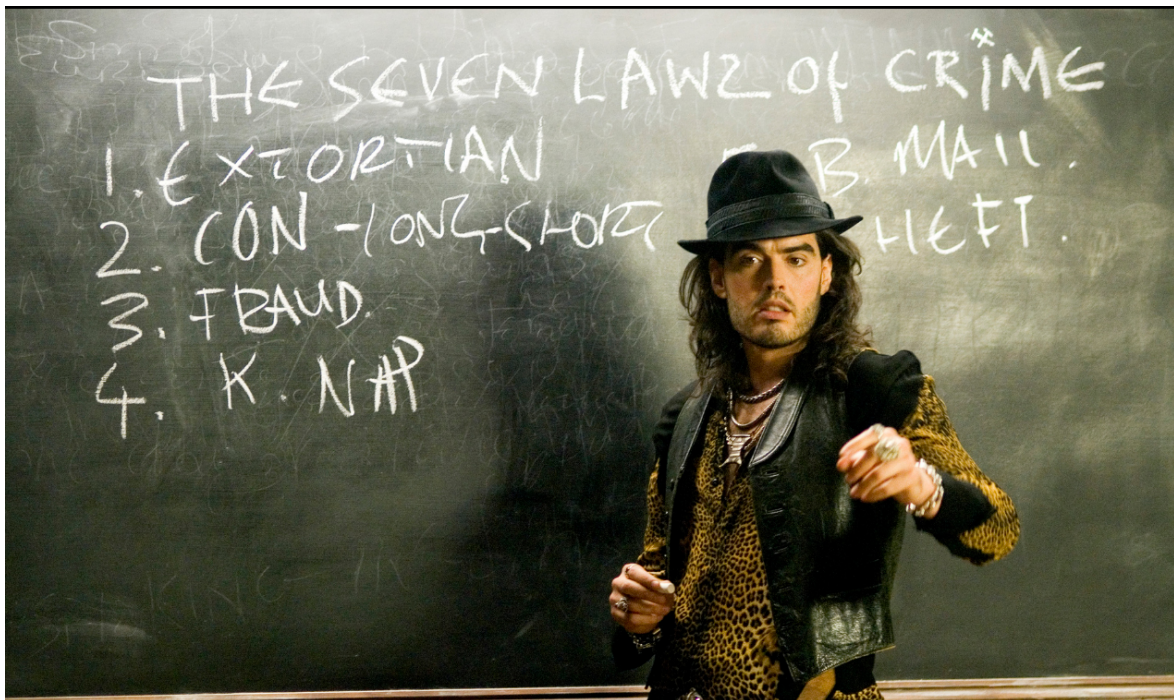
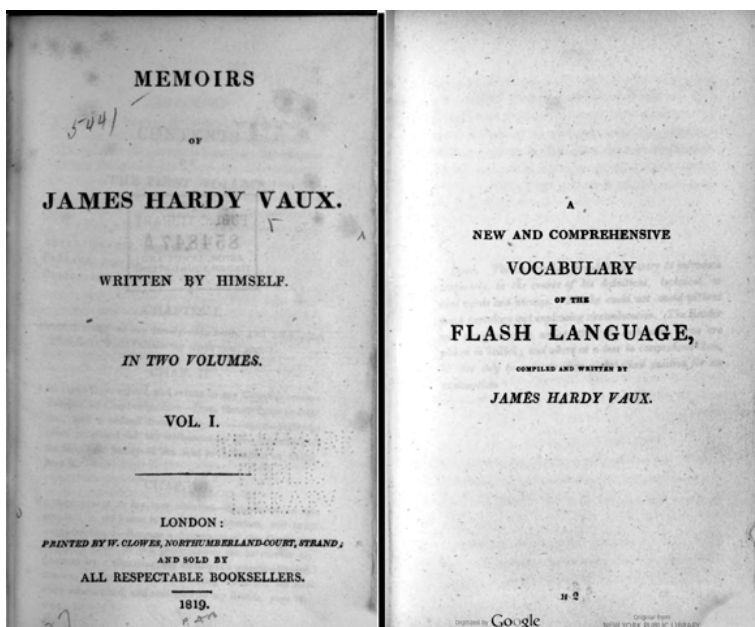


**A few slang terms are very short-lived; but some slang endures for centuries.**



In 1819 James Hardy Vaux published 'A New and Comprehensive Vocabulary of the Flash Language', a compilation of the underworld slang used in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century New South Wales that was brought from Britain and Ireland. The “vocabulary”



appeared in Volume 2 pages 147-227 of *Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux, Written by himself* printed in London by W. Clowes (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433082394838>, see also Simon Barnard’s 2019 book *James Hardy Vaux’s 1819 Dictionary of Criminal Slang and Other Impolite Terms as Used by the Convicts of the British Colonies of Australia – with*

*Additional True Stories, Remarkable Facts and Illustrations*, Melbourne: Text Publishing.)



Vaux was born in 1782. He was a professional thief and swindler who was transported three times in 1800, 1809, and 1830. His last recorded conviction was two years for indecent assault of an 8-year-old girl in 1839. He probably died in the 1840s.

As you see from the following list, lots of the slang Vaux records (about 20%) was still used in twentieth century Australia and most of it is extant today (even if you don't move in the wrong circles).

*bang up to the mark* 'smart'; *bash* 'beat up'; *beak* 'magistrate'; *haven't got a bean* 'no money'; *beef* 'hue and cry'; *blow the gaff* 'tell on, reveal'; *bob* 'shilling'; *body snatcher*; *bolt* 'run'; *bounce* 'what a bouncer does'; *bowled out* 'found out, removed from a position'; *bunce* 'money'; *cadge*; *chiv* 'knife'; *chum*; *cleaned out/up* 'money/wealth gone'; *clout* 'cloth'; *conk* 'nose'; *cove* 'person'; *crabbed* 'imperfect'; *crack a safe*; *cracksman*; *crack* 'interchange'; *croak* 'die'; *dancers* 'stairs'; *dicky* 'inferior'; *do someone in*; *do the trick* 'bring off'; *dollop*; *drop* 'give [drop me a quid]'; *duds* 'apparel' [originally limited to women]; *dues* 'what's owing'; *dummy* 'fool'; *earwig* 'listen in'; *fancy woman* 'mistress'; *fancy man* 'extra marital lover'; *fence* 'receiver of stolen goods'; *flash* 'smart', 'show, reveal'; *flash language* 'slang, thieves' jargon'; *floor* 'knock someone down'; *fly* 'vigilant, sharp'; *frisk* 'search'; *game* [n.] 'pursuit'; *gammon* 'flattery, bullshit'; *be good for something*; *grab*; *grub* 'food'; *his nabs* 'his nibs'; *hoist* 'robbery'; *jemmy* 'crowbar'; *job* 'undertaking'; *kid* 'child'; *kirk* 'church'; *knap* 'steal, get'; *lag* 'convict'; *lamps* 'eyes'; *lark* 'game, something done for fun, gain'; *leary* 'suspicious'; *bring to light* 'reveal'; *lumbered* 'incommoded'; *lush* 'drunk'; *mitts* 'gloves, hands'; *mug* 'face'; *nail a person*; *nancy* 'arse'; *nancy boy*; *needle a person*; *nix*; *nose* 'snout, grass'; *out and out* 'completely'; *pal* 'friend'; *palm* 'bribe', 'palm'; *patter* 'talk'; *pick up someone*; *pigs* 'police'; *pinch* 'steal'; *pins* 'legs'; *jug, clink* 'prison'; *plummy* 'good'; *post a bet* 'put up a bet'; *prime* 'good, plummy'; *pull* 'influence'; *pull up* 'stop'; *put up an idea* 'float an idea'; *queer* 'counterfeit'; *queer it* 'spoil it'; *quid* 'pound, guinea'; *racket* 'scheme'; *rattler* 'coach'; *rum* 'good'; *school* [of gamblers, etc.]; *scout* 'watchman'; *seedy* 'poor, shabby'; *sell* 'betray'; *shake* 'steal from'; *sharp* 'cheat'; *on the sly* 'secretively'; *snitch* 'betray'; *snooze*; *sound a person* 'try to get info from'; *spin a yarn*; *square* 'upright, honest'; *stake* 'sum of money'; *stash* 'end, put away'; *sticks* 'furniture'; *sting* 'defraud, rob'; *stink* 'uproar, outrage'; *stow* 'finish, stash'; *swag* 'bundle, booty'; *swell* 'gentleman'; *tanner* 'sixpence'; *toddle* 'walk slowly, be dodderly'; *toddler* 'child'; *togs* 'clothes'; *togged out to the nines* 'well-dressed'; *tools* [for housebreaking, etc.]; *tooled up*; *topped* 'hanged'; *traps* 'police'; *do the trick* 'accomplish'; *try it on*; *turn up a trump* 'turn out well'; *wack* [n.] 'share'; *wanted* [for a crime]; *weed* 'tobacco'; *yarn* 'narrate'.

OK, currency is now decimal, there are more trendy slang terms for friends, and *weed* is more frequently used for dope than tobacco, but a surprising quantity of eighteenth-nineteenth century flash language is still in common use today. Vaux's "vocabulary" is testament to the longevity of slang.

Keith Allan <<https://users.monash.edu.au/~kallan/homepage.html>>