

**WINCHESTER WORD-  
BOOK: A  
COLLECTION OF PAST  
AND PRESENT NOTIONS**

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Winchester Word-book: A Collection of Past and Present Notions by R. G. K. Wrench

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**R. G. K. WRENCH**

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WINCHESTER WORD-BOOK



WINCHESTER  
WORD-BOOK



*A Collection of Past and Present*

*NOTIONS*

*compiled by*

R. G. K. WRENCH

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*Multa renascentur quae jam cecidere, cadentque  
Quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus.*

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**Winchester**

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## Preface

*The history of an old man is of infinitely more interest than the promise of a young one. And so, probably, of words: the past of "ferk" is more interesting than the future of "boycott": and the old words which have dropped out of classical English, but survived in the dialects, appeal to us with a force quite beyond that of the consciously created slang which springs up from day to day in schools, the Universities, or sporting circles.*

*It is in this association with past ages that much of the language of Winchester College can fairly claim a position which slang cannot: we have not made it, we have inherited it, and its survival is not a little remarkable.*

*That dialects in remote corners should have kept up a vocabulary of their own is intelligible enough, but it is very strange that words which have been dead for centuries in the English language should have survived in the traditions of a school, where the age of the oldest*

*inhabitant is at the most seven instead of seventy years, and where contact with the outer world is complete.*

*For this language of ours is still in full vigour, and that without the slightest consciousness of anything like affectation or pedantry attaching to its use. At Winchester we never send a person, but we ferk him: we are never idle, but we thoke plentifully: a thing is not pretty, but cud: when dead-brum we get some bulky pax to pledge us dibs: we mug at toy-time on remedies: we splice rocks: we get planted and killed, and it works dreadfully: we come abroad after having been continent in a sick-house, etc. etc.*

*And all this language is to the majority of those using it "perfectly tug English," as it may literally have been to their forefathers three centuries ago.*

*How such words as thoke, cud, brock can have survived it is difficult to surmise: all that can be said is that they are the same words with the same meaning as the old ones. If they have not survived, they must have been accidentally born again.*

*The words in this "Word-book" are those which seem to possess some historical interest, though it is difficult to follow a few of them, which may possibly have no history at all. They have all been in use at Winchester within this century; nearly all were current twenty-five years ago, and the majority of them are still in daily use. A few have died out through neglect, and others have suffered a violent death owing to changing circumstances: these have been marked obsolete. When scobs are destroyed, the word, too, must naturally die, but it has had a life of some centuries, and therefore demands a place in the Word-book. Places and customs are only incidentally introduced.*

*The Glossaries hitherto published have done these words scant justice; and in assuming that an imbecile*

*Wykehamical ancestry composed them by spelling words backwards, or by choosing a word at random out of the Classics, have relegated them to the position of nonsense. If thoke came from θύκος, serk from furca, and scob from boccs, they would be quite unworthy of any consideration; but the slightest investigation proves them to be full of interest to the philologist, and worthy of the tenderest respect from Wykehamists.*

The authorities referred to are :—

P. P.—“*Promptorium Parvulorum sive clericorum*,” an English-Latin dictionary of about 1440.

HAL.—“*Halliwel's Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*.”

E. D. S.—The English Dialect Society's publications.

N. E. D.—*New English Dictionary*.

DE COLL. SCHOLA is the poem entitled “*De Collegio seu potius Collegiata Schola Wicamica Wintonensi*,” hitherto attributed to Christopher Johnson. Mr. Cotton, however, has lately proved conclusively that the poem was written more than one hundred years later, its date being about 1645.

MARG. NOTES STAT. are marginal notes scribbled in a copy of the Statutes which was kept in Chambers for the benefit of the boys till the end of the last century. The dates occurring are all between 1770 and 1790. The remarks are generally of a most ribald character, but a few of them have seemed worthy of being recorded.

Words marked \* suggest no etymology.

The broad pronunciation of the long a in Latin is a time-honoured peculiarity of Wykehamists.

The abbreviation of the ending -ation into *ā*, as *examina* for *examination* is probably not half a century old.

There is a tendency to pluralise words, such as “*Hills*,” “*Meads*”; and to omit the definite article before titles and familiar names, such as “*Prefect of Hall*,” “*School*,” “*House*.”