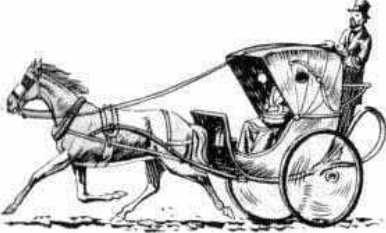




Kathleen Baldwin's Regency Glossary



A short glossary of some Regency words used in my books. If you run across words that you would like defined, please write to me. I love sharing my love of the quirky colorful Regency language.

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Addle-pated	Not right in the head, mentally deficient
apoplexy	to suffer a stroke, but usually an exaggeration. As in, "That stunt of yours you nearly gave me apoplexy."
arse	The back-end of a donkey. As in, "Don't be an arse."
balderdash	To spout lies or nonsense. She waved him away, "Balderdash. I don't believe it."
Balmy	insane, or deluded, a screw loose, not quite right in the head. (See daft) "Aye, the lad's a trifle balmy, but he does make me laugh."
Banbury Tale	A childish tale or fib, an unbelievable story told to avoid the truth. <i>Banbury</i> is drawn from a nursery rhyme of that name, and/or the fact that Banbury, England was where many fairy tales were published. Many etymologists say that Georgette Heyer coined this phrase. So, although it may not be an authentic Regency phrase, it was eagerly adopted as part of the accepted Regency vernacular.
<i>Beau Monde</i>	French for 'the beautiful people.' Refers to the elite members of London's high society. (See also <i>Ton</i>)
blackguard	a villain, A black-hearted man. Pronounced: bla-gurd. "He's a handsome devil, but a blackguard through and through."
bombazine	a twill-woven black silk, often used for mourning clothes. Because it is stiffer it rustles more than regular silk, creases and wrinkles easily.

Word or Phrase	Meaning
“the sticking point”	generally used to describe a young man brought to the point where he is either willing or forced to propose marriage, or enter into some other agreement with some reluctance.
cabriolet	 <p>A small two wheeled carriage, usually for hire. The forerunner of today's word for a cab.</p>
chit	A pert young woman. May have originated from <i>kitten</i> .
Corsican	Someone from Corsica. For instance, Napoleon was actually Corsican rather than French.
Corinthian	A fashionably dressed high-society gentleman of low morals; gambler, womanizer.
cudgel	A short club. Footpads and robbers use a cudgel to hit people over the head.
daft	Foolish or stupid. As in, “Don’t be daft.”
folderol	Nonsense. “Folderol! That’s pure poppycock, that is.”
foolscap	Sturdy parchment made from animal skins. “You’d best write it on a sheet of foolscap.”
foxed	Drunk. Plastered. “Oye! That fellow there is foxed. Had a few too many, he did.”
Frog	A pejorative term for a French man. Originated with Queen Elizabeth who was so delighted by the dancing jumps and leaps of one of her French suitors, that she called him "my frog." Snarky courtiers began using the term derisively.
frogs (clothing frog)	a military type epaulette.
fustian	To have pompous or highly affected speech. “Oh, what fustian!” Used to scoff at what another person is saying.
greatcoat	a long heavy manly looking gentleman's overcoat, very popular during the Regency. Think Matrix.
gammon	Telling a fib in order to trick or tease someone. ”Pish posh. Stop gammoning me.”
high alt	Excessively happy or excited. (see 'up in the boughs')
jibe - gibe (jibe)	A tease, barb, or a jest. Gibe was more commonly used. Jibe is a variant, not to be confused with jib, which is a type of sail.
Laudanum	Liquid opium used for dulling pain, very addictive.
Leech	A doctor, a general practitioner, referred to as a leech because of the common practice of applying leeches. “She’s sick! Send for the Leech.” (see also Sawbones)

