

We have received various messages by email, snail mail, and word of mouth regarding the origins of many school words. Although these are recorded below, it is interesting that you are not all in agreement as to the derivation of some of these words and phrases.

We will probably never now get to know the true meanings of the words and phrases from the past, but you do all like a good argument, so please feel free to join in the debate!

The School's own language was named 'Slanguage' in S. Hopewell's book, 'Royal Russell School, A History'. The ISBN for this book is 0 09 136160 5, first published in 1978 and printed in Great Britain by The Anchor Press Ltd, Tiptree, Essex. Some examples of School 'Slanguage' are shown below with some more recent additions. If you know of any more words, and/or the origins and meanings of them, please email Sue.

Barney A practical joke

Benched Punished

Beurre Butter (or more likely margarine)

Booze Tea: a concoction with milk and sugar added, decanted from an urn into large metal jugs placed on the tables. 'Sling down the booze!' was an oft heard cry in the Dining Hall as we filled our plastic beakers with this delectable beverage.

Buck Someone keen on games or gymnastics. When the gymnasium was built at Russell Hill, it seemed so wonderful that it was compared with Buckingham Palace. Hence anyone using it frequently was known as a 'buck'.

Bugs 'ole St Andrews House. Originally the old mansion at Ballards, which became St Andrews before demolition.

Anthony Mak (1974-1982) writes:

I was told by several independent sources that St. Andrews House received this nickname due to an outbreak of head lice that broke out in the 60s.

Colin Barrable (1951-1956) tells us that Bugs 'ole is more likely to have been the name given to St Andrews boys by jealous Oxford and Cambridge boys, than it has to do with either head lice or any vermin in the old building!

Carney Try and persuade someone to give you something. To scrounge.

Cat's Cradle Girls' Boarding House. Originally applied to South House only.

Chibby **Roger Fletcher (1942-1949) writes:**

It was an everlasting game played by two teams of pupils in every spare moment where, when caught by the opponents, you had to go to the chibby tree and remain until released by your team or until all members of your team were caught. Then roles were reversed. I recall these games going for many days because we had an honour system whereby nobody was allowed to follow you when returning to your previous hiding spot from which you attempted to get to the chibby tree to release your mates. Some of the hiding places were

very strange.

- Chin rub** To lie
Anthony Mak (1974-1982) writes:
this was contemporary with my time at school. Although I was there from 74-82, this term probably came in around 77-78. Originally, we used to just rub our chins in a condescending manner with a big grin when someone said something we didn't believe. Later, people gave up rubbing their chins and just said 'chin rub'.
- Chink** Money
- Chibbies** **Andrew McWilliam (1933-1940) reflects:**
Chibbies preceded the later version of chippies, and a favourite venue for a wholly unauthorized midnight excursion was Chibby Valley, where a bonfire would be lit and a roasting session enjoyed with an ample supply of chestnuts. Lessons the following morning had a strangely lethargic air about them, often accompanied by a residual hint of smoke!
- Chippies** Sweet chestnuts. In season, prefects would sometimes demand a specified number of 'chippies' harvested, shelled and ready for roasting as a punishment for some minor misdemeanour.
- Chunk** Large piece of cake or chocolate left for a pupil by a friend
- Clump** To hit someone
- Colley** A game of marbles
- Cresta Run** **Ex member of staff, Andrew Foot (1950-1984) writes:**
One of Crispin's! The footpath just beyond The Cottage in the Wood, leading down to a gate into Conduit Lane. So called because of its popularity as a toboggan run in the big snow of 1962. Part of it is still used as a cross country course.
- Dags** A dare
- Dump** Where Croydon Council used to dump all the local refuse, next to the old swimming pool. Now used for the annual Fireworks Display, but not much good for anything else!
- Dumper** Dustcart – these vehicles were a familiar sight at Ballards when the dump was landfilled as they would come in convoy every few minutes up the Conduit Lane drive. Eagerly awaited was the dumper from Croydon market as it often contained wooden orange crates useful in the construction of the shacks at Pets' Corner where we kept rabbits and guinea pigs.
- Dyke** Lavatory
- End of the World** **Ex member of staff, Andrew Foot (1950-1984) writes:**
A place-name for the far end of the School grounds nearest South Croydon. Much used by the CCF in their exercises on Mondays. Probably coined by Crispin.

