

# Made-up about this boss new Liverpool Dickie

Jonnie Robinson, Lead Curator of Spoken English, writes:

We can all probably remember the first time we met a *Scouser* [= 'person from Liverpool'] face to face. Leafing through Tony Crowley's excellent [Liverpool English Dictionary](#) immediately transported me back to 1983 and a fellow first year student in halls of residence who regularly described himself as *dead made-up* [= 'really pleased/excited'] or disdainfully proclaimed *that's last* [= expression used dismissively of e.g. unpleasant drink or food/embarrassing choice of clothing/dismal taste in music]. *Made-up* and *last* are both in Crowley's wonderful new dictionary, which is the culmination of years of research into Liverpool English. There have been countless entertaining and informative treatments of *Scouse* [= 'the dialect of Liverpool'] – both in print and online – but Crowley provides a long overdue authoritative inventory of Liverpool vernacular based on evidence from published works, thus enabling a reader to trace the provenance of over 2,000 fascinating expressions.

✖ It's intriguing, for instance, to be able to consult his entries for items in the Library's own [Evolving English WordBank](#) – examples of contemporary dialect and slang words and phrases submitted to the British Library by members of the public in 2010/11. The following items that feature in both resources include established Liverpool favourites such as [made-up](#) [= 'pleased']; forms that reflect local pronunciation, like [antwack\(y\)](#) [= 'antique']; references to local specialities, customs and folklore, such as [Wet Nellie](#) [= type of bread pudding] and [Hickey the Firebobby](#) [= bogeyman evoked to frighten children/deflect them from asking awkward questions]; and recent coinages, like [jarg](#) [= 'fake, useless, rubbish']. Returning to 1983, it turns out my new friend was actually from Formby, so might potentially be dismissed by sticklers as a *Plastic Scouser* [= 'person from the Liverpool hinterland rather than the city itself']. Intriguingly, there's no entry for *Plastic Scouse(r)* in Crowley's dictionary, although there are several (conflicting) definitions in *Urban Dictionary* and elsewhere online including [this BBC Voices Recording](#). Opinions as to the exact geographic boundary of *Scouseland* [= 'Liverpool'] inevitably vary, but towards the end of our first term my mate from Formby certainly staked a genuine claim to membership of the wider *Scouse* community by asking me if I was intending to put up any *chrizzie dezzies* [= 'Christmas decorations'] in my room. This brilliantly playful construction is an example of a highly productive process of word formation in Liverpool English – abbreviating the stem of an existing word and adding the suffix <-y> or <-ie> (e.g. *plastic* → *plazzy*) and/or changing the final consonant of the stem before adding the suffix (e.g. *plastic* → *placcy*).

Crowley includes several of these highly distinctive hypocoristic forms. Many are arguably universal in colloquial speech, like *bevvy* [= 'drink'] (from

'beverage')], *bezzie* [= 'best mate'], *butty* [= 'sandwich' (from 'bread-and-butter')], *chippy* [= 'chip shop'], *footy* [= 'football'], *offy* [= 'off-licence'], *pressie* [= 'present'], *sarnie* [= 'sandwich'], *trackie* [= 'tracksuit'], *tranny* [= 'transistor radio'] and *wellies* [= 'Wellington boots']; others are probably more geographically and/or socially restricted, such as *bezzies* [= 'best clothes'], *cozzie* [= 'swimming costume'], *lizzy* [= 'elastic'], *lecky* [= 'electricity supply'], *lippy* [= 'lipstick'], *photie* [= 'photograph'] and *trainies* [= 'trainers']. Even more noteworthy, though, is the set of entries that are, if not absolutely unique to Merseyside, then much more common there than elsewhere. Several refer to significant local landmarks, such as *Dellie* [= 'Adelphi cinema'], *Mizzy* [= 'Wavertree Playground' (known locally as 'The Mystery')], *Parly* [= 'Parliament Street'], *Scotty Road* [= 'Scotland Road'], *Sevvy Park* [= 'Sefton Park'], *Tocky* [= 'Toxteth'] and *Vauxy* [= 'Vauxhall Road' (I've never heard *Vauxy* in reference to the Vauxhall Road in London, for instance)]; others refer to municipal institutions or authority figures that have special local significance, including *binnie* [= 'binman'], *bizzies* [= 'the police' (from 'busybody')], *corpy* [= 'Liverpool Corporation'], *cuzzies* [= 'customs officer'], *lanny* [= 'landing stage'], *ozzy* [= 'hospital'], *plainee* [= 'plain-clothes detective']; while several relate to domestic objects and/or cultural activities including food, daily routine and leisure pursuits, such as *avvy* [= 'afternoon'], *conny onny* [= 'condensed milk'], *cowie* [= 'cowboy film'], *finny addy* [= 'finnan-haddock'], *loosie* [= 'cigarette sold individually'], *mobie* [= 'mobile phone'], *muzzy* [= 'moustache'], *emmy oggie* [= 'empty house'], *rollie* [= 'roll-up cigarette'], *squashies* [= 'squashed/broken chocolate sold at reduced price'] and *sterry milk* [= 'sterilised milk']. As a productive form, Crowley's dictionary cannot possibly hope to be comprehensive, but forms like *conny onny* and *mobie* demonstrate how this process applies equally to traditional and to modern household items and my mate's use of *chrizzie dezzies* shows how it can be used to create highly original forms that may or may not be adopted more widely – the *BBC Voices Recordings* captured [basies](#) [= 'baseball boots'] and [grungies](#) [= 'fan of grunge rock music'], for instance.

