**[Dorian Lasseter](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/137-dorian-lasseter/" \o "Go to Dorian Lasseter's profile)**

* Where's My Water
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/137-dorian-lasseter/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE1MjA0Nn0%3D)
* Member
* 3,266 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:The Sea!
* Interests:18th Century reenactment; Maritime, F&I...  
  Did ECW as well...  
  All BP firelocks and cannons!  
    
  Also enjoy Swordfighting and a good Donnybrook  
    
  Got a question for or about me? Ask!!!

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[Posted December 6, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=152046) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=152046)

Aye,

Dunno if there were a topic of this nature already... or even if this be th' right place for it...

What nautical words/phrases do you use or hear every day?

More than you think, I'll wager....

Things like;

'being three sheets to the wind'

Or 'Being at laggerheads with someone'

Or 'the cats out of the bag'

and so fourth...

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=edit)

[**Coastie04**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/27-coastie04/)

* Dread Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_dread_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/27-coastie04/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE1MjA5OH0%3D)
* Member
* 1,008 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Juneau, AK
* Interests:Nautical history, sailing (especially tall ships and my own 'Sanctioned Mistress'), shooting (of all eras and calibers), and homebrewing.

([IP: 66.58.246.44](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=66.58.246.44)) · · 

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Arrrgh! I use that at least a few times a week. Sometimes I sign emails to me wench as that, sometimes to express frustration, and sometimes just to scare little kids. It's rather versatile, really.

With me job, I also use a variety of nautical words on a daily basis. A very small list follows:

deck

head

bulkhead

bridge

port

starboard

haliard

bosun (derived from boatswain...in fact, this one's my roommate)

Captain (second most important on the ship, right behind the head cook)

swell (actually, anything but)

current

crab angle

bears (as in ship bears two points off the larboard bow, or ship bears a 320 relative)

pitch

roll

knots

OK, I've gotten tired of typing now. There's quite a few more, but you get the point.

Coastie B)

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=152098)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_152098_menu)

[**John Maddox Roberts**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/334-john-maddox-roberts/)

* First Mate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_1st_mate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/334-john-maddox-roberts/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE1MjA5OX0%3D)
* Member
* 272 posts

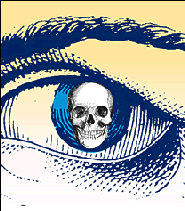
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I don't know what the weather's like where you are, but lately here it's been "cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey." It's a nautical reference, having nothing to do with either simians or testicles.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=152099)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_152099_menu)

[**Deadeye**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2410-deadeye/)

* Ship's Master
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_shipsmaster.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2410-deadeye/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE1MjExOH0%3D)
* Member
* 176 posts
* Location:Va Beach, Virginia
* Interests:Hell Raisin, Carousing, General Malady. Marlinespike, swordplay, Reenacting, Bladesmithing, foundry work.

([IP: 70.174.9.199](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=70.174.9.199)) · · 

[Posted December 6, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=152118) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=152118)

There is a great book out called ***"When a Loose Cannon Flogs a dead Horse, there's the Devil to Pay"*** that has a whole list, plus discriptions and history behind the phrase.

Makes for good reading around the Scuttlebutt, or in the Head, or while eatin yer favorite geedunk...

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=152118)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_152118_menu)

[**Rumba Rue**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5984-rumba-rue/)

* Immortal Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5984-rumba-rue/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE1MjEzM30%3D)
* Member
* 7,270 posts
* Gender:Female

([IP: 69.85.147.9](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=69.85.147.9)) · · 

[Posted December 6, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=152133) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=152133)

Well I'm still trying to figure out how my parrot picked up the word "Swabbie", no one here taught it to him. :unsure:

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=152133)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_152133_menu)

[**The Doctor**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1278-the-doctor/)

* aka Mad Jack Wolfe
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1278-the-doctor/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE1MjE3NX0%3D)
* Moderator
* 3,670 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:╦┐◤︻㍕┻═▄
* Interests:Historian and writer, partnered with the dazzling and lovely Honour Bright.

([IP: 66.41.198.216](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=66.41.198.216)) · · 

[Posted December 7, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=152175) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=152175)

I'm not sure if I posted this before or not, but it's worth repeating. :)

**Over a Barrel**

The most common method of punishment aboard ship was flogging. The unfortunate sailor was tied to a grating, a mast or over the barrel of a deck cannon.

**To Know the Ropes**

There was miles and miles of cordage in the rigging of a square rigged ship. The only way of keeping track of and knowing the function of all of these lines was to know where they were located. It took an experienced seaman to know the ropes.

**Dressing Down**

Thin and worn sails were often treated with oil or wax to renew their effectiveness. This was called "dressing down". An officer or sailor who was reprimanded or scolded received a dressing down.

**Footloose**

The bottom portion of a sail is called the foot. If it is not secured, it is footloose and it dances randomly in the wind.

**Booby Hatch**

Aboard ship, a booby hatch is a sliding cover or hatch that must be pushed away to allow access or passage.

**First Rate**

Implies excellence. From the 16th century on until steam powered ships took over, british naval ships were rated as to the number of heavy cannon they carried. A ship of 100 or more guns was a First Rate `line-of`-battle ship. Second rates carried 90 to 98 guns; Third Rates, 64 to 89 guns; Fourth Rates, 50 to 60 guns. Frigates carrying 20 to 48 guns were fifth and sixth rated.

**Pipe Down**

Means stop talking and be quiet. The Pipe Down was the last signal from the Bosun's pipe each day which meant "lights out" and "silence".

**`Chock-a`-block**

Meaning something is filled to capacity or over loaded. If two blocks of rigging tackle were so hard together they couldn't be tightened further, it was said they were "`Chock-a`-Block".

**Leeway**

The weather side of a ship is the side from which the wind is blowing. The Lee side is the side of the ship sheltered from the wind. A lee shore is a shore that is downwind of a ship. If a ship does not have enough "leeway" it is in danger of being driven onto the shore.

**Windfall**

A sudden unexpected rush of wind from a mountainous shore which allowed a ship more leeway.

**Groggy**

In 1740, British Admiral Vernon (whose nickname was "Old Grogram" for the cloak of grogram which he wore) ordered that the sailors' daily ration of rum be diluted with water. The men called the mixture "grog". A sailor who drank too much grog was "groggy".

**Three Sheets to the Wind**

A sheet is a rope line which controls the tension on the downwind side of a square sail. If, on a three masted fully rigged ship, the sheets of the three lower course sails are loose, the sails will flap and flutter and are said to be "in the wind". A ship in this condition would stagger and wander aimlessly downwind.

**Pooped**

The poop is the stern section of a ship. To be pooped is to be swamped by a high, following sea.

**As the Crow Flies**

When lost or unsure of their position in coastal waters, ships would release a caged crow. The crow would fly straight towards the nearest land thus giving the vessel some sort of a navigational fix. The tallest lookout platform on a ship came to be know as the crow's nest.

**Buoyed Up**

Using a buoy to raise the bight of an anchor cable to prevent it from chafing on a rough bottom.

**By and Large**

Currently means in all cases or in any case. From the nautical: by meaning into the wind and large meaning with the wind: as in, "By and Large the ship handled very well."

**Cut and Run**

If a captain of a smaller ship encountered a larger enemy vessel, he might decide that discretion is the better part of valor, and so he would order the crew to cut the lashings on all the sails and run away before the wind. Other sources indicate "Cut and Run" meant to cut the anchor cable and sail off in a hurry.

**In the Offing**

Currently means something is about to happen, as in - "There is a reorganization in the offing." From the 16th century usage meaning a good distance from shore, barely visible from land, as in - "We sighted a ship in the offing."

**Skyscraper**

A small triangular sail set above the skysail in order to maximize effect in a light wind.

