. E.10c
have the w. behind you D.3b
ill w. G.13d
in a bottle G.13b
in a dike G.13d
in the guts of the w. G.13b
in the w. E.10c
kittle as the w. G.13b
know which way the w. blows D.3b
lang clue to w. B.1f
lazy w. I.89b
let w. I.29c
like the w. G.13b
little w. kindles I.73c
north w. I.82b
not always in one quarter G.13b
of the dead men’s feet I.38c
o’the mare’s tail E.14c
out of his sails D.3b
piss in the w. I.29f
put the w. up I.29c
put w. into sails D.3b
queer pirn B.1f
raise the w. D.3b
ravelled hasp B.1b
Robin Hood w. J.3b
round finger I.30g
sack of w. G.13b
sail before the w. D.3b
sail close to/near the w. D.3b
sail with every (shift of) w. D.3b
sail with the w. D.3b
save thy w. to blow thy kail I.69c
save w. to cool your poddish 1.68
sea w. changes less often… D.5
second w. K.29a
see which way the w. blows D.3b
shakes no corn E.33b
sheets in the w. D.3b
sits in that quarter G.13b
sniff the w. G.13c
sow the w. J.34t
speak to the w. G.13c
spit against/into the w. I.24k
stones against the w. G.13c
straw shows which way the w. blows G.13c
straws in the w. G.13c
take the w. of D.3b
takes sair w. to shake E.33d
that blows nobody any good G.13d
throw cap against w. B.6i
throw straws against the w. G.13c
to know where the w. sits G.13c
tossed by the w. G.13c
tup i’ the w. E.23b
turn with the w. D.15e
twist in the w. H.21e
up see wound up
up B.1f, K.72c
up his arse I.29e
up in B.1f
up your bottom(s)/pirn B.1f
wavering as the w. G.13b
western w. I.49c
when w. is still G.14d
whistle down the w. E.9c
white w. in his lug I.24b
wild as the w. G.13b
winter w. change oft G.13b
women, w. and fortune… D.3b
words are w. G.13b
write on the w. J.20i
wroth as the w. G.13b
your pirn B.1f
your watch for you I.81e
windage, Kentucky C.8
windbag K.6a
windfall E.30f
winding sheets I.38d
windle, not a G.4a
windlestrae
dwebble as w. G.4a
micht hae ca’d me owre wi’ a w. G.4a
not a w. G.4a
steed scours at a w. E.14d
windlestraes
make boggles o’ w. J.66c
red for w. G.4a
windlestraw
for a stack-prop G.4a
not a w. G.4a
windlin, muckle E.15b
windlins go, lets E.33c
windmill (v) E.34c
Bradshaw’s w. E.34c
drive w. with bellows E.34c
not tell an A from a w. J.20c
round as a w. E.34c
Sutton w. E.34c
throw cap over w. E.34c
windmills
in head E.34c
thrown bonnet over w. E.34c
tilt at w. J.24
window (n) I.23a, I.41i
actions and words are the w. I.41i
bay w. I.41i
better door than w. I.41h
bow w. I.41i
came in at w. I.41i
come in at w. I.41h
come in by the w. I.41i
everything in front w. E.2b
finish Aladdin’s w. J.2a
go/be thrown out of w. I.41i
love comes in at w. I.41h
love out of w. I.41h
more in the w. E.2b
nature will come in at w. I.41h
shop w. E.2b
with a spoon 1.41h
woman at a w. H.4
window-dressing E.2b
window-pane, whelks behind D.12
windows
house out of w. 1.41i
Yebby’s w. 1.41i
wind’s
in/into the w. eye I.23a
sheet in the w. eye D.3b
winds
all w. contrary D.5
blow on high hills G.13d
cast/fling/scatter to the w. G.13d
mill will go with all w. E.34c
throw to the w. E.9c
use all w. D.3b
wind-storm, fart in I.29c
wind-swept I.82c
windward
anchor to w. D.15b
knock to w. of D.3b
piss to w. I.29f
windy
as a wisket I.45a
day not for thatching I.40h
fly kite when w. K.71
on w. side of E.10c
wine
by the barrel K.21a
cries w. K.21a
good w. needs no bush K.26b
has drowned more D.9d
in the bottle K.21a
is run out K.21a
is whetstone of wit F.31c
lees to every w. K.21a
new w. J.35b
palled w. K.21a
sweetest w. K.21a
taste of cask K.21a
water in w. K.21a
wine-lake G.23c
wing (n and v) G.45b
broken feather in w. E.9a
can’t fly on one w. A.4e
frae the tap o’ the w. G.45c
keep bill under w. G.45a
o’Wauchope’s moorhen I.69b
on the w. G.45b
