

Saving Saffron Sweeting: Guide to Brit-speak

According to the famous quote, Britain and America are ‘two nations divided by a common language’.

In case *Spotted Dick* and *dunking* have you scratching your head, here is a quick guide to some of the expressions used in *Saving Saffron Sweeting*. (All opinions are author’s own!)

For more British quirkiness and information to accompany the book, please visit www.paulinewiles.com



Term in book

Explanation

Chapter 1

sodding	Mild expletive, for example, ‘I’ve lost my sodding keys again.’ (Don’t use in super-polite company)
Cadbury’s	Famous British chocolate company
biscuits	Essentially a cookie, but usually with a crunchy consistency. Frequently consumed with tea!

Chapter 2

boot (of car)	trunk
Heathrow	London’s main airport
the Tube	the London Underground (railway) system
Harrods	famous (upmarket) British department store
Lycra	Spandex
X-rated gesture	Probably the V sign, which is equivalent to the finger.
zebra crossing	Black and white striped crosswalk where pedestrians have priority.
mini roundabout	Small traffic circle, often simply painted on the road.
number plate	license plate
Thames	Main river which flows through London.
Hobnobs	brand name of a chocolate biscuit (cookie)
dunk	Dip a biscuit in a hot drink to make it soft. A risky activity and best avoided in polite company!
do the washing up	wash the dishes
gutted	devastated
nail varnish	nail polish
Tesco	mainstream British grocery store
knickers	panties

Chapter 3

pulling your leg	joking, kidding around
Kit Kat	chocolate & wafer candy bar
M25	motorway which circles the edge of London
motorway	freeway
sausage roll	British snack (or light meal) of sausage meat wrapped in pastry. Can be served hot or cold.
top notch	excellent
wall ties	Strips of metal, designed to stop a wall in an old building sagging and bulging.
shortbread	Plain cookie, made with sugar, butter and flour. Probably originated in Scotland.
detached (house)	single family home
estate agents, estate agency	real estate office
Wimbledon	Famous tennis tournament, held in south-west London each year.

Chapter 4

Durham	University (and town) in northern England.
Gruffalo	Monster-type character in a popular children's book.
Royal Mint	producer of British coins and currency
punt	A long, low, flat-bottomed boat, popular in Oxford and Cambridge. It is propelled (and steered) by someone standing at the back with a long pole, which pushes off the river bed.
fried eggs	sunny side up
National Trust	Conservation charity; protects historic buildings and countryside. Most properties are open to visitors.
cream tea	Typically: scone served with jam and clotted/whipped cream, with a pot of tea. Consumed as a mid-afternoon snack.
estate car	Large, low family car with hatchback. Popular choice before SUVs and 4x4's.
crossroads	Intersection, especially where two roads bisect at right angles.
bonnet (of car)	hood

Chapter 5

postman	mailman
crisps	(potato) chips
Ribena	brand name of blackcurrant soft drink
broadband internet	high speed internet
dandelion & burdock	Traditional non-alcoholic English drink, containing extracts from these two plants.
crumpet	griddle cake, made from flour and yeast
granny annexe	in-law unit
dual carriageway	two-lane road

boiler type of furnace, giving both hot water and central heating
semi attached house
Conservative right-wing (mainstream) political party in the UK

Chapter 6

the Backs Attractive area of Cambridge where the rear grounds of several colleges back onto the River Cam.
half past three three-thirty
Bakewell tart pastry with jam, sponge and almonds
cooker stove/range
tractor farm tractor

Chapter 7

fish and chips Deep-fried fish in batter, with fries (usually chunky).
sticky toffee pudding Iconic British steamed dessert, featuring moist sponge cake, dates and toffee sauce. Personal favourite of the author!
cow parsley Weed-like plant, commonly seen in summer alongside roads and hedgerows.
legal beagles lawyers
Argos lower-cost supplier of household & other goods
estate agent (person) realtor or real estate broker

Chapter 8

pothole hole in the road, sometimes known in the US as a chuckhole
Pimm's Brand of alcoholic drink, the most popular of which is served as a cocktail involving gin, lemonade, fresh fruit and mint. A summertime classic.
crumble similar to a cobbler

Chapter 9

shagging sleeping with, having sex with (don't use in super-polite company)
trainers sneakers
biro brand name, also used as generic name of a ballpoint pen
bollocks expletive; literally, testicles (don't use in polite company!)

