

SCHOTT'S ORIGINAL MISCELLANY

A glossary of thieves' cant, compiled exclusively for Weekend by Ben Schott

“DIPPING THE SUCK IS A KITTLE JOB”

Amputate your timber..... be off with you
Asker..... professional beggar
Barker..... firearm, gun
Beaker hunter..... one who steals poultry
Blue pigeon flying..... stealing lead from roofs
Box Harry..... tea and dinner at one meal
Cant of togs..... a gift of clothes
Cat & kitten hunting..... stealing pewter pots from pubs
Chalk..... observing closely so as to remember someone
Chinkers..... money
Christen a yack..... to alter the maker's name in a watch
Church a yack..... to swap the mechanism in a watch
Clout..... Cotton handkerchief
Cocum..... cunning and sly
Crocuses..... fraudulent, itinerant doctors
Croppie..... one who has his hair cut short in prison
Cut your lucky..... run away
Daylights darkened..... black eyes
Dipping..... picking pockets
Drag..... three months in prison
Dross scouts..... gold watches
Douse the glim..... put the lights out
Ebony optics albonised..... black eyes painted white
Everlasting staircase..... the prison treadmill
Family men..... thieves
Fan..... a waistcoat
Fawney..... a ring
Fillet of veal..... house of correction
Flimp..... garotte robbery
Flummox..... failure
Fogle..... handkerchief
Free..... to steal
Frog and toe..... London
Gadding the hoof..... going without shoes
Gig lamps..... spectacles
Go the jump..... break into a room through the window
Hellite..... professional gambler
Highflies..... beggars impersonating poor gentlemen
Hip inside..... inside coat pocket
Hip outside..... outside coat pocket
Hocus..... to drug a victim before robbing him
Hop the twig..... go away
Ivories..... teeth
Jemmy..... crowbar
Jigger..... lock
Jurk..... an official seal
Kidment..... a handkerchief left out to entrap thieves

Kidman..... one who trains boys to steal
Kittle..... difficult
Lagged..... transported
Lap the gutter..... get drunk
Leary..... knowing; cunning
Lingo..... language
Lush-cove..... a public house
Maidstone jailer..... tailor
Marking..... watching
Milken..... a housebreaker
Mosh..... dining out, and then not paying
Mouch..... to sponge off your friends
Mushroom fakers..... itinerant umbrella repairers
Mully grubs..... indigestion
Mumper..... beggar
Nap the regulars..... divide the spoil
Nose-my..... tobacco
Nix..... nothing
Palming..... shoplifting in pairs; one distracts, one steals
Peach..... to inform or betray
Pilcher of fogles..... a stealer of pocket handkerchiefs
Quill-driver..... a lawyer's clerk
Raclan..... a married woman
Regulars..... a thief's share of the spoils
Riding the donkey..... cheating in weight
Scranning..... begging
Seven pennyworth..... seven years' transportation
Short commons..... scarcity of supplies
Shoe leather..... said by thieves when anyone is coming
Shooting the cat..... being sick from drink
Skin..... purse
Slash..... outside coat pocket
Slick a dee..... pocket book
Slumming..... ageing counterfeit coins
Snow dropping..... stealing linen off a hedge
Souper..... a watch
Spark..... a diamond
Speel..... to run away
Spree..... to get drunk
Stall..... to screen a robbery while it is perpetrated
Star a glaze..... break a window
Steel-bar driver..... a tailor
Stoop buzzing..... stealing from men using prostitutes
Strike the jigger..... to pick a lock
Suck..... inside breast pocket
Swag-chovey bloke..... buyer of stolen goods
Tick..... credit

Tip-Topper..... a gentleman
Toggery..... clothes
Trotters..... feet
Turkey merchants..... buyers of stolen silk
Uncle..... pawnbroker
Upper benjamins..... overcoats
Walk your chalks..... go away
Wedge scouts..... silver watches
Work the bulls..... palm off fake five-shilling pieces

For 19th-century thieves, silk handkerchiefs (or *billys*) were an important commodity and, as a result, a range of very specific terms were employed to describe them:

Billy..... a general term for silk pocket handkerchiefs
Belcher..... close striped pattern
Blood-red Fancy..... all red
Blue Billy..... blue ground with white spots
Cream fancy..... any pattern on a white ground
Green King's Man..... any pattern on a green ground
Randle's-man..... green, with white spots
Water's-man..... sky coloured
Yellow Fancy..... yellow with white spots
Yellow Man..... all yellow

From such slang, thieves constructed their own phrases:

Fence my snibbed lays..... sell my stolen goods
A down in the veil..... a hue and cry in the town
Screaves in his benjy cloy..... notes in his waistcoat pocket
Working at the hoys and coreing..... shoplifting

Compiled from a number of sources, principally:
The Vulgar Tongue: comprising two glossaries of slang, cant and flash words and phrases, principally used in London at the present day
— Ducange Anglicus, 1859.

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