

Glossary of 17th Century Terms

The 17th Century Research Group of the St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society has been transcribing wills and inventories of that period relating to St Albans for nearly twenty years. Over 1,000 documents have been examined and this Glossary of Terms has been compiled which other researchers may find useful.

Axletree/Axtree: a fixed beam or bar, on the rounded ends of which the wheels of a vehicle are connected and revolve.

Barrow-hog: a castrated boar or swine.

Band: the neckband of a shirt.

Baven/Bavin: a bundle of brushwood or light underwood, such as is used in bakers' ovens. Differing from a faggot in being bound with only one withe or band, rather than two.

Beakehorn (Bycorne, Bick-Iron, Bickern): The pike or taper end of a blacksmith's anvil. Also, an anvil with two projecting taper ends (bi-corn = 2 horns).

Beetle: a small heavy-headed hammer, used for ramming down a pavement, hedge-stakes or wedges, but sometimes covered with nails and used for splitting wood.

Binding Piece: a piece of lumber which is nailed between two opposite beams or joists to prevent lateral deflection.

Birding Piece: a light gun for shooting birds.

Binge: dialect spelling of bin, a container or vessel.

Bloom: a mass of puddled iron hammered or squeezed into a bar.

Bolting/Boulting: sieving flour or meal before bread making. The tub in which the sifting was done was a **Bolting Tun**, and after sifting it was stored in a **Bolting Hutch**.

Bolting House: a room for preparing food.

Braser: a large pan for burning charcoal.

Breast-wimble: a kind of gimlet or auger upon which the breast presses in working.

Burne: 1. a contracted form of burden, something that is borne or carried, e.g. "a burne of stickes". 2. the effect of burning or clearing.

Chirurgion: one whose profession it is to cure bodily diseases and injuries by manual operation; a surgeon.

Charger: A large plate or flat dish for carrying a large joint of meat; a platter.

Clout: 1. a cloth. 2. a kind of nail.

Clowt/Clout: Leather for repairing or patching heels, shoes.

Coulter: a vertical iron cutting blade fixed in front of a ploughshare.

Court Cupboard: an early form of sideboard built in two parts.

Cradle (agricultural): A light frame of wood attached to a scythe, having a row of long curved teeth parallel to the blade, to lay the corn more evenly in the swathe.

Cross-cloth: a linen cloth worn across the forehead.

Cyprus Table: a table made of wood from cypress tree.

De[m]i: a half.

dci defti: d[i]c[t]i def[unc]ti - the said deceased.

Dosser/Dorser: a basket carried on the back, or slung in pairs over the back of a beast of burden, a pannier.

Earpicker: an implement for clearing wax from the ears.

Fann: 1. a winnowing fan, a shallow wicker basket from which the grain was thrown by

hand. 2. a mechanical device generating a draught, so separating the grain from the chaff.

Fellies, Fellows, Fellae, Felles: the section of the rim of a wheel supported by the spokes.

Fetters: Chains or shackles for the feet of a human being or animal; hence gen. a bond, shackle (rare in singular).

Field Bedstead: a bed designed for rough use (like a modern camp bed).

Flaskett: 1. a long, shallow basket or oval washing tub, with hands at each end. 2. a small barrell for taking beer to harvest fields. 3. a flask or bottle.

Forest Bill: a woodman's bill-hook; an instrument for lopping trees etc.

Fossett/Fosser/Forser/Forcer: a small chest, sometimes leather-covered and strengthened with iron bands, used to hold documents, jewellery and other valuables.

Fryse (Frize, Fryze): A kind of coarse woollen cloth, with a nap, usually on one side only.

Garner: a storehouse for corn or granary.

Gaskyns (or Galligaskyns): unpadded wide breeches which reach to the knee.

Gorget: an article of female dress covering neck and breast; a wimple.

Guile Tun: a wort tub in which liquor ferments (cf. Wort Trough).

Headpeece: many meanings - in our context, a piece of armour for a person's head.

Horsemill: a mill driven by a horse walking in a circle.

Jett: a large ladle or scoop, used esp. in brewing and other industries to empty a vessel.

Keeler/Kyeler: a cooler, used in brewing.

Kine/Kinne/Kyne: cows.

Latten/Lattin: a mixed metal of yellow colour, either identical with, or closely resembling, brass.

Livery cupboard: 1. a cupboard for keeping clothes. 2. a cupboard with perforated doors for the storage of food. 3. a cupboard used for bread and wine in sleeping quarters.

Morris-Pike: a type of pike used by soldiers - supposed to be of Moorish origin.

Napkins: were large in the 17th century, 35"x45", used to help eating with the hands. The size was reduced when knives and forks were introduced.

Nigge/Niggard: a false bottom to a grate to reduce fuel consumption (hence "niggardly").

Noggin (sometimes spelt noggen): 1. a small drinking vessel: a mug, cup or ladle. 2. a small pail or bucket.

Ob: an abbreviation for "obulus", i.e. a halfpenny.

Peel: a flat, long-handled shovel with which loaves were put into and removed from a hot oven.

Penal sum: the penal sum for an unpaid bond was generally twice the amount of either the original bond or the estate of the person owing.

