

English is a Crazy Language....

There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England nor French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? One goose, two geese. So one moose, two meese? One index, two indices?

Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend, that you comb through annals of history but not a single annal? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it? If teachers taught, why didn't a preacher praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? If you wrote a letter, perhaps you bote your tongue?

Sometimes I think all the English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? Park on driveways and drive on parkways?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and wise guy are opposites? How can overlook and oversee be opposites, while quite a lot and quite a few are alike? How can the weather be hot as hell one day and cold as hell another?

Have you noticed that we talk about certain things only when they are absent? Have you ever seen a horsefull carriage or a strapfull gown? Met a sung hero or experienced requited love? Have you ever run into someone who was combobulated, grunted, ruly, hevelled or peccable?

And where are all those people who ARE spring chickens or who would ACTUALLY hurt a fly?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which an alarm clock goes off by going on. English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race (which, of course, isn't a race at all). That is why, when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible. And why, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up this essay, I end it.

So, do the English really speak English?

(A Guide for Americans (and of course, others...))

*"The Americans are identical to the British in all respects except, of course, language."
Oscar Wilde*

*"We (the British and Americans) are two countries separated by a common language."
G.B. Shaw*

Allow us to settle any confusion, alphabetically, about some commonly used English in England. Not that English is not spoken in Scotland, Wales or Ireland. It is - besides Welsh in Wales, Gaelic in Scotland and Gaelic in Ireland... Confused? Read on - for an irreverent and very funny expose of English as she is spoke (spake?) here.

Firstly, if you are invited to a "posh" (well to do) house for a dinner party (pronounced "dinnah party") in London it will probably be prepared in/on an **AGA** (pronounced as "Ahgaaaa..") Cooker (stove), which costs nearly as much as a reasonable three-bedroom house in London. (Which on current 2002 London real estate values is around £500,000 pounds, \$800,000 US Dollars or \$1.3 million Australian dollars!)

Every year hundreds of thousands of 18-year-old British school leavers suffer a torturous yearly examination called **A Levels**, which is the second part of the General Certificate of Education required to enter university. **Antiquated.**

Allotments. A vegetable (veggie) garden plot. A quaint custom where some people, usually living in small terrace houses or council flats, have permanent near to rent-free (a fiver a year) access to their own little plot of land in a communal garden to grow their own veggies and flowers. These plots are usually also prodigious producers of produce (say that after a dinner party) and often win major awards at garden shows for the veggies (vegetables) produced from them. Note that the British are nutty about gardening and hopelessly addicted as a race to mucking around with dirt (in gardens) as opposed to their racy daily tabloids (newspapers) that muck around with dirt of the journalistic kind.

To continue on mucking around with dirt in newspapers. A tabloid is the term used to describe several of the national newspapers, specifically the "Sun", the "Daily Mirror" & the "Express". They have small pages being approximately one-half the page size of a standard newspaper, and report news on the basis of never letting the truth stand in the way of a good (read bad, really bad) story. To add to their incredibly sensationalist headlines, they have a daily Page 3 photograph of a 18 something year old girl that usually blisters the newsprint that it is printed on. Ah, the tabloids, which shouldn't be confused with real newspapers such as the "pukka" (read "respected/accepted") FT, (Financial Times) the staid & venerable but starting to loosen up "Times", and the "don't know which side of the fence to sit on" "Guardian" & the "Independent".

Anoraks are hooded coats or Parkas. Although very popular in winter, they are now the subject of a major investigation with some major "quango" university grant to motivate the wearer to actually move his/her head from left to right (or up and down) and actually look before crossing the road (splat) as wearing one with the hood fully zipped up has the same effect on the wearer as dobbing (the horse) with a full set of blinkers on.

The term Anorak (as in “what an Anorak” is also sometimes used to describe the wearers perceived position in life as being at the shallow end of the gene pool.

If you are in a Pub (traditional bar) and someone asks you for a game of **arrows**, this has nothing to do with cowboys and Indians but refers to a game of darts, usually in the rubbity (Cockney rhyming slang – rubbity dub = pub).

An **Aubergine** (pronounced in Chelsea as “OrrburGene) is the name for a common garden variety eggplant. Don't ask me why an eggplant is called an aubergine here, but it is. Very embarrassing on your first supermarket foray.

In the UK, a **banger** is an old car but the plural, bangers, are sausages and are often served with mash (mashed potatoes).

If someone is **bent** this has nothing to do with osteoporosis but the fact that he/she is doing something illegal. A **bent copper** is not a twisted penny but a crooked policeman. Some crims and tea leaves (thieves, rhyming slang) are so bent they can hide behind a corkscrew.

