

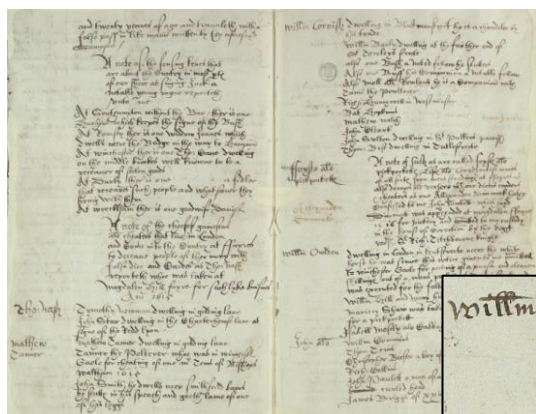


We're proud to bring you this sample of the wonders available at **Hampshire Record Office**. Our aim at **The English Project** is to promote discussion of the English Language in all its variety – across the years, through our own time and into the future. We have produced this small download to discuss a few texts local to Winchester which give a snapshot of the English language in the year Shakespeare breathed his last. We think he'd have found material in all three.

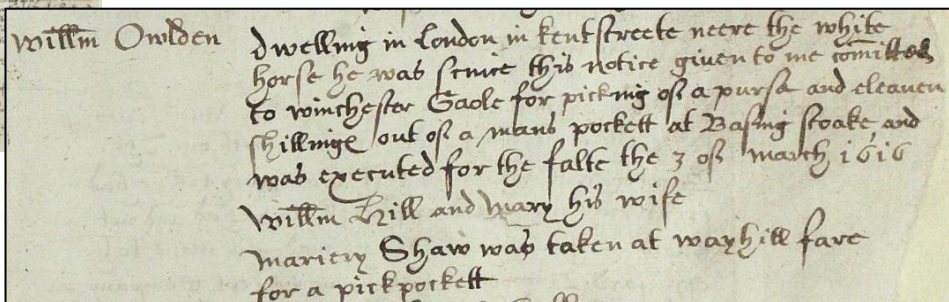
### How to use this download

We hope you will find these extracts act as a taster to go and have a look yourself at similar 17<sup>th</sup> century texts perhaps at your own Record Office as there is one in each county across the country. We have set out some of the key points of language interest in these excerpts and have asked a few questions to get you thinking. While this download is aimed primarily at students of A-level English Language, the texts and genres are a bit more challenging and unusual than you would get in a language change exam question but many of the skills will be the same, whichever exam board you follow. And if you are not (yet!) a student of English Language this download will give you a sample of the language issues studied.

### THE BOOK OF DEPOSITIONS: 'Notable Rogues' - Criminal Characters at Winchester Gaol (Jail!)



William Owlden dwelling in London in Kentstreete neere the white horse he was scince this notice given to me committed to Winchester Gaole for picking of a purse and eleaven shillings out of a mans pockett at Basing stoake, and was executed for the falte the 3 of March 1616



One of the fun (and challenging) things about studying language

change is the range of **genres** or variety of forms of document. Sometimes you will find a type of document which remains quite similar across time (wills, contracts, adverts etc.) and sometimes you will find a genre which seems very different. This Book of Depositions is just such an unusual document.

These depositions (witness statements) were heard and written down by John Newbolt, Governor of the House of Correction in Winchester, probably for the use of Hampshire justices during a crackdown on travelling fraudsters and thieves in the early 1600s. This rare record shines fascinating light on the criminal fraternity of Winchester. (HRO, from a private collection, 44M69/G3/159.)

### Questions

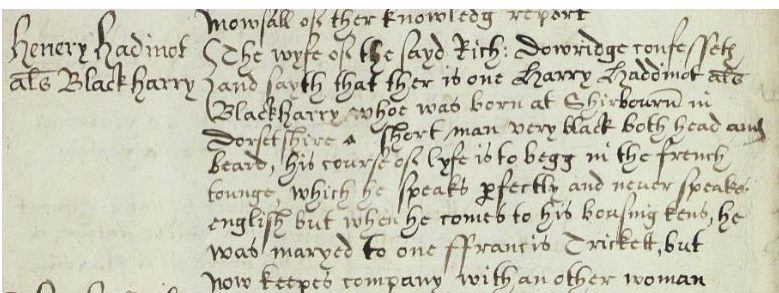
1. Orthography: make a note of all the dated spelling. Do you notice any patterns?
2. Semantics: highlight the 'legalese' jargon; what does it tell us about the conventions of legal language?
3. Pragmatics: do you think the extract shows different attitudes and values from the present time?