one w. down E.28b
traipse her w. G.54a
under her w. G.45f
wings
all legs and w. G.51
are sprouting G.45f
bats his w. a long time G.45f
clip his w. E.27f
earn w. A.4e
fly without w. G.45b
if pig had w. E.25h
lend w. to G.45b
mischief has w. G.45b
misfortunes come on w. G.45b
singed w. G.38a
spread w. G.45f
sprout w. J.65
tail broader than w. G.45b
wait in the w. K.62a
wink
  all not blind that w. I.34c
  at I.5d
  nod as good as w. E.14f
  on ewe E.23c
  quick/ready as w. I.5d
winking
  easy as w. I.23b
  like w. I.23b
winkle out D.12
winkle-pickers D.12
winking D.12
winnard, wisht as G.52c
winnelstrea, weak as G.31a
winning
  goose loses feather or two E.27b
  lay wame to w. I.65a
winnow (a/the) (v) F.17b
  taters F.17b
  wheat from the chaff F.17b
wins
  horse that w. doesn’t lose reins K.50c
winsel, weak as G.52c
winter
  apple E.30f, I.55b
  break-up of hard w. G.16c
  cruel as w. G.19a
  finds out I.43a
  hard w. G.59
  molasses in w. I.561
  never died o’ w. yet G.19a
  poor as w. G.19a
  squaw w. C.17a
  thunder G.15b
  way G.7b
  weather G.11
  wind G.13b
  woodcock makes not a w. G.54d
winterhedge F.18b
wintry G.19a
wipe (a/the) (v) K.62e
  deck with I.83b
  eye I.37f
  floor with I.83b
  his nose of I.32d
  nose on own sleeve I.32d
  off K.26c
  out I.83d
  slate clean K.26c
wipes (a/the/his)
  child’s nose I.3b
  devil w. arse F.5
  nose on (own) sleeve I.32d
  shoes 1.41e
wire
  come up to the w. K.29a
  go close to the w. E.7b
  go (down) to the w. K.29a
  live w. A.6b
  off the w. A.4a
  slip under the w. E.7b
wired
  Christian with aces w. K.79b
    into I.5o
    up A.6b, K.64a
wire-drawer A.5d
wire-drawn A.5d
wires
  get your w. crossed I.5o
    on w. D.8b
    pull the w. K.64a
    thin w. A.4a
wiry A.5d
wisdom
  has cut w. teeth I.2f
    pull his w. teeth I.36g
  serpentine w. J.35b
    walks B.10b
wise
  as (a/the) ape C.17e
    Christian J.36
      daw G.46d
      dockyard pigeon D.15d
      drake E.26a
      gander/goose E.27a
      owl G.48
      scold from her badge H.10
      Solomon J.34j
      Solon J.28a
      sucking duck E.26a
      sucking gully E.27b
      Waltham’s calf E.21c
      Westmorland jury H.18b
      wild goose E.11e
      wisp E.11c
      women of Mungret J.54
      woodcock H.6g
man takes hold of the better I.46b
men cannot pull out I.49a
  catch the fish H.6h
  flee the clog E.15d
in the world E.30a
of Gotham F.18a
redd B.1b
you may be a w. man A.5c
wish (a/the)
   burn dry G.24a
cake dough I.71b
   is father to the thought I.4c
to Jericho J.34g
wishbone I.69b
wishes
   if w. were butter-cakes I.71c
      horses G.7g
         thrushes G.3e
wisht as a winnard G.52c
wisket
   cammed/conceited/crushed/ windy as w. I.45a
   of whelps I.6d
wisp
   do not light a w. F.24d
gude ale needs nae w. K.26b
   in place of a brush I.82b
   in your mouth E.21e
   wise as a w. E.11c
wispt, short horse soon E.15f
wissel of her groat E.1a
wistful I.5a
wit
   as a buckler C.4a
   as thick as Tewkesbury mustard I.56h
   enough to come out of the rain G.11
   German’s w. C.17a
   in poaching eggs I.61c
   more w. in little finger I.30g
   no more w. than a burbolt E.11e
      coot G.50b
      stone G.21b
      stool I.80b
   rust A.3b
   tongue before w. I.24e
   want/wine the whetstone of w. F.31c
   without learning E.30b
witch (n) J.6a
   black as a w. J.6a
   burn the old w. H.20c
   cross as a w. J.6a
   cross the old w.out J.6a
devil hugged the w. J.63g
fou’il/ill as a w. J.6a
   is in keelack F.9b
   nervous as a w. J.6a
   of Wokey J.6a
pale as a w. J.6a
sail like a w. J.6a
say prayers backwards like a w. J.6a
sinful/straight/ugly/white as a w. J.6a