If one is **bevved**, one is drunk, shot, four sheets to the wind, fall-down-grab-the carpet legless and in his cups and it therefore stand to reason that a bevvy is the drink that allows one to get that sloshed.

A **Big Mac** is a burger with two all beef patties lettuce cheese onion sauce on a sesame seed bun. No translation needed there. Sod it.

Only the bankers would care about this one, if there are any left after the dotcombomb and any companies remaining that are still actually worth billions, (as if it affects us mere mortals!) but it's fascinating. A **billion** or one billion is one thousand million in the UK. One trillion is one thousand billion. Because of the difference between US and British definitions of a billion, official use of the term in the UK has been dropped in favour of "one thousand million" to define a billion.

A **biscuit** is a cookie. Cookies are nasty little tracking thingamugummies that sit on some web sites. We at Ancestor Travel like to call them Cookie Monsters. (*We don't use em!*)

Bitter is beer and not a state of mind, unless you are drowning your sorrows in which case the bitter could make you bitter. Regulars in pubs (read traditional American Bar for Pub) who like a pint of bitter may just order 'a pint', which in Cornwall will sound like a 'point'. Don't confuse a beer with a lager. A lager is usually closer to an American beer but well, quite a lot stronger depending on the brand. For what its worth, Aussie lagers have become the beer of choice for most British, plus the 250 thousand Australians who are in the UK at any one time. Fancy shares in Fosters? (Their accounting practices are hmmm, real and should hold no surprises.)

A **bloke** is a man, a guy (also chap, a lad or a fella).

The term **bloody hell** (or if in an unrefined area “bloody ‘ell’!) is a popular mild expletive once considered highly offensive, and used as an expression of incredulity, real or feigned, the latter depending on the intake of pints at the pub. Usually used as in “Bloody hell, you crashed the car into the garage wall again!”

The old term for a copper is a **Bobby**. It is still used but fading into history. A Bobby is a referral to the founder of the modern day police force in Britain, Sir Robert Peel or “Bob” as a shortened version of Robert. (The term before this for a policeman was a “Peeler.”) Police in Britain are in all respects immaculately turned out, immaculately polite, immaculately trained and do not carry guns apart from special circumstances. May the immaculate force be with you.

A **bodge job** is a non-professional completion of a task. Beware of unlicensed handymen. A bonnet is the hood of a car, although having a bee in one’s bonnet has nothing to do with bangers. Hoods are underworld crims. **Boots** go on feet but they are also the trunks of cars, as well as a fine chain of Chemists (pharmacies). Trunks are bathers (swimming trunks).

Butty. As in a chip butty pronounced as “chup boody” in some parts. A favourite sandwich, particularly up north, made up of two buttered pieces of white bread and filled with “chips” (fried potato as in “fries” in the US.) Quite yummy (yummy = good) but only for those who possess the digestive capabilities of a fully-grown water buffalo.

A **bus** is a means of transport. In the US, they are called coaches who in England are employed (and paid millions of pounds – onya Sven!) to train “soccer” teams. Soccer is English football. Football is Soccer. Period. Full stop. In England, it is a religion akin to nothing on earth. Even the Aussie Rule fanatics in Australia do not come near this lot when it comes to Soccer (Sorry, Football!) As a guide, in the England World Cup match against Sweden, (Ireland had their own more successful agenda!) over 40 million (total population of the UK is around 59.9 million) British (aha- except the Scots though, as they did not make the World Cup draw) watched the game between 7.30 and 9-30am. Roads, offices, surgeries, banks, you name it – were totally deserted on a peak hour morning in London.

BYOB is a sign in restaurants. It stands for “Bring Your Own Bottle”, which can be purchased in an “offo” or “offie” (off-licence or liquor retail outlet).

Cheerio is a friendly way to say goodbye. ‘Toodlepip’ may be heard in use occasionally by the upper crust, nobs, sloany ponies, willies or prats (all derogatory terms for the upwardly mobile set). **Cheers** is also a friendly ways to say thank-you.

Chips are fries, whereas **crisps** are potato chips.

The **City** (postcode EC) is the name for London’s equivalent to Wall Street, and probably just as awash lately with the thud of falling stock prices (and bodies) as Wall Street. Look for the stockbrokers and merchant bankers in the pubs around St Paul’s at lunchtime, easily spotted by their pukka (again!) Saville Row (famous London Street for men’s tailors) pinstripe suits, red braces, Turnbull & Asser ties, and frantic nervous fumbling with two mobile (cell) phones simultaneously along with a glass of Australian Chardonnay.