Epp	To do something very vigorously
Fag	A Junior working for a Senior
Favey	Someone reputed to be a staff favourite
Frère	Brother
Funk	Cheating or any action that was unfair.
Gink	Single coil electric cooker used by prefects
Goff	Andrew McWilliam (1933-1940) reflects: Back in the 1930s the Headmaster, Mr Roberts, often spoke of playing a round of Goff on the links, the favoured pronunciation in those days.
Grims Dyke	St Andrews Anthony Mak (1974-1982) writes: A former Housemaster of St. Andrews, Mr Hogarth, was nicknamed 'Grim' and thus St. Andrew's became known as Grim's Dyke. I had the pleasure of knowing Mr Hogarth – he was quite a character and, yes, often grim. His daughters were known as the 'Mini-Grims'. Martin Chapman (1966-1975) tells us that this term originated from his very good friend Mark Hanson (1970-1975).
Herberts' Corner	Ex member of staff, Andrew Foot (1950-1984) writes: Another Crispin term for the top corner of West Pitch. This area became a popular socialising venue during Break and lunch-time. Almost certainly because of its proximity to the bushes used as a smoking den. There was always plenty of fag-end evidence there!
Ho	A cigarette, hence 'ho-ing' – smoking
Hobbitts	Junior Department
Hobby	Badly drawn square or rectangle
Hunk	A piece of 'chunk' or other food
Joe or Jobie	Doing something out of the ordinary – vaguely daring or exciting
Joe-mag	Small comics of war or similar stories
John	Someone over-confident – 'big headed' or arrogant Anthony Mak (1974-1982) writes: I believe this slang was created by me and my group of friends (Zeki Murad, Brian Winstanley, and John Young). John Davies was our Technical Drawing teacher circa 77-80, who had a 'don't mess with me' attitude. His classes were excellent as he had very high standards. Consequently, he didn't give praise easily, but when he did it was always well deserved. Unfortunately, Mr Davies was a heavy smoker, so he had the tendency to make a short guttural

exhaling of breath before talking (a kind of 'eh' sound). Therefore, when anybody did something exceptional, we would mimic his exhaling of breath followed by the word 'John' to convey the sense that the exceptional act would have been worthy of praise even from the great, John Davies. Simultaneously, we would sweep out our hand from our chest downwards in a chopping motion as if to cut-off any verbal dissent.

Mecca Domestic staff

Anthony Mak (1974-1982) writes:

This term was handed down to us by our seniors, so it could easily be early 70s. The lifestyle of the domestic staff was said to include a lot of bingo, and as bingo halls at that time were mostly run by Mecca, hence they were called Meccas.

Jonathan Buckle (1954-1961) writes:

The term MECCA dates from much earlier than the 1970s. It was certainly well established into our vocabulary some twenty years earlier and was used to describe any 'blue collar' worker. The term was also a title. We would refer to 'Mecca So-and-so' in those days before the onset of political correctness

Tony Ford (1947-1961) tells us:

The origin of Meccas for domestic staff most probably derived from Shakespeare's *The Rude Mechanicals*, as in those days no one would have known about praying to Mecca.

Meccaring Doing domestic duties

Meph **Andrew McWilliam (1933-1940) reflects:**
This was a term used to describe a less robust and adventurous type of boy, the root meaning in the dictionary being, perhaps, a little less than complimentary! Those leaving school in their last term in the 1930s would greet each other with the words; "Attcher Leaver"! Not too dissimilar from the cockney expression, "Watcher Cock"!

Methy Someone whose behaviour was almost too good to be true

Mingy A small piece of 'chunk' or other food

Mme Presumably from the French 'Madame' and pronounced 'mee'. It was the title given to female adults such as masters' wives and sundry staff instead of the usual Mrs or Miss. It was in no way disrespectful, just common parlance.

Nipping **Roger Ballaster (1945-1954) says:**
A really painful reminder of an unpleasant practice! When a boy got his first long trousers, all boys already wearing long trousers were permitted to squeeze a portion of the newly garbed long trouser wearer's inner thigh – the bruises took a long while to fade away!!

Observay	A viewpoint in the woods that affords a wide vista towards Croham Hurst and Sanderstead
Paddy	A state of bad temper
Pash	Close friend
Pay Day	Wednesday before the end of term, when all debts (financial, repayment of favours, paying back physical 'debts') are repaid.
Pecker	Another state of bad temper
Piffing	Ex member of staff, Andrew Foot (1950-1984) writes: A term meaning to swing the lead – feigning illness to avoid school, games etc.
Pivvies	Small marbles
Pop	A slap across the face. Hopefully in these enlightened times this disgraceful practice has been discontinued.
Pupil's friend	His or her parent or guardian
Scruff Rig	Non uniform clothes worn after teaching hours
Shant	The School David Pickles (1955-1965) writes: This used to be with the Fire Brigade in Croydon. Ex member of staff, Andrew Foot (1950-1984) writes: In the early days of 'boys only' at Russell, pupils (all boarders then) were allowed to bring pets with them and a collection of hutches and other pet accommodation grew up in the area behind the Dining Hall close to the Chapel. This became known as 'Shanty-Town' and the term was extended to refer to the whole School. It was a term of endearment really, by boys for many of whom the School was their only real home. The Junior and Girls' School at Purley was known by the boys at Russell as 'T'Other Shant' well into the Sixties.
Shunt	Allow someone to move ahead of you in a queue
Slashing the playground	Brushing puddles from the playground after rain
Stash	To spoil something
Stuffed up	Misled – having one's leg pulled
Sukey	Domestic staff
Swab	Cloth to wipe down the tables in the dining hall, it usually stank! (says Martin Chapman: 1966-1975)
The A's or A levels	Ground staff

The Tyke	Tippin: the little brown terrier that chose to spend most of his time with us. Although I think he belonged to a local resident, he was generally accepted as our School dog and mascot.
T'other Shant	Russell Hill School in Purley (The Juniors and Girls School prior to their move to RRS in the early 60's)
Turn green	Blush
Yok	A particular form of pupil bullying, hence bullying in general