

Recording of the week: Anglo-Romani and dialect

This week's selection comes from Jonnie Robinson, Lead Curator of Spoken English.

It was great to see [Peaky Blinders](#) back for a fourth series as, among its many delights, it offers a rare glimpse in the mainstream media of Anglo-Romani. Given the presence of traveller communities across the UK it's perhaps not surprising that Romani has influenced local dialect in many parts of the country. Speakers either side of the English-Scottish border, for instance, will be familiar with terms like gadgie [from gaujo = '(non-gypsy) man'], mort [= 'girl, woman'], moeey [from mui = 'mouth, face'], radgie [from radge = 'mad, angry'] and scran [= 'food']. A small set of Romani words are used more widely, including cushty [from kushti = 'good'], mullered [= 'dead, killed'] and mush [= 'man (esp. as form of address)'] and a recent [collaboration](#) between the British Library and Guardian newspaper to document regional words confirmed the relationship between Anglo-Romani & dialect as contributors supplied numerous expressions including chore [= 'to steal' (Poole)], dinilo [= 'fool, Idiot' (Portsmouth)], jukkel [= 'dog' (Carlisle)], ladging [= 'embarrassing' (York)] and tuvli [= 'cigarette' (Newark)].



Probably the most unfortunate contribution of Anglo-Romani to English is the word chav, which in recent years has been adopted by young speakers all over the country to refer negatively to a stereotypical young ne'er-do-well characterised by cheap designer clothes, anti-social behaviour and low social status. The word derives from the much more endearing Anglo-Romani word chavvi [= 'boy, son'] and illustrates how certain social groups have unfortunately always attracted suspicion and condemnation. A WordBank contributor from the Medway, Kent who can pukker [= 'to speak'] Romani explains, for instance, how he will often jel down the tober to see my little chavvis in my vardo ['go down the road to see my children in my caravan'], while another contributor submitted an expression assumed to be local to Newark, seemingly unaware of its Romani origins. The book *Romani Rokkeripen To-Divvus* (Thomas Acton and Donald Kenrick, 1984) records mandi [= 'I'], buer [= 'woman'] and rokker [= 'to talk, speak'].

[Jel down the tober to see my little chavvis in my vardo \(BL shelfmark C1442/2355\)](#)

[Mandi don't know what the buer is rokking \(BL shelfmark C1442/1079\)](#)

Over 400 recordings capturing English dialect and slang worldwide can be found in the [Evolving English Wordbank](#) collection on [British Library Sounds](#).

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[Recording of the week: Trisha Brown in conversation with Richard Alston](#)

This week's selection comes from Dr Eva del Rey, Curator of Drama and Literature Recordings and Digital Performance.

American dancer and choreographer Trisha Brown talks to British choreographer Richard Alston at the ICA, London, 15 November 1991 (duration: 59 min 43 sec).

At the time of the discussion there were three works by Trisha Brown programmed at the Sadler's Wells theatre in London: *Opal Loop* (1980), *Lateral Pass* (1985) and *For M.G.: The Movie* (1991). Most of the discussion is centred on these three works.

In 1989, *Opal Loop* was added to Rambert's repertory under the artistic direction of Richard Alston. This was the first time Trisha Brown had ever agreed to stage it for a company other than her own. Alston was the artistic director of Rambert from 1986 till 1992.

Brown also talks about her explorations of gravity and perspective for her 'walking on the walls' pieces; how she works with dancers; character and gender in dance; and *Set and Reset* (1983), a dance work made in collaboration with Robert Rauschenberg and Laurie Anderson.



Trisha Brown – Walking on the Wall. Photo by Sascha Pohflepp / CC BY. The Barbican Gallery, London, 5 May 2011. First performed in 1971 at the Whitney Museum, New York.

This recording comes from a [collection](#) of 889 talks and discussions held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London between 1982-1993.

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[Recording of the week: Ethiopian Michael Jackson?](#)

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

This song was recorded in 1991 by ethnomusicologist Lesley Larkum at the Green Hotel, Mek'ele (Mekelle) in the northern Tigray region of Ethiopia. It represents one of those wonderful moments of ethnographic fieldwork when you come across something, not necessarily related to the focus of your work, but nevertheless captivating. It's times like those you are thankful for a sound recording device! Lesley was conducting research on Tigrinyan music during revolution. She had heard these two children singing in a bar a couple of nights beforehand and had asked them to return so she could record them. Sadly there's no photograph of them but as I listen, in my mind's eye I see a couple of youngsters with the voices, rhythm and exuberance of a young Michael Jackson.

[Children singing at the Green Hotel \(C600/15\)](#)



The [Lesley Larkum collection](#) of Ethiopian field recordings can be consulted at the British Library.

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[Recording of the week: a Christmas story](#)

This week's selection comes from Stephen Cleary, Lead Curator of Literary & Creative Recordings.

This seasonal offering comes from our [African Writers Club](#) collection and was recorded on 7 November 1966 in London on a Revox F36 tape machine. 'No Room at Solitaire' is a dramatization by Cosmo Pieterse of a short story by Richard Rive. It updates the nativity tale to Christmas Eve in northern Transvaal (now Limpopo), South Africa, in the era of apartheid. Contains strong language.

[A Christmas story \(C134/98\)](#)



Entabeni – Limpopo, South Africa by [FyreMael](#) via [Visualhunt.com](#) / [CC BY](#)

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Recording of the week: the Curlew's Lament

This week's selection comes from Richard Ranft, Head of Sound and Vision.

Around this time of year as winter takes its hold, and into spring that follows, a daytime walk around one of Britain's more remote coastal estuaries and mudflats, or over inland moorlands and heathlands will likely bring about an encounter with a Curlew, the largest of all waders. Its soulful voice carries far across flat and rolling landscapes, adding a magical and haunting feel to wild places. And in early English folklore, it was a harbinger of death, or for the poet WB Yeats, it spoke of a love lost:

*"O Curlew, cry no more in the air,
Or only to the water in the West;
Because your crying brings to my mind
passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair
That was shaken out over my breast:
There is enough evil in the crying of wind"*



This particular Curlew recording was made in southern England as long ago as 1937 by the pioneer bird sound recordist, Ludwig Koch (1881-1974). It comprises several takes that illustrate the bird's varied notes. The recording was used for many years to introduce *The Naturalist* radio programme, broadcast by the BBC Home Service.

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