

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)

Bit Faker: A coiner. A counterfeiter of coins.

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 Sharper

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

Buttner: 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/it. (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

Cracksman: A Burgler, a safecracker. One who cracks of breaks locks. A whole genre of thief.

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.

Crow: A lookout. A doctor.

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 liquers.

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

Dragsman: 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

F inny: 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

Flats: Playing cards, syn. Broads.

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

Gammy: 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: Begger

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 knowledgeable 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.

Lill: 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

Mutcher: A thief who steals from drunks

Muck Snipe: A person who is "down and out"

Nail: Steal

Nancy: Buttocks

Nebuchadnezzar: Male sexual organs; "to put Nebuchadnezzar out to grass" means to engage in sexual intercourse.

Neddy: Cosh

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

Rampman 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

Screever: A writer of fake testimonials; a forger

Srew: 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 Jemmy: A half naked begger
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.
Smatter 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
Snoozzer: 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.
Titfer/Titfertat: 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
Tuppenny (*Tuppenny 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)