Pipkin: a small (usually earthenware) pot or pan. Also a drinking vessel or bottle.

Powthering tub: a powdering tub in which meal was cured with salt and spice.

Posnet: 1. a small iron pot for use inside a larger vessel, e.g. for cooking porridge. 2. a small metal cooking pot with handle and three feet.

Qualiver/Qualivre/Caliver/Caliber: a light kind of musket, introduced in the 16th century, which seems to have been the lightest possible firearm.

Sad: of a dark, sombre colour.

Saveguard: an outer skirt or petticoat worn by women to protect their dress when riding.

Scitterne (Cittern): a musical instrument of the lute family. Popularity declined after the 17thC, whereupon usage changed to suggest any of various stringed instruments, especially in archaic contexts.

Sconce: a candlestick with a screen to protect it from the wind. Or a flat candlestick with a

handle for carrying. Or a bracket candlestick fixed to the wall.

Scuttle: a large shallow open basket or wickerwork bowl used for carrying corn, earth, vegetables etc.

Searce: a fine sieve or strainer.

Seed-cod: A basket or other vessel of wood carried upon one arm of the husbandman, to bear the seed or grain which he sows with the other hand.

Shoat/Shott/Shot: a young pig, or one castrated.

Skavell, Scavel, Scaffle etc.: a small spade.

Skeel: A wooden bucket, pail, tub, or similar vessel used for some domestic purpose, chiefly for holding milk or water, and usually having a handle or handles formed by staves rising above the rim.

Skep: A basket or hamper, varying in form and use in different localities.

Slice: a fire shovel used particularly for getting the ashes out of a baking oven. The end was shaped like a spade or paddle.

Slickstone (Sleekstone): a smooth stone using for smoothing and polishing.

Sling: (innkeeping): a strong, thick, short pole used for lifting barrels onto men's shoulders.

Slink piece: a skin from an aborted calf or weak, sickly beast.

Standish: an ink stand.

Steele: an implement for sharpening cutting tools or utensils.

Stone-horse: an uncastrated or entire horse; a stallion.

Store Pig: an animal acquired for fattening.

Sweft (Swift): A light kind of reel, usually of adjustable diameter, upon which a skein of silk, yarn, etc. is placed in order to be wound off.

Tann: a winnowing fan; a shallow wicker basket from which the grain was thrown by hand.

Terce: in brewing/innholding, a barrel and a half.

Thrum(b) (Weaving): each of the ends of the warp-threads left unwoven and remaining attached to the loom when the web is cut off; usually in pl. (also collect. sing.) the row or fringe of such threads.

Tick: a case in which flock, feathers, chaff etc. were put to make bolster or mattress.

Tilter: an apparatus for tilting a cask so as to empty it without stirring up the dregs.

Tod: a weight used in the wool trade, usually 28 pounds or 2 stone, but varying locally. Sometimes just a general load, not a specified weight.

Tonnell: a cask or barrel.

Tunnel: a funnel for transferring liquor from one vessel to another.

Venetians: semi-fitting hose reaching just below the knee.

Warp (Weaving): the threads which are extended lengthwise in the loom, usually twisted harder than the weft or woof, with which these threads are crossed to form the web or piece.

Warping: the action of preparing a warp for weaving.

Weather: a male sheep, usually castrated and in its second season.

Wort Trough: a trough for the infusion of malt, which after fermentation becomes beer.

CLOTH

Measurements:

2 ¼ inches = 1 nail

4 nails = 1 quarter (9")

4 quarters = 1 yard (36")

5 quarters = 1 ell (45")

Canvas: coarse, unbleached cloth made of hemp or flax. Often used for sheets and window curtains.

Darnix: famous for tapestries and upholstery materials, name derived from the city of Tournai (Doornick).

Fustian: thick, coarse woollen cloth, cotton or flax, usually dyed a dark colour.

Holmes Fustian: a clothing material made in Swabia, particularly in Ulm (hence Holmes).

Linsey woollsey: mixed fabric of wool & linen or wool & flax. Or inferior wool, used for furnishings and clothing for poorer classes.

List(e): the selvage, border or edge of a cloth, usually of different material from the body of the cloth.

Lockram: coarse, loosely woven linen. Used for skirts, neckware etc by poorer classes.

Osenborow Fustian: a clothing material made in Osnaburg.

Polldavy: coarse cloth or canvas.

Saye: worsted cloth. Could be dyed, various weights. Used for clothing, bed hangings, curtains etc. (Reference in Pepys to Green Say.)

Wodmole/Wedmole/Wadmole: a coarse woollen material.

Wrought: decorated, embroidered with needlework.

WORDS USED IN COMPLETING ACCOUNTS

Ingrossing (or Engrossing) Inventory: to write in legal terms.

Exhibition: for Oaths and Act of Court.

Proctor's fee

Quietus est: he is at rest – released from obligation.

Apparitor: Officer of Court.

TANNING

Dicker: parcel or lot of 10 hides or skins of leather.

Lime

Lye: wood ash

Tan bark

Pits, Vats

Taw, Tawing: softening.

Wooze, Ooze, Ouze: liquid used.

Grainer: liquid and or vat for stripping hair from hides.