If you know how to use the Oxford English Dictionary online (or have access to a hard copy), try looking-up some of the words with non-standard spelling. You may be surprised at how many variant spellings of some words there are.

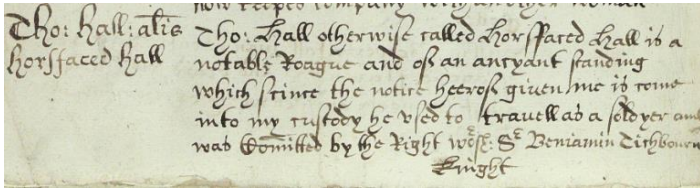
And just as you think you are getting used to the register of this document, we are going to throw a few more extracts at you with such rich images that could have come directly from the Bard himself...

Henry Hadinot alias Blackharry  
 The wyfe of the sayd Richard Dowridge confesseth and sayth that ther is one Harry Haddinot alias Blackharry whoe was born at Shirbourn in Dorsetshire a short man very black both head and beard, his course of lyfe is to begg in the french tounge, which he speaks perfectly and never speaks english but when he comes to his bousing kens\*, he was maryed to one Francis Trickett, but now keeps company with an other woman

\*bouse = drink/liquor; ken = OED 'vagabond slang – a house, especially one where thieves, beggars or disreputable characters



Thomas Hall alias Horsfaced Hall  
 Thomas Hall otherwise called Horsfaced Hall is a notable roague and of an ancyant standing which scince the notice heerof given me is come into my custody he used to travell as a soldyer and was committed by the Right Worshipful Sir Benjamin Tichbourn knight.



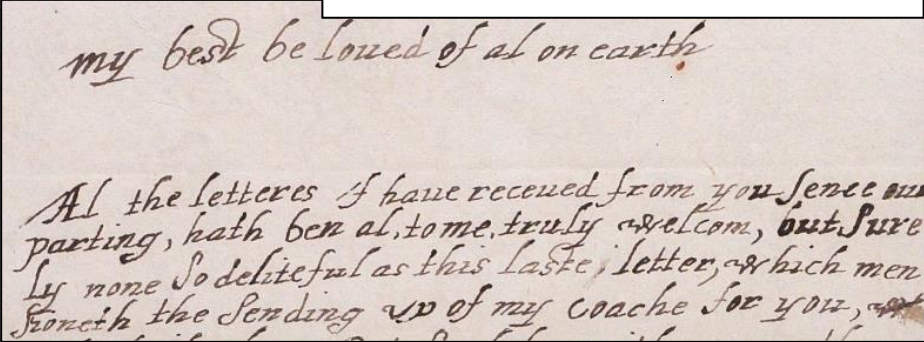
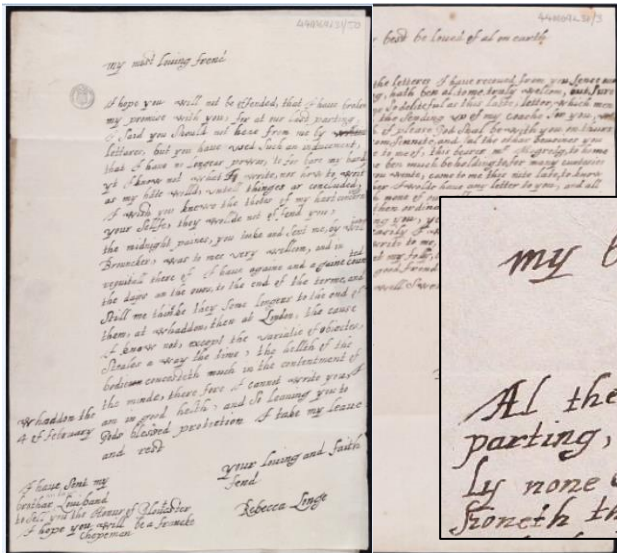
**Language Notes:**