**The Bitter End**

The end of an anchor cable is fastened to the bitts at the ship's bow. If all of the anchor cable has been payed out you have come to the bitter end.

**Toe the Line**

When called to line up at attention, the ship's crew would form up with their toes touching a seam in the deck planking.

**Back and Fill**

A technique of tacking when the tide is with the ship but the wind is against it.

**Overhaul**

To prevent the buntline ropes from chaffing the sails, crew were sent aloft to haul them over the sails. This was called overhauling.

**Slush Fund**

A slushy slurry of fat was obtained by boiling or scraping the empty salted meat storage barrels. This stuff called "slush" was often sold ashore by the ship's cook for the benefit of himself or the crew. The money so derived became known as a slush fund.

**Bear Down**

To sail downwind rapidly towards another ship or landmark.

**Under the Weather**

If a crewman is standing watch on the weather side of the bow, he will be subject to the constant beating of the sea and the ocean spray. He will be under the weather.

**Overreach**

If a ship holds a tack course too long, it has overreached its turning point and the distance it must travel to reach it's next tack point is increased.

**Gone By the Board**

Anything seen to have gone overboard or spotted floating past the ship (by the board) was considered lost at sea.

**Above Board**

Anything on or above the open deck. If something is open and in plain view, it is above board.

**Overwhelm**

Old English for capsize or founder.

**Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea**

The devil seam was the curved seam in the deck planking closest to the side of the ship and next to the scupper gutters. If a sailor slipped on the deck, he could find himself between the devil and the deep blue sea.

**The Devil to Pay**

To pay the deck seams meant to seal them with tar. The devil seam was the most difficult to pay because it was curved and intersected with the straight deck planking. Some sources define the "devil" as the `below-the`-`waterline-seam` between the keel and the the adjoining planking. Paying the Devil was considered to be a most difficult and unpleasant task.

**Rummage Sale**

From the French "arrimage" meaning ship's cargo. Damaged cargo was sold at a rummage sale.

**A Square Meal**

In good weather, crews' mess was a warm meal served on square wooden platters.

**Son of a Gun**

When in port, and with the crew restricted to the ship for any extended period of time, wives and ladies of easy virtue often were allowed to live aboard along with the crew. Infrequently, but not uncommonly, children were born aboard, and a convenient place for this was between guns on the gun deck. If the child's father was unknown, they were entered in the ship's log as "son of a gun".

**Overbearing**

To sail downwind directly at another ship thus "stealing" or diverting the wind from his sails.

**Taking the wind out of his sails**

Sailing in a manner so as to steal or divert wind from another ship's sails.

**Let the Cat Out of the Bag**

In the Royal Navy the punishment prescribed for most serious crimes was flogging. This was administered by the Bosun's Mate using a whip called a cat o' nine tails. The "cat" was kept in a leather or baize bag. It was considered bad news indeed when the cat was let out of the bag. Other sources attribute the expression to the old english market scam of selling someone a pig in a poke(bag) when the pig turned out to be a cat instead.

**No Room to Swing a Cat**

The entire ship's company was required to witness flogging at close hand. The crew might crowd around so that the Bosun's Mate might not have enough room to swing his cat o' nine tails.

**Start Over with a Clean Slate**

A slate tablet was kept near the helm on which the watch keeper would record the speeds, distances, headings and tacks during the watch. If there were no problems during the watch, the slate would be wiped clean so that the new watch could start over with a clean slate.

**Taken Aback**

A dangerous situation where the wind is on the wrong side of the sails pressing them back against the mast and forcing the ship astern. Most often this was caused by an inattentive helmsman who had allowed the ship to head up into the wind.

**At Loggerheads**

An iron ball attached to a long handle was a loggerhead. When heated it was used to seal the pitch in deck seams. It was sometimes a handy weapon for quarrelling crewmen.

**`Fly-by`-Night**

A large sail used only for sailing downwind and requiring rather little attention.

**No Great Shakes**

When casks became empty they were "shaken" (taken apart) so the pieces, called shakes, could be stored in a small space. Shakes had very little value.

**Give (someone) a Wide Berth**

To anchor a ship far enough away from another ship so that they did not hit each other when they swung with the wind or tide.

**Cut of His Jib**

Warships many times had their foresails or jib sails cut thinly so that they could maintain point and not be blown off course. Upon sighting thin foresails on a distant ship a captain might not like the cut of his jib and would then have an opportunity to escape.

**Garbled**

Garbling was the prohibited practice of mixing rubbish with the cargo. A distorted, mixed up message was said to be garbled.

**Press Into Service**

The British navy filled their ships' crew quotas by kidnapping men off the streets and forcing them into service. This was called Impressment and was done by Press Gangs.

**Touch and Go**

This referred to a ship's keel touching the bottom and getting right off again.

**Scuttlebutt**

A butt was a barrel. Scuttle meant to chop a hole in something. The scuttlebutt was a water barrel with a hole cut into it so that sailors could reach in and dip out drinking water. The scuttlebutt was the place where the ship's gossip was exchanged.

**Edited December 7, 2005 by Mad\_Jack**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=152175)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_152175_menu)

[**Dorian Lasseter**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/137-dorian-lasseter/)

* Where's My Water
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/137-dorian-lasseter/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE1MjE3N30%3D)
* Member
* 3,266 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:The Sea!
* Interests:18th Century reenactment; Maritime, F&I...  
  Did ECW as well...  
  All BP firelocks and cannons!  
    
  Also enjoy Swordfighting and a good Donnybrook  
    
  Got a question for or about me? Ask!!!

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Lordy Jack, ye done spilled th' vernacular all over th' place!

Excellent job... indeed....

I find it very interestin' how many landlubbers talk usin' so many o' them words n' phrases an' have not a clue as to where they came from...

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=152177)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_152177_menu)

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [Fox](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE1MjUzN30%3D)
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.  
    
  Shooting pirates.

([IP: 81.103.217.61](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=81.103.217.61)) · · 

[Posted December 8, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=152537) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=152537)

Nice list Jack! I must confess I doubt the clean slate reference though, for two reasons: a: the usual traditional method of recording time and distance during a watch was with pegs in a traverse board. Slates might sometimes have been used, but probably not often enough to give rise to a saying. b: it's more likely to come from the days when slates and chalk were used in schools. You make a mistake in a question, you scrub it out and start again with a clean slate.

Also, (I can hear the groans) can I scotch the evil rumour that freezing the balls off a brass monkey has anything whatsoever to do with naval gunnery. The triangle used to keep cannon balls in were usually iron not brass, were never called monkeys, and would have to shrink a heck of a lot for the cannon balls to roll off. It's an urban myth. The phrase is probably a nonsense one like "raining cats and dogs". :unsure:

I can also add to the list. Some of the more prosaic and less obviously nautical phrases have nautical origins. The only one that springs to mind is **By and large**. A ship can sail by the wind or large, so "by and large" means "just about everything".

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=152537)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_152537_menu)

[**kass**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1603-kass/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_scourge_o_the_7_seas.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1603-kass/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE3NTU1NX0%3D)
* Member
* 1,526 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Easton, Pennsylvania
* Interests:Historical Clothing from the 14th through 18th centuries. Getting all the niggling details right. Dressing up and having fun with my similarly-obsessed friends. :)

([IP: 12.111.215.248](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=12.111.215.248)) · · 

[Posted February 28, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=175555) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=175555)

Okay you lads with the OEDs [Oxford English Dictionaries -ed]! Look me up some stuff, will ye?

This morning as I was brushing my teeth, I thought of how interesting it was that the word "slut" in the 18th century referred to a young girl, regardless of her sexual behaviour. And I started wondering how far back that word went.

I also found myself wondering about the word "wench". Is it really an Elizabethan word for a waitress? Or is it a Victorian thing like so much else.

