

Glossary of Irish Terms in *By the Bog of Cats*

There's an expression in Ireland to describe a woman in a very bad humor, "She's like a *bag of cats*."

Irish Travellers—The Travellers are a nomadic group of people living in Ireland. It is estimated that there are around 25,000 Travellers living in Ireland today. Many non-Travellers refer to these people as "Tinkers" (often derogatively) from the Irish word "tincéiri" which means "tinsmith." Travellers distinguish themselves by their own language (called Gammon) and customs. Because Travellers are often illiterate, their historical origin has been obscured (they kept no written records). Homeless landowners from Cromwell's military campaign, victims of the 1840's famine, craftsmen searching for work, problems with drinking, and the birth of illegitimate children are all possible theories for the existence of the Travellers. When Travellers arrive in an area, there is often an increase in tensions between local residents and the Travellers. Local residents often insist that there is an increase in crime when Travellers arrive. A recent study in Ireland states that over half of Travellers do not live past the age of 39.

Geography: The midlands of Ireland are filled with bogs, hills, and mountains, making farming incredibly difficult.









Tinker—As stated above a “tinker” is a tinsmith. Tinkers served as wandering menders of tin wares, such as pots and pans.

Betimes: (*ref. page 7*) sometimes.

Coddin’: (*ref. page 8*) having someone on, tricking. In this instance, tricking the eye.

Good innin’s: (*ref. page 9*) to have had a long and active life.

Wagon of a girl child: (*ref. page 11*) “wagon” refers to an ugly woman. Calling Josie a “wagon of a girl child” is basically calling her an ugly girl.

Yokes: (*ref. page 12*) can actually refer to anything, a generic term for an object.

Quinched: (*ref. page 13*) extinguished

Give Over: (*ref. page 13*) a request to stop doing something.

Pegged: (*ref. page 15*) threw.

Brown studies: (*ref. page 15*) a funk, depression.

Puss: (*ref. page 15*) face (usually a sulky face).

Snap: (*ref. page 16*) a card game in which a pack of cards is divided evenly between the players. The cards are dealt facedown in piles in front of each player. The players take turns pulling a card from the top of their pile and placing it (face-up) on a central pile. If two cards placed consecutively on the pile are the same number, then the first player to yell “Snap” and place their hand on the central pile wins the entire pile. The winner of the game is the person who accumulates the entire pack.

Thick: (*ref. page 16*) stupid.

Back-answerin’: (*ref. page 17*) talking back, sassing.

Jumper: (*ref. page 17*) sweater.

Cheek: (*ref. page 23*) disrespect (this reference, “Ya’ve a cheek...” is closer to meaning that Carthage has a lot of nerve.)

Spancel: (*ref. page 24*) This word is actually both a noun and a verb. The noun form is a form of rope hobble for tying animals. The verb form means to hobble an animal *with* the noun form of the word.

Scrubber: (*ref. page 24*) A female of low morals.

Clatter: (*ref. page 25*) a slap.

Lashin' into a naggin of whiskey: (*ref. page 26*) Drinking a large amount out of a small bottle of whiskey.

Butchery: (*ref. page 27*) a synonym for “bloody”.

Gatch: (*ref. page 27*) an unusual way of walking.

Nappy: (*ref. page 28*) diaper.

Scutty: (*ref. page 30*) a derogatory term for a woman of the lower class (implies lack of hygiene and morals).

Not the full shilling: (*ref. page 32*) mentally handicapped, slow.

Whingin': (*ref. page 37*) crying.

Whisht: (*ref. page 38*) keep quiet, hush (depending on dialects, this can either be written as “whisht” or as “whist”).

Craythur: (*ref. page 38*) (pronounced CRAY-tuur) Irish Gaelic for “creature”...also a modern Irish term for “whiskey”.

Knacker: (*ref. page 39*) gypsy, traveling person (tinker). A “knacker” is also someone who acquires old or dead horses for slaughter. In this instance, being called a “piebald knacker” calls into question Hester’s racial purity.

Shower: (*ref. page 41*) crowd.

Git: (*ref. page 46*) rotten person.

Molly cuddlin': (*ref. page 46*) over protecting.

Banjaxin': (*ref. page 47*) breaking.

Stravagin': (*ref. page 47*) to wander aimlessly, to saunter or stroll.

Sup: (*ref. page 48*) a small amount.

Industrial school: (*ref. page 49*) schools run by religious orders in England, Ireland, and Scotland (funded by the public) for neglected or abandoned children in order to “prevent crime”. In recent years, these schools have become well known for rampant physical and sexual abuse of the students at the hands of the members of the religious orders running the schools.

Givin' out: (*ref. page 51*) criticizing someone.

Cut of Ya: (*ref. page 53*) a shortened version of “cut of your jib”. This expression originally comes from sailors, who would compare their opinions of ships based on the jib sails (triangular sails set between the topmast head and the jib boom). Some people think that the expression came into being because of the similarity between the triangular sails and the shape of a person’s nose.

Rip: (*ref. page 54*) an immoral person.

Scrubber: (*ref. page 55*) a female of low morals (a “scrubber boy” would be similar to a male prostitute).

Glane: (*ref. page 56*) actually an Irish pronunciation of the word “glean” meaning to gather information.

Purlin’: (*ref. page 60*) the sound made by a small stream running among obstructions.

English Words Obscured by the Midland Accent

Ya: you

Auld: old

Wan: one

Wance: once

Lave: leave

Be: by

Aither: either

Cetch: catch

Axin’: asking

Sourt: sort

Yees: you (plural)

Me: my

Ates: eats

Meself: myself

Everywan: everyone

Hould: hold

Ya'd: you would

Ya've: you have

Tould: told

Kittle: kettle

Bilin': boiling

Tilet: toilet

Writ: written

Ne'er: never

Babby: baby

Stookin': stacking

Ladin': leading

D'ya: do you

G'wan: go on

Eegit: idiot

Crame: cream

Aisy: easy

Biled: boiled

Tay: tea

Sammige: sandwich

Siled: soiled

Folly: follow

Quane: queen

Sould: sold

Again': against

Dacency: decency

Swallyed: swallowed

Maneness: meanness

Glamin': gleaming

Gargiyles: gargoyles

Tayspoonfull: teaspoonful

Hoor: whore

Yella: yellow

Yeer: your