Chapter 10

flapjack Fairly dense cake, usually in a bar shape, made with oats and golden syrup.
poppycock nonsense

Chapter 11

by-law local ordinance, decided at village or town level

Waitrose	British grocery store, usually premium quality
Sainsbury	British grocery store
business rates	business tax
wellies	wellington boots
oven	stove
cul-de-sac	residential dead-end street

Chapter 12

Piccadilly	area of central London
Fortnum's	Fortnum and Mason, luxury London department store
teacake	A flat, bread-like roll, sweetened and containing spices and raisins. Almost always served split, toasted and buttered. Delicious.
clotted cream	Thick, almost solid cream. Traditionally served with a scone (and jam) to make a cream tea.
a tad	a bit
Piccadilly line	one of the Tube's lines
Kings Cross	large railway station in north London
Beetle	Volkswagen Beetle
blag	talk your way into getting something for nothing
egg mayonnaise	egg salad
knickers in a twist	feeling worried, anxious, or stressed

Chapter 13

bumper	fender
conservatory	sun room
(dog) lead	leash

Chapter 14

solicitor	lawyer
Mastermind	British quiz show with tough level of questions.
Twiglets	Twig-shaped snacks with distinctive taste, not unlike Marmite (see Ch. 26).
Marks and Spencer	Famous British department store, especially loved for its food and underwear.

Chapter 15

blimey	exclamation of surprise
Queen Anne	style of furniture, dating from that period
silverside	rump roast
cushions	pillows

Chapter 16

parish council	Local authority; lowest tier of local government. Powers are usually very limited.
fire engine	fire truck

Chapter 17

the loo	the restroom, also the actual toilet itself
Spotted Dick	Classic British dish: steamed suet pudding containing raisins (= 'spots') and almost always served with custard. The name causes amusement to native Brits, too.
Typhoo	brand of tea

Chapter 18

Grade II listed	Listed: A building which has been placed on a protective list, designating special historic or architectural interest. Grade II: sub-category of listed buildings.
Brigadoon	Famous musical, featuring two American tourists who stumble upon a Scottish village which only appears once every hundred years.
North Circular	major road route around the northern part of London
bum	butt (don't use in super-polite company)
Lib Dem	Liberal Democrats (mainstream UK political party)

Chapter 19

Downing Street	street where the British Prime Minister lives
Selfridges	famous (rather pricey) department store
Oxford Street	popular shopping street in London
Harvey Nichols	famous (upmarket) department store
John Lewis	yet another department store (and the author's favourite!)
Monsoon/East/Phase Eight	women's clothing brands
Hampstead	attractive residential part of north London
Match of the Day	sports TV show, typically featuring soccer
Ovaltine	bedtime drink made from malt powder and hot milk
Grand National	prestigious horse race
East Anglia	Eastern part of England; includes the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

Chapter 20

Eliza Doolittle	main character in the musical <i>My Fair Lady</i>
Blighty	Affectionate term for Britain, often used by expats or those on vacation outside the country.
Lovely Jubbly	Expression of approval coined by popular TV show <i>Only Fools and Horses</i> .

bill (in restaurant)	check (restaurant)
slobber	drool
custard tart	Pastry filled with custard (that is, a mix of milk/cream, eggs and sugar) and sprinkled with nutmeg.
mincemeat	A (sweet) pie filling of chopped dried fruit, spices, sugar and perhaps brandy. Some recipes call for beef suet, but these days, mincemeat is usually animal-free. Do not confuse with a recipe which calls for minced meat (which is indeed ground meat).

Chapter 21

wally	idiot
elderflower cordial	soft drink: sugar, water and elderberry flowers.

