

ALPHOMIC PHRASES

SUSAN THORPE

Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, England

In "Alphomes" in the August 1995 *Word Ways*, I proposed and defined the term *alphome* as a set of alphabetically-ordered letters of which at least one arrangement is a word. Some words, like BEEFILY, have their letters already arranged in alphabetical order and in these cases the word and its alphome are one and the same.

In the current article I go a step further and look for single words whose alphomes make meaningful phrases when their alphabetically-ordered letter sequences are split into two or more groups. For example, the word LABEL makes the alphome ABELL which, when split, makes the alphomic phrase A BELL. Beginning with five-letter alphomic phrases, the simplest of these consists of the indefinite article followed by a noun. In each example, the alphomic phrase is given first and is followed by the single word from which it is derived.

A BIRR briar	A BOOT taboo	A BOSS basso
A CELT cleat	A CENT enact	A CHIN china
A CHOP poach	A CLOT octal	A DEER eared
A DELL ladle	A DIOR radio	A DOOR doora
A FILM malfi	A FIST fiats	A GIST gaits
A HINT hiant	A HOST oaths	A KLOP polka
A KNOT tonka	A LOOP Paolo	A LOSS lasso
A MOOR maroo	A NOOP Poona	BE ILL libel
GO PRU group	I LOST toils	I'M NOT Minto
IN OPS pions		

DOORA is Indian millet; TONKA is a bean; MAROO is an obsolete form of marrow; NOOP is the fruit of the cloudberry; and MINTO is the name of a sweet.

As the phrases increase in length, the reader will notice that the same words keep appearing, especially ACE, ADD and GIN.

A BERRY brayer	A BESSY Bassey	A BOOST taboos
A CELLO locale	A CHILL Cahill	A DERRY dreamy
A DITTY dittay	A FILLY flaily	A FIRST afrits
A FLOSS sol-fas	A GHOST asoght	A GINNY naying
A SPOOK pookas	ACE INN canine	ACE LOT locate
ADD EGG dagged	ADD EGO goaded	ADD ELY deadly
ADD GIN adding	ALL NOS llanos	BEE FLY feebly
DI LOST stolid	DI OOPS! isopod	EGG HOT hogget
GIN NOW owning	GIN OTT toting	I'M NOSY toting

BASSEY is Shirley Bassey; a DITTAY is the matter of charge or ground of indictment against a person for a criminal offence; ASOGHT is the past tense of aseek (obsolete verb, to seek for); and POOKAS are Irish hobgoblins.

A BEE MRS besmear	A BELLOW lowable	A GILL, NY allying
ACE FILM malefic	ACE LOST lactose	ADD DEER dreaded
ADD FIST faddist	ADEN'S TV advents	A.E.G. HINT heating
A.E.G. HOST hostage	A.E.G.LOST legatos	AIM MOSS mimosas
ALL MOSS slaloms	BEEF GIN beefing	BEE KNOT betoken
BEE LOST boletes	EGG LOST toggles	EH, I LOST eoliths
ELM MOSS Moslems		

A.E.G. are the initials for the electrical firm Allgemeine Electricitatts Gesellschaft; and BOLETES are fungi.

A BELLOOT lootable	A DEER STY strayed
A DIN...PSST sandpits	A GILL NOW allowing
ABEL (MRS. T) lamberts	ACE FILLY facilely]
ACE HIRST chariest	ACE IN NOS. canonise
ACE IN OPS. canopies	ADD MOOSY doomsday
A.E.G. GLORY gargoye	BEE FIRST briefest
BEING NOW wing-bone	CHILL OOT oilcloth
EH, I'M NO PR morphine	HIM OR STU? humorist

OOT is Scottish for out.

Longer alphomic phrases are hard to find. Two nine-letter examples: ABE ILL...STY bestially, ACE EFFORT coffee-rat (1859 OED quote). The ten-letter phrase DEE, FLOOR VW! overflowed are the words of a somewhat incoherent husband who, to his horror, discovers that his wife Dee has spilt something on the floor of his treasured car. After his initial shock, he suspects from the all-pervasive smell that Dee has been buying supplies of her favourite tippie behind his back. He stammeringly inquires of her: DEE, GIN OR R? R? reordering.

The following alphomic phrase are the words of a modest man who is embarrassed when his wife refers to him as an ace egg, presumably meaning 'good egg': ACE EGG I'M NOT! geomagnetic.

My last alphomic phrase has 15 letters and concerns a new recruit at the highly secret codes and ciphers establishment of Bletchley Park in England during the Second World War. As a code breaker he was a disaster, continually losing letters with effortless ease. Understandably he was nervous, added to which he was afflicted with a stammer which became noticeably worse as his nervousness increased. Asked by his supervisor how he was progressing on a particular assignment, he unintentionally blurted out ABCDEF I.. I... I... I... I LOST! This alphomic phrase is appropriately made from the alphome of CODIFIABILITIES.