A true **Cockney** is judged as a person born within hearing distance of the Bow bells (rang in Bow Church) in the East End of London. Famous for their “Cockney Rhyming Slang” throughout Britain, (England in particular), and interestingly also right around the world, with an especially rich heritage in its incorporation into classic Australian slang. It was originally invented as a type of code so conversations could be had without the coppers (police) knowing what it was about. (“bread and jam” = tram, apples & pears = stairs “tin lids” = kids, “china” = “mate” as in “china plate” ... and don’t get us started on any more! It is an organic & active sub language that continues to be applied to English words and expressions globally.

Very often served at pubs on village greens is a traditional Devonshire (or Cornish for the Cornish readers!) **Cream Tea**. Tea, (Always in a tea-pot - NEVER tea bags!) fresh hot scones, (don’t get into a fight with pronouncing the word “scone” – and read muffin for scone) fresh strawberry jam and **Clotted Cream**, which is unbeeleevably rich super thick cream that you apply with a trowel - so maybe take quite a few tums (antacids) after.

Cricket. Ah, the solid “thwack” of leather (leather cricket ball) on willow (cricket bat made from a Willow tree) on an English Green (sports ground) in summer. Cricket is a very old, arcane, bewildering ball game (except to the British and its 17th/18th century previously colonised countries of Australia and the Indian sub continent) that defies description to people that have not grown up with it. And, television and radio commentators actually get paid obscene amounts of money to describe it. As one American succinctly put it, after watching a 5-day test match with his British corporate counterpart, “watching paint dry is actually more fun and happens quicker”.

However, the invention of the limited “over” (50 sets of 6 balls bowled) one day cricket game by Kerry Packer, the Australian media mogul in the 1970s has made for a fast paced, heart stopping game. (And that’s as much a description that you will get from us, either the traditional 5 day match or the 1 day limited over game, as some extremely funny descriptions that take up a lot of space already exist). The purists, who up until the introduction of the one-day game, only watched the traditional 5-day matches, still call the one day version of cricket “the pyjama” game referring to the colourful uniform and unabashed muscular capitalism exhibited by this new breed of commercial sport.

Also, cricket being a very “pukka” (that word again) social game is a great excuse in rural Britain for the local lads to get “hammered” (drunk) at the local Pub after, which is always adjacent to every village green.

And, another very pukka (again!) phase, “Not **Cricket**” as in “that’s **not cricket** old chap”, using cricket’s impeccable reputation for good sportsmanship as describing an act that is not ethical or “sportsmanlike”, as in when someone cheats or does something unethical.

A **cuppa** is a cup of tea. The British LOVE their cup of tea.

Digs is a term used not so much these days to describe accommodation, as in sharing in rented house or flat (flat = apartment) and not to describe your activity in the garden. It came into being predominately with university students renting a room in a private house or sharing with 20 or so other students in a three bedroom house.

Dosh is money (also 'dough', 'cabbage', 'lolly', 'the folding stuff').

A **dressing gown** is a bathrobe, not glamorous ball wear, whereas a dressing down is to tear strips off someone.

A **fag** is a cigarette. A packet of fags costs about a fiver (five pounds). Smoking in the UK is not only a terrible health hazard but also a terrible wealth hazard. It is even acceptable to ask someone in a pub if you can 'bum a fag'. And it's polite to repay the favour.

Someone who is **fagged** is exhausted. The British are aware of the American term 'fag' as well.

A **faggot** in parts of England is a sausage-like meat (aka Savoury Ducks).

Fanny in Britain is not a posterior as it is in America. An innocent "Park your fanny over here" may offend...

A **flat** is an apartment. (See Digs) When a tyre (not 'tire!') is flat it has a puncture. In the event of same, pull over towards the footpath, not the sidewalk (gutter = kerb, motorway = freeway).

Fourex is a famous Queensland beer exported to the UK from Australia, and coincidentally is also the name of a quite popular brand of condom in the UK. Most people know how to distinguish between the two, but the distributors did drop the advertising slogan used in Australia, "I can feel a Fourex coming on."

A **greasy spoon** is another term for a cheap restaurant, in which, there may well be cutlery of a greasy nature. If you'd like to check out the kitchen facilities, ask the **guv/guvner**, the boss (from 'governor'). Greasy spoons are quite often BYOBs and patrons may end the evening **hammered** (bevvied). For desert, if you would like jello, ask for **jelly**. Do not ask for jam if you want jelly or you will be brought a breakfast preserve.

If you are busy vacuuming the carpet you are **hoovering**, as a vacuum cleaner is called a **Hoover** after the generic name of the principal manufacturer, the Hoover Company. However, ALL vacuum cleaners are called "Hoovers". How's that for a nightmare for the Brand Marketers!

