Victorian Slang: Lower Class and Underworld

Abbess: Female brothel keeper. A Madame.
Abbot: The husband, or preferred man of an Abbess.
Alderman: Half-Crown
Area: The below-ground servant's entrance in the front of many London town-houses. (Not underworld slang)
Area Diving: A method of theft that necessitates sneaking down area steps, and stealing from the lower rooms of houses.

Bacca-pipes: Whiskers curled in small, close ringlets.
Barkers (Barking Irons): Guns, Pistols, esp. Revolvers.
Beak: Magistrate
Beak-hunting: Poultry stealing
Bearer up: Person that robs men who have been decoyed by a woman accomplice.
Beef: (1) (v) Raise hue-and-cry. (2) (n) Thief. (cr) = Hot Beef! = Stop Thief!
Bend: Waistcoat, vest
Betty: A type of lockpick
Billy: Handkerchief (often silk)
Blackleg: A person who will work, contrary to a strike. In the Colonies they are called Scabs.
Blag: To steal or snatch, usually a theft, often by smash-and-grab
Blob, on the (Blab): Begging by telling hardluck stories.
Blooming, Bloody (Blasted, etc.): are forms of profanity not heard in polite company (Today they've been replaced in prestige with "Fucking", which is really too bad.)
Blow: Inform.
Blower: Informer. Also a disrespectful term for a girl.
Bludger: A violent criminal; one who is apt to use a bludgeon.
Blue Bottle: A policeman
Boat, get the (Boated): To be sentenced to transportation (obs.). To receive a particularly harsh sentence.
Bone, Bene: (Pronounced Bone and Benneh?) Good or profitable.
Bonnet: A covert assistant to a Sharp
Broad Arrow: The arrow-like markings on a prison convict's uniform.
"Wearing the broad arrow" = In prison.
Broads: Playing cards. Ex. "Spreading the broads" = playing a game of cards
Broading: Cheating at cards
Broadsman: A card Sharpener
Bruiser: A Boxer (b)

Buck Cabbie: A dishonest cab driver
Bug hunting: Robbing, or cheating drunks. Esp. at night.
Bull: Five shillings
Buor: A woman
Buttoner: A sharper's assistant who entices dupes.
Buzzing: Stealing, esp. Picking Pockets.

Candle to the devil, To hold a: To be evil
Cant: A present; a free meal or quantity of some article. Also the creole and jargon spoken by thieves and the "surplus population."
Cant of togs: A gift of clothing.
Caper: A criminal act, dodge or device.
Cash Carrier: A pimp, ponce or whore's minder.
Chapel, the: Whitechapel.
Chat: a Louse (a singular of Lice).
Chaunting: Singing; also informing
Chaunting lay: Street singing (hopefully for money)
Chavy: Child
Chink: Money
Chiv, shiv: Knife, razor or sharpened stick (r)
Choker: Clergyman. "Gull a choker"
Christen: To remove identifying marks from, to make like new again.
"Christen a watch."
Church: To remove identifying marks from, to make like new again.
"Church a watch."
Cly faking: To pick a pocket, especially of its handkerchief (for which there was a ready market)
Cockchafer: An especially build treadmill in the 'Steel
Coiner: A coin counterfeiter
Cokum (n & adj): Opportunity, advantage, shrewd, cunning.
Cool: Look, look at this!l. (cb)
Coopered: Wornout, useless
Coopered Ken: A bad place for a stick up.
Cop, Copper: A policeman
Couter: Pound (money)
Cove: A man
Crabshells: Shoes
Crapped: hung, hanged.
Crib: A building, house or lodging. The location of a gaol.
Crimping shop: A waterfront lodging house, esp. one associated with the forcible impressment of seamen.
Crooked cross, to play the: To betray, swindle or cheat.
Crusher: A policeman

