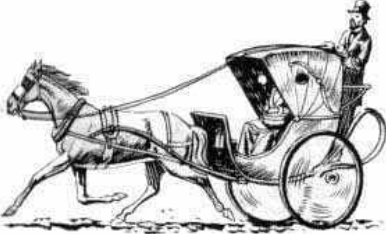


Kathleen Baldwin's Regency Glossary





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
agog	A farcical word used to mean fabulously eager. "Oh my dear, I am simply all agog to hear the latest on dit (gossip or rumor)."
apoplexy	To suffer a stroke or heart attack, 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	Pronounced: bla-gurd. A villain, a black-hearted man. "He's a handsome devil, but a blackguard through and through."
bombazine	a twill-woven black silk, often used for mourning clothes. A stiffer fabric, it rustles more than regular silk and creases and wrinkles easily.

Word or Phrase	Meaning
brambles	a prickly hedge or bush, but it is often used to describe a person in trouble. "Poor lad, he took his father's phaeton without asking and landed himself in the brambles. After the whooping he got, I doubt he'll be able to sit down for a week."
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. It may have originated from the word <i>kitten</i> .
coming out	Very different from its current meaning, during the Regency, Victorian, and early American centuries, coming out referred to a young lady's formal introduction into high society (generally to find a husband). During the first year of her 'coming out,' she would be referred to as a debutante.
Corsican	Someone from Corsica. For instance, Napoleon was actually Corsican rather than French.
Corinthian	A fashionably dressed high-society gentleman of low morals; a gambler, womanizer.
countenance	One's appearance or facial expression. "Judging by his countenance, Lord Wesmont was about to burst his spleen." (Get very angry)
cudgel	A short club. Footpads and robbers use a cudgel to hit people over the head.
cur	A slur that literally means a mongrel dog, used to describe a man of reprehensible behavior.
cut direct	To snub or turn up one's nose and treat the other person as if they do not exist—a severe public condemnation.
daft	Foolish or stupid. As in, "Don't be daft."
debutante	A young lady recently introduced into high society. (See coming out.)
<i>de rigueur</i>	Required behavior. French for: You simply must do this to be acceptable in society. "Oh, but my darling, you must wear a hat. It is simply <i>de rigour</i> ."
Doing it up too brown	This expression has changed meaning, but during the Regency, it meant to overdo a compliment or an action for nefarious reasons, to achieve criminal, immoral, or selfish ends.
Feetham machine	An innovative early version of a shower. The showering machine was hand-pumped and recycled the water, invented in 1767 by William Feetham.
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."

Word or Phrase	Meaning
foxed	Drunk. Plastered. "Oye!" He laughed and pointed at Lord Sloshpants. "He is well and truly foxed."
Frog	A pejorative term for a Frenchman. 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 shoulder epaulet.
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	To be excessively happy or excited. (see also 'up in the boughs')
high in the instep	This is a criticism of a snobbish aristocrat who thinks they are better than everyone else. "Oh dear, did you see her turn up her nose and give the cut direct to Sir Newfellow?" "Hhm, yes. She thinks he's beneath her. I daresay, Lady Stuffgarter is rather too high in the instep."
Gibe or jibe (jibe)	A tease, a 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.
Jackanapes	A young man who behaves foolishly, stupidly, or impertinently.
jaw-me-dead	When someone delivers a long-winded lecture or scold.
Laudanum	Liquid opium used for dulling pain and is very addictive.
Leech	A doctor, a general practitioner, was referred to as a leech because of the common practice of applying leeches. "She's sick! Send for the Leech." (see also Sawbones)
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?"
mad as a hatter	Insane. Derived from observing hatters who used harsh chemicals in hat-making, which caused tremors and other nervous symptoms, giving them the behaviors and appearance of madness.
milk of human kindness	A phrase from Macbeth by Shakespeare, meaning to have proper human feelings or empathy for others. Often used in reverse. "The lady seems to be lacking the milk of human kindness."
missish	To behave girlishly, or to be overly squeamish or prim. "Oh, Betsy, it's just a wee little spider. Stop being so missish."