A **jumper** is a sweater, which may well be 'nicely filled out' by a **lass**, who is a young female - and it may well be a quarter of century since she was in nappies (diapers).

Legless is when you drink too much (alcohol). So if you are legless, do not even think about driving your car, which if it is over three years old requires a government administered **MOT** certificate annually to prove its roadworthiness. MOT is a ferociously administered form of legalised government robbery where, in order to get your MOT, you have to agree with the garage people (speaking in English which makes it even more interesting) that you need repairs probably to the value of the worth of the car. A friend of ours recently bought a new car.

Her old car, a perfectly good 6-year-old Volvo, was offered as a trade in but was rejected as it was judged not worth the cost of obtaining an MOT for it. She tried to sell it privately, but in the end donated it to charity as no one would buy it.

“Thanks **lovey**”, or “be with you in a minute, **love**”. No, not an attempt by someone to tell you that they are hopelessly enamoured with your rugged profile, but a genuine term used with infuriating familiarity predominately by working class women as a term of greeting and address. Rather a shock to the system to be called “love” and “lovey” if you never clapped eyes on them before. In Scotland the word “Hen” is quite often used in its place.

A **lounge** bar is a separate bar area found in a Pub which is usually much more up-market than the Public Bar area, usually with genteel ersatz furnishing, complete with the mandatory set of hunting dog prints on the wall and mock regency period furnishings. Historically it was for the upper class and for ladies to actually (gasp) be able to drink in a Pub.

To live in a **maisonette** is to live in a flat or apartment that has two levels, i.e. upstairs and downstairs. Ruthlessly exploited and abused by real estate agents in London (who are making truly obscene amounts of money from the current real estate boom and have set a new level of social loathing way below even lawyers), the term is now used to describe broom cupboards.

When shopping in Great Britain, visit the venerable **Marks and Spencers**, fondly referred to as **Marks & Sparks**. A good middle of the road store, it recently fell on hard times but after two years and a 4 million pounds salary package paid to a new CEO to revive it (true!) it is once again the place to shop.

Ah, **Marmite**. Nothing prepares you for the taste of British marmite. With the consistency and visual appeal of a small bucket of 50-year old axle grease, it is a yeast extract used predominately on breakfast toast. The Brits love their Marmite, and it has been around for generations with its recipe unchanged. Australians beware. If you are a Vegemite Kid, (Vegemite is the Australian equivalent), Marmite is a big, big shock to the system, as it looks the same but well, no, it does not cut it compared to Vegemite. (A further version(?) of Marmite called “Bovril” is used as stock flavouring for cooking.) Marmite or Vegemite, its an acquired taste and not many visitors acquire it, but, well, we love it!

National Health. The UK has a socialist health system that is “free” with its cost being met by all taxpayers through national health deductions from their wages. Suffice to say, and due for a 3 hundred billion pound revamp from this year; it is currently a bureaucratic nightmare. Although health facilities & the training & care is excellent in the UK, and by and large hospitals are modern, getting to see a doctor or specialist through National Health is a Byzantine & arcane process that can take in some cases, months. Our advice is when visiting the UK you **MUST** have travel insurance that covers the cost of medical services that enables you to use medical services outside the national health system. A warning. A visit to a GP if not through National Health costs around £80-100 pounds, or \$140 US dollars or around \$200 Australian dollars.

Newspapers and magazines etc are purchased through **Newsagents** that usually have a small shop about the size, lighting and olfactory equivalent of a bat cave and that's not the Batman and Robin kind. They also usually sell tube (rail) and bus daily/weekly/monthly passes which are very good value as you cannot purchase a pass from the bus driver - and prepare to wait for 30 minutes if trying to purchase same at a rail station.

Light switches and power point switches **on and off**. Unlike American electricity, which is 110v 60hz, UK electricity is 240v 50hz, so don't even think about using your US hairdryer, computer etc without checking that it has a built in adaptor. As well as the current being different so too are the switches. A light switch is turned ON by pushing the switch DOWN, and turning it OFF is to push it UP. Power points in the wall also have switches in them that work the same. Also as British electricity is three wired/earthed - American is two wire non-earthed) most British electrical appliance plugs have fuses in them, which besides offering excellent further safety, provides even more hidden & exciting places to look when something blows up.

One. If one believes one's station is above the chattering classes, one may choose to use this strange third person style of speech made popular by royalty. "One is always careful of one's reputation" could translate to "I am always careful of my reputation" or an admonishing "You should be careful of your reputation." Funny stuff, English by the English.