Dab: bed (cb). "To dab it up with ____" = to engage in carnal acts with ____.
Dabeno: Bad (cb)
Daffy: A small measure, esp. of spiritous liquors.
Deadlurk: Empty premises.
Deaner: A shilling. (Etymologically descended from the Dinarious, or ancient silver penny of Britain...)
Deb: Bed (cb)
Demander: One who gains monies through menace.
Derbies: (Pronounced Darbies). Handcuffed
Device: Tuppence
Deuce Hog (Duce Hog): 2 shillings
Devil's claws: The broad arrows on a convict's prison uniform.
Dewskitch: A beating
Didikko: Gypsies; half breed gypsies (r). (From Didikai, a Rom contraction of Dik akai, or "look here")
Dillo: Old (cb)
Dimmick: A base coin, counterfeit
Ding: (v & n) Throw away, pass on. Any object that has been so treated. Ex. "Knap the ding" or to take something that has been thrown out.
Dipper: Pickpocket
Dispatches: Loaded dice
Dobbin: Ribbon
Dollymop: A prostitute, often an amateur or a part-time street girl; a midinette.
Dollyshop: A low, unlicenced loan shop or pawn shop.
Don: A distinguished/expert/clever person; a leader
Dookin: Palmistry
Down: Suspicion. "To put down on someone" means to inform on that person's plans. While "To take the down of a ticker" means to Christen a watch.
Do Down: To beat someone badly, punishing them with your fists. (b)
Downer: Sixpence.
Downy: Cunning, false.
Drag: (1) A three month gaol sentence. (2) A street
Draggsman: A thief who steals from carriages.
Drum: A building, house or lodging; the location of a gaol.
Dub: (1) Bad (cb); (2) Key, lockpick
Duce: Tuppence
Duckett: A street hawker or vendor's licence.
Duffer: A seller of supposedly stolen goods. Also a Cheating Vendor or hawker.

Dumplin: A swindling game played with skittles
Dumps: Buttons and other Hawkers small wares.
Dunnage: Clothes

E.O.: A fairground gambling game
Escop (Esclop, Eslop): Policeman (cb)

Fadge: Farthing
Fakement: a Device or pretence (especially a notice or certificate to facilitate begging).
Family, the: The criminal Underworld, also Family People.
Fan: To delicately feel someone's clothing, while it is still being worn, to search for valuables.
Fancy, the: The brethren of the boxing ring.
Fawney: Ring
Fawney-dropping: A ruse whereby the villain pretends to find a ring (which is actually worthless) and sells it as a Possibly valuable article at a low price.
Fine wirer: A highly skilled pickpocket
Finn: Five pound note
Flag: An apron
Flam: A lie
Flash (v & adj): Show, Showy (as in "Show-off," or "Flashy"); smart; something special.
Flash house: A public house patronized by criminals.
Flash notes: Paper that looks, at a glance, like bank-notes
Flat: A person who is flat is easily deceived.
Flatch: Ha'penny
Flimp: A snatch pickpocket. Snatch stealing in a crowd.
Flue Faker: Chimney sweep
Flummut: Dangerous
Fly, on the: Something done quickly.
Flying the Blue Pidgeon: Stealing roof lead.
Flying the Mags: The game of "Pitch and Toss"
Fogle: A silk handkerchief
Fushme: Five shillings

Gaff: Show, exhibition, fair "Penny Gaff" - Low, or vulgar theatre.
Gallies: Boots
Gammon: Deceive
Gammon: False, undependable, hostile
Garret: Fob pocket in a waistcoat
Garrote: (v & n) A misplaced piano wire, and how it was misplaced.
Gatter: Beer
Gattering: A public house
Gegor: Beggar
Gen: Shilling
Glim: (1) Light or fire. (2) Begging by depicting oneself as having
been burnt out of one's home. (3) Venereal Disease.

- **Glock**: Half-wit
- **Glocky**: Half-witted
- **Gonoph**: A minor thief, or small time criminal
- **Granny**: Understand or recognize
- **Gravney**: A Ring
- **Grey, Gray**: A coin with two identical faces
- **Griddling**: Begging, peddling, or scrounging
- **Growler**: A four wheeled cab
- **Gulpy**: Gullible, easily duped.

- **Half inch**: Steal (From pinch) (cr)
- **Hammered for life**: Married
- **Hard up**: Tobacco
- **Haybag**: Woman
- **Haymarket Hector**: Pimp, ponce or whore's minder; especially around the areas of Haymarket and Leicester Squares.
- **Hoisting**: Shoplifting
- **Holywater sprinkler**: A cudgel spiked with nails.
- **Huey, Hughey**: A town or village.
- **Huntley, to take the**: Syn. To take the Cake or to take the Biscuit. Also to be most excellent, as in Huntley and Palmer's biscuits.
- **Hykey**: Pride.

- **Irons**: Guns esp. Pistols or revolvers.
- **Jack**: Detective
- **Jemmy**: (1) Smart. (2) of Superior class. (3) an housebreaker's tool.
- **Jerry**: A Watch
- **Jerryshop**: Pawnbrokers
- **Joey**: A fourpence piece
- **Jolly**: Disturbance or Fracas
- **Judy**: A woman, specifically a prostitute
- **Jug loops**: Locks of hair brought over the temples and curled (a hairstyle that thankfully died out later in the period).
- **Julking**: Singing (as of caged songbirds)
- **Jump**: A ground floor window, or a burglary committed through such a window.

