

A Dubious Guide to the Origins of Phrases



Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. Hence, the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married was invented.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all, the infants took their baths. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, “Don't throw the baby out with the bath water.”

Houses had thatched roofs of thick straw, piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where falling creatures could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over

the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying Dirt poor came into being. The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entranceway. Hence the saying, a thresh hold.



“Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days.”



In those old times, peasants in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme was made up, “Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old.”

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