If you are out having a good time it can be referred that you are **out on the tiles**. Some say it comes from tom-cats out on the tiles (roof tiles) although another school of thought is that it is where you will probably have to sleep when you get home and find yourself locked out. (On the tiles on the front door step.)

If in Cornwall - or anywhere in the UK that flogs (sells) them whether they are genuine or no -) you might be tempted to buy a Cornish **Pasty**. First lesson, DON'T call it a "Parsti" - it is pronounced "Paystee" Second lesson, only genuine Cornish Pasties come from and are purchased in Cornwall, third lesson, if you purchase one outside of Cornwall it will usually look like a laboratory experiment using sausage meat, sawdust, and cardboard for a pastry wrapping. A true Cornish Pasty is delicious, filled with chopped up mince, potato and vegetables inside a delicious flaky shortbread like pastry covering. Beware imitations!

True Cornish pasties have/had little curved pastry handles on either end of the pasty. This was to allow the coal miners in the old days to eat the pasty without getting it dirty. True.

If someone tells you to "keep your **pecker** up" it is not a sly reference to purchasing Viagra, but rather a very old saying relating along the lines of "don't worry, it will be ok, be happy".. No, this is not made up..it is still said especially in the older rural areas of Great Britain..

A "**p**" (pronounced "pee") is also a currency unit (one new penny = **pence** = 100 pennies to the **Pound** (Pound = "quid") or Pound Sterling which is the basic monetary unit. Coins come in 1p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p and 1 pound and 2-pound denominations. Notes come in 5 pounds ("fiver") ten pounds ("tenner") and 20, 50 (a "pinky") and 100 pounds. The coins are easy to use and identify, and are also satisfactorily quite heavy, as befits a currency that is the strongest in the world!

Someone who is **pissed** is very drunk, not angry or disappointed. American movies that have an aggro character in control of their mobility and speech that states that they are 'really pissed' is very bemusing to the English.

A **pitch** is a playing field, not something you do on it, as in baseball. (also 'paddock').

A **pillar** box is a **post** box for posting letters, which is a 5 foot high, rotund round red cylinder poking up out of the footpath on just about every street corner like an unexploded fat red bomb from WW2. However, again in a weird travesty of what really works well in this country, the Royal Mail is by and large truly awesome with its punctuality and ability to get the most illiterate of addressed mail to its intended recipient. The two classes of mail are first and second-class, with first class virtually ensuring delivery anywhere in the UK the following day after postage. All mail is delivered to your actual home address in the UK through a large brass letter flap in your front door by an immaculately uniformed **postman**, including even multi story flats (apartments). No wonder "Consignia" (the current corporatised name for the Royal Mail) has lost about the same amount last year on operating costs as the GDP for a good sized European country. However, like dogs by the fire in pubs in winter and cricket on a lazy summers day, the reassuring "plop" every day of my mail hitting the floor inside the front door is an enduring symbol of what is very right about this remarkable country.

If you are upper class you are generally referred to as being a bit **posh**. The term is believed to originate from a 18/19th century acronym from sailing to the colonies aboard a ship and referring to the class and location of your cabin on board, as in POSH stood for "Port Out, Starboard Home". These cabins were more expensive, much better furnished, roomier and cooler (no A/C in those days!) as for most of the journey the sun was on the other side of the ship.

A **poofter** (fag) is a derisive term for a homosexual. Generally however becoming less used as transgendered (gay) people become more accepted in mainstream culture. A **poof** however is a small footrest. (Don't go there!)

"The raw **Prawn**". No, that is not heard here unlike its use in Australia signifying unacceptable or antisocial behaviour ("Don't come the raw prawn with me, mate"). However, like the US, a prawn in the UK is actually shrimp or very small prawns. Large prawns are sold here and are delicious, however no distinction is made between small and large prawns with the name.

The **Prime Minister** of the UK (Tony Blair or his wife, Cherie Blair – whoever gets up first on the day) is simply abbreviated to the **PM** (or is that a simple PM?).

Some one taking **pop** isn't escorting granddad, it's a fizzy drink, and can be purchased in **pubs** (public house or hotel) by **punters** (customers).

Aha! We have reached P for **Pub!** Of course, it is an abbreviation for **Public** House. The very fabric of history of Great Britain and Ireland is encapsulated in their Pubs. Glorious, wonderful, quaint old historic pubs by the thousands, most with histories stretching back hundreds and hundreds of years. Clean and comfortable, wonderful in summer with masses of flower baskets and snug and warm in winter with blazing log fires.