Crowley's dictionary is a unique celebration of the extraordinary ingenuity and creativity of Scouse vocabulary. To explore the equally distinctive Scouse accent, try [this](#) recording in the Library's [Evolving English VoiceBank](#).

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## Recording of the week: Rabindranath Tagore's 'Songs of Patriotism'

*This week's selection comes from Dr Janet Topp Fargion, Lead Curator of World and Traditional Music.*

Born in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a

writer, poet, artist and teacher. He was the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1913, for his poetry collection *Gitanjali*. Tagore wrote over 2,000 songs during his life, referred to as *Rabindra Sangeet*, in which he expressed his world view commenting on politics, progress and education. This song is taken from an album of patriotic songs, and is sung by Hemanta Mukherjee (1920-1989), popularly known as Hemant Kumar, a respected Indian singer, composer and film producer.

[Nai Nai Bhoy](#)



Tagore's work was hugely influential on European writers and thinkers. A part of his life narrative is highlighted in the [Connecting Stories: Our British Asian Heritage](#) exhibition at the Library of Birmingham in collaboration with the British Library running until 4 November, 2017.

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*Nai Nai Bhoy* is taken from *Songs of Patriotism* – Rabindranath Tagore. Label/catalogue: His Master's Voice ECLP 2280, 1962. BL shelfmark: 1LP0156677

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## [Recording of the week: not on period instruments](#)

*This week's selection comes from Jonathan Summers, Curator of Classical Music Recordings.*

Those of us brought up in the 1980s and 1990s only hearing Haydn performed on period instruments missed a lot. While these were innovative and fascinating, older recordings of symphony orchestras – with large string sections performing Classical repertoire on contemporary instruments – became outmoded. This recording from 1953 of the Oxford Symphony by Geroge Szell and his Cleveland Orchestra is a delight, full of elegance, wit, virility and humour – all the best traits of Haydn's genius.

[Haydn Symphony no. 92 G major \(Oxford\)](#)



A collection of Haydn's symphonies can be found on [British Library Sounds](#).

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## Recording of the week: soul midwives

*This week's selection comes from Holly Gilbert, Cataloguer of Digital Multimedia Collections.*

Friends, Vanessa and Felicity, talk about their work as soul midwives which involves working with people who are dying to ensure that their death is personal and dignified. They describe the different ways that people approach and experience death and how their work has changed the way that they view life and think about their own death. They discuss at length the mysteries that surround death, how other people react to what they do and the gift of insights that they feel are given to them by the people they work with. They also describe the experiences of death that made them want to do this job, they talk about how much they enjoy what they do and say that, contrary to what people might think, it actually involves a lot of joy and laughter.

[The Listening Project\\_soul midwives \(excerpt\)](#)



This recording is part of [The Listening Project](#), an audio archive of conversations recorded by the BBC and archived at the British Library. The full conversation between Vanessa and Felicity can be found [here](#).

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## Recording of the week: computer programming and motherhood in the 1960s

*This week's selection comes from Tom Lean, Project Interviewer for An Oral History of British Science.*

Like many women in the 1960s, Stephanie Shirley left her job in the computer industry after becoming a mother. At the time, women were expected to cut short their professional careers and stay at home to raise the family, but this was not quite what Stephanie Shirley had in mind. In 1963 she started a company named Freelance Programmers, to allow women who had left the computer industry when they had children to continue working as programmers from home. In time, Stephanie Shirley's company grew to a major business employing thousands of people. However, at the start, with sexism rife, Stephanie

Shirley had to go to rather unusual lengths to create a professional image, not least calling herself "Steve", as she recalls in this interview from [An Oral History of British Science](#).

[Stephanie Shirley\\_Programming at home \(BL ref C1379/28\)](#)



This clip is part of [Voices of Science](#), an online resource which uses oral history interviews with prominent British scientists and engineers to tell the stories of some of the most remarkable scientific and engineering discoveries of the past century.

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*Tom Lean will speak about the related [An Oral History of Electricity Supply Industry](#) project at 'The Life Electric', a British Library event on Thursday 19 October. Book your tickets here*  
<https://www.bl.uk/events/the-life-electric-oral-histories-from-the-uk-electricity-supply-industry>