



The Eton Glossary

Abracadabra

The abracadabra is the planning document used to conjure up a timetable for Masters and boys. It is so named to reflect the alphabetical labelling of Divs (lessons) in the timetable.

Absence

A check to see whether any boys are absent without leave. House Masters conduct regular absences within their Houses, and there is a grand formal absence on the Fourth of June when a team of Masters 'read' absence in School Yard and its vicinity.

Agar's

The western half of a large expanse of playing fields beyond Pockocks Lane.

Assembly

An alternative to Chapel held in the mornings for each Block before Divs.

Beak

An Eton Master (teacher).

Bekynton

The central dining room that provides breakfast, lunch, and supper for 11 of our 25 boarding Houses. It also contains a Masters' Common Room, and caters for visiting teams and other groups.

Bill

A list of boys who will be summoned to account for their behaviour when they have broken the School rules, usually resulting in a meeting with the Head Master or Lower Master, or a suitably senior member of staff. The Bill was dubbed 'A prelude to some punishment' in the 1923 glossary.

Block

The School is divided into five year groups, which are known as Blocks F-B (Years 9-13): a new boy joins in F Block (Year 9), moves into E Block (Year 10) after one year, and so on, until he finally progresses to B Block. In the year before new boys join in F Block, they are referred to as being in G Block. A Block used to refer to those who returned to complete 'seventh term' Oxbridge applications. Now it refers to the Block who have just left at the end of their time at Eton.

Blocker

A member of a particular Block: F Blocker, E Blocker, and so on.

Boys' Dinner

Lunch. Also referred to as Dinner.

Burning Bush

An ornate iron lamppost positioned right in the centre of Eton and often used as a meeting point.

Calendar Style

The form of a boy's name used in formal documents. It will include post-nominals such as KS (King's Scholar) or OS (Oppidan Scholar), or ma or mi for older and younger brothers respectively.

Cannon Yard

The yard opposite School Library, so named because it contains a large cannon captured by the British during the Crimean War and given to Eton in 1867 by the Secretary of State for War, Old Etonian John Somerset Pakington, 1st Baron Hampton.

Capping

Acknowledging a Master when passing out of doors. Boys would raise a finger and Masters would respond in the same way. It is said that this gesture originates from the era when boys wore top hats and would raise them on meeting a Master. This tradition ended during the 1990s.

Captain of the Oppidans

The top Oppidan: selected from among the academically most distinguished Oppidans, he is one of the four senior school officers (along with the Captain of the School and the President and Chairman of The Eton Society, or Pop).

Captain of the School

Referred to in Hill's Eton Medley glossary as the top Colleger, he is the House Captain in College and one of the four senior officers (along with the Captain of the Oppidans and the President and Chairman of The Eton Society, or Pop).

CCF

The Combined Cadet Force, known colloquially as the Corps, provides military and adventurous training for volunteers in D, C and B Blocks.

Chambers

A mid-morning break of 25 minutes when boys return to their Houses for a snack, and Masters gather together for a meeting, normally in Upper School. The final ten minutes provide boys with a convenient opportunity to buttonhole individual Masters.

Chore

A sanction such as weeding a House garden.

The Chronicle

A School magazine edited by senior boys that comes out every few weeks. There is also a Junior Chronicle.

College

- (i) The boarding House in which the King's Scholars live.

- (ii) The body of King's Scholars.

Colleger

One of the 70 King's Scholars: Collegers have KS after their surname in School lists.

College Chapel

The main chapel. Although Eton's founder Henry VI had intended for it to be double its actual length, it is still large enough to accommodate all senior boys.

College Library

An outstanding rare book and manuscript library whose scholarly facilities are made available to all members of the School's community and to visiting academics.

Conduct

The senior chaplain.

Corps

A colloquial term for the CCF (Combined Cadet Force).

Dame

The Dame assists the House Master in running their boarding House, working in partnership to ensure the overall welfare and wellbeing of boys in the House.

Div

Unofficial term for a lesson.

Division

A set or form of boys taught together in any subject, e.g. 'Are you in Mr Smith's Division for French?'

Division Master

The teacher of a group of boys for a particular subject, sometimes referred to informally as a Div Master.

Dry Bobs

Cricketers. Sometimes used for any non-rowing sportsman. Largely historical. Not to be confused with Wet Bobs or Slack Bobs.