Basically, I'm trying to start a topic about what words (particularly titles and appelations) that we hear at the Ren Faire are really correct or what we should be saying instead.

**Edited July 11, 2012 by Mission**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
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* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.  
    
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[Posted February 28, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=175610) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=175610)

Kass, you can subscribe to the OED online... <_<

The etymology of "wench" is the middle English "wenche" from the Old English "wenchel" meaning a child. Unlike our modern usage it was probably a not-unkind way of addressing a young woman, particularly perhaps a young serving woman (or girl). The natural promiscuity of barmaids perhaps led us to the verb "wenching" :huh:

The etymology of "slut" is similar, but probably was used more to mean someone scruffy and unpresentable that its modern definition of someone sexually promiscuous. Grose's 1785 dictionary, for example, defines a "slattern" as "A woman sluttishly negligent in her dress". Possibly an old whore, but not necessarily so.

Grose's dictionary gives some fantastic names for both young men and young women:

**Admiral of the Narrow Seas**: One who from drunkeness vomits into the lap of the person sitting opposite him *Sea phrase*

**Ankle**: A girl who is got with child is said to have sprained her ankle

**Arch Duke**: A comical or eccentric fellow

**Athanasian Wench *or Quicunque Vult***: A forward girl, ready to oblige every man that shall ask her

**Backgammon Player**: A sodomite

**Baggage**: ... a familiar epithet for a woman

**Bantling**: A young child

**Bat**: A low whore, so called from moving out like bats in the dusk of the evening

**Beard splitter**: A man given to too much wenching (*think about it - Ed*)

**Bitch**: ... the most offensive appelation that can be given to an English woman, even more than that of whore, as may be gathered from the regular Billinsgate or St. Giles's answer "I may be a whore but I can't be a bitch".

**Bitch Booby**: A country wench. *Military term*

**Biter**: a wench whose \*\*\*\* is ready to bite her a-se; a lascivious, rampant wench.

**Bob-tail**: a lewd woman, or one that plays with her tail.

**Bugger**: a blackguard, a rascal

**Cake**: a foolish fellow

**Cat**: A common prostitute

**Catamaran**: an old scraggy woman; from a kind of float made of spars and yards lashed together, fo saving shipwrecked persons

**Cull**: A man, honest or otherwise

**Dangler**: One who follows women in general, without any particular attachment.

**Death's Head upon a mop-stick**: A poor miserable emaciated fellow

**Doggess, Dog's wife or lady, Puppy's Mamma**: Jocular ways of calling a woman a bitch.

**Duck F-ck-r**: the man who has the care of the poultry onboard a ship of war

**Ewe**: A white ewe; a beautiful woman. An old ewe, drest lamb fashion; an old woman, drest like a young girl

**Fancy man**: a man kept by a lady for secret services

**Fox[e]**: A sharp, cunning fellow

**Frigate**: A well rigged frigate; a well dressed wench

**Gawkey**: A tall, thin, awkward young man or woman

**Gill**: Abbreviation of Gillian, figuratively used for a woman.

**Gundiguts**: A fat pursy fellow

**Harriden**: A hagged old woman; a miserable scraggy worn-out harlot.

**Hobberdehoy**: Half a man and half a boy; a lad between both

**Hussy**: An abbreviation of house-wife, but now always used as a term of reproach

**Jack Whore**: A large masculine overgrown wench

**Irish beauty**: A woman with two black eyes

**Laced Mutton**: A prostitute

**Ladybirds**: Light or lewd women

**Mackerel**: A bawd

**Miss**: a miss or kept mistress; a harlot

**Nick Ninny**: A simpleton

**Peculiar**: A mistress

**Rantipole**: A rude romping boy or girl; also a gadabout disipated woman

**Rib**: A wife; an allusion to our common mother, Eve, made out of Adam's rib

**Sandy Pate**: A red haired man or woman

**Scab**: A worthless man or woman

**Slamkin**: A female sloven, one whose clothes seem hung on with a pitchfork

**Tosspot**: A drunkard

**Willing Tit**: a free horse, or a coming girl

**Edited March 13, 2006 by Foxe**

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* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1603-kass/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE3NTYyMX0%3D)
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Yeah, I know I can subscribe to the OED online. But I also know this gives you joy. B)

Say, you do Elizabethan from time to time, yes? I want to run a few appelations past you and see if I have them right or not. I know them for 18thc, but not 16thc.

"Mistress"-- form of address for a married woman "Mrs. Fairfax". Also a form of address for a superior, particular one's employer.

Can it be used with the given name?

"Master" -- form of address for a man of higher rank than yourself or your employer.

Has this come to be used for boys yet? Or is that purely 19thc?

Would one call a Head Brewer "Master Brewer" or "Master Fairfax" or "Master Bob"? Or is he too low-ranking to be any of these (brewing not being as much a professional as a Kitchener's duty, like baking...).

What level of address would be used for a brewer's wife? In other words, what level is she? Is she akin to the wife of a merchant or more like the wife of a cook?

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Do Elizabethan quite a bit (used to be curator of the Golden Hind y'know!)

I don't think forms of address were too defined, but generally I think it's a matter of respectability. For example, a brewer might not be a professional man, like me (a sea-captain in this example), but I like beer and I don't have the skill to brew my own so I respect what he does. I'd probably call him Master Fairfax. If we were great friends then I'd call him Bob. I can't imagine calling him Master Bob.

(*note: it comes hard to me to respect anyone called Fairfax, but if I'm ever going to then let it be a brewer*)

Same for mistress, it's a politeness thing rather than a social order thing.

One of the things which is often overlooked is that servants and tradespeople were much more respected in the 16th-17th centuries than later. They were seen as people who were fulfilling one of the necessary stations in life. It was believed (possibly rightly) that for society to function you need every class from the labourer to the noble, therefore, if you were a noble (or a higher class or whatever) you didn't so much look down on those in the lower orders. You gave them orders because that was your job, they obeyed them because that was theirs. You didn't treat them badly (OK, some people did, but not generally) provided they fulfilled their part of the deal. Thus, although you *were* "superior" to them, you were all part of God's plan and respected one another as such.

Having said all that, servants (ie, people who were not independent of masters) would probably be called by their name without a title. So, if Bob's the brewer who works in my big house then I'll probably call him Bob (or Fairfax) and you Mrs (or mistress) Fairfax, but if he's the brewer in the local tavern (even if it is on my estate) I'll call him Master Fairfax (probably)...

Criminals, vagabonds, the unemployed, and people of poor morals were outside the system, you can throw as much shite at them as you like.

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Rock on! Thanks, Master Foxe (don't think that one got past me in your first post).

Could you recommend any books or websites that deal well with the subject?

Thanks so much!

Kass

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
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* Curmudgeon With A Cannon
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* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/407-hawkyns/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjE3NTg0M30%3D)
* Moderator
* 1,330 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:New Haven Colony
* Interests:cannon, swords, cannon, wenches, cannon, muskets, cannon, pistols, cannon, re-enacting, cannon, rum, cannon, living history......... Did I mention cannon?

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[Posted February 28, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=175843) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=175843)

Foxe said:

(*note: it comes hard to me to respect anyone called Fairfax, but if I'm ever going to then let it be a brewer*)

Bloody well said, Sir!!

Kass, when Mom was a teenager, in Yorkshire, her Father and Grandfather, both of whom were from Warwickshire, used to refer to her as a sightly wench. Even as late as the middle of last century, it seems that wench was still in common use and meant no more than an unmarried girl. I add the counties, because English, until the advent of televison and radio, was extremely regional in it's dialects. Still is, in parts of the backcountry.

I, being brought up in the Dales, spoke very nearly a different language when I came to this country. If you've ever seen any of the episodes of "All Creatures Great and Small", think of the old farmers. That was my dialect.

