

Seven old English words that deserve to make a comeback

From the leader of the free world, who claims to “have the best words” and knows how to “win bigly”, through to people who feel more comfortable using emojis rather than letters while texting, the English language seems to be taking a bit of a drubbing of late. But by way of celebrating St. George’s Day, comedian Gary Slaymaker selects some English words that deserve to make a comeback.

1. Expergefactor

One of the more impressive looking old words that has fallen out of use. Quite simply, it’s something that wakes you up. For most of us, that would be an alarm clock; but it could also be the chirping of birds, the sound of the bin men, or even a noisy neighbour. Ironically, The X Factor, is something that, these days, sends most people to sleep.

2. Lanspresado

A sparkling wine, or a rustic Italian side-dish perhaps? Not a bit of it. A lanspresado is someone who arrives somewhere, having conveniently forgotten their wallet... or having some other convoluted story to explain why they have no money on their person. According to a dictionary of thieves’ slang in 1736 – “He that comes into company with but Two-pence in his Pocket”. Lanspresado does seem like an unnecessarily long title for a person of this nature – in my little peer group we just call him Keith.

3. Grubbling

The art of searching through your pockets for your phone, or keys, or any similar small objects. Even though the word was created as a verb for pockets, it can also mean searching around desk drawers for similar small objects. According to one definition – “Grubbling is like groping, except less organised.” Probably not the best line of defence you’ll hear during a court case, either.

Grubbling is like groping, except less organised.

4. Razzle

Probably more familiar to some as the name of a special interest magazine for gentlemen, this is also a word from the East of England which means to cook something until the outside of it burns, while the inside remains raw. Here’s a term that should be brought back for any football supporter who’s bought a burger from a van outside any sports ground across the country. You can also razzle by warming yourself in front of a fire, although please note, the burnt on the outside/raw on the inside approach isn’t something we’d recommend here either.

5. Cuddle-Me-Buff

Once you’ve had your inexpertly cooked burger, why not head off to Yorkshire to wash it down with a Cuddle-Me-Buff – simply an old term for beer. It’s such a jolly term that it clearly takes the sting out of any drunken altercations as a result. “The defendant then grew quite abusive in his language, as he’d been cuddling for most of the night.” On a cautionary note, the result of too much Cuddle-Me-Buff could very easily lead to a bout of Piddle-Me-Pants

Fancy a Cuddle-Me-Buff whilst I razzle this sausage?

6. Freck

Sports commentators can often find themselves lost for words during heated contests, and so this word is an ideal addition to their vocabulary. To move swiftly or nimbly – e.g. “Harry Kane there, frecking his way through the Arsenal defence.” It’s a word that could also be used in Hollywood action movies, as a substitute for their more colourful phrasing, e.g. “Let’s get the freck outta here”.

7. Kakistocracy

Finally, we complete this little spin through the majesty of the English language, with another incredibly apt word... that’s probably never been more important than in these turbulent political times. First coined in 1829 by English author Thomas Love Peacock, and offered here without comment: Kakistocracy – a state or country run by the worst, least qualified, or most unscrupulous citizens.

More wonderful wordplay