Pub food (be careful, and stay away from the corporate chain “cookie cutter, olde-worlde style plastic pubs”) generally is excellent value, tasty and fresh with usually a house speciality, especially in the country. Also country pubs and Inns offer great value bed and breakfast accommodation. Also summer at a Pub (or any major event) would not be the same without a **Pims**, (equivilant = mint julep) a pleasantly alcoholic drink much loved by the Brits in summer. (It is usually served with mint leaves and in the country mint leaves are covered in aphids (small insects). Yuk! Forewarned is forearmed...

A **Public** school is not as its name suggests, but is an upper class very exclusive & expensive **private** school, where children are often booked in at birth (generally the school(s) that their parents attended). The UK is very class conscious, with amazing wealth at one end of the scale and real poverty at the other. A public school education is essential to work the “old boys network” (networking contacts with classmates made from your school days) and to get one’s foot on the rung for that plum corporate job, directorship, member of parliament etc. The opposite to this is a State School which is publicly funded schooling. However, a public school pedigree is still very much a powerful force in the way business is done in this country.

The **Queen**. Well, this one needs no explanation. For those lucky enough to be in this country in June of 2002 and attend the Queens Jubilee celebrations marking her 50-year anniversary on the throne, it was a humbling, and truly wonderful and historic occasion. Although the royal family is much derided and they have their fair share of sanctioned lunacy and dysfunctional people, heartache and problems, Queen Elizabeth 2nd and the monarchy is the glue that holds this country together. Even the staunchest of anti-royalist and fervent republicans have been skittled at the new wave of patriotism in this country and for the monarchy. Long Live the Queen!

To stand in a **queue** is to stand in a line. It is a well know fact that the British are the most patient law abiding “queuers” in the world, and will patiently stand in a queue all day long if that is what it takes to go to the toilet, attend an event, purchase a ticket or whatever. (I have done it myself, standing in the cold and rain for 10 hours to attend the Xmas Eve Carols at Kings College in Cambridge some years ago.) Not a murmur, not a rumble as thousands of us stood in the freezing rain for 10 hours to get in, and with 500 hundred or so poor souls behind us refused entry on reaching the doors, and no complaint. Remarkable. (Some say it is Jungian conditioning left over from WW2, who knows, but a truly remarkable trait.)

A **quid** is slang for the currency unit “pound”, which is currency as well as a measurement of weight (a pound or abbreviated to a “lb”) of which 112 lbs make up a hundredweight (cwt) and 20 cwt (2240 lbs) are a ton.

“**Quite** the show old boy”. True. They still say this here, particularly in upper class circles. Like the term “one”, it is uniquely British and can be put on the front of a sentence to mean the absolute final last word, or used as a reply to verify that it was a great show as in: “What a great show!” ans: “Quite, old boy.” BUT, it can also be used as it is normally used as in: “its quite a dark colour” meaning that it is not absolute but nearly... yes.. it’s rather hard to grasp.. Oh, and for Americans color is spelt colour – also harbour, neighbour etc.

Randy. No it is not an abbreviation for Randolph, although Randolph is a noble name in Great Britain and well represented. To be randy is to well, be a bit frisky.

In the UK there is a television channel that televises Parliament 24 x 7 when the government sits in session. True. Sometimes watching it on a slow day is hilarious, particularly in the afternoon with all the well nourished more senior members of parliament after a long lunch zzzing away on the benches, only to wake up at some particular point of order or debate to loudly mutter “**rhubarb, rhubarb**” and promptly fall back asleep again. The use of this word is from the theatre and is used in crowd scenes when everyone mutters “rhubarb” so as it seems everyone is talking animatedly. Also of course, Rhubarb pie is a wonderful dessert in Great Britain, made from rhubarb stalks & apples.

A **rotter** is an upmarket public school expression for a bad person as in a scoundrel. The British have forever branded the person who wrote an expose on his affair with Princess Diana as a “rotter”. (A rotter is also a “cad”, a “bounder” and a “ne’re do well”.)

Driving through a **roundabout** (also sometimes called a carousel for obvious reasons) is about the same as playing Russian roulette & lawn bowls simultaneously but with cars and trucks in real time. Roundabouts are traffic zones circles where 4 roads meet simultaneously and do not have traffic lights to control the vehicle flow. A roundabout works on the premise of drivers extending courtesy to other drivers and to obey the law (yeah – right!) for each driver to theoretically give way to allow the person on their right to proceed before them. Yes, if everyone gives way to their right simultaneously you would have an infinite loop in which nobody could move.

A **rubber** is an eraser, not a condom (AKA a French letter, which is not a missive across the Channel from France).

A **rubbish bin** can be a dustbin - which is a trashcan. Taking out the trash may refer to dating a girl with low morals.