I find it interesting that at Faire, everyone is either a false Cockney, or from the West Country. Slipping back into my home dialect has been very useful and there is at least some documentation that it has not changed much in a couple of hundred years. It's not just accent, either. Vocabulary, syntax, everthing is changed. So if I'm going first person, I'll go back to the Dales.

The other thing that I've found very useful is just reading Shakespeare. that will give you a good sense of vocab and syntax.

Hawkyns

:wacko:

**Edited February 28, 2006 by Hawkyns**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
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Thanks Rod. You pretty much guessed my purpose -- I don't want to sound like Eliza Doolittle!

I guess I'll just have to break out my "Complete Works" eh? :wacko:

Say, have you ever heard those dialect tapes from Stuart Press (Skyes used to sell them)? If you have, are they any good?

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'Oh for a Muse of Foire'? I have a copy, somewhere. Luke used to swear by it, but I'm not so sure. Plimoth makes everyone sound like they're from the West Country, even those from Nottingham, and I know a lot of their research comes from there. I just think it's a bit too much of one dialect and does not show the variations.

Hawkyns

:ph34r:

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* Member
* 99 posts
* Location:http://www.freewebs.com/guildofstbarbara/

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[Posted March 1, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=176101) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=176101)

Kass i have a copy of the well tempered dialect i can burn it for you if you private message your snail mail address... it is a pretty good one and has tutorials on it as well.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
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[**Red Maria**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/15-red-maria/)

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* Member
* 1,057 posts

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I do recall from my Ren. Faire days that a kitchen slut was the lowest rank of servant in a household. If remeber correctly the term appears in A Comedy of Errors.

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* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=176161)
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* Member
* 1,063 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Orlando, FL

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[Posted July 13, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=206898) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=206898)

Ok so we all want to portray a proper image, what about speech? Is there a period dictionary available? I would love have a good reference in one place.

Second, we always read on how pyrates and sailors swearing and cursing. What was considered a curse? Were they specific words? Or more just phrases?

I got to thinking about one day and figured I’d post a question. Thanks.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=206898)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_206898_menu)

[**Capt. Sterling**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/)

* Sticky Fingers Sterling Needs a New Hat
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIwNjkwNH0%3D)
* Member
* 10,302 posts
* Gender:Pyrate Hunter
* Location:here
* Interests:Killing pirates, haven't met one yet worth keeping alive....

([IP: 71.51.21.129](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=71.51.21.129)) · · 

[Posted July 13, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=206904) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=206904)

Hallelujah!

I would like to know more about this topic as well as I am quiet convinced not every single pirate spoke like he just walked out of the pub in Cornwall... ;)I know there were cockney accents already established by the GAoP.

I have been studying Gaelic and the smoother versions of Scottish accent, not all those hard rolling 'r's.... that are so typically heard... for my character.

I would start with nautical terms of the time frame first, at least know what you are talking about onboard your ship. Also many of these terms did fall into common use amongst sailors... there are a number of books that claim sailors had their own lingo and a person could actually tell they were a sailor because of the words they used...

Then see if you can find a reliable 18th century dictionary and just start reading any original letters, or copies of, that you can for your time frame and the country of origin for your character...

Here's hoping more folks will jump on this topic...

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=206904)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_206904_menu)

[**blackjohn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/)

* Iron Age Hero Lost at Sea
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIwNjkwN30%3D)
* Member
* 3,745 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbia, Md
* Interests:Stuff... and junk.

([IP: 205.156.36.11](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=205.156.36.11)) · · 

[Posted July 13, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=206907) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=206907)

Somewhere around here I've placed a link to Capt Grose's Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue... or maybe somewhere around the pirate brethren forum... hmmm... no, actually on both. Here, during last year's Talk Like a Pirate Day, under... the Rabble Rousing section? And on the pirate brethren forum I think I stickied it somewhere. Ok, so it's the 1811 edition, but ALOT of his words go back into the 17thC, and he usually is pretty good about giving a little background (or at least the edition I own does).

**Edited July 13, 2006 by blackjohn**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=206907)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_206907_menu)

[**blackjohn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/)

* Iron Age Hero Lost at Sea
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIwNjkwOH0%3D)
* Member
* 3,745 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbia, Md
* Interests:Stuff... and junk.

([IP: 205.156.36.11](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=205.156.36.11)) · · 

[Posted July 13, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=206908) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=206908)

here, because it was easy to find...

<http://www.piratebrethren.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=57>

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=206908)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_206908_menu)

[**kass**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1603-kass/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_scourge_o_the_7_seas.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1603-kass/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIwNjkxNH0%3D)
* Member
* 1,526 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Easton, Pennsylvania
* Interests:Historical Clothing from the 14th through 18th centuries. Getting all the niggling details right. Dressing up and having fun with my similarly-obsessed friends. :)

([IP: 65.78.123.221](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=65.78.123.221)) · · 

[Posted July 13, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=206914) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=206914)

My research fairy godmother just sent me a stack of articles about 18th century speech (because Captain Sterling and I were talking about it and I got to thinking as I often do...). I just got it all in the mail yesterday and haven't had a chance to read more than the titles. But when I'm done, I'll be happy to report what I've learned! ;)

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=206914)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_206914_menu)

[**MorganTyre**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2806-morgantyre/)

* First Mate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_1st_mate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2806-morgantyre/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIxMzE5N30%3D)
* Member
* 291 posts
* Location:South Texas
* Interests:Sailing, rigging, snorkeling, spearfishing, diving

([IP: 24.175.239.215](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=24.175.239.215)) · · 

[Posted August 14, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=213197) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=213197)

Whenever a customer comes in to the shop, generally to inquire about masthead work though sometimes just blocks, one word is pronounced in either of two ways. The word is sheave or in plain english the round thing inside a pulley that the rope rolls over. The two pronunciations are either sheev (like it's currently spelled) or shiv. For some reason the pronunciation of shiv has ALWAYS driven me completely insane. That word alone would immediately convince me you were nothing but a lowly stinkpotter masquerading as a sailor even if you'd grown up aboard a schooner and your mastery of the two-stroke is limited to a weed-eater. I know this is wrong of me. It's prejudicial and unwarranted and I'm not proud of it. However, minor annoyances are minor annoyances and I can't help disliking that anymore than I can help disliking lima beans. Well, all of those poor souls who have quietly earned my contempt should now feel vindicated. From Ashley's book of knots:

3155. Blocks are of two kinds: *"made" blocks* , of several pieces, and *"morticed" blocks*, which are chiseled out of a single piece of wood. The early name for a grooved wheel in a block was *shiver* which, after 1627, was contracted to shiv, the name that is used at present.

**Edited August 14, 2006 by MorganTyre**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=213197)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/#elControls_213197_menu)

[**Rabbitz**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2984-rabbitz/)

* Deck Swabber
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_deckswabber.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2984-rabbitz/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIxMzI0MX0%3D)
* Member
* 21 posts
* Location:Port Jackson, Australia
* Interests:Deck Crew on 19th Century Iron Barque (James Craig)

([IP: 203.166.19.130](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=203.166.19.130)) · · 

[Posted August 14, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=213241) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=213241)

MorganTyre said:

The early name for a grooved wheel in a block was *shiver* which, after 1627, was contracted to shiv, the name that is used at present.

SO I am guessing that the phrase "Shiver Me Timbers" was drawn from the act of using a "Shiver" to tension the timbers while bending them.

This would be difficult & dangerous work, thus the exclamation of suprise...

No source for this I am just speculating.

Rabz

[**HarborMaster**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/970-harbormaster/)

* Dread Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_dread_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/970-harbormaster/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIxMzI0Nn0%3D)
* Member
* 1,446 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Centralia Wa and Cebu Philippines
* Interests:Scuba Diving ., Shooting ., Drinking ., Cannons ., Motorcycling . I hope I didn't , leave out anything important.