Word or Phrase	Meaning
missive	A letter. However, the word envelope, with respect to a letter, was not yet in use.
modiste	Think of her as a fashionable personal gown designer for the wealthy ladies of the Beau Monde. The word is derived from the French word, <i>mode</i> , which means fashion.
muddle	To be caught in the middle of a rather sticky wicket (a problem or predicament). “I say, George, this is quite the muddle you’ve gotten into.”
Mullioned glass	Small panes of glass, divided by strips of metal or wood. Old mullioned glass often has 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	a night gown, also called a bed dress, and it really was a dress, with long sleeves, a high collar, and often a ruffle along the bottom.
ninny or ninnyhammer	Stupid or slow person. Often said with affection, the way we say silly (see also slow top.)
Oak Galls	 <p>A growth on oak trees, generally caused by insects. Galls have been used to produce ink since the Romans.</p> <p><small>This photo of a gall was taken in Winchester, UK by Bob Embleton, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2113912</small></p>
Old Bailey	The Central Criminal Court of England and Wales. You can read actual court cases here: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/ “Jack nicked a bloke's purse, got pinched and strung up (hung) at the Old Bailey.”
on dit	A bit of gossip or a rumor.
overset	To be upset, distraught, or 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. The sleeves may be short or long. The garment is buttoned or tied in the front, and generally, the skirt extends from full length to three-quarters length.</p> 
Portmanteau	A large two-sided trunk or suitcase
Prince Regent	A prince who rules in place of an incapacitated father. In the Regency era, Prince George ruled because his father, King George, had a debilitating mental illness.
promenade	This multifaceted French word means to take a walk. But during the Regency it often referred to the walk couples take around the room preceding a waltz. It also refers to a particular walk in Brighton that offered a view of the Pavilion and the Steyne.

Word or Phrase	Meaning
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
Rake	The typical Regency bad-boy.
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 debt. In the old days, credit was drawn on a ticket—hence the shortened word 'tick.' If I don't find a rich husband soon, my family will be up the River Tick. (Flat broke and headed for debtor's prison.) See Up the River Tick
Roly-poly	A very old word based on two origins: 1. Biscuit spread with jam. 2. Rowle Powle, a chubby buffoon. This slur derived from two sources: a 16th-century rolling-ball game, and William Rowles, an actor, who played a short fat buffoon (a silly clown) at Paul's theater, often called Powles.
roundaboutation	To dance around an issue verbally rather than coming straight to the point.
Sawbones	A surgeon or doctor. The term originated because army surgeons were often called upon to saw off bones. As soldiers returned home, the usage enlarged to include all doctors. (See also Leech)
scratching on the door	This was the common practice instead of knocking.
Season	The <i>Season</i> was when parliament was in session because it meant all the Lords were in town, along with their eligible sons and daughters. The Season usually began directly after Easter and lasted until mid-summer, when the Parliament session usually let out. However, there were a few historical exceptions when the session lasted a bit longer.
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 died, 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'.

Word or Phrase	Meaning
termagant	An ill-tempered or overbearing woman, a shrew.
“the sticking point”	When a young man is brought to the point where he is either willing or forced to propose marriage or enter into some other agreement, usually with some reluctance.
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	A shortened French euphemism for <i>Le Bon Ton</i> , 'the upper ten thousand.' The elite members of London's high society. (See also Beau Monde)
Topsy-turvy	When things are in utter confusion, or matters are turned upside down. Derived from the obsolete 1528 English word <i>terve</i> to turn upside down.
up in the boughs	“Emotions flying as high as the treetops.” Excessively emotional due to being upset or overly elated. (see also high alt)
<u>up the</u> 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.
Water Closet	Alexander Cumming's sliding valve water closet was an early version of a flushing toilet, invented in 1733, with significant advances made in 1775.
Widgeon	A widgeon is a white duck or goose. The term was sometimes an endearment, other times a slight insult, meaning someone behaved like a silly goose or duck.
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 two more resources you might find helpful:

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

You might also enjoy Candace Hern's lovely glossary: <https://candacehern.com/regency-world/glossary/>