Rugger is another name for rugby, or rugby union (or religion for some followers or world domination for the Aussies.)

The **Season**. Ah, the Season. This term is used to describe the social season, which starts in summer (June) and runs through to end of July, beginning of August. All the social events are staged in this period, such as Ascot, (HATS ladies please!) the Derby, Wimbledon, Stella Artois (Queens), Chelsea Flower Show, Henley Regatta, British Grand Prix, Glastonbury, music festivals at Kew & Hampton Court. Basically all of the social set (young & old sweet things) dress up, spend up, & whoop it up, with the object to be seen and make the social pages...(Then of course its away from August 1 on annual holidays, with London empty until early September, at which stage everyone returns to get some work in before the ski season starts in November..)

If you are passing through a railway station - which is a distinct possibility as nobody is insane enough to drive when the average speed of London traffic (gridlock) is about 5 miles per hour - you will probably grab a **sandwich** from one of the trendy or not so trendy fast food shops. Ah, the sandwich. In 1762 the 4th Earl of Sandwich shoved two bits of meat between two slices of bread so he could eat with one hand and play cards with the other. If only he knew what legacy he was inflicting on the human race.

If you are partial to **scrumpy**, you like a particularly strong alcoholic drink made from fermented rotten apples. Not to be confused with cider, this stuff can power a Saturn 5 rocket with ease, and has about the same affect in reverse the following morning when you wake up.

If you “go the **slog**” in cricket you are trying to hit the ball out of the ground, but if “it is a hard slog”, it is hard work.

The British **smack** their children, which is the same as to spank them. Unfortunately, the more sinister meaning of the word “smack” is creeping into the general vocabulary with smack (a mixture of cocaine and heroin) rapidly gaining ground in the UK as the authorities work hard to combat the huge influx of hard drugs into the country.

Snogging is kissing and **steaming** is another quaint term for being bevvied, and if you have been bevvied the night before you might **skive** off or be a **skivver**, which means you are you are taking an unauthorised day off work or school.

Spotted Dick is a favourite English Pudding and not the measles. Nowhere in America would you hear, “Oh, that spotted dick was yummy.” (good)

Squash. The same as racquetball, or something that is like a cordial i.e. a sweet drink for kids.

Here we go. To be sure, to be sure. **Stout.** Mothers milk for the Irish. You know, its black, its Irish beer, it’s got a head on it that you can wrap your face around, and it’s truly a religious experience to drink. That’s if you like it. Ouch!

Hmm. Cricket again. Just about has its own sub-language. To be on a **sticky wicket** is to be in danger of being “got out” in cricket, as it refers to the playing pitch after rain (sticky) where the advantage swings to the bowler as he can do rather interesting things with the ball hitting the pitch. If you are on a sticky wicket outside of a cricket match you are in a difficult situation.

Ta is a casual way of saying thank you.

Tea. No explanation. Although Coffee has also gone ballistic in the UK, with nearly as many Starbucks as “Maccas”, Tea is the beverage (bevvie) of choice for most Brits. Preferably very hot, and with tea added to the milk rather than the milk added to the tea...and with this you would generally have a “digestive” (cookie or biscuit) if it was morning tea. But wait, there’s more! If it were afternoon tea, you would have dainty little sandwiches with the crusts cut off, or scones. More yet! High tea was originally used as an expression for early dinner for the children. Still used here to describe a meal, as in to go to tea is also to go to early dinner in the evening, as in: “I’m going to tea at Millie’s house”. Drinking tea (the beverage) at Millie’s house with your tea (dinner) is not mandatory.

A **tenner** is 10 quid and a **ton** is slang for a hundred. In casual conversation about cricket, batsmen never score a hundred runs, they score a “ton”, not that many Americans strike up a conversation on cricket, unless it’s the orthopterous insect.

London is world famous for its **theatre**, (plural) or “shows” being musicals. These are staged in theatres (singular), which are also used for ballet, plays etc. To go to the movies (pictures) you would visit a cinema. For Americans, it’s not spelt theatre and a meter is a metre.

Tights are nylons or stockings. Worn by woman of course. And some Tory politicians.

I like this one. If in a pub around closing time (11 pm or later-depends on the interpretation of British licensing laws which are very strange) you might hear, “**Time gentlemen please**. If you can’t drink them, leave them, if you can’t leave them, drink them - time gentlemen please!” Easy! Time gentlemen please means drink up and get out as its closing time.