([IP: 67.160.25.108](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=67.160.25.108)) · · 

[Posted August 14, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=213246) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=213246)

Correct me if I am wrong but I believe "Shiver me Timbers" was derived from 12 pounders or better slamming in the ships hull or even better one of the masts during an engagement. The smell of black powder (nothing like it \*S\*) smoke.,probably fire death and destruction.,and in a creaky and near death voice a shiver me timbers shortly after the hull is breached and the ball settles into the main mast., a heavy blow from a 24 pounder.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=213246)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_213246_menu)

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [Fox](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIxMzQ5OX0%3D)
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.  
    
  Shooting pirates.

([IP: 86.136.77.177](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=86.136.77.177)) · · 

[Posted August 16, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=213499) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=213499)

I believe that "Shiver my timbers" is one of those phrases whose true origins will never be definitively known.

Out of interest, Nathaniel Butler has this to say on "Shivers"

Quote

...there are two sorts: the one of brass, the other of wood. The brazen ones are only in use in the heels of the topmasts. The wooden shivers are either of one whole piece of wood, and then are used in small pulleys only, or small blocks; or are made of quarters of wood, scarped or let one into another, and so used in the knights and winding tackle blocks; and into these shivers are put little square things, called coaks, which have holes in them; and these keep the shivers from splitting and galling of the pin of the block wherein they turn.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=213499)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_213499_menu)

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [Fox](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIxMzUzNn0%3D)
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.  
    
  Shooting pirates.

([IP: 86.136.77.177](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=86.136.77.177)) · · 

[Posted August 16, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=213536) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=213536)

D'oh! While I was looking up "Larboard" in Coles' 1724 dictionary I could also have looked up "Sheave"...

"**Sheevers**, *which run round in the pullies and block*"

So, by the GAoP "sheave" would have been an accepted pronounciation.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=213536)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_213536_menu)

[**MorganTyre**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2806-morgantyre/)

* First Mate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_1st_mate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2806-morgantyre/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjIxMzU2Nn0%3D)
* Member
* 291 posts
* Location:South Texas
* Interests:Sailing, rigging, snorkeling, spearfishing, diving

([IP: 24.175.239.215](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=24.175.239.215)) · · 

[Posted August 16, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=213566) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=213566)

Foxe said:

So, by the GAoP "sheave" would have been an accepted pronounciation.

Huzzah! Best news I've heard all day. Thanks.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=213566)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_213566_menu)

[**Capt Thighbiter**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2303-capt-thighbiter/)

* Plunderer
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_plunderer.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2303-capt-thighbiter/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NjA0M30%3D)
* Member
* 475 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Brentwood, NY

([IP: 12.159.134.163](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=12.159.134.163)) · · 

[Posted February 7, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=246043) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=246043)

sputcheon n

metal lining of the mouth of a scabbard

The blade rang against the sputcheon as he drew it, eliminating the element of surprise.

and

Bastinate v

to beat upon a person, usualy with a stick, on the soles of the feet. A favorite Spanish and Muslim punishment

Ouch!!!

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=246043)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_246043_menu)

[**Lady Alyx**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1805-lady-alyx/)

* Dread Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_dread_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1805-lady-alyx/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NjA0Nn0%3D)
* Member
* 1,221 posts

([IP: 128.152.20.33](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=128.152.20.33)) · · 

[Posted February 7, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=246046) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=246046)

I always liked the phrase...."shut yer gob"...where did gob come from?

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=246046)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_246046_menu)

[**Red Cat Jenny**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3475-red-cat-jenny/)

* Truly one of a Kind
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3475-red-cat-jenny/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NjQ1Nn0%3D)
* Member
* 7,468 posts
* Gender:Female
* Location:New York but pining for the open sea
* Interests:Pirates, history, anthing nautical, salt water fish tanks, the Caribbean and South Pacific, a good barbecue and a cold Sam Adams, travel, airplanes, rockabilly, Grand Mariner on the rocks, fabulous sunsets accompanied by a warm breeze and good friends.  
  Diverse enough?  
  I's love to learn to sail and also surf. I grew up around the waters of LI. Cept for 2 yrs land lubbin in AZ. The pirate thing? When I was 6, I stole my brother's halloween tricorn pirate hat and proceeded to wear it for three months till it ripped and the string fell off. Needless to say the rest is history!

([IP: 24.47.52.126](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=24.47.52.126)) · · 

[Posted February 9, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=246456) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=246456)

Binnacle..

Where did that one come from?

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=246456)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_246456_menu)

[**Coastie04**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/27-coastie04/)

* Dread Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_dread_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/27-coastie04/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NjQ3M30%3D)
* Member
* 1,008 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Juneau, AK
* Interests:Nautical history, sailing (especially tall ships and my own 'Sanctioned Mistress'), shooting (of all eras and calibers), and homebrewing.

([IP: 152.121.19.61](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=152.121.19.61)) · · 

[Posted February 9, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=246473) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=246473)

From wikipedia.org:

Binnacle:

Quote

Before 18th century bittacle, through Span. bitacula, from Lat. habitaculum, a little dwelling

Gob:

Quote

-Gob is British English slang for mouth. Probably from Scottish or Irish Gaelic, mouth, beak, puckered mouth.

-Gob in Manx Gaelic means mouth, beak, muzzle, hook, bow (of ship), point, nosepiece, nose, spout, lip of jug, apex, nib, jet, pee of anchor, jut, headland, prominence, promontory, spit and is the name of river mouths or estuary points. See ManxNoteBook and usage/location Map

-Gob and gobbing are also British English slangs for spit and spitting - i.e. emissions from the gob.

-Gob is slang for sailor (usually US navy).

I thought the slang for sailor was kind of fitting for this topic. Granted, these are just from wikipedia, but it's at least one source for an explanation (though I wouldn't completely trust it without a second opinion).

Coastie ;)

**Edited February 9, 2007 by Coastie04**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=246473)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_246473_menu)

[**Salty**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3581-salty/)

* Dread Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_dread_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3581-salty/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NjUwMn0%3D)
* Member
* 1,012 posts
* Location:back in the mountains of westren pa...good to be back home
* Interests:maker o pots, tankards, and rum jugs. the natural world as it be and history that was not written by the winners.

([IP: 24.52.234.187](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=24.52.234.187)) · · 

[Posted February 9, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=246502) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=246502)

^ true :ph34r:

why are the belying pins.....well called belaying pins? on words always wondered about topic

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=246502)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_246502_menu)

[**Dorian Lasseter**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/137-dorian-lasseter/)

* Where's My Water
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/137-dorian-lasseter/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NjUzN30%3D)
* Member
* 3,266 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:The Sea!
* Interests:18th Century reenactment; Maritime, F&I...  
  Did ECW as well...  
  All BP firelocks and cannons!  
    
  Also enjoy Swordfighting and a good Donnybrook  
    
  Got a question for or about me? Ask!!!

([IP: 147.72.68.65](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=147.72.68.65)) · · 

[Posted February 9, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=246537) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=246537)

Because they are pins that belay, or hold the lines....

Thus the phrase "Belay that order!"

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=246537)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_246537_menu)

[**Lady Alyx**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1805-lady-alyx/)

* Dread Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_dread_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1805-lady-alyx/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NjU4N30%3D)
* Member
* 1,221 posts

([IP: 128.152.20.33](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=128.152.20.33)) · · 

[Posted February 9, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=246587) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=246587)

In POTC2 one of the men on the ship that gets crushed by the Kraken..notates the sudden jar of the ship and exclaims:

Mother Carey's Chickens....where does that come from and mean?

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=246587)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_246587_menu)

[**LongTom**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2786-longtom/)

* Pyrate Captain
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_captain.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2786-longtom/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NzQ4NX0%3D)
* Member
* 629 posts
* Location:San Francisco or thereabouts
* Interests:"If I was a blackbird, could whistle and sing..." (Hm. I guess I must be a blackbird.)<br>Makin' hats, really big ones.<br>WizKids Pirates series games.