Chapter 22

banister	stair rail
Maltesers/Crunchie/Curly	types of British candy bar
Wurly	
Coronation Street	long-running soap opera set in northern industrial town
Doctor Who	famous British sci-fi series
plonk	cheap wine

Chapter 23

Wensleydale	type of British cheese, much loved by Wallace and Gromit
tosser	jerk (don't use in polite company)
A12	major road in East England
old git	impolite term for elderly man (don't use in polite company)
dough	slang for money
Pavlova	Meringue-based dessert, often filled with cream and fresh fruit, probably invented in New Zealand.

Chapter 24

roundabout	raised traffic circle
bugger off	get lost (don't use in polite company)
Lancashire	northern English county
bread and butter pudding	Another British classic: layers of bread, raisins and spices baked in an egg and milk mixture.
bonkers	crazy
nappies	diapers
nookie	sex

Chapter 25

goofed	messed up
mortarboard	Academic hat, nowadays usually worn only for formal events (such as graduation). May be called a Cap in the US.
Diagon Alley	famous wizardly street in Harry Potter
cider (British)	alcoholic apple-based drink
windscreen (car)	windshield

Chapter 26

Kensington	neighborhood in the south-west part of central London
Guy Fawkes night/Fireworks night	5th November; celebrations including bonfires and fireworks recall the failed attempt in 1605 by Guy Fawkes to blow up parliament.
Guy	dummy figure, made for burning on the bonfire
Bangers & mash	sausage with mashed potatoes
Royal Mail	British postal service
autumn	Fall (season)
sticky-beak	look at in a nosey way; poke your nose in
Tate Modern	a modern art gallery in London
Marmite	Brand name of a yeast extract commonly spread on bread or toast. Most Brits either love or hate Marmite.
Blackheath	neighborhood of London, south of the Thames
Liverpool Street	Large London rail station. Trains to Cambridge run from both Kings Cross and Liverpool Street.

Chapter 27

Serpentine	lake in Hyde Park
sod it	dammit (don't use in super-polite company)
aluminium	British spelling of aluminum
spend a penny	visit the restroom

Chapter 28

mince pie	Christmas pastry, filled with mincemeat (see Ch. 20)
clot	idiot
Horlicks	brand name of a malted milk hot drink, popular at bedtime

Chapter 29

chocolate orange	Chocolate segments made into an orange shape; especially popular as a gift in Christmas stockings.
boeuf bourguignon	French dish of beef cooked slowly in red wine

Quavers	cheesy potato snack, light and puffy in texture
natty	fashionable
HP sauce	Brown sauce, in the same family as ketchup, but darker with a stronger, spicier flavour.

Chapter 30

Radio 2	a radio station provided by the BBC
going down the pan	going down the toilet; to degenerate rapidly
traffic warden	meter maid
Christmas pudding	Dark, dense steamed pudding, made from dried fruit, sugars, treacle and (often) suet.
Radio Times	TV listings magazine. Many families only buy the Christmas special.
Oxfam	National thrift store, supporting humanitarian relief efforts.
Queen's speech	In this case, the traditional Christmas Day address to the Commonwealth by HM Queen Elizabeth II.
Two Ronnies	Comedy show of the 1970s and 1980s, starring Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett.
tracksuit bottoms	sweat pants
jumper	sweater

Chapter 31

get a wiggle on	hurry
Oyster card	smart card used for ticketing on public transport in London

Chapter 32

Pot Noodle	Dehydrated noodles plus flavouring in a pot, prepared by adding hot water.
Hobbs	women's clothing store
Twelfth Night	5th January: in the UK, it's considered unlucky if Christmas decorations are still up after this.

Chapter 33

The Independent	British national newspaper
treacle tart	Very sweet dessert: pastry filled with a mixture of golden syrup, breadcrumbs and lemon juice
(house) deposit	downpayment
scotch egg	hard-boiled egg, wrapped in sausage meat, then breadcrumbs, and deep fried.