A “**toad in the hole**” here is not an obnoxious belligerent toad or bullfrog jammed into a black hole in the ground, but an interesting gourmet treat consisting of pork sausages cooked in a coating of Yorkshire pudding mix, which in itself is like a thick pancake mix. If your eyes are watering at the sound of this, you will probably need a **tissue** (Kleenex) to wipe them.

Yup. Ketchup here is **tomato** sauce, and we don’t say “tom-may-to” we say “too-mart-oh.” And a **torch** is a flashlight. British men (and woman) don’t wear pants, they wear **trousers**. A short-sleeved cotton shirt without a collar is called a **T-shirt**. And it does get warm enough in the summer in the UK to wear this garment!

The **tube** is the London Underground, which although creaking at the seams and over 100 years old (the tracks-not the trains, which by and large are rather good) still does a very good job of transporting over 3 million plus people every day.

“**Twee**” is a derogatory term in that something or someone is twee, meaning old fashioned, old hat, out of date, very uncool.

Yorkshire pudding is a batter mix as in a “toad in the hole”, but used mainly as an adjunct with a roast beef dinner. (cooked joint of meat)

The **underground** is the London Tube, whereas a subway is a walkway under a road.

U is also of course, the **UK** or **United Kingdom**. What’s the difference between the UK, Great Britain, Britain and Ireland? England, Scotland & Wales are COUNTRIES in what is called “Great Britain”, commonly abbreviated to “Britain”.

The current name for the UK: “United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” (Abbreviated to “United Kingdom” further abbreviated to “UK”) was adopted in 1927. Note that the Republic of Ireland is a separate country, and is NOT a part of Great Britain or the UK.

VAT is Value Added Tax (17.5%) – think of it as tipping the government. VAT is applied to almost all items for sale in the UK. Too complex to go into here, but if you are an overseas visitor you can generally claim your VAT back in most cases on departure from the UK. Most large stores have special areas to provide the necessary VAT refund paperwork.

Wellingtons or abbreviated to “**wellies**”, were invented of course by the Duke of Wellington and is the name for waterproof knee high rubber boots. Strangely enough, the term **wellied** also means to be drunk, hammered, bevied, sloshed, plastered, cut, blind, blotto, pickled, in one’s cups, potted, shickered, under the weather, spifficated, pie-eyed, tight, tanked, or just under the **weather**.

Ah, the **weather**. The British are OBSESSED about their weather. (As in clouds, rain, wind, temperature etc) Seriously, it is all that anyone seems to talk about. It is amazing, truly a national obsession, and seriously dysfunctional. Sometimes it rains here, (ok, ok, it rains a lot!) and it’s cold in winter. It can be warm in spring, and infuriatingly to the Brits, quite hot in summer. Infuriating in that they can’t start a conversation with their usual: “isn’t the weather awful/horrid etc” and you can *feel* the unspoken thought; “how dare it be nice - we forever tell everyone that our weather is in a perpetual state of endless stygian gloom, drizzly, dark, grey and gloomy ...how dare it be nice!”

Or maybe its just this crazy English language, as of course we also have another version of the word – **whether** - used as in “whether or not you want to talk about the weather” (I don’t) or maybe we can really make things interesting, as a “**wether**” is the English word for a castrated ram, (the male sheep version - not the computer ram) so maybe the whole weather thing here is whether the men talk about the weather for wethers.....

With the greatest respect. A legal and foolproof way of telling your boss that that they are wrong and/or are a twit (idiot), and that you don’t in fact have any respect whatsoever for them. It is always used to start a sentence as in: “With the greatest respect Nigel, I feel that we should look at another way to achieve our goals.” (Translates to: “You silly git, you don’t have a clue and my way is better”. If said whilst driving a car, Nigel probably would want to throw you through the **windscreen** (windshield) but good manners and tough anti litter laws would generally prevent him from doing so.

A **zebra** crossing is where zebras and pedestrians get to chance their luck when crossing the road. The term refers to diagonal painted black and white lines on the road so as to supposedly identify a sanctioned pedestrian crossing, where pedestrians always have the right of way and vehicles have to give way to pedestrians. Dream on. It works like this. Vehicles don’t stop at a pedestrian crossing unless: (a) the pedestrian somehow manages to make eye contact with the driver as they roar down the road towards the crossing and (b) the pedestrian, desperately trying to establish eye contact with the oncoming driver (not easy of a winters night), then simultaneously and very tentatively stretches their right foot out as if to make the first step onto the crossing. All being well, the driver in the 100th car or so will make eye contact with the pedestrian, who then firmly slams his foot down on the crossing, thus bluffing the driver to come to a screaming halt inches from the pedestrians foot.

-And that’s it for the first edition. Hope you enjoyed reading it as much as we enjoyed writing it!