Dutchman's

The eastern half of a large expanse of playing fields beyond Pockocks Lane.

Early School

A lesson before breakfast, phased out during the 60s and 70s.

Extra Work

Essentially homework, this prep. work is set by a Division Master to be done out of school: usually abbreviated to EW.

Fellows

The Provost and Fellows constitute the School's governing body.

Fellows' Eyot

A field bordering the Thames.

The Field

- (i) A football field between the Slough Road and the rackets courts (referred to as Sixpenny in the Summer Half).
- (ii) The top Field Game team.

The Field Game

The Field Game is one of Eton's two versions of football and is played by boys of all ages in the Lent Half.

Fixtures

A booklet containing the School list and a great deal of other information. It used to contain a diary but this is now online.

Formal Change

An alternative to School Dress allowed or required on certain occasions, consisting of a suit or jacket, a tie and smart trousers, along with appropriate shirt, shoes, etc.

Fourth of June

A gala day celebrating the birthday of George III, held as near as practicable to the actual date, when parents, friends, and relations are made welcome. Alongside a number of exhibitions and sporting events, the day features Speeches and the Procession of Boats.

Half

Naturally, the academic year is divided into three Halves (terms): Michaelmas, Lent and Summer.

Half Change

The same as School Dress, except with a change coat instead of a tailcoat and optionally without the waistcoat.

Head Man

The colloquial name for the Head Master. Note that it is Head Master and not Headmaster because the incumbent is also a Master (i.e. a Teacher) and the Head of that body.

House Captain

The Senior Prefect in an Oppidan House.

House Master

The House Master of an Oppidan House stands in loco parentis for 55 or so boys. The boys themselves are usually referred to by their surname and the initials of their House Master, for example Smith (JAGF).

Informal Change

Appropriate casual clothes worn in and around Eton on informal occasions.

Judy's Passage

A narrow pedestrian pathway providing a convenient shortcut through the centre of the School. Named after Francis Durnford, Eton's Lower Master between 1864-1877 and Fellow between 1877-1881. Durnford House is also named after him; Judy was his university nickname.

King's Scholar

Housed in College, and distinguishable by the wearing of a black academic gown over their uniform, these Etonians passed the academically demanding King's Scholarship exam.

Keeper

A captain of a sport or activity.

Lock Up

The time of day every evening when boys have to be back in their Houses. After Lock Up, boys may only leave for approved activities and must sign out.

Long Walk

- (i) The space in front of School Office.
- (ii) The avenue from Windsor Castle to the equestrian statue of George III known as the Copper Horse.

Lower Chapel

The chapel for the two lower Blocks, E and F.

Lower Master

The deputy to the Head Master, they preside in Lower Chapel and historically had responsibility for the Lower Boys.

Lower School

The original classroom completed by the mid-1440s. For 200 years, Eton's only classroom.

Luxmoore's Garden

A garden on an island beside the Thames open to Eton's adult residents and senior boys.

Ma'am

The term (which rhymes with 'ham') used by the boys to address their Dame, female Masters and other female staff.

Master

A teacher.

Mesopotamia

A field bounded by the Jordan and Willowbrook used for football in the winter, for cricket in the summer. Informally referred to as Mespots.

Music Scholar

Music scholarships were instituted in the 1960s when the Choir School was closed down; Music Scholars have MS after their surname in School lists.

Non-Specialists

Boys not yet in the sixth form, i.e. not yet embarked on A-level courses.

Oppidan

Any boy who is not a Colleger.

Oppidan House

A boarding House in which about 55 Oppidans live (there are 24 Oppidan Houses).

Oppidan Scholar

An Oppidan who has distinguished himself over a sustained period in Trials. Oppidan Scholars have OS written after their names.

Pop

The body of senior prefects, more properly known as The Eton Society. Its likely origin comes from the fact that boys used to meet above Mrs Hatton's lollypop shop on the High Street, and 'popina' is Latin for a shop that sells food.

Pop Wall

A low wall bordering the Long Walk upon which supposedly only members of Pop are allowed to sit.

Praepostor

A member of Sixth Form Select who summons boys in the Bill.

Precentor

The musician in charge of music in College Chapel: usually the same as the Director of Music.

President of Pop

The head prefect within The Eton Society. He is supported by the Chairman of Pop and, together with the Captain of the School and Captain of the Oppidans, they are the four senior school officers who meet regularly with the Head Master and Lower Master.