([IP: 192.150.10.200](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=192.150.10.200)) · · 

[Posted February 13, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=247485) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=247485)

Dorian Lasseter said:

Because they are pins that belay, or hold the lines....

Thus the phrase "Belay that order!"

I'm extrapolating here, but I will guess that to belay a rope is to lay it down upon itself; the rope is laid (or in the older usage, be-layed) upon the pin in such a way that it is held fast by its own tension on the pin.

In other words, the "be" in belay is similar to the "be" in "bewitched" or "befuddled."

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=247485)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_247485_menu)

[**Red Cat Jenny**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3475-red-cat-jenny/)

* Truly one of a Kind
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3475-red-cat-jenny/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NzU3N30%3D)
* Member
* 7,468 posts
* Gender:Female
* Location:New York but pining for the open sea
* Interests:Pirates, history, anthing nautical, salt water fish tanks, the Caribbean and South Pacific, a good barbecue and a cold Sam Adams, travel, airplanes, rockabilly, Grand Mariner on the rocks, fabulous sunsets accompanied by a warm breeze and good friends.  
  Diverse enough?  
  I's love to learn to sail and also surf. I grew up around the waters of LI. Cept for 2 yrs land lubbin in AZ. The pirate thing? When I was 6, I stole my brother's halloween tricorn pirate hat and proceeded to wear it for three months till it ripped and the string fell off. Needless to say the rest is history!

([IP: 24.47.52.126](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=24.47.52.126)) · · 

[Posted February 13, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=247577) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=247577)

Coastie04 said:

Binnacle:

Quote

Before 18th century bittacle,  a little dwelling

Aw..I'd live in a little binnacle :ph34r:sounds cozy.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=247577)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_247577_menu)

[**Lady Alyx**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1805-lady-alyx/)

* Dread Pyrate
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_dread_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1805-lady-alyx/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjI0NzYwNH0%3D)
* Member
* 1,221 posts

([IP: 128.152.20.33](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=128.152.20.33)) · · 

[Posted February 13, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=247604) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=247604)

Hey I answered my own question...check this out..this is so interesting in regards to Mother Carey's Chickens

[Mother Carey's Chicken's one explaination](http://southseas.nla.gov.au/biogs/P000125b.htm)

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=247604)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_247604_menu)

[**Boucanier**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5321-boucanier/)

* Bilge Rat
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_bilgerat.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5321-boucanier/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjMxNjMwMX0%3D)
* Member
* 6 posts
* Location:Massachusetts
* Interests:Historian Buccaneer Era, and Golden Age of Piracy. Material Culture. Hardcore/Progressive Living History.

([IP: 66.189.43.128](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=66.189.43.128)) · · 

[Posted June 6, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=316301) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=316301)

Does anyone know the origins of the phrase "a short life and a merry one." Any sources would be greatly appreciated. I seem to remember this phrase being attributed to Bartholomew Roberts but cannot seem to find any concrete evidence to supports this. Thought I read it in Johnson's but after searching through its pages for the phrase cannot find anything.

Thank you,

Bryan Stefancyk

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=316301)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_316301_menu)

[**PirateQueen**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/13-piratequeen/)

* Ship's Master
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_shipsmaster.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/13-piratequeen/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjMyMDUzOX0%3D)
* Member
* 143 posts
* Gender:Female
* Location:Burbank, California, USA

([IP: 128.170.86.41](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=128.170.86.41)) · · 

[Posted August 1, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=320539) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=320539)

The quote in its entirety is:

"In an honest Service, says he, there is thin Commons, low Wages and hard Labour; in this, Plenty and Satiety, Pleasure and Ease, Liberty and Power; and who would not ballance Creditor on this Side, when all the Hazard that is run for it, at worst, is only a sower Look or two at Choaking. No, a merry Life and a short one, shall be my Motto."

It's from the 1734 edition of :

A General and True History of the Lives and Actions of the most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street-Robbers, &c To which is added, A Genuine Account of the Voyages and Plunders of the most Noted Pirates

by Capt. Charles Johnson

The quote, attributed to Bart Roberts, can be found on p. 196. Here's an image of that page:

[P. 196](http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/cdm4/crime_viewer.php?DMTHUMB=1&CISOPTR=15693&ptr=15931&searchworks=0_0_0_0_0)

You'll find the quote in the second column, about 2/3 down the page.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=320539)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_320539_menu)

[**TheBlackFox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2602-theblackfox/)

* Plunderer
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_plunderer.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2602-theblackfox/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjMyMDU2OH0%3D)
* Member
* 346 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Bear, DE
* Interests:Wenches, Rum, Gunpowder, Plunder (but not always in that order)

([IP: 66.80.250.69](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=66.80.250.69)) · · 

[Posted August 1, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=320568) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=320568)

PirateQueen said:

by Capt. Charles Johnson

hmmmm. . . . I don't put a lot of stock in his writings. There's so much incorrect in that book that a lot of piratical historians think that the writer might have been a pen name of DeFoe. . . . the information presented, especially about Bart Roberts and Blackbeard are very much in question. If you pick up the book "The Last Days of Blackbeard The Pirate" by Kevin Duffus, he's found a LOT of historical discrepancies with the accounts of "Capt. Johnson."

There's another recent pirate book that calls Johnson's statements into question, but I can't put my finger on the book as of yet (I'm reading 3 a month now).

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=320568)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_320568_menu)

[**Raphael Misson**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/9117-raphael-misson/)

* Plunderer
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_plunderer.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/9117-raphael-misson/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjMyMDYxOH0%3D)
* Member
* 449 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Period Surgery. Designing Stuff. Creating Stuff. Positions of power without title.

([IP: 64.241.37.140](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=64.241.37.140)) · · 

[Posted August 2, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=320618) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=320618)

What we can say that the phrase goes back to 1734 and would probably have been in use at that time and before. It almost certainly goes back farther than that, but print is the only definable way that I can think of that we have to trace words and phrases to certain periods. One of the interesting things I find about *The Diary of Henry Teonge* is that editor G.E. Manwaring has noted when Teonge's diary is the first print usage of various terms and words.

No book is absolutely factual. I would argue 'absolute factuality' nearly doesn't even exist in the human realm; it's more of an agreement to accept something as being a fact. (Actually, I have done so in Beyond several times.) The author of the *General History* appears to have gotten much of his info second hand which leaves the door open for all sorts of 'factual' errors. Every bit of print, including first hand accounts are open to errors in memory and re-telling. We interpret everything we take in. The most current research suggests that our memories are constructed of high points of events. When we 'recall' them, we actually go back and fill in the bits that were not high points, often, provably, incorrectly. However, the attribution is not disproved just because there are some disagreements in data between one source and another. I would argue it could never be disproved (unless someone invents a time machine). Still, I suspect Roberts would probably like that it was attributed to him even if he didn't say it. :lol:Like Picasso, he'd probably claim a work that increased his notoriety whether it was his or not.

As for the authorship of the *General History*, I used to think that Defoe was the author until I looked into it more deeply. The *General History* was not ascribed by historians to Defoe until the 1930s. I highly recommend the book *The Canon-isation of Daniel Defoe* by P.N Furbanks and W.R. Owens. There's a lot of evidence against Defoe as author while much of the evidence for it is rather weak. However, I won't re-recite it here - you can find what I learned on my webpage if you're curious:

[http://www.markck.com/images/Piracy/Author...l%20History.htm](http://www.markck.com/images/Piracy/Authorship%20of%20General%20History.htm)

(Even if you do read that, I'd get a copy of the book and read it for myself if I were you. There's nothing like direct experience. I'm sure your local library can procure it for you.)

**Edited August 2, 2008 by Raphael Misson**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=320618)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_320618_menu)

[**Boucanier**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5321-boucanier/)

* Bilge Rat
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_bilgerat.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5321-boucanier/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjMyMTAxNn0%3D)
* Member
* 6 posts
* Location:Massachusetts
* Interests:Historian Buccaneer Era, and Golden Age of Piracy. Material Culture. Hardcore/Progressive Living History.

([IP: 66.189.43.128](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=66.189.43.128)) · · 

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Many thanks to all those that have replied to the post! I greatly appreciate it.

Bryan Stefancyk

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=321016)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_321016_menu)

[**TheBlackFox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2602-theblackfox/)

* Plunderer
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_plunderer.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2602-theblackfox/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjMyMTAyN30%3D)
* Member
* 346 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Bear, DE
* Interests:Wenches, Rum, Gunpowder, Plunder (but not always in that order)

([IP: 68.82.65.15](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=68.82.65.15)) · · 

[Posted August 6, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=321027) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=321027)

Raphael Misson said:

[http://www.markck.com/images/Piracy/Author...l%20History.htm](http://www.markck.com/images/Piracy/Authorship%20of%20General%20History.htm)

(Even if you do read that, I'd get a copy of the book and read it for myself if I were you. There's nothing like direct experience. I'm sure your local library can procure it for you.)

Well spoke and very interesting. . . THANX!

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
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* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_321027_menu)

[**Raphael Misson**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/9117-raphael-misson/)

* Plunderer
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_plunderer.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/9117-raphael-misson/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjMyMTM0Mn0%3D)
* Member
* 449 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Period Surgery. Designing Stuff. Creating Stuff. Positions of power without title.

([IP: 64.241.37.140](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=64.241.37.140)) · · 

[Posted August 10, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=321342) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=321342)

AHA! I thought I had seen this elsewhere. I was searching through my notes for something else and I happened to come across a reference to this concept (if not the precise wording, nearly right and definitely the same idea) in *Edward Barlow's Journal*. Note that this entry pre-dates Bart Robert's birth, so we can write him out of the plot as being the origin of the phrase:

“[1668] …and poor seamen having but little money, and it being hungry times going always to short allowance of victuals, and the boats coming from the shore with wine and fruits on board of us to sell, and it being indifferent cheap, which made many of our poor men’s mouths to water to see good liquor before them, and I had not money to buy a drink of it, but they falling to their old trade for as long as the purser had any clothes or things that would either sell or change for wine, they would not be without as long as the purser would let them have any, running out so most part of their wages crying, **‘A merry life and a short’**; ‘Longest liver take all’; and 'Never let us want when we have it and when we have it not too’.” (Barlow, p. 159-60)

Emphasis mine, of course. Again, it sounds from this account that the phrase was common among seamen.

An aside that sort of explains the reasoning of the men for saying this in regard to the sale of clothing by the purser. There was a custom during period of the purser of a ship selling clothes to the seamen (who frequently had no money) against their future pay. Pay was received when the voyage was completed. So the men could raise money by buying clothes at high prices, which they would then turn around and sell or trade at lower prices to local vendors. According to Barlow, this money was usually used to buy drink. (This was not the intent of selling the clothes, of course, and viewing this as a plot to cheat the men -as Barlow does- may not be fair at all.)

I believe I have detailed this elsewhere, but Barlow laid it out like this - the clothes cost 7 or 8 shillings in England, the purser sold them for 9 or 10 s. and the sailors sold them to the vendors for 3 or 4 s. Quite a raw deal, but if you read through several accounts, you'll find the sailors generally ran through whatever moneys they had very quickly on a voyage. The concept of the purser selling clothes at high prices is also detailed in *Teonge's Diary*, although he doesn't explain that the seamen turned around and sold the clothes to buy drink. Woodes Rogers also mentions that the men traded their warm clothes in a port after leaving England. He had six tailors busily sewing up makeshift clothing for the crew in preparation for reaching the nasty weather at Cape Horn. (He and his officers had tried to stop the men for trading their clothes so short-sightedly, but they would have none of it; their rationalization certainly followed that of "a short life and a merry one.")

**Edited August 10, 2008 by Raphael Misson**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=321342)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_321342_menu)

[**Boucanier**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5321-boucanier/)

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* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5321-boucanier/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjMyMTQzMn0%3D)
* Member
* 6 posts
* Location:Massachusetts
* Interests:Historian Buccaneer Era, and Golden Age of Piracy. Material Culture. Hardcore/Progressive Living History.

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[Posted August 11, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=321432) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=321432)

Thanks Mission thats great stuff!

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=321432)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_321432_menu)

[**Daniel**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/352-daniel/)

* Pyrate Captain
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_captain.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/352-daniel/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjM4NzYxNX0%3D)
* Member
* 652 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:McLean, VA
* Interests:History, pirates, fiction, writing, writing historical fiction about pirates, jokes, games, law.

([IP: 204.13.181.13](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=204.13.181.13)) · · 

[Posted July 19, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=387615) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=387615)

"Fie" is one of my favorite curse words. You find it all over Shakespeare. I know at least one case in GAoP where it was used: Congreve wrote in 1695, "O fie, miss, you must not kiss and tell."

On the other hand, I don't remember seeing the word "fie" anywhere in the General History of the Pirates, Moll Flanders, or anything else written in GAoP. Maybe Congreve was deliberately using an archaic term, instead of an everyday one? Does anyone know any other case when "fie" was used in GAoP?

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=387615)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_387615_menu)

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjM4NzYyNH0%3D)
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

([IP: 24.231.221.86](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=24.231.221.86)) · · 

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I don't recall seeing it in the journals I've read, but then I wasn't really looking for it. Although it's not really the sort of word you would use in a journal - it's more something you would hear in speech (and thus in dialogue) or in poetry.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=387624)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=2#elControls_387624_menu)

[**Dutchman**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/6150-dutchman/)

* Has anyone seen my cousin?
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_scourge_o_the_7_seas.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/6150-dutchman/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjM4NzY2OH0%3D)
* Admin
* 1,773 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:tidewater virginia

([IP: 96.233.208.249](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=96.233.208.249)) · · 

[Posted July 20, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=387668) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=387668)

so how about fe fie fo fum? lets ask wikipedia..........

Earlier variants of the fairy tale Jack the Giant-Killer found in chapbooks include various renditions of the poem, recited by the giant Thunderdell:

Fee, fau, fum,

I smell the blood of an English man,

Be alive, or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread.[1]

Fe, Fi, Fo, Fum.

I smell the blood of an Englishman,

Be he living, or be he dead,

I’ll grind his bones to mix my bread.[2]

The latter two verses of the left version are the most famous in popular culture.

In William Shakespeare's play King Lear, the character of Edgar exclaims:

Fie, foh, and fum,

I smell the blood of a British man.

The phrase clearly makes use of the archaic word "fie", used to express disapproval.[3] This word is used repeatedly in Shakespeare's works, King Lear himself shouting, "Fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!" and the character of Mark Antony (in Antony and Cleopatra) simply exclaiming "O fie, fie, fie!" The word "fum" has sometimes been interpreted as "fume".[1] Formations such as "fo" and "foh" are perhaps related to the expression "pooh!", which is used by one the giants in Jack the Giant-Killer;[2] such conjectures largely indicate that the phrase is of imitative origin, rooted in the sounds of flustering and anger.

[1]

[edit] References

^ a b c Tatar, Maria (2002). "Jack and the Beanstalk". The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.. pp. pp. 131 – 144. ISBN 0-393-05163-3.

^ a b History of Jack the Giant Killer. Glasgow: Printed for the booksellers. <http://www.library.pitt.edu/libraries/is/enroom/chapbooks/historyjack.htm.>

^ "fie". The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. The Houghton Mifflin Co.. 2000. <http://www.bartleby.com/61/66/F0106600.html.> Retrieved November 13, 2008.

Retrieved from "[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fee-fi-fo-fum"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fee-fi-fo-fum)

Categories: English poems

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[**capn'rob**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10470-capnrob/)

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* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10470-capnrob/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjM4NzY3NX0%3D)
* Member
* 535 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Morehead City, NC
* Interests:Cruising, power or sail. Music and Maritime History. Pilaging, Plundering and General Mayhem!

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[Posted July 20, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=387675) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=387675)

"Feh"! A term of discust or contempt in Yiddish. The Language is a Mideval German, Hebrew, Aramaic with Slavic, Old French and Old Italian mixed in. I think that, as with most Yiddish words, it sounds like what it means.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=3)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=387675)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=3#elControls_387675_menu)

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_pyrate_legend.gif
* [Fox](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjM4NzY4M30%3D)
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.  
    
  Shooting pirates.

([IP: 217.44.208.153](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=217.44.208.153)) · · 

[Posted July 21, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=387683) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=387683)

The OED cites:

**1677** GALE *Crt. Gentiles* IV. 113 Phy! how depraved is mans nature altogether! **1749** FIELDING *Tom Jones* VIII. ix, Fy upon it, Mr. Partridge..are you afraid of facing a little cold?

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=3)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=387683)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=3#elControls_387683_menu)

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

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* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

([IP: 24.247.94.112](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=24.247.94.112)) · · 

[Posted July 11, 2012](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=410218) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=410218)

A lot of pop-pirates use the slang term "deadlights" to refer to the eyes and I was wondering how far back this went. I actually found another [topic about frog lanterns](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11871-ships-lanterns-rush-candles-frog-lanterns-c/page__hl__deadlight#entry194042) that had this to say...

On 5/18/2006 at 2:56 PM, Dorian Lasseter said:

The Deck prism is also known as a 'deadlight'....

On 5/18/2006 at 3:36 PM, Dorian Lasseter said:

I found more out about deadlights...

They are, essentially, portholes or portlights that cannot or are not made to open...

Today, a deadlight is an interior porthole window...

So, I guess the deck prism would be a horizontal deadlight...

Google is a grande thing...

On 5/19/2006 at 8:08 PM, blackjohn said:

My edition of Grose has "Day Lights" as being slang for eyes. [Note: 'Grose' refers to Francis Grose's book [Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue](http://books.google.com/books/about/1811_Dictionary_of_the_Vulgar_Tongue.html?id=uyr6taMSJtwC) (1811) which is about 100 years OOP.]

I have checked two very good books on the fitting of ships from the late-16th to early-19thC and have found nothing on deck prisms. I've found alot on wiindows, companionways, deck gratings, etc., but nothing on the little jewels.

So blackjohn (who can be trusted more often than not) seems to have gotten to the bottom of the origin of the term as being a part of the ship, although his source cites a very wide time range, making me wonder if even *that* is a period term. Regardless, this tells us nothing about deadlights being used to refer to eyes.

A surf 'round the net to figure out when and how this came to refer to eyes produced a lot of useless crap - there are several unsourced "Pirate Dictionaries" out there that have copied and repeated variations on the explanation "Yer eyes, lad!" Of course, these same sources also define 'Arrrr!' so we can set most of them aside as chaff. Interestingly (but still no more useful) is that Hargrave Jennings wrote a book in 1873 called *Live Lights and Dead Lights* but that is a book that discusses religion.

This all seems to go back to the supreme source of pop-piracy: Treasure Island, which was first serialized in 1881-2. (*After* Jennings book, interestingly enough.) In his book, Stevenson has Long John Silver spouting the improbable sentence "Here you comes and tells me of it plain; and here I let him give us all the slip before my blessed deadlights!"

So unless someone has read something referring to 'deadlights' (or possibly 'dead lights' or 'dead-lights') as being eyes in material previous to that, this appears to be yet another thing that Stevenson gave us in his imaginative book written 150 after period.

**Edited July 11, 2012 by Mission**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=3)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=editComment&comment=410218)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&page=3#elControls_410218_menu)

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* Goat Specialist
* http://pyracy.com/uploads/pip_immortal_pyrate.gif
* [](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/&wr=eyJhcHAiOiJmb3J1bXMiLCJtb2R1bGUiOiJmb3J1bXMtY29tbWVudCIsImlkXzEiOjk4ODUsImlkXzIiOjQxMDIyMH0%3D)
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

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[Posted July 11, 2012](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=findComment&comment=410220) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9885-pirate-words-and-phrases-meanings-origins-etc/&do=reportComment&comment=410220)

OK, playing around with the search function Google Books. Note that Google books certainly doesn't have every book ever written in it. It also has the limitation that it can only be found if the word is spelled properly and the interpretation program can figure the words in the books it is searching out. (Those f's for s's confuse the heck out of the search program, for example. It. words do end up being spelled as 'Congrefs' by the interpretation program for example. However, it's the best source I can think of to find words in really old books as of this moment.

Searching for the terms "deadlights" and "dead lights" and limiting the time period of the search to books printed during 1/1/1500 - 1/1/1750, I get:

1. [*A faithful narrative of the capture of the ship Derby: belonging to the East-India Company, Agraham Anselm Commander) by Angria the Pirate, on the Coast of Mallabar, December 26, 1735*](http://books.google.com/books?id=Re9bAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA73&lpg=PA73&dq=%22deadlights%22&source=bl&ots=36yQ8FSqYC&sig=MIVHPeEeRWtBSdP6_ln_VmMFmmI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=1ab9T7GiAuL00gGZt8iNBw&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22deadlights%22&f=false)*.*

*"*Deadlights were put up in the *Victorys* Great Cabin, that the *Vizapunt* and the rest should not make their Escape in the Night, all the Vessels Boats rowing, under Arms all Night, under the Stern, and round about the Gallivat [A small armed vessel, with sails and oars used on the Malabar coast.] that came off for the *Vizapunt.*" (Page 73)

2. The meaning above appears to me to agree with something found in the 1736 [Dictionary Britainnicum](http://books.google.com/books?id=O50-AAAAcAAJ&pg=PT245&lpg=PT245&dq=%22dead+lights%22&source=bl&ots=9ETZpSGbzs&sig=fe9-Uu1cMUBWvYrC8AqHj6SEaZc&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jqn9T6SiD6mk6wHPobWyCw&ved=0CE8Q6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=%22dead%20lights%22&f=false) put together by Nathan Bailey.

"Dead Lights [ in a Ship] the Shutters for the Cabbin Windows, generally put up, or in most Ships rather let down in a Storm."

3. The earliest use of the word (via a Google books search, anyhow) appears by separating the words (dead lights) which is from the 1726 book [*A voyage round the world by way of the great South Sea*](http://books.google.com/books?id=SGDQAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=%22dead+lights%22&source=bl&ots=vYU0LYrbOo&sig=kotO5RkEHFWT3YOe1IgGe9Nemgg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jqn9T6SiD6mk6wHPobWyCw&ved=0CD0Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=%22dead%20lights%22&f=false), George Shelvocke:

"About midnight a sea struck us upon the quarter, and drove in one of our quarter and one of our stern dead lights, where we ship'd great quantities of water before we were able to stop them again: and were were for considerable time under continual apprehension of foundering again." (page 3)

So I don't even think we can state with certainty that the word in reference to shutters was in use during the golden age (which I have defined as being about 1690 - 1725 per Foxe.) And this meaning has nothing *whatsoever* to do with eyes, much less their closest cousin in meaning, lanterns.

So I'd say deadlights in reference to eyes (or even lanterns) is a non-period word based on what info I've found. Used properly for the GAoP it refers to shutter on a window in a ship.

**Edited July 11, 2012 by Mission**