

THE VULGAR TONGUE

JEFF GRANT

Hastings, New Zealand

Slang forms a significant part of the English language. The first slang dictionary appeared over 300 years ago, recording terms that are now mostly obsolete. Some of the old favourites survived though, and a few were thought too vulgar to include in standard dictionaries until quite recently. Even today, the sanitised family edition of the American *Official Scrabble Players Dictionary* omits dozens of supposedly offensive words. What a wimpy bunch of woolly woofers! We should be celebrating our colourful slanguage, not censoring it. Here is an A-to-Z collection from the 1811 *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*. Note that none of these is allowed in Scrabble.

ABEL-WACKETS blows given on the palm of the hand with a twisted handkerchief (a jocular punishment among sailors)
BRISTOL-MAN the son of an Irish thief and a Welsh whore
CLEYMES artificial sores made by beggars to excite charity
DILBERRIES small pieces of excrement adhering to the hairs near the fundament
EQUIPT rich, or having new clothes
FLAYBOTTOMIST a bum-brusher, or schoolmaster
GUNDIGUTS a fat, pousy fellow
HARK-YE-ING whispering on one side to borrow money
ITCHLAND Scotland (also called Scratchland and Louseland)
JAW-ME-DEAD a talkative person
KONOBLIN-RIG stealing large pieces of coal from coal sheds
LANSPRISADO one who has only twopence in his pocket
MAW-WALLOP a filthy composition, sufficient to provoke vomiting
NIMGIMMER a physician who cures venereal disease
ODD-COME-SHORTLYS some time or another
PUZZLE-TEXT an ignorant blustering parson
QUOT a man who meddles in women's household business
RANDLE a nonsensical rhyme recited by Irish schoolboys as an apology for breaking wind near friends
SLIPGIBBET one who deserves and has narrowly escaped the gallows
THINGSTABLE a ludicrous designation for a constable, avoiding the first syllable which sounds somewhat indecent
UNGUENTUM AUREUM a bribe
VAN-NECK a woman with large breasts
WATER-SCRIGER a doctor who prescribes from inspecting the water of his patients; a piss-prophet
XANTIPPE a shrew or scolding wife
YAFFLING eating
ZOUCH a slovenly ungenteeled man who stoops while walking