

PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, by J.M. Synge

Glossary of people names, place names, terms, and idioms

Compiled by Elizabeth van den Berg

Spoken by Barbara Carswell on a sound file at

<http://web.ku.edu/idea/special/playnames/playboy.mp3>

Recorded by Paul Meier, September 22, 2007

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Barbara Carswell, a native of Northern Ireland, holds an MS. Ed from the University of Kansas, did her undergraduate work at St. Mary's College of Education, Belfast, taught Irish to secondary school students in Northern Ireland, and in Rann na Feirste, Loch an Iubhair, and Gaoth Dobhair (Gaelteacht areas in Donegal), and also taught Irish at the University of Kansas. Her dialect is that of Donegal.

Paul Meier is a dialect coach, and the founder and director of IDEA. His dialect instruction booklets and CDs on the Irish and Northern Ireland dialects are available from <http://www.paulmeier.com/booklets.html> .

Achill – an island off the western coast

Balina – a town inland in County Mayo

banbhs – (n.) piglets

bedizened – dressed or adorned gaudily. Usually implies magnificence, fine riches

Belmullet – a remote town in the West of Ireland

blackthorn (n.) – a cane made from a blackthorn plum bush

Boers – Dutch settlers suppressed by the British in the Boer War 1899-1902

bona fide – a real traveler and so permitted to purchase spirits after the closing time of a licensed pub.

carcase (n.) – carcass

Carrowmore – a town in Northern Mayo County

Castlebar – large city in the county of Mayo on the NW side of Ireland

cess – expression meaning bad luck derived from the practice of assessment of the Irish for provision of British Military forces. “Bad cess to ya” is a common curse meaning “may you come to a bad end”.

cleeve (n.) – basket worn on the back “Cliabh”

Connaught – an area in Galway county; “blue jugs in a cabin of Connaught” in Act III refers to Danish Vikings who settled in Dublin making blue pottery, but they never reached Connaught, so such a thing would be a rarity.

cnuceen (n.) – a small hill “Cnocain”
creel cart (n.)- a wicker basket cart, usually used for carrying fish
Crossmolina – a town in the middle of County Mayo
curragh (n.) - small boat used in Ireland from ancient times and made of a frame (as of wicker) covered usually with hide or tarpaulin
droughty (adj.) – thirsty
Erris plain – area near Crossmolina, County Mayo, Ireland
felts (n.) – thrushes
frish-frash – leavings in a cup
furze (n.) – a spiny yellow flowered shrub
furzy ditch – ditch under the above mentioned shrub
gob (n.) – a worthless youth with a foul mouth. [Gob literally means mouth]
inveigle (v) – entice, lure
Kilmainham – a jail in Dublin
Kruger – Paul Kruger, president of the South African Republic established by the Boers (see above for Boers)
Land Wars – at peak in the 1880’s, to nationalize the ownership of land and so protect tenant farmers from eviction
lepper (n) – leaper (as in one who leaps)
liefer (adv.) – willingly, gladly
loosed kharkis– refers to former soldiers (who wore khaki uniforms) from the Land Wars, described as being belligerent and unruly
loy (n.) – small spade with a long handle, usually used for the digging of potatoes
lug (n.) – earlobe
Michaelmas – feast of St. Michael, September 29
mitch off– run off, disappear
mitred bishops – mitred refers to the hats that the bishops wore at the time
Neifin (Irish, Gleann Naoighean) = the valley of Glasnevin
Owen – A glen in Galway County. “Owen” usually means a river (often *in* a glen) ... it comes from the Irish word “abhainn”
parlatic – Paralytic (as in not able to stand ... usually with drink!)
paters – the Lords Prayer
poteen (n.) –an illegal home distilled spirit
shebeen (n) - an unlicensed or illegally operated drinking establishment
Sligo (n.) – harbor town in Northern Mayo county; Boats left from here to Glasgow.
spavindy (adj.) – spavin is a disease of horses that causes lameness. Christy refers to a lame donkey. Spavin often refers to a kicking donkey ... one that kicks out backwards ... considered “cranky” . The Irish word is “speachan”.
“Speachaire” means a cranky, irritable person
Stooks of the Dead Women – A shoreline rock formation named for a ship disaster
steleen (n.) – wandering. Pegeen continues with a reference to the poet Owen Roe O’Sullivan who wandered the county of Kerry and it’s Dingle peninsula
St. Martin’s Day – a festival day on November 11 preceding a period of penitence (St. Martin’s Lent) which extends through Christmas.
supeen (n.) – a small drink
thaneen (n.) – thread, song, scrap

tinkers (n.) – itinerant mender of household utensils, so called as they usually worked tin.

turbary (n) – the right to cut turf (see below) on another's property

turf (n.) – rectangular pieces of dried bog, used for fireplace fuel.

union (n.) – public assistance workhouse

wake (n.) gathering of the bereaved following the death of a relative or friend, lasting all night, traditionally with lots of drinking. Started originally to ensure that the person was actually dead before the burial.

winkered – wearing a harness with blinders

Character names, names of other villagers mentioned

Christopher Mahon – also called Christy

Daneen Sullivan

Honor Blake

Jimmy Farrell

Kate Cassidy

Mad Mulrannies

Marcus Quin

Margaret Flaherty – also called **Pegeen Mike**

Michael James Flaherty

Nelly

Old Man Mahon

Patcheen

Philly Cullen

Red Linahan

Sara Tansey

Shawn Keough – also called **Shaneen**

Susan Brady

Widow Quinn

Sources:

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In Wicklow, West Kerry and Connemara, J.M. Synge, Rowman and Littlefield, NJ, 1980

Barbara Carswell (in response to e-mail query)

<http://maps.google.com>