Private Business

The weekly session when a Tutor sees their pupils.

Procession of Boats

An event on the Fourth of June when the best oarsmen of all ages in the School dress in festive 19th century naval uniform, row past the crowd of parents, etc. assembled on the bank and salute them by raising their oars and standing up.

Provost

The Chairman of Eton College's governing body. Resident in Eton during the Half.

Pupils

The boys in a Tutorial group. Not to be confused with the more generic usage synonymous with students, commonly used outside Eton.

Queen's Eyot

The term (which rhymes with 'wait') refers to an island owned by the School in the middle of the Thames four miles upriver from Eton.

Reading Over

An occasion when the Head Master or Lower Master reads out end-of-Half non-specialist examination results or an adjudication is given for a prize, often by an external examiner.

Reader

A lesson when boys are sent back to their Houses to work.

Rip

If a boy does a particularly bad piece of work, his Division Master may give him a 'rip': the boy has the piece of work signed by his House Master and Tutor.

Rowing Lake

The School rowing course near Dorney. Used for the Olympic Games in 2012.

Rowland's

A School-run shop selling food and non-alcoholic drinks.

Rowland's Tap

Tap serves food and alcoholic drinks to C and B Blocks. Colloquially known as 'Tap'.

Run

If a Division Master is 15 minutes late, the boys may 'take a run' to School Office and claim a free period.

St Andrew's Day

An open day for parents in late November, its principal feature being the annual Wall Game match between the Collegers and the Oppidans.

School

A lesson.

School Dress

The School uniform, often referred to as 'tails'.

School Hall

A large hall used for assemblies, examinations, and concerts.

School Library

A lending and reference library whose extensive facilities are available to all members of the School community.

School Office

The administrative hub of the day-to-day life of the school, run by the School Office Manager.

Schoolroom

A classroom.

School Yard

A paved yard lying at the heart of Eton's most ancient buildings.

Sent Up for Good

A boy whose work in a subject is outstandingly good may be 'Sent Up for Good'; he shows the Head Master or Lower Master a sample of his work, which is then lodged in the College Archives.

Short Leave

An 'exeat' weekend when all boys go home.

Show Up

If a boy does a particularly good piece of work, his Division Master may give him a Show Up; the boy has the work signed by his House Master and Tutor.

Sixth Form Select

The academic elite of the School: the top 20-25 Collegers and Oppidans in B Block. They are responsible for performing speeches, praeposting (calling boys to the Bill) and they attend the Head Master's Essay Society.

Slab

A place in a House where messages can be left, and where boys tend to congregate.

Slack Bobs

Either a boy who does not play sport or a boy who is neither a Dry Bob nor a Wet Bob; i.e. they participate in neither cricket nor rowing. An obituary to a mathematics Master in the 20 June 1975 edition of the Chronicle includes the quote, "I can stomach an atheist, I can stomach a Socialist, but don't let me come across a slack bob".

Specialists

Sixth-formers.

Speeches

An event on the Fourth of June when members of Sixth Form Select recite 'speeches': numerous parents and members of the community attend. There are also speeches in the winter Halves, attended by B or C Block.

Staying out

Excused owing to illness.

Stick-Ups

A wing collar with white bow tie worn with School Dress by senior boys who have distinguished themselves in various specific ways (House Captains are entitled to wear stick-ups, for instance).

Tails

The same as School Dress.

Tardy Book

A sanction for late work or arriving late to a lesson. It involves signing a book in School Office early in the morning.

Thames Valley Athletic Centre

An athletic facility owned by Eton but administered by the local authority, and used jointly by the School and local athletics clubs.

Trials

End-of-Half examinations.

Tutor

A Master who is responsible for a particular boy's academic progress. Boys meet their Tutor in small groups once a week in an informal way.

Tutorial

The weekly session when a non-Specialist Tutor sees their pupils.

Upper School

The second classroom at Eton to be built, in the 17th century.

Up To

Taught by: I'm up to Mr Newton for Maths.

Vice-Provost

The Deputy Chairman of the governing body; frequently a former Master.

The Wall

The wall against which the Wall Game is played.

The Wall Game

The Wall Game is played throughout the Michaelmas Half by boys of all ages.

Wet Bobs

Rowers.