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Northern Irish Rhyming Slang— A Lexicographical Lacuna

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Abstract

For a long time now students of rhyming slang have been well served by a number of dictionaries. British lexicographers have nonetheless focussed mostly on the English English variety of this slang and have given scant or no attention to other less productive regional varieties in the British Isles. While it has long been known that this form of slang is used in Northern Ireland, lexicographers have not hitherto noticed the vernacular specimens it has yielded there. This article treads new ground by scrutinizing the evidence available for Northern Irish rhyming slang and analysing its distinctive features. The last part of the article unearths a rich subset of the slang lexicon that has largely remained hidden to compilers of dictionaries.

“Martin”, I tried to explain, “nobody knew that rhyming slang was native to Belfast until McDowell started speaking it. He’s the only one who does speak it.”

“No, I think we’re losing the popular touch”, said Martin.

(*Fortnight* magazine, Belfast, November 2006, p. 32)

Introduction

Impenetrable as it may seem to the untrained observer, rhyming slang (henceforth RS) is a straightforward kind of word-making. Nothing could be as simple as coining a word or phrase that conveys the meaning of another word it rhymes with.¹ Some familiar

¹ I wish to thank David L. Gold for helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this article.

examples are *whistle and flute* ‘a suit’, *butcher’s hook* ‘a look’, *septic tank* ‘a Yank’ and *Winona Ryder* ‘cider’. The changes these words can undergo range from shortenings (*whistle*, *butchers*, *septic*, *Winona*) to more unpredictable formations of various types, including elongated variants (*Frank Butchers* ‘a look’, an embellished, elongated version of *butchers*, itself a shortening of *butcher’s hook*) and culturally-bound extensions (*Listerine* ‘a person with anti-American views’, based on the fact that *Listerine*TM is an *antiseptic* mouthwash). The simplicity of this process, at least in its most basic form, partly accounts for its continued use and proliferation, especially in Britain and Australia, from its origins in the first half of the 19th century down to the present. And this proliferation, of course, has been reflected in slang dictionaries, perhaps, some may even think, somewhat too keenly at times.

Julie Coleman, one of Britain’s leading lexicologists, has recently made the point that RS is over-represented in British slang dictionaries (Coleman 2010a, 191; see also Coleman 2010b, 116). To an extent, it is easy to agree with her. Many words that *apparently* never made it beyond the pages of amateur wordlists, pamphlets and humorous dictionaries (some of them perhaps coined by their own authors) have been copied by other reference works. On occasion at least, those words have in turn been carried over into serious dictionaries. Examples are, if not two a penny, not at all rare.

But there is still a far less common, yet more subliminal factor contributing to what may be regarded as a distorted lexicographical picture of the RS lexicon: slang lexicographers may believe that the inclusion of a RS lexeme in a serious dictionary is ipso facto evidence that the lexeme is genuine, and thus may end up including it in their own works. Witness the expression *dog’s meat*, the ersatz etymon given by *OED2*—and repeated by many authors, including Morris (2000, 113) and Ayto (2002, 36)—for the Americanism *dogs* ‘feet’.² Unsubstantiated though it is, the RS *dog’s meat* is given headword status in Puxley (2003) and Tibballs (2008).

It is my conviction, nevertheless, that dictionaries distort the picture of RS in another major and perhaps more significant way. The over-representation Coleman criticizes refers, obviously, to the English English (mostly working-class London) variety. But am I alone in no-

² The recently revised entry in the online *OED3* (2000–, s.v. *dog* n.¹, sense 16) reads in part: “It has been suggested that this is short for *dog’s meat*, used as rhyming slang for *feet*, but there is very little evidence for such a use”. “Very little evidence” seems to be a weasel phrase.

ting that other less-known, yet equally fascinating social and regional varieties of this slang are downplayed, under-represented, or simply not represented at all, in British slang dictionaries?³ Where is the RS used by, say, British folk musicians or by British sound engineers, to mention but two narrowly defined social groups? The former are known to refer to a chord as (1) a *florrie* (the shortened version of *Florrie Forde*, after the Australian music-hall artiste), while the latter use the word (2) *Desperates* (a shortening of *Desperate Dans*, the plural form of the name of a British comic-strip hero) as a synonym for *cans* or *headphones*.

(1) He [*sc.* Nick Strutt] was very clued up musically, and had a kind of muso rhyming slang that he used—so he'd always talk about “florries” rather than “chords”. (*The Mudcat Café*, <www.mudcat.org>, 30 September 2009)

(2) Engineering in the studio, I've been asked, “Can you give me a bit more in the Desperates?” (*The Steel Guitar Forum*, <bb.steelguitarforum.com>, 11 September 2007)

Neither of those lexemes, as it happens, is recorded in any of the dozens of dictionaries at hand. Or to take another, perhaps more striking example: any dictionary will tell you that the RS for *balls* (in the sense of ‘testicles’) is *marble halls* or *Niagara Falls*. But in what dictionary can one find (3) the Irish *Charles de Gaulles* or (4) the Scottish *Denis Laws*?

(3) Lauren has grabbed me by the knackers, so fast that I didn't even see her hand move. [...] When I've signed it, roysh, with, like, a trembling hand, she finally gives me back my Charles de Gaulles. (O'Carroll-Kelly 2009, 79)

(4) I'm going to boot his Denis Laws. (*Daily Record*, Glasgow, 30 May 2007, p. 11)

Just thumbing through any of the three serious dictionaries of RS, namely Franklyn (1960, 1961), Green (2000) and Ayto (2002), is enough to discover that geographical variation is a grossly neglected facet of RS lexicography. And this is understandable for two reasons: the lion's share of the RS one can find in British slang dictionaries is mostly English, or Cockney to be more precise, since it was in London's East End where this form of slang originated in the first half of the 19th century. Furthermore, one can claim with some confidence that most expressions

³ See Seal (2009, 21), who makes a similar point regarding Australian RS.

coined since then are in fact London coinages. The second reason has to do with the centrality of London as a source of linguistic innovations, its slang being disseminated throughout Britain (in both spoken and written form, especially via the media) much more easily than that from other parts of the country. Non-London RS and non-English English variants in general are thus less likely to be noticed by lexicographers.

All of the above brings me to the main reason for writing this article. Following the lead of previous studies on the geographical distribution of RS in mainland Britain (Lillo 2004b, 2012) and its spread in Ireland (Lillo 2004a, 2010), in this piece I will set out to further explore its development by looking at those usages that are peculiar to Northern Ireland. In so doing, this article will help map the focal points of productivity of RS in the British Isles and pin down its dialect variations, the vast majority of which have slipped under the radar of slang research.

Venturing into uncharted waters, or, the story so far

The fact that Northern Irish rhyming slang (hereafter NIRS) is absent from slang dictionaries does not come as a surprise. An oddity in itself, RS represents only a tiny, not to say microscopic, portion of the dialect vocabulary of Ulster. The vast body of research on lectal variation and language varieties in Ulster (see McCafferty 2010, 140–141) contrasts sharply with the dearth of studies of the slang used there and the paucity of attention paid to it by lexicographers. Leaving aside amateur wordlists and humorous dictionaries (for example, Kelly 2005), in which dialect proper, eye dialect and regional slang often appear side by side, Macafee (1996) omits most slang words—and clearly downplays Northern Irish slang as a matter of principle (see Corrigan 2010, 83–84, 87)—on the grounds that “much of the slang used in Ulster is or was generally found throughout the British Isles” (Macafee 1996, xix). What few slang items this dictionary includes are not always peculiar to Ulster, as the author herself makes clear, and none of those few is RS. A somewhat broader coverage of slang (not always confined to Northern Irish usage either) is provided by Todd (1990), but here again RS is conspicuous by its absence. We are therefore dealing here with virgin territory.

Or nearly so. To begin at the beginning, there is no bona fide evidence of the existence of homegrown specimens of RS in Ireland in the 19th century. Franklyn’s suggestion that the Irish-flavoured *Rory O’More* is an early Irish coinage (Franklyn 1960: 6) is not borne out by the known history of the word, which is first attested in Ducange Anglicus (1857,

in the sense of ‘floor’), Hotten (1873, according to Green 2010, in the sense of ‘prostitute, whore’) and Chiderdoss (1892, in the shortened form *Rory*, meaning ‘a door’).⁴ Its adoption into mid-19th century English RS is not hard to understand: the word was taken from the title of a song penned in 1826 by Samuel Lover and popularized throughout Britain in the 1830s and 1840s by Madame Vestris.⁵

The available evidence also speaks against Pei’s claim that “in the 1830’s, the Dublin and Belfast Irish gave it [*sc.* RS] their own humorous admixture, with such expressions as *Iron Duke* for ‘fluke,’ *holy friar* for ‘liar,’ *flowery dell* for ‘cell,’ *skin and blister* for ‘sister.’” (Pei 1967, 191). None of those items is recorded in the 19th century, none is unmistakably Irish in origin, and all four seem to be Irish imports from English English.⁶ Franklyn (1960, s.v. *iron duke*) was the first to record *Iron Duke*—he claims its use dates back to the 19th-century, but presents no evidence that it does and I find none either. The earliest record of *flowery dell* ‘cell’ is from Jervis (1925, 16); *skin and blister* is first found in Fraser and Gibbons (1925, 260); and the earliest use I can find for *holy friar* is in the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ episode of Joyce’s *Ulysses* (Joyce 1922, 405), but this, as every lexicographer and Joycean scholar knows, cannot be taken as evidence that the word is originally Irish or even that it had entered Irish English by the early 1920s.⁷

Speculation aside, the first account I have found so far of the existence of RS in Ireland is in a brief note written in 1941 by the Portaferry actor and playwright Joseph Tomelty (Tomelty 1941). Besides drawing attention to its currency in everyday Belfast speech, he gives some examples of Cockney RS which are “universal” in the British Isles and five “patently local Irish variations”: *Rory O’More* (yet again) ‘door’, *Craigavad* ‘It’s bad’, *Brian* ‘the Buroo’ (that is, the dole, unemployment benefit), *Tarry Rope*

⁴ The two editions of Hotten’s dictionary I have at hand, dated 1864 and 1870, only give *Rory O’More* in the sense of ‘floor’.

⁵ Lover worked the song up into a novel and a play in 1837. It seems reasonable to think, *pace* Troubridge (1946, 47), that the popularity of Lover’s song in the United States (Upton 1944, 29) also accounts for the use of *Roary O’More* ‘the floor’ (Maurer 1944, 194) in American criminal parlance. Franklyn’s assertion that the expression is used in America only in the sense of ‘door’ (Franklyn 1960, s.v. *Rory O’More*) must be a mistake.

⁶ I say *seem* because the earliest attestation of a linguistic item is not necessarily that of its earliest use, and the lect where it is first recorded is not always its lect of origin. That is all the more true of slang words, especially old ones, which turn up in print only on occasion, and when they do (if they do at all), they have usually been around for a while. For more on the widespread misconception that the first recorded use of a word is its earliest use, see Gold (2009, 226–223).

⁷ The first known non-Irish attestation of *holy friar* is in Manchon (1923).

'the Pope', and *Gravy King* 'King'. Of those five lexemes, however, only *Craigavad* arose in Northern Ireland, since, as mentioned above, *Rory O'More* was used in England long before Tomelty's time, *Tarry Rope* is also used in Scotland (Lillo 2004b, 112; 2012, 91), *Brian*, a shortening of *Brian Bóruí*, is what I have elsewhere called a "cut-down pun" (Lillo 2006)—or reduced pseudo-RS since there is no rhyme—and *Gravy King* is not RS, but just a jocular elongation of the target word.⁸

For all the meager lexical evidence it provides, Tomelty's testimony is nonetheless unique in that it points to the prevalence of RS in the Belfast of the early forties, something which is consonant with what Franklyn said a couple of decades later:

What is now required to complete the geographical picture [of RS] is an intimate study of its history and fate in Ireland, to which country it was, in all probability, carried early by the returning Irish navvies. It is known to be employed by the 'sporting fraternity' in both Belfast and Dublin, and it is known to have acquired there a specifically Irish shape; further, it is believed to have become translated into the Gaelic, but how extensive a vocabulary the Irish sporting men have, and how far it is used outside sporting circles remains unrecorded. (Franklyn 1960, 21)

Aware of that limitation, Franklyn includes in his dictionary (1st ed. 1960, 2nd ed. 1961) seven items which he identifies as Irish (*channel fleet* 'street', *cowhide* 'wide [aware of]', *flowers and frolics* 'ballocks', *fun and frolics* 'ballocks', *Glasgow boat* 'coat', *row-de-dow* 'a row [riot]') or Anglo-Irish (*Pat and Mick* 'prick [penis]'), one which was "chiefly in Irish usage" before 1914—and thus, we assume, of Irish provenance—(*liffey water* 'porter [ale]') as well as four which, though found in America, he presumes, on flimsy grounds, to be of Irish origin (*cup of tea* 'see', *goose and duck* 'fuck', *sighs and tears* 'ears', *boy in blue* 'stew').⁹ He does not say what he

⁸ With respect to Northern Irish pseudo-RS, a more recent specimen is *Reg Empey* (or *Sir Reg Empey*) 'empty', based on the name of a former leader of the Ulster Unionist Party. Though one might think that the form is an instance of imperfect RS, it is in fact based on the homophones *Empey* and *empey*, the Scots and Ulster dialect form of English *empty*: "And of course referring to somewhere the numbers fall far short of capacity as 'Reg Empey'". (*Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010). "[W]hy is this page Sir Reg Empey?" (*Facebook*, 16 June 2011).

⁹ *Row-de-dow* and *liffey water* are included in the Addenda to the 1961 edition. All other items appear in both editions. Note, however, that *row-de-dow* is not RS, but a rhyming elaboration of *row*, since this is precisely its target word. An example of true RS resulting from the elaboration of one of its elements is the Cockney expression *jug and pail* 'jail': *jug* 'prison' > *jug and pail*, rhyming with *jail*.

means by “Anglo-Irish” (a problematic term in this context—see Hickey 2007, 3) and does not specify which of those lexemes are used in Dublin and which are heard only in Belfast. Further research was required, as he rightly notes, but that was not to come until well over four decades later.