witchcraft J.6a
witches of Pendle J.6a
witch-hunt H.13b
witching hour J.6a

witch’s
   cold/thin as a w. tit J.6a
tighter than w. cunt J.6a

wite God, you need not J.63d

with (a)
   child to… I.1d
   lay F.16a

withe, pebbles in a F.32d
wither on the vine E.30g

withered
   branch G.25b
   kiskey G.30b

withering G.13d

withers
   are unwrung J.25a
   wring the w. E.15g

withershins, stars gang G.18a

withies
   grow like young w. G.27e
   steep the w. I.45a

within (a/the)
   ace of K.79b
   bounds E.7b
   hog’s gape E.25b
   hundred yards of hollin G.27e
   inch of I.88c
   mile of an oak G.10a
   sight of G.7f
   striking distance C.4c

without
   bait… F.7a
   turning a hair F.10b

withy
   caught by the w. G.27e
dance in/on/from a w. G.27e
get thief in w. G.27e
girn in a w. G.27e
nearest the w. C.13a
stiff as a w. G.27e
thief for the w. H.21a
throw the w. G.6a
thrown as a w. G.27e
throw in a w. G.27e
tough as a w. G.27e
tree will buy a horse G.27e
water won’t rob/war/wrong w. G.27e
withy-cragged G.27e
witless as wild goose E.11e
witness (v) H.17
wits woolgathering F.12b
witter, over the E.12
wives
    are like pilchards D.13d
    old w. baking I.62b
    rain old w. K.24
wives’
    old w. Paternoster J.57b
    old w., tale I.5a
wizard J.6a
wizened as winter apple I.55b
wizran see weasand
wizzel see weasel
wo
    ox never wo F.15e
    pigeon never wo K.52
wobble
    like (a/the) drunken sailor D.15a
        jelly I.70e
wobbly as an owd corn boggart J.66c
Wobegon, Lake J.24
wode as wild bullock E.21f
Wokey, witch of J.6a
wolf (n and v) G.59
    at the door I.41a
    bad dog never sees w. E.18
    between dog and w. G.59
    cares not how many sheep there are E.23i
    cry w. J.2f
dust of sheep chokes not w. E.23i
eats another G.59
eats counted sheep E.23i
eats up the goose E.27e
    sheep E.23i
foolish sheep makes w. confessor J.44
from the door I.41a
full and wether whole E.23i
give w. wether to keep E.23i
have seen the w. G.59
holds w. by the ears E.8d
hungry as a w. G.59
in his belly I.29a
in sheep’s clothing J.2f
Irish w. G.59
    , it would have worried you! G.59
keeps company with the w. G.59
lamb who bites w. E.23i
life of the w. E.23i
lone sheep in danger of w. E.23i
lone w. G.59
see a w. G.59
to keep sheep E.23i
to man G.59
wake a sleeping w. G.59
will devour E.23i
will die in the skin G.59
wolf! J.2f
wolf-pack G.59
wolf's
  be in w. mouth E.23i
dark as a w. mouth G.59
  put head in w. mouth J.2f
wolf-tree G.59
wolly I.56f
wolves
  howl among w. G.59
  ill heads, fat w. E.23i
  lose teeth G.59
  prey on w. G.59
  throw to the w. G.59
woman
  all behind like a fat w. I.31a
  and a cherry I.55i
  and a ship D.1a
  and a slapst gown B.6f
  at a window H.4
  he that hath a w. F.7b
  if you rush the w.... I.61d
  is a weathercock J.52b
  kissed the cow E.20d
  like gold ring in sow’s nose E.25g
  look on apron-string I.33c
  man without a w. D.3c
  old w. (n) I.4g
  old w. picking geese E.27g
  old w. would never have looked I.62a
  one hair of w. F.15c
  scarlet w. J.35h
  that paints E.7c
  turns head I.21c
  weep G.49b
  with child I.1d
  without an excuse E.10d
  without religion I.90e
  without virtue K.21a
woman’s
  mind and winter wind G.13b
  nothing sharper than a w. tongue F.31d
  old w. dance K.9a
strength 1.24e
thrang as a w. tongue I.5a
women
and bees E.30j
and bridges G.9e
and hens E.28b
are ships D.8a
cannot be turned E.25g, E.30j
grow on sunny side E.30i
in state affairs C.17e
let w. wear breeches B.61
, like cats, look best at home I.14c
, many words E.27f
paradise of w. J.65
rained naked w. I.1e
three w. I.86b
, wind and fortune D.3b
wise as w. of Mungret J.54
words are w. 1.20
women’s
thoughts G.11
tongues wag E.23d
won
in a canter K.50c
in the hundred/shire C.21e
neither lost nor w. K.28
with a feather I.1b
with an apple I.55b
with the egg E.28c
wonder wurr, you’d G.46b
wonderful how they make guns C.9
won’t eat you! C.17c
woo, April when they I.81a
woobles, bored for the E.23f
wood
as (a/the) hare G.64b
March tip E.23b
babe(s) in the w. J.4a
born in a w. G.48
can’t see the w. for the trees G.25a
contained own burning F.24d
crooked w. makes even fire I.72d
damsel of the w. I.1a
dead w. E.30a
full of thieves G.25b
go through the w. I.72d
go wrong way to the w. G.25a
gone through the w. I.72d
good w. G.25b
green w. makes hot fire I.74d
half-burnt I.73b
have an eye to the w. G.25a
have the w. on F.33b
horse and rotten harrow F.15e
ill w. to growz E.31b
in a w. G.25b
in the w. of... G.25b
let him that fears leaves not into w. G.25b
like w. like arrows C.2c
little w. will heat a little oven I.62a
live too near the w. G.48
lost in a w. G.25b
man’s eye I.35e
more mares in the w. E.14c
out of the w. ×2 G.25b
owl can live in the w. G.48
rabbits out of the w. H.6a
sarry w. G.25b
saw w. F.24i
she’s gone through the w. I.72d
ways to the w. G.25a
will renew foliage G.27d
woodchuck (n) C.17h
woodcock (n=simpleton) H.6g
hay G.54d
makes not winter G.54d
play the w. H.6g
Scotch w. I.69b
snite need not betwite w. G.54c
springe to catch w. H.6g
wise as w. H.6g
wooden (adj=dull etc.) A.1a
beg blessing of w. god J.44
clock I.81e
cute as a w. box A.1b
dagger K.61c
don’t buy any w. nutmegs J.55k
don’t take any w. nickels E.2b
duck K.72c
hill G.20a
horse (=gallows) K.72b
Indian, dead as/ like a K.15b
kimono C.17a
overcoat has no pockets B.6e
platter I.48a
poultice on w. leg I.37d
ride the w. horse K.72b
sit like w. hullet K.72c
spoon J.32
suit B.6d
take a w. nickel F.1b
walls I.39b
wedge F.32a
widow with w. leg I.1c
wooden-headed A.1a
wooden-legged mare E.14c
wooden-stake J.1d
woodpecker (n) G.57
  in petrified forest G.57
  want sweet meat G.57
woodpeckers don’t breed sparrow- hawks G.57
woodpile, nigger in F.34a
Wood’s dog I.7d
colt E.14a
woods
  are full of them G.25b
  bull of the w. E.19b
colt E.14a
  go to the w. G.25a
  neck of the w. I.25a
take to the w. G.25a
wood-sawyer, free as F.24i
woodshed (v) F.24i
  something nasty in w. F.24i
woodshedding F.24i
woodsman by his chips, tell F.24e
woodwork, crawl into/out of/lurk in G.35c
woof or warp B.2d
wool
  all one w. E.23h
  and a yard wide B.4c
better give w. than sheep E.23h
  come for w. E.23h
dyed in the w. B.3a
fleece w. off another sheep E.23h
  gathers w. on his clothes F.12b
go for w. E.23h
goats’ house to thig w. E.24a
goats’ w. E.24a
  if cap be made of w. B.5k
lazy sheep thinks w. heavy E.23a
Lemster w. B.4c
little w. F.12b
lock of w. G.19b
lose/keep w. E.23h
more squeak than w. F.12b
nae w. sae coarse B.3a
no w. so white B.3a
no worth the skirling E.23h
on her back F.12b
plum as w. B.4c
pound of w. B.4c
pull w. over eyes E.23e
seek w. on an ass E.17a

  shear against the w. F.12b
stroke right way of w. E.23e
tie my w. B.5f
warm as w. B.4c
wets bread in w. G.3e
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