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Lightskirt	A woman of low moral character. "Psst. That's no lady, that's a lightskirt."
macadam	tar and stone pavement for roads
mad	Crazy, insane, or having a wild idea. "Join the Circus? Have you run mad?"
missish	To behave girlishly, or to be overly squeamish or prim. "Oh Betsy, it's just a wee little spider. Stop being so missish"
missive	A letter. However, they didn't yet use the word envelope in respect to a letter.
muddle	In the middle of a rather sticky wicket (a problem or predicament.) "I say, George, this is quite the muddle."
Mullioned glass	small panes of glass divided by strips of either metal or wood. Old mullioned glass will often have a slightly lumpy characteristic because glass is actually a super thick liquid, not a solid. Over time (centuries), the glass slowly drips and is no longer smooth.
nightrail	night gown, also called a bed dress, and it really was a dress, long sleeve high collar, ruffle along the bottom.
ninny or ninnyhammer	Stupid or slow. Often said with affection the way we say silly (see also slowtop.)
Oak Galls	 <p>A growth on oak trees generally caused by insects. Galls have been used to produce ink since the Romans.</p> <p>Photo of a gall taken in Winchester UK by Bob Embleton, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2113912</p>
Old Bailey	"That Jack, nicked a bloke's purse, he did. Bound to get pinched and strung up at the Old Bailey." The central criminal court of England and Wales. You can read actual court cases here: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/
overset	upset, distraught, crying
patten	a heavy wooden clog worn for work in the garden or to walk through mud.
pelisse	 <p>An outer garment worn for warmth but often decorative as well. Sleeves may be short or long, garment is buttoned or tied in the front, generally, the skirt extends full length to three quarters length.</p>
Portmanteau	a large two-sided trunk or suitcase

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Prince Regent	A prince who rules in place of an incapacitated father. In this case Prince George rules because his father, King George, had a debilitating mentally illness.
puffed off	when a young lady is married off, (usually to a wealthy man) much to her mama's delight.
quizzing glass	a single lens spectacle with a short ornate handle generally worn on a ribbon or chain around the neck
ratafia	A macerated fruit punch liqueur, flavored with almond extract. Sometimes a touch of brandy is added.
Regency	The years 1811-1820 when Prince George ruled as Regent during his father, King George's, mental illness.
River Tick	To be deeply in dept. In the old days credit was drawn on a ticket—hence the shortened word 'tick.'
Roly-poly	A very old word based on two origins: 1. Biscuit dough spread with jam. 2. rowle powle, a worthless fellow. This term originates from a 16th century rolling ball game.
Sawbones	surgeon or doctor, originally meant army surgeon so often called upon to saw off bones. As soldiers returned home, usage enlarged to include all doctors. (See also Leech)
scratching on the door	This was the common practice instead of knocking.
shilly-shallying	To be indecisive; hesitating or taking too long to act. "For pity's sake, Beatrice, do stop shilly-shallying and pick a ribbon."
Slowtop	Derogatory term meaning someone is stupid or slow-witted. (see also ninny.)
Stick/stuck his spoon in the wall	He die, passed away. "Poor fellow, got a chill and stuck his spoon in the wall."
Sticking point	To bring a gentleman 'up to scratch', or 'to the sticking point' meant the young man was brought to the point that he is willing, or forced, to propose marriage.
switch (as in applied to one's backside)	A switch is a slender flexible branch used to deliver a spanking, often a willow branch, stick or rod, used for giving a whipping. The law declared it legal for a man to beat his wife so long as the 'rod' was not bigger than his thumb. Hence the phrase 'rule of thumb'.
Thomas Coke	Thomas William Coke, 1st Earl of Leicester (6 May 1754 – 30 June 1842) known for many things, but his brilliant innovations in agriculture are mentioned in my books.
Ton	Short for 'the upper ten thousand.' The elite members of London's high society. (See also Beau Monde)
Too high in the instep	Used to describe someone who is very proud, or haughty. Snobbish.

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Topsy-turvy	Utter confusion, upside down. Derived from the obsolete 1528 English word <i>terve</i> to turn upside
up in the boughs	"Emotions flying as high as the treetops" Excessively emotional due to being upset or overly elated. (see also high alt)
up the River Tick	Bound for debtor's prison. "So poor one does not even have a mattress with which to float up the river tick." Origins: Debtor's notes were called tickets – shortened to tick, meaning a river of debt and in prison they had to provide their own mattress.
Window Tax	During the Regency every window was taxed. (And you thought our taxes were excessive.)

Check back frequently. I add to this glossary from time to time.

Here are some wonderful resources you might also find helpful:

For original thieves' cant try: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5402/pg5402-images.html>

Don't miss the lovely Candace Hern's glossary: <https://candicehern.com/regency-world/glossary/>