In the early 2000s, after a few years’ digging around on the topic and being continually intrigued by the lack of research on it (see Görlach 2000), I set out to reconstruct the history of RS in Ireland (Lillo 2004). Though the earliest evidence I had of the use of RS on the island was Tomelty’s observations on its currency in Belfast, I was able to find only three lexemes that were exclusive to Northern Irish English (*Craigavad*, *funny wonder* and *the Cock and Hens*—see below), so I decided the main focus of that first foray should be the Republic of Ireland. The result was a body of forty-eight items, some based on oral evidence gathered at first hand, others taken from written sources, and still others gleaned from several dictionaries of British and Irish slang, including Franklyn’s (1961) and the then recently published second edition of Share’s *Slanguage* (2003). Not surprisingly, my hunt for homegrown specimens was nowhere nearly as successful as it was in Dublin, Cork (the second largest city in the Republic) being a virtually barren area for RS.¹⁰ Hence Lillo (2010) on Dublin RS, which yielded a further sixty-one new items—not all of them, it must be said, likely to occur outside the literary sources in which they were found. By focussing first on the RS used in the Republic and then on the role of Dublin as a point of diffusion, both articles implicitly posed a question which I touched on but left unexplored: if Tomelty and Franklyn mention Belfast as one of the places where RS is, or was, used, would it be possible to find any examples of RS (besides the three just mentioned) used only in Northern Ireland? This is where we are now.

¹⁰ During my research, several people from the Cork area told me that RS is something of a Dublin mannerism and that its use may be perceived as a sign of Anglophilia. That perception seems widespread among non-Dubliners, as can be seen in the following comment posted on the *Irelandlogue.com* site on 10 September 2010: “Unless I’m up in Dublin I think I’ll be spared the rhyming slang in my business meetings :) The cockney rhyme thing is a British slang import that has taken hold in Ireland’s capital but, thankfully, almost nowhere else.” That may well explain not just the low incidence of RS in the speech of Corkonians, but also its overwhelming productivity in the speech of (mostly) young people from the affluent suburbs of south Dublin, where British culture and social values hold sway.

On the nature of NIRS

To assign spatial labels with any degree of accuracy, a researcher would have to undertake systematic fieldwork (see Gold 2011), that is, divide an area up, in each subarea find someone who is a good speaker of the language spoken in that subarea, put the same questions to all the speakers, and plot the results on maps. In this case, to determine which RS expressions are now used only in Northern Ireland, one would have to carry out systematic fieldwork not just in Northern Ireland but also in the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

In the impossibility of carrying out that much-needed task, I have done what one person can do with a limited amount of time at his disposal: having gathered probably the largest number of RS lexemes in English (more than 4,500),¹¹ for each of which I have noted as best I have been able to the places in which they have been used, I have compared those gathered in Northern Ireland (by others or by me) against the rest of my collection and culled from it those for which evidence is available only for use in that area.

For lack of information on where each of the lexemes arose, I have assumed (a) that the ones found both in Northern Irish English and in one or more non-Irish varieties of English originated in Britain and (b) that the place of origin of those found both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland but not in Britain (or perhaps only in Scotland but not in England and Wales) cannot be determined.

(a) The first assumption applies to apparent Cockneyisms such as *sky rocket* ‘pocket’ and *tea leaf* ‘thief’, general British RS expressions that have been adapted to the phonological system of Northern Irish English, like *oily reg* ‘feg’, in the sense of ‘cigarette’ (the Northern Irish version of the general British RS *oily rag* ‘fag’), and lexemes that have also been recorded in Scotland, like *Abraham Lincoln* ‘stinkin’, in the sense of ‘disgusting’.

(b) The second assumption applies to such lexemes as *Far East* ‘priest’ and *Napper Tandy* ‘brandy’, both of which have been recorded in Northern Ireland and the Republic but not in Britain. The place of origin of *Margaret Thatcher* ‘scratcher’, in the sense of ‘bed’, cannot be determined either, as the word is found in Northern Ireland, the Republic and Scotland but not in England or Wales. It is therefore just as likely to

¹¹ In round figures, Franklyn (1961) contains 1,500 entries (some 500 more than Franklyn 1960), while Green (2000), Ayto (2002) and Puxley (2008) have about twice that number.

have originated in one of those places as to have been coined independently in more than one place.

By process of elimination I arrived at a small subset of lexemes whose use seems to be confined to Northern Ireland. While their morphological and prosodic features do not reveal their Northern Irish origin in any obvious way, their lexical make-up or their cultural references sometimes do. The three criteria for singling out the Northern Irish rhymes are (a) the presence of exclusively Northern Irish lexical items, (b) the presence of exclusively Northern Irish pronunciations or (c) the mention of Northern Irish realia.

(a) An unequivocal sign of the Northern Irishness of a lexeme is the use of an Ulster dialect word in the RS lexeme, in the target word or in both. An example is *buck lep*, the Ulster dialect for ‘a sudden leap’, which takes on the meaning of ‘cap’ via the rhyme with the Ulsterism *kep* ‘idem’. Less obscure at first sight is *chip butties* for plimsolls or gym shoes, since the expression is based on a well-known British colloquialism for a chip sandwich, but the rhyme is formed on the Northern Irish (and Scottish) dialectalism *gutties*—itself a shortening of *gutta-percha* (see Todd 1990, s.v. *gutties*; Rennie 2004–, s.v. *guttie*, n²). Similar examples are *bird’s custard*, from the popular brand of custard powder, and *Mozambique* (or just *mozam*), which result from the rhyme with the regional slang words *mustard* ‘troublesome, difficult’ and *keek* ‘crap, an act of defecation’.

(b) Dialect pronunciation accounts for the expression *Cassius Clay*, meaning ‘flea’, the word *flea* sounding like *flay* in some Northern Irish accents, especially among working-class speakers. Likewise, the rhyme *Geoff Duke* ‘look’ is based on the common Ulster pronunciation of *duke* and *look* with a high rounded central vowel. And the rhyme *Oliver Hardy* ‘party’ (courtesy of the rotund half of the Laurel and Hardy comedy team) readily qualifies as a Northern Irish original because it relies on the realization of the /t/ in *party* as a voiced alveolar tap, a feature typically associated with Belfast speech.

(c) “Rhyme”, as the Hungarian-born British poet George Szirtes puts it in a different context, “is an accident waiting to happen itself into meaning” (Szirtes 2008, 144). And the happiest of all accidents, I should say, happens when rhyme and reason seem to go together naturally, as it were. An example is *baking bowl* ‘hole (that is, the anus; sex with a woman)’, especially when used in the phrase *get one’s baking bowl* ‘get one’s hole’ (of a man, to have sexual intercourse with a woman). Similarly, *Lower Falls* (based on the name of an area of Belfast) makes one think of a man’s nether regions because, besides rhyming with *balls*, the word can be interpreted as a common noun phrase (*the lower falls*) with

a testicular reference. Such accidents are not common in NIRS, though. What is the semantic link between *Donaghadee* (from the name of a small town in County Down) and *E* ‘an ecstasy tablet’, between *Sammy Mackie* (from the name of the Northern Irish entertainer who sang Northern Ireland’s 1982 World Cup song “I’m Yer Man”) and *Paki* ‘a Pakistani’ or between *Gilnahirk* (from the name of a suburb of Belfast) and *Turk*? What we do know, given the kinds of names those lexemes are based on, is that none of them could have been created anywhere but in Northern Ireland.¹²

On occasion, it is the target word rather than the lexeme itself that shows its origin. A prime example of Northern Irish realia is *the Heel and Ankle*, both a widely used colloquialism for the Shankill (a predominantly Protestant working-class area of West Belfast) and the name of a popular pub on Belfast’s Shankill Road. Another culture-specific term is *the Cock and Hens* (or *the Wee Cock and Hens*) for the Glens, the nickname of Belfast’s Glentoran F.C.—hence the club’s emblem of a cockerel, which, according to the website *Playingfortheshirt.net*, has appeared on their shirt since 1965.

Nicknames for places and football clubs are not, of course, a specific feature of NIRS. Nor are sectarian terms for Protestants (*Iron Rod / Steel Rod / Sally Rod*, rhyming with *Prod*) and Catholics (*Iron Haig*, rhyming with *Taig*).¹³ As one can easily imagine, words of this kind are also found in Scotland, especially in Glasgow. When contrasted with other RSs, though, the Northern Irish variety is the only one with a set of terms related to paramilitary groups and terrorism, some of which are or have been used (and probably coined) by terrorists themselves. In this peculiar lingo, the Provisional and Official factions of the IRA (the two organizations that emerged after the IRA split in 1969) are known as *the Bon Jovis* (‘the Provies’) and *the Chocolate Bickies* (‘the Stickies’),¹⁴ and their members have *Buster Keatons* (‘meetings’) and hide their *chocolate trifles* (‘rifles’) in *camels’ humps* (‘arms dumps’). Cynically enough, if anything goes wrong, Loyalist terrorists may say they have done a *funny wonder* (‘a blunder’). A more chilling way to put it is hard to imagine.

¹² Compare their general British RS equivalents, respectively *Bruce Lee*, *ounce of baccy* and *Captain Kirk*.

¹³ It does not take Sherlockian deduction to see that *Prod* is a shortening of *Protestant* (whence also *Proddy*), the final <d> reflecting the common pronunciation of intervocalic /t/ as a voiced flap. The etymology of *Taig*~*Teague*, on the contrary, requires an explanation: the word is an anglicization of the Irish *Tadhg*, a male given name once popular among Irish-speaking Catholics (Macafee 1996, s.v. *teague*, *taig*).

¹⁴ The nickname “the Stickies” was inspired by their practice of sticking Easter lilies on their coat lapels during the annual commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising.

A glossary of NIRS

The glossary that follows is a collection of RS terms peculiar to Northern Ireland. Most of them are recorded here for the first time. While it would be logical for any study of this type to be based on evidence from spoken language (the primary natural habitat of slang), the palpable and playful nature of RS and its stereotypical (or, in metapragmatic terminology, third-order indexical) value make it likely to occur very often in the written medium, its attestation in either written or spoken form being no guarantee of its frequency, its currency or even its “authenticity” or lack of it—whatever that means in this case. Granted, a RS lexeme comes into being by its very coinage; if it does not catch on, it will then be a nonce-word or an idiolectalism, but it will still be RS. Which takes us right back to a point suggested above: the only RS dictionary compilers can *safely* regard as spurious is the one which originated in a fabricated etymology (see *dog’s meat* above) and never had any real existence outside the dictionary. Yet it is always wise to remember that lexicographers are not all-seeing and all-knowing (Gold 2009, 216).

Although most of the items in this study have been culled from the written language proper (periodicals and works of fiction) and the Internet (especially forums), I have done my best to make sure that these latter at least are not the idiosyncratic brainchildren of particular users. They have all being verified either through first-hand oral evidence or by asking at least two other users or informants, sometimes via the Internet itself, sometimes through personal correspondence. As a matter of lexicographical principle, I have a natural tendency to distrust what I find on the Net. Yet given the disinhibiting effect of anonymity in cyberspace,¹⁵ I am at once well aware that much of the material one can find there is hard to find anywhere else. The Internet is also a godsend for slang research for another reason: as it has now reached almost every corner of the developed world (and every aspect of our life, too), it helps find evidence for expressions which, albeit apparently rare, are common in small geographical areas or even highly frequent among certain kinds of speakers living in small geographical areas. These expressions “are still slang—just as their famous cousins—and should be equal in the lexicographer’s eyes” (Spears 1995, 189).

¹⁵ Especially when it comes to name-calling and talking about loaded topics like sex, race, politics and religion.

In the glossary below, each entry-head is followed by the target word conveying the meaning, its variants and/or short forms, its etymology (if relevant or known), and, where possible, one or more supporting quotations. As the citational evidence for many words is drawn from comments on the *Belfast Forum* (<www.belfastforum.co.uk>), all quotations from this source are followed by the initials *BF* and the date on which the relevant comment was posted.¹⁶ Words reported by individual contributors to this forum as examples of RS are indicated in the entries by the abbreviation “Rtd *BF*”.

Aughnacloys, the. (1) The Boys—a collective term for the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). *Also the Auchnacloys.*

From Aughnacloy (also spelt *Auchnacloy*), a village in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, on the border with the Republic. Like its non-RS equivalent (*Boys*), the word *Aughnacloys* is used by members and supporters of the PIRA and INLA.

- **Auchnacloys.** Rhyming slang for “the Boys,” that is, the PIRA or INLA. (Feldman 1991, 271)

- I remember a time when the walls of West Belfast were covered with SSRUC, UTP and FTQ, which I have confidence in your ability to decipher for yourself. Nowadays, it’s UTH and FTRA, which is a telling reflection both of the number of hoods in my part of the world and those fine gentlemen’s attitude toward the Aughnacloys. (*Saoirse32* blog, 7

May 2005)

- Ah, so *all* the Brutish Occupation Farces killed by the Aughnacloys are now “Irish people”? (*Politics.ie* forum, 27 September 2011)

(2) The *toys*, i.e. the testicles. An instance of double RS, *toys* being a shortening of TOY DOLLS (*q.v.*), rhyming with *balls*.

► See also LOWER FALLS and SMITHFIELDS.

- Ye git a kick in the Auchnacloys yel b in pain. (*BF*, 20 October 2008)

Austin Stack. The back.

Based on the name of the famous Irish revolutionary republican (1879–1929). Rtd *BF*, 12 October 2006.

- We need a new mattress. My Austin Stack’s killing me. (Recorded, Belfast, male, age ca. 60, September 2010)

baking bowl. The hole (in the slang senses of ‘anus or buttocks’ and ‘sex with a woman’). Often used in the phrase **get one’s baking**

¹⁶ The *Belfast Forum* is described in DMOZ as “[a] public forum for discussing all aspects of Belfast life, local news, nightlife, events, activities and sports”.

bowl ‘of a man, to have sexual intercourse with a woman’. Also **bacon bowl**.

► See DAN MADOLE and JOE MCDOWELL.

- I wouldn’t have wiped my bacon bowl with it mate. (*FootballForums.net*, 12 June 2008)

- I’m not the world’s most positive person and I need a virtual boot up the baking bowl on occasion. (*Rev Counter* forum, 14 December 2010)

- Fair enough. Maybe I’ll get my bacon bowl while I’m over here. (*This is Belfast*, posted on Stevie Kane’s webpage, <www.steviekane.com>, 12 March 2011)

Ballybeens. Jeans.

Ballybeen is a large housing estate on the outskirts of East Belfast. Quoted on the *Our Wee Country* forum, 31 August 2010.

Ballyclare. The hair.

Ballyclare is a small town in County Antrim, about eleven miles from Belfast. Rtd *BF*, 12 October 2006.

Bangor boat. A coat.

An old reference to the regular passenger steamer service from Belfast to Bangor. The expression *north and south*, mentioned in the following quotation, is British RS for *mouth*. Rtd *BF*, 12 October 2006.

► See GLASGOW BOAT.

- M, I’ll hold your Bangor Boat while you dig Coats in the North and South. (*BF*, 10 April 2007)

Bangor Reserves. Nerves. Also **Bangors, bangers.**

Bangor Reserves are the reserve team of Bangor F.C. The British expression *get on someone’s bangers* is simply a jocular variation on *get on someone’s tits* ‘to irritate someone’ (hence also *get on someone’s knockers / boobs / melons / baps / etc.*), the word *bangers* being slang for ‘breasts’: “I’m sorry but Anthea is really getting on my bangers[.]” (*Weightwatchers* message board, 19 April 2009).

- We always referred to an attack on your nerves as ‘Bangor Reserves’ which was then termed ‘Bangers’ and if your bangers were troubling you, then you certainly had problems. [...] We were all convinced that Hannibal was a ‘plant’ by the British, put there to wreck our bangers. (Devlin 1985, 15, 17)

- [H]e lost his bangor reserves at the last minute and allowed one of the biggest idiots in cyberspace back onto the board. (*GAA* forum, 28 March 2008)

- [A]ye, his Bangor’s have been fucked ever since The Hatchets blew a twelve point lead at Easter ten years ago. (*When Saturday Comes* message board, 14 March 2011)

Bat and Ball. A nickname for someone named *Paul*.

Reported by a mechanic from Lisburn, County Antrim, in December 2009.

• Q: How did you come up with your username?

A: Registered here and couldn't think of a username. My first summer job after A-levels was for a commercial bakery. Paul = bat and ball = batsy? (*Overclockers UK* forum, 7 September 2011)

bathtub. The gub (= the gob, i.e. a person's mouth).

• Shut your bathtub or I'll shut it for you! (Reported by a thirty-year-old male teacher from Belfast, February 2010)

Billy Beggs. Eggs.

• We've run out of Billy Beggs. (Reported by a lorry driver in his sixties from Carryduff, County Down, November 2004)

Bird's Custard. Mustard (= troublesome, difficult). *Also Bird's.*

From a well-known brand of custard powder.

• Peter Andre is Bird's Custard and always has been. (*BF*, 11 February 2010)

• [I]n rhyming slang [*mustard* is] also known as Bird's (Bird's Custard). (*A til Azed* 2007–2011: s.v. *Mustard*)

Bob Dylan. A shillin (= a shilling). *Also Bob Dillin.*

A RS elaboration of the colloquial word *bob*. From the US folk-rock singer Bob Dylan (real name Robert Allen Zimmerman; b.1941).

► See MATT DILLON.

• shillin = bob dillin. (*BF*, 2 September 2010)

Bon Jovis, the. The Provies (= the IRA).

From the US rock band Bond Jovi, fronted by singer Jon Bon Jovi. The Provies (or Provisionals) are the members of the Provisional IRA (aka *the PIRA*), the dominant faction of the organization after its split in 1969. The group decommissioned all its arms in 2005.

• [H]e was ordered out of his home town of Newry, under death threat from what he called the 'Bon Jovies'—the Provies. (McDowell 2001, 63)

• So are you telling me the Bon Jovis/SF dont engage in extortion? Dont oppress their "own" people in order to gain funds? (*Stugger O'Toole* website, 23 March 2007)

• They [*sc.* Bon Jovi] will probably also be unaware—as indeed it seems was Ihab, otherwise he'd surely have re-thought the musical accompaniment—that the band's name is Belfast slang for another paramilitary outfit. The Provies. The Bon Jovis. (*The Belfast Telegraph*, 12 April 2008)

Bruce Meeler. A peeler (in the sense of 'a police officer').

- I'm fed up with the Bruce meelers calling to my door at 6 and 7 in the morning asking us to leave. (*BF*, 1 April 2009)

buck lep. A kep (= a cap).

Buck lep is Ulster dialect for a sudden leap.

- [M]y ould lad called it his 'glasgow boat and his buck lep' (kep). (*BF*, 6 October 2009)
- In later years on the building sites with your *Donkey Jacket and Buck Lep* on ye had to turn yer waterboots down so ye didn't look like a big girls blouse. (*BF*, 6 August 2011)
- As they passed a street cleaner Davy noticed the cleaner had no cap or 'Buck Lep' as they called them in those days [*sc.* 1950s][.] ("Belfast City Characters: Pig Minelly", *Rushlight Magazine* website; accessed 4 December 2011)

bullroot. In prison slang, a sex offender, especially a *fruit* (i.e. a male homosexual). Also **ballroot**, **root**.

A RS offshoot of the Northern Irish insult *bullroot* 'a complete idiot'.

► See WEST BEIRUT.

- 'Root! Root! Smith's a fuckin' root.' [...] 'You bastards, you bastards! Who's a poofter? Who's a bullroot! You're the bullroots!' he screamed back. (Morrison 1994: 232 and 233)
- Despite being married with two children and fond of portraying

himself as a macho kind of guy, he was also a closet homosexual or, in Belfast rhyming slang, a 'bullroot' (fruit), as the locals described him. (*Irish Independent*, Dublin, 8 May 2005)

- Loyalists have a long track record of allowing convicted sex-offenders & assorted ballroots onto their wings & therefore into their gaol command structures. (*Republican Socialist* forum, 29 October 2009)

Buster Keaton. In paramilitary slang, a meetin (= a meeting). Also **buster**. From the US film comedian Buster Keaton (real name Joseph Francis Keaton; 1895–1966).

- He thought it was an IRA buster he was running, which it was, and he was all for planning ops, getting things moving. [...] There was this club in the Donegall Road where all the Red Hand Commando in Belfast were being sworn in. We had a "buster" about it in 1922, but Gerry Kelly wouldn't allow any action. (Bradley and Feeney 2011, 252, 300)

camel's hump. In paramilitary parlance, an arms dump.

Recorded in use among members of republican paramilitary groups. In English English, the term is also used as RS for *dump*, but only in the sense of 'an act of defecation' (Puxley 2008).

- Paramilitaries store active weapons in arms "dumps" or "camels' humps" as they are

known in the local rhyming slang.
(Feldman 1991, 179–180)

Cassius Clay. A flea.

From the original name of American boxer Muhammad Ali (b.1942). The term was reported by a lorry driver in his sixties from Carryduff, County Down, November 2004.

cherry pickers. Knickers.

- [W]as wearing her cherry pickers wat ya think. (<www.bebo.com>, blog, 8 August 2009)

chip butties. Gutties (= plimsolls or gym shoes).

See etymology in the main text.

- chip buddies = guddys (trainers in belfast). (*BBC 606* forum, 30 May 2007)
- The adidas Londons are a sweet set of chip butties!!! (*Inside Out* forum, 4 December 2009)

Chocolate Bicky. A Sticky (a member of the Official IRA; someone committed to the ideals of the Official IRA).

Usually used in the plural (*the Chocolate Bickies*), the word refers specifically to the Official IRA (also known as *the OIRA* or, colloquially, as *the Officials*), one of the two factions of the IRA formed after the split of this organization in 1969. The other faction was the PIRA (► see *BON JOVIS*, *THE*). Though the Official IRA declared a ceasefire in 1972, it is generally accepted that it continued to

operate well into the 1980s. In 1974, a small faction of hard-line Official members created the Irish National Liberation Army, or INLA (► see *AUGHNACLOYS, THE*). Today, both *Sticky* and *Chocolate Bicky* are also used to denote someone committed to the ideals of the Official IRA; both words are often loosely (and not quite accurately) used in the sense of ‘Irish Republican (and Roman Catholic)’.

- In Belfast/cockney speak, us Iron Rods and Chocolate Bickies are avin a giraffe ... (*Just Another 606* forum, 17 October 2011)

chocolate trifle. In paramilitary parlance, a rifle.

- ‘We were wondering if we could use your house to leave some stuff. Just a bit o’ gear.’¶ ‘What is it?’ I asked.¶ ‘Two chocolate trifles.’ (Brannigan 2010, 86)

Cock and Hens, the. The Glens (nickname of Belfast’s Glentoran F.C.). Also **the Wee Cock and Hens**.

- Life away from the Cock and Hens could be a culture shock, and vice versa. Says John: “Obviously, I cannot disregard 14 years of service at the Oval. Glentoran was a big part of my football life.” (*The Belfast News Letter*, 14 August 1999, p. 44)
- Apparently, ‘some’ Portadown players turned up on Saturday thinking they would wrap up matters against the Cock and

Hens. (*Ulster Gazette*, Armagh, 18 April 2002)

cough rock. The cock (in the slang sense of ‘penis’).

From Cough Rock, the traditional rock sweets made by the Northern Irish manufacturer Shaws (W. J. Shaw & Sons Ltd).

- [H]eavy petting’s alright but don’t follow with the old cough rock[.] (McCafferty 2002b, 79)
- That’s a fella you fools! He’s hid his cough rock! (*YouTube* website, ca. January 2011)

Craigavad. Bad, usually in the phrase of understatement **not too Craigavad**.

Formed on the name of a village in County Down, Northern Ireland, near Belfast. The term is recorded by Tomelty (1941).

- And ‘I’m not too Craigavad’ is a perfectly acceptable answer to, ‘What about ye, mucker?’. (*The Belfast Telegraph*, 25 March 2004, p. 1)
- £700k for 13 months in custody? Bigger me but that’s not too Craigavad! (*PPRuNe* forum, 13 August 2008)
- Four whiskeys in and I was starting to feel not too Craigavad. (Bateman 2011, 255)

Cullybackey. A nickname for someone pet-named *Jackie*. Also **Cullybeckie**. Formed from the name of a village in County Antrim. The form *Cullybecky* was quoted on the

Our Wee Country forum, 30 August 2010.

Dan Flynn. The chin.

Rtd *BF*, 12 October 2006.

Dan Madole. The hole (in the slang senses of ‘anus or buttocks’ and ‘sex with a woman’). Often used in the phrase **get one’s Dan Madole** ‘of a man, to have sexual intercourse with a woman’. Also **Dan McDowell**.

► See BAKING BOWL and JOE MCDOWELL.

- Does my arse look big in this? [...] [“H]ell no dear, your dan madole is slimmer than a slim thing on a diet” is the usual lie. (*Amateur Photographer* forum, 17 January 2004)
- Fergie should give him a good boot up the Dan McDowell. (*NI Football* forum, 21 September 2010)
- I’m in no position to criticise anyone who was giving up their own time to fight this as I was sitting at home on my Dan Madole reading the press statements[.] (*Our Wee Country* forum, 25 September 2010)

Danny La Rue. Stew. Also **Danny**.

From the Irish-born drag artiste Danny La Rue (real name Daniel Patrick Carroll; 1927–2009).

- In a Belfast pub, you ask for ‘a bowl of Danny’ if you want stew (Danny La Rue, geddit?). (<www.guardian.co.uk>, 9 March 2011)

desert rat. A flat.

- We have many colourful slang phrases such as [Desert rat—flat.] (*BF*, 10 April 2007)

Donaghadee. An E (i.e. a tablet of MDMA, the recreational drug best known as *ecstasy*).

From Donaghadee, a small town in County Down, Northern Ireland.

- If you asked for a bag of Donaghadees you could find yourself in prison for trying to buy some Class A drugs. (*The Belfast Telegraph*, 25 March 2004, p. 1)
- Alright mucker, got any Donaghadees? (*BF*, 5 May 2008)

Doris Day. Nickname of Jim Gray (1958–2005), one of Northern Ireland’s chief loyalist paramilitaries. Also **Doris**, **Ugly Doris**.

Formed as a humorous allusion to US film actress Doris Day (originally Doris Mary Ann von Kappelhoff; b.1924). Jim Gray’s dyed blonde hair, fake tan and flamboyant dress sense were thought to be somehow reminiscent of the actress.

- Entitled “Doris you’re dead”, the article claimed that other brigadiers had warned Gray, a wealthy racketeer, about drug dealing. (*The Sunday Times*, London, 6 April 2003)
- Although dubbed ‘Doris Day’ by the media, Gray had another unprintable nickname inside the UDA, inspired by his sex life. (*The*

Belfast Telegraph, 9 October 2005)

- And it is primarily about the UVF leader in east Belfast nicknamed the Beast from the East or “Ugly Doris”. The first nom de guerre relates to his east Belfast bailiwick and the second refers to the late Jim Gray, the UDA east Belfast leader or “brigadier” murdered by his own people. (*The Irish Times*, Dublin, 23 June 2011)

duke. (1) A look. Also **dukey**, **dukie**, **jeuk**, **jook**, **juke**.

A shortening of GEOFF DUKE (*q.v.*).

- Have a wee duke at my post a few topics down this page if you please[.] (*Fastfude* forum, 11 December 2004)
 - [T]ry, if you can thole it, having a wee jeuk at this list of Ulster dialect words[.] (*The Copyboys* blog, 29 July 2009)
 - It would be a wonderful if we could have a wee duke at the aul place before it’s altered. (*Lisburn Exiles* forum, 11 October 2009)
 - Sally Ann had a wee dukie at the Cadburys website[.] (*BF*, 1 April 2011)
 - Thought I’d have a wee dukey at this as my family also came from Cambrai Street. (*BF*, 18 April 2011)
- (2) To look.
- Next thing I’m led down to a saracen with my two wee twins dukin’ over the balcony shoutin’, ‘Is that the brave knights come to rescue us?’ (Jones 1988, II, 459)

Earl Haig. A Taig (i.e. a Roman Catholic).

After the Scottish Field Marshal Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig (1861– 1928), who commanded the British Expeditionary Forces in the First World War.

► See IRON HAIG.

- Prods versus Prods what is the point, we have enough earl haigs in oor wee country to be getting on with. (*YouTube* website, ca. 2009)
- The problem facing bears is that you have far too many names for the taigs. Whether it be fenians, bheasts (pretty much any word where ‘h’ is the second letter), mhanks, bhead rhattlers, ‘earl haigs’, etc. the Tims have one word to describe the Rangers support with the highly offensive ‘H’ word. (<leggoland2.blogspot.com>, blog, 24 September 2010)
- Oh aye, and it was riddled with Earl Haigs as per fckin usual. (*Rangers Media* forum, 25 January 2011)

Enniskillen. A queer (i.e. a homosexual man).

A shortening of the phrase *Enniskillen Fusilier*, itself based on the *Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers* regiment of the British Army. The regiment was raised in Enniskillen (County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland) in 1881 and was amalgamated into the Royal Irish Rangers in 1968.

- Enniskillen (as in fusileer)—

queer or Lake windemere. (*Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010)

funny wonder. In paramilitary parlance, a blunder.

The following quotation is from the statement made by a loyalist bomber who killed an old Protestant lady in West Belfast.

- That’s a job I done, but I done a funny wonder (blunder). I threw a petrol bomb through the wrong window and an old lady got burned. (McKittrick et al. 1999, 28)

Geoff Duke. A look. Also **Geoffrey Duke, jeffy duke, Jeffery Duke, Geoffrey, jeff, Jefferys, Jefferies, Jeffries.**

► See also DUKE.

After the English motorcycle racer Geoff Duke (b.1923). The term is also recorded as a RS synonym for the verb *puke*, but, so far as I can tell, this usage is confined to the Republic of Ireland.

- But I have yet to actually see it on the telly, so I went and had a jeffries at the site of all things tubular[.] (<flat3d.orumu.org/2006/09/03/irn-bru-32/>, 3 September 2006)
- Went and had a wee jeff at it and noticed a problem... (*Really Mean Sounds* forum, 20 November 2006)
- We were having a Geoff Duke at him out of our office in Hope Street when he caught us on. (*BF*, 28 February 2007)

- If you want to see support levels for a United Ireland within NI have a Geoffrey Duke at this[.] (*Sluggie O'Toole* website, 9 November 2010)
- I just had a wee jeffrey duke at my last years feedback[.] (*Boards.ie* forum, 19 May 2010)
- Have a wee jeffy duke here for info on different car towing limits[.] (*Really Mean Sounds* forum, 16 August 2010)
- Excelen-tay Max, I shall give it a wee watch at lunchtime and have a jefferies at what I will be missing. (*Amazon.co.uk* video games forum, 8 March 2010)
- [H]ave a wee jefferys at the local press this week to see what will help u on ur way... (*Newry City Marathon* forum, 27 May 2010)
- I think I saw you on Kings Road the other day, was in my brothers VTIS and you's had a wee geoffrey at his car lol. (*Really Mean Sounds* forum, 1 March 2011)

Gilnahirk. A Turk.

From the name of a suburb of Belfast.

- The Claimant alleged that shortly after he commenced employment with the Respondent he was subjected to harassment of a religious and racist nature. Examples of the alleged harassment are as follows:¶ (h) Calling the Claimant names such as Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaida, Turkish bastard, El Potato, Gilnahirk (rhyming slang for

Turk). (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2007–2008, 156)

Glasgow boat. A coat. *Also Glasgow.*

The full form is recorded by Franklyn (1960), Partridge (1984) and Green (2000), but none of them labels it as Northern Irish. Franklyn marks it as 'Irish usage', while Partridge and Green identify it as 'Anglo-Irish'.

► See BANGOR BOAT.

- I had heard this before but more often than that I'd heard a coat referred to as a Glasgow. (*BF*, 6 October 2009)

• (See first quotation under BUCK LEP.)

God forgimme. A nickname for someone pet-named *Jimmy*.

Quoted on the *Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010.

Hammer and Tack. A nickname for someone pet-named *Jack*.

Quoted on the *Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010.

► See ROOF RACK.

Harry Gregg. A feg (= a cigarette).

From the Northern Irish footballer Harry Gregg (b.1932). The term was used in Robert Niblock's play *A Reason to Believe*, premiered at the West Belfast Festival in July 2009.

► See SIMON PEGG.

Harry McCourts. Shorts.

From the Northern Irish footballer Harry McCourt (b.1968). It was

quoted on the *Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010.

Heel and Ankle, the. The Shankill (an area of West Belfast).

- Al, Stewie is selling contraband Harp at the roadside on the heel and ankle. (*BF*, 3 December 2008)
- Sure they will be spakin' the gaelic up the heel and ankle soon enough. (*The Belfast Telegraph*, 28 July 2010, p. 28)
- That latter thought is my own, but Mr P***** took the emigrant trail and now lives far from the 'Heel 'n ankle'. (Wharton 2011, 130)

Iron Haig. A Taig (i.e. a Roman Catholic).

Probably a variant of EARL HAIG (*q.v.*).

- Nah as Hedgers says that half of Dunmurry is all "Iron Haigs" now and sir barry has the cheek to say we are the people he should prob change it to we were the people. (*NI Football* forum, 10 March 2003)
- In our area Pope Heads, Sally Rods and Iron Haigs. (*BF*, 19 November 2008)
- [W]as Paddy a Sally Rod or an Iron Haig? (*BF*, 24 August 2009)

Iron Rod. A Prod (i.e. a Protestant).

- ▶ See SALLY ROD and STEEL ROD.
- I always found that the best way to suss out 'Iron Rods' was to make a joke about Daniel O'Donnell—the believers in the Reformation are a bit vague on him. (*GAA* forum, 27 May 2008)

Jimmy Ned. A bed.

Rtd *BF*, 12 October 2006.

Joe McDowell. The hole (in the slang senses of 'anus or buttocks' and 'sex with a woman'). Often used in the phrase **get one's Joe McDowell** 'of a man, to have sexual intercourse with a woman'.

▶ See BAKING BOWL and DAN MADOLE.

- [T]ake your head out of your joe mcdowell[.] (*Irish Independent Escorts* forum, 12 March 2009)

Lower Falls. The balls (in the sense of 'testicles').

Formed on the name of an area of Belfast.

▶ See AUGHNACLOYS, THE (sense 2), SMITHFIELDS and TOY DOLLS.

- [A] kick in the lower falls is painful. (*BF*, 10 April 2007)
- BLUENATIC, you want a boot in the Lower Falls mate[.] (*Bluemoon-MCFC* forum, 16 September 2010)

Matt Dillon. A shillin (= a shilling).

From Marshal Matt Dillon, a fictional character in the long-running TV western *Gunsmoke*.

▶ See BOB DYLAN.

- [T]hree d bit[¶] hapenny[¶] matt dillion [*sic*][.] (*BF*, 5 November 2009)

Merlyn Rees. A piece (i.e. a packed lunch.)

Formed on the name of the Welsh politician who served as Home Secretary and Northern Ireland Secretary in the British Labour governments of the 1970s. The

term was reported by a mechanic from Lisburn, County Antrim, in December 2009.

Mozambique. A keek (= an act of defecation). *Also mozam.*

Based on the name of the African country.

- lol I'd say 'away for a mozam' [.] (*Talk Celtic* forum, 29 May 2008)
- Mozambique—no1 in the toilet (keek). (*Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010)
- Going for a Mozambique. (*BF*, 13 September 2011)

Oliver Hardy. A party.

Formed on the name of US actor Oliver Hardy (1892–1957).

- some woman went t'some oliver hardy an wore this dress chat / shiny chats / wouldn't be my—y'know my trick / too glitzy[.] (*McCafferty* 2002a, 28)

Paris bun. (1) A son.

A Paris bun is a sweet, sponge-like bun popular in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

- Paris bun was a rhyming slang name for someone's son. (*BF*, 27 February 2007)
- I will post some photies of the oul beg soon when my Paris bun comes to help with my forthcoming movie. (*BF*, 17 August 2007)

(2) A nun.

Rtd *BF*, 27 February 2007.

Pat Sharp. Harp lager.

Formed on the name of a well-known English TV presenter and DJ (b.1961).

- A Pat Sharp is rhyming slang in Belfast for a pint of Harp. (*Twitter*, social network, 10 January 2012)

Phil Coulter. A bolter (= a hasty escape). *Also Phil.*

Used in the phrase **do a Phil Coulter**, meaning 'to run away'. From the Northern Irish musician Phil Coulter (b.1942).

- We did a Phil. (*GAA* message board, 3 November 2009)
- We're [*sic*] did you go last night you done a phil coulter on me. (*Twitter*, social network, 2 July 2012)

Pollock Docks. Socks.

From the Pollock Dock in Belfast Harbour. Rtd *BF*, 12 October 2006.

purse mixer. A fixer (i.e. a go-between in an illegal business).

- Well, Paddy Farrell's responsibility would have been as the "purse mixer", or "fixer", on the finance going over to Liverpool. (Interview with Kevin Sheehy, former head of the RUC drugs squad, as reported in McDowell 2001, 224)

quick buck. A fuck (in the sense of 'an act of sexual intercourse').

- [*Posting #1*]: The ladies, (and men dressed as ladies), that work these streets [*sc.* Belfast's red-light district] seem to be the usual mix of drug addicts and drunks, people who have suffered terrible abuse, nutters, folks down on their luck and those needing

a quick buck. [*Posting #6*]: Jett, you do know what a “quick buck” means in Belfast lingo, don’t you? (<lettertoamerica.blogs.com/letter_to_america/2006/05/prostitution_in.html>, blog, 2 and 3 May 2006)

rolling rocks. Socks.

The expression *plates of meat*, mentioned in the following quotation, is British RS for ‘feet’.

- Standing on a f**king hoor of a plug with only a pair of rolling rocks on my plates of meat. FFFCCCUUKKK!!!! (GAA message board, 21 December 2007)

Roof Rack. A nickname for someone pet-named *Jack*.

► See HAMMER AND TACK.

Quoted on the *Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010.

Sally Rod. A Prod (i.e. a Protestant).

A sally rod is a long, thin willow stick, formerly used to enforce discipline. *Sally* is the Hiberno-English version of the Irish *saileach* ‘willow’.

► See IRON ROD and STEEL ROD.

- It occurs to me that ‘sally-rod’ is Ulster rhyming slang to [*sic*] ‘Prod’, i.e. Protestant. (Carson 1997, 101)

- Arthur Guinness was a sally rod. (*Shine* message board, 18 November 2009)

- Up til 8am to out-drink the Sally Rods on the 11. (*Twitter*, social network, 12 July 2011)

Sammy Mackie. A Paki (i.e. a Pakistani; loosely, a native of the Indian subcontinent).

From the name of a Northern Irish entertainer. The synonymous slur *Hamilton Accie* is also used in Scotland (see Lillo 2004b, 104).

- Sammy Mackies or Hamilton Accies—Asian gentlemen. (*Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010)

Sandy Row. A nickname for someone pet-named *Joe*.

Formed from the name of an area of Belfast. Quoted on the *Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010.

Simon Pegg. A feg (= a cigarette). *Also Simon.*

From the English actor Simon Pegg (b.1970).

► See HARRY GREGG.

- Give us a Simon. (Reported by a thirty-year-old male teacher from Belfast, February 2010)

Smithfields. The testicles.

Possibly derived from the phrase *Smithfield stalls*, rhyming with *balls* ‘testicles’. A reference to the stalls in Belfast’s Smithfield Market, destroyed by fire in 1974, at the height of the Troubles. A new shopping mall was built on its site in 1986.

► See AUGHNACLOYS, THE (sense 2), LOWER FALLS and TOY DOLLS.

- I’ll hit you a good kick in the Smithfields. (*Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010)

Spuds and Gravy. A nickname for someone pet-named *Davy*.

Quoted on the *Our Wee Country* forum, 30 August 2010.

Steel Rod. A Prod (i.e. a Protestant).

► See IRON ROD and STEEL ROD.

- Similarly many of the words used for *unionists* that follow have entries of their own, not all are currently much in use and some of them refer specifically to *loyalist* groups. These include (in alphabetical order): Billys, Blackmen, Huns, Ironrods (rhyming slang, also Steelrods), Jaffas, Orangies, Prods, Proddies and Proddy Dogs. (Dunn and Dawson 2000, 266)

Tancy Lee. Tea. *Also Tansy Lee.*

From the Scottish boxer James ‘Tancy’ Lee (1882–1941). Rtd *BF*, 12 October 2006.

- Enjoyed my Tansy Lee. (*BF*, 10 April 2007)

tatie bread. Dead. *Also tattie bread, tatey bread, tatted.*

Tatie bread is Ulster dialect for *potato bread*. This kind of bread is popular in Northern Ireland and Scotland (in the latter country it is known as *tattie scone*).

- One kept saying: ‘Nine policemen, all tatey bread.’ (Collins and McGovern 1997, 265)

- Now if he hits you, Swifty, you go down like a roll of carpet and you

don’t get up again. *Tatie bread*, son. (Park 2002, 251)

- Ted Roach is *Tattie Bread*. (*Digital Spy* forum, 10 August 2004)

- Do you think I’m gonna wait until I’m tatted, like? (Celtic singer Raymond McCullough, *Celtic Roots Radio*, music podcast, 28 January 2010)

toy dolls. The testicles.

Recorded by Munro (2007, 144, 249). *Dolls - balls* is a perfect rhyme in Northern Irish English. The word may be a vernacular coinage or a post hoc rhyming interpretation of the Scottish slang *toy dolls*, also used in this sense.

► See AUGHNACLOYS, THE (sense 2), LOWER FALLS and SMITHFIELDS.

Warrenpoint and Omeath. The teeth.

From the name of a town in County Down, Northern Ireland, and a nearby village in County Louth, Ireland. Rtd *BF*, 12 October 2006.

water hose. The nose.

Rtd *BF*, 10 April 2007.

west Beirut. A fruit (i.e. a male homosexual).

The word was reported by a contributor to the *Crystal Palace Football Club* forum, 6 January 2009. ► See BULLROOT.

References

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