- **Kanurd**: Drunk (cb)
- **Kecks**: Trousers
- **Ken**: House or other place, esp. a lodging or public house.
- **Kennetseeno**: Bad, stinking, putrid — Malodorous. (r)
- **Kennuck**: Penny
- **Kidsman**: An organizer of child thieves
- **Kife**: Bed
- **Kinchen-lay (Kynchen-lay)**: Stealing from children
- **Kingsman**: A coloured or black handkerchief.

- **Knap**: To steal, take or receive
- **Knapped**: Pregnant
- **Knob**: "Over and under" a fairground game used for swindling.
- **Know life, to**: To be knowledgable in criminal ways

- **Lackin, Lakin**: Wife
- **Ladybird**: A Prostitute
- **LAG**: A convict or Ticket-of-leave man; To be sentenced to transportation or penal servitude.
- **Lamps**: Eyes
- **Laycock, Miss (or Lady)**: Female sexual organs
- **Lavender, in**: (1) To be hidden from the police, (2) to be pawned, (3) to be put away, (4) to be dead.
- **Lay**: A method, system or plan
- **Leg**: A dishonest person, a sporting cheat or tout.
- **Lil**: Pocketbook
- **London Particular**: Thick London "Pea Soup" fog
- **Long-Tailed**: A banknote worth more than 5 pounds is said to be "long tailed"
- **Luggers**: Ear rings
- **Lumber**: (1) Unused, or second-hand furniture. (2) To pawn. (3) To go into seclusion. (4) To be in lumber is to be in gaol.
- **Lump Hotel**: Work House
- **Lurk**: (1) A place of resorting to or concealment in. (2) A scheme or method
- **Lurker**: A criminal of all work, esp. a begger, or someone who uses a beggar's disguise.
- **Lush**: An alcoholic drink.
- **Lushery**: A place where a lush may be had. A low public house or drinking den.
- **Lushing Ken**: See Lushery
- **Lushington**: A drunkard

- **Macer**: A cheat
- **Mag**: Ha'pence
- **Magflying**: Pitch and toss
- **Magsman**: An inferior cheat
- **Maltooler**: A pickpocket who steals while riding an omnibus, esp. from women.
- **Mandrake**: a Homosexual
- **Mark**: The victim
- **Mary Blaine**: Railway Train (cr); to meet a train or to travel via railway.
- **Mauley**: Handwriting, signature
- **Mecks**: Wine or spirits
- **Milltag**: Shirt
- **Miltonian**: Policeman
- **Min**: Steal
- **Mitting**: Shirt
- **Mizzle**: Quit, Steal, or Vanish
Mobsman: A swindler or pickpocket, usually well-dressed. Originally one of the "Swell Mob"
Mollisher: A woman, often a villain's mistress
Monkery: the Country
Monniker: Signature
Mot: Woman, esp. the proprietress of a lodging or public house
Moucher, Moocher: A rural vagrant. A gentleman of the road.
Mouth: (1) Blabber. (2) A Fool
Mug-hunter: A street robber or footpad. Hence the modern "Mugger"
Mumper: Begger or scrounger
Buttocks
Nancy:
Nebuchadnezzar: Male sexual organs; "to put Nebuchadnezzar out to grass" means to engage in sexual intercourse.
Neddy:
Nemmo: Woman (cb)
Nethers: Lodging charges, rent
Newgate Knockers: Heavily greased side whiskers curling back to, or over the ears
Netherskens: Low lodging houses, flophouses
Nibbed: Arrested
Nickey: Simple in the head
Nobble: The inflicting of grievous bodily harm
Nobbler: (1) One who inflicts grievous bodily harm. (2) A sharper's confederate
Nommus!: Get away! Quick! (cb)
Nose: Informer or Spy
Nubbiken: A sessions courthouse
On the fly: While in motion or quickly
Onion: A watch seal
Out of twig: Unrecognized or in disguise
Outsider: An instrument, resembling needle nosed pliers, used for turning a key in a lock from the wrong side.
Pack: A night's lodging for the very poor
Paddingken: A tramp's lodging house
Pall: Detect
Palmer: Shoplifter
Patterer: Someone who earns by recitation or hawker's sales talk, esp. by hawking newspapers
Peter: A box, trunk or safe.
Pidgeon: A victim
Pig: A policeman, usually a detective
Pit: Inside front coat pocket
Plant: A victim
Pogue: A purse or prize
Prad: Horse
Prater: A bogus itinerate preacher
Prig: (1) A thief. (2) To steal
Puckering: Speaking in a manner that is incomprehensible to spectators
Punishers: Superior nobblers. Men employed to give severe beatings
Push: Money
Racket: Illicit occupation or tricks
Rampsman or Ramper: A tearaway or hoodlum
Randy, on the: On the Spree or otherwise looking for companionship
Rasher-wagon: Frying pan
Ray: 1/6 (one and six-pence)
Reader: Pocketbook or wallet
Ream: Superior, real, genuine, good.
Ream Flash Pull: A significant heist
Ream Swag: Highly valuable stolen articles
Reeb: Beer (cb)
Roller: A thief who robs drunks or a prostitute who steals from her clientele.
Rook: A type of jemmy
Rookery: Slum or ghetto
Rothschild, to come to the: To brag and pretend to be rich.
Rozzers: Policemen
Ruffles: Handcuffs
Saddle: Loaf
St. Peter's Needle: Severe discipline
Salt Box: The Condemned Cell
Sawney: Bacon
Scaldrum dodge: Begging by means of feigned, or self-inflicted wounds
Scran: Food
Scratch an itch: (cr) Bitch
Screw: A maker of fake testimonials; a forger
Screw: Skeleton Key
Screwing: A sub-genre of Cracking; burglary by means of skeleton keys, waxing keys, or picking locks.
Screwsman: A burglar versed in screwing
Scroby: Flogging in gaol
Scurf: An exploitive employer or gang-leader
Servant's lurk: A lodging or public house used by shady or dismissed servants.
Shake lurk: Begging under the pretence of being a shipwrecked seaman.
Shallow, work the: Begging while half naked.
Shant: A pot or tumbler
Sharp: A (card) swindler
Shevis: A shift, a type of garment.
Shinscraper: The Treadmill
Shirkster: A layabout
Shiver and shake: (cr) A cake
Shivering Jimmy: A half naked beggar
Shoful: (1) Bad or counterfeit. (2) An hansom cab
Shofulman: A coiner or passer of bad money.
Skipper: One who sleeps in hedges and outhouses
Skyrocket: (cr) Pocket (rarely used)
Slang cove: A showman
Slap-Bang Job: A night cellar (pub) frequented by thieves, and where no credit is given.
Slum: (1) False, sham, a faked document, etc. (2) To cheat. (3) To pass bad money.
Smasher: Someone who passes bad money.
Matter Hauling: Stealing Handkerchiefs
Snakesman: A slightly built (boy) criminal used in burglary and housebreaking.
Snells: A hawker's wares
Snide: Counterfeit; counterfeit coins or jewels.
Snide pinching: Passing bad money
Snoozer: A thief that specializes in robbing hotel rooms with sleeping guests.
Snowing: Stealing linen, clothes, etc, that have been hung out to dry.
Soft: Paper money (i.e., "to do some soft" means to pass bad paper money.)
Speeler: Cheat or a gambler
Spike: Workhouse
Sprat: Six pence
Spreading the Broads: Three card monte.
Square rigged: Soberly and respectfully dressed.
Swell: An elegantly, or stylishly dressed gentleman.
Tail: Prostitute
Tatts: Dice, False Dice
Tea Leaf: Thief (cr)
Terrier Crop: Short, bristly haircut (denoting a recent stay in a prison or a workhouse)
Teviss: Shilling
Thicker: A Sovereign or a Pound
Thick 'Un: A Sovereign
Tightener: A meal. "To do a Tightener," to take a Meal.
Tifter/Tiffertat: Hat (cr)
Toff: An elegantly, or stylishly dressed gentleman.
Toffer: A superior whore.
Toffken: A house containing well-to-do occupants.
Toke: Bread

Tol: Lot (cb), a Share.
Toolers: Pickpockets
Tooling: Skilled Pickpocket
Toper: Road
Topped: Hung
Topping: A hanging
Translators: Secondhand apparel, especially Boots.
Trasseno: An evil person
Tuppeny (Tuppeny Loaf): Head (cr. from Loaf of Bread)
Twirls: Keys, esp skeleton keys.
Twist (Twist and Twirl): Girl (cr)

Under and Over: A fairground game that's easy to swindle people with.
Vamp: To Steal or Pawn. "In for a vamp" to be jailed for stealing
Voker: Speak (r). "Voker Romeny?" (Pardon me, but do you speak Thieve's Cant?)

Weeping Willow: Pillow (cr)
Whistle and Flute: Suit (cr)
Work Capitol: Commit a crime punishable by death.

Yack: A watch
Yennap: A Penny. (cb)