- Standardisation of spelling was developing in the 1600s: there were spelling conventions but also wide variation.
- Legal jargon runs throughout these documents: 'the sayd' anaphoric references and 'heerof' compound adverbs all add legal certainty in what is a serious criminal justice matter; 'confesseth' shows archaic verb forms.
- Descriptions were a crude form of identity before technology enabled better records (look out for early 'wanted' posters which have some very curious descriptions of their felons!)

**THE SHERFIELD LETTERS: 'Midnight Paines' - the Love Letters of a Salisbury Wife.**

It's important to keep in mind the **context** of all of the texts we are looking at. The next set of documents are very personal letters written by the recently married Rebecca Sherfield to her husband, Henry, lawyer, MP and later a judge, in 1616. For both Rebecca and Henry this was a second marriage. The letters show Rebecca updating Henry on his business affairs, from his farms and tenants to information about his neighbours – and they are also filled with affection and sentiment, a really personal voice clearly coming to us from 400 years ago. (HRO, from a private collection, 44M69/L31/3,50)

My best be loved of al on earth  
 Al the letteres I have receved from you sence our parting, hath ben al, to me, truly welcom, but surely none so deliteful as this laste letter, which men sioneth the sending up of my coache for you,



I hope you will not be offended, that I have broken my promise with you, for at our last parting, I said you should not heare from me by writing lettars, but you have used such an inducement, that I have no longear powar, to for bare my hand, that [yt] I know not what I write, nor how to writ as my harte wolld, untell thinges ar concluded, I wish you knewe the thotes of my hart concerning your selfe, they wolde not of fend you, the midnight paines, you tooke and sent me, by William Brouncker, was to mee very wellcom, and in requitall there of I have againe and againe counted the dayes an the ours, to the end of the terme, ...

*my most loving friend*

I hope you will not be offended, that I have broken my promise with you, for at our last parting, I said you should not heare from me by writing lettars, but you have used such an inducement, that I have no longear powar, to for bare my hand, yt I know not what I write, nor how to writ as my harte wolld, untell thinges ar concluded, I wish you knewe the thotes of my hart concerning your selfe, they wolde not of fend you, the midnight paines, you tooke and sent me, by William Brouncker, was to mee very wellcom, and in requitall there of I have againe and againe counted the dayes an the ours, to the end of the terme, and ...

**Questions:**

1. Have a go at transcribing the section to the right
2. What internal inconsistencies are there in spelling?
3. Look at the syntax (word order). How is this different from the way you would write?
4. Consider some of the images Rebecca uses; what do you make of 'I have no longear powar to for bare my hand' or 'the midnight paines, you tooke'?

**Language Notes:**

- Terms of address – the letters have salutations which are good examples of a personal style (idiolect); personal documents often have a different voice from public documents, making them rich and varied
- Rebecca keeps separate some words which we compound in modern Standard English: for bare, your selfe, there of. Some of these are likely Rebecca's own style as these already existed as compounds long before the 1600s (e.g. in the OED we see 'forbaer' in c1000; Caxton was using 'yourselfe' in 1490; in 1598 Shakespeare was already following the long-established convention 'thereof' in *Love's Labours Lost*). It is interesting to see this process at present continuing in our own time with words such as 'a lot', 'hand out' etc.

**INVENTORY: 'In the backsyde, one loade of wood' – The Probate Inventory of Robert Yostys, Husbandman**

*In the hall*

*Imprimis a little round table p*

*Item an old cubbord, and iiii cofers p*

*Item an old garner for corne p*

*Item iiii bowles, iij fyrkyns a powdring tubbe and a buckett p*

*Item a brasse pott, ij skyllette, iij kettles payre of potthookes p*

*Item vii pewter dysshes, two candlestickes and two saltcellers p*

*Item a byll, and an axe, and oth' workinge tooles p*

*Item one andyron, and a payre of pothangers*

This inventory was drawn-up after the death of this farmer, near Basingstoke, who died without making a will. It typical of the period and lists his household possessions in the 'hall' and 'chamber', as well as his livestock and crops. (HRO, 1616AD/76.)

In the hall	
Imprimis a little round table	vid
Item an old cubbord, and iiii cofers	vs
Item an old garner for corne	vid
Item iiii bowles, iij fyrkyns a powdring tubbe and a buckett	iis
Item a brasse pott, ii skyllettes, iij kettles a payre of potthookes	xs
Item vii pewter dysshes, two candlestickes and two saltcellers	iiiis
Item a byll, and an axe and other workinge tooles	xiid
Item one andyron, and a payre of pothangers	vid

These texts all raise questions about the development of Standard English – the idea there is a set of ‘rules’ by which one variety of our language exists. We get used to thinking of there being a ‘correct’ way to write, yet historical texts (and some modern ones such as SMS messages, emails, social networking comments) show that what is considered ‘correct’ does change over time. With the 1616 texts we see that the written English used in different genres has many variations in style – an interesting ‘language change’ point.

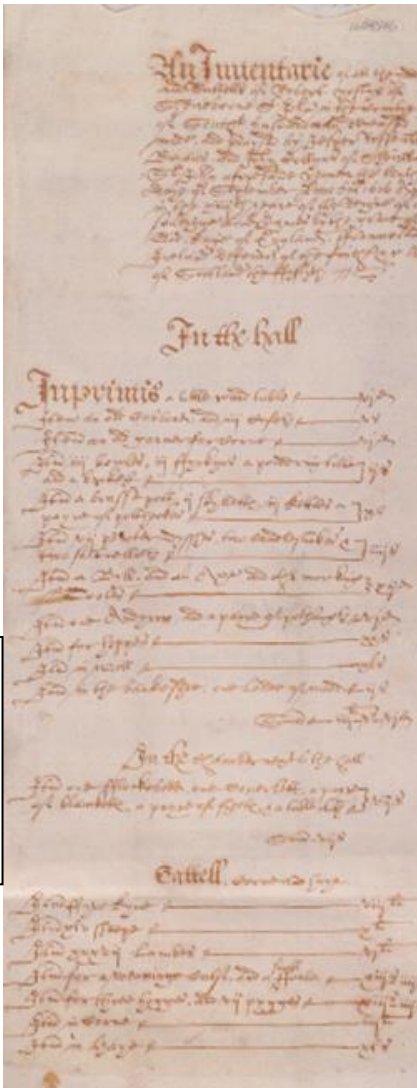
**Questions:**

1. What evidence of obsolete lexis (words that have vanished) is there?
2. Can you identify any conventions of the genre (things that keep cropping up)?

**Language notes:**

- As with many legal texts a significant quantity of Latin words are present (untranslated) supporting the idea that Latin retained its position as a language of authority and that legal texts have a very different register.
- The lexical fields reflect ideas of functional language change (some things become obsolete and the words for them vanish), this shows us how society changes. Ask people you know if they could describe any of the items in your list (1) above...
- It’s interesting to note (below) how the writing of dates has changed, away from reference to reigning monarch, another example of a social norm that has moved on.

...the tenth  
daye of September anno domini 1616 and  
in the xiiiith yeare of the reigne of our  
sovereigne Lord James by the grace of  
God, kinge of England, Fraunce, and  
Ireland defendor of the faithe etc and  
of Scotland the fyftyth



**Summary**

We hope these extracts from very different documents in 1616 have given you an insight into the range of language over time and that you will consider exploring your own county archives to see if you can find local documents which are equally intriguing to study from the English language perspective.

**Further reading...**

To find out where your own local archive is, search the government website at

- <https://www.gov.uk/search-local-archives>

The British Library has a beautiful, interactive timeline of online texts at:

- <http://www.bl.uk/englishtimeline>

For the edited text of the English Language Day lecture based on the texts in this download, see our website below.

If you liked this... Why not check out our blogs? Across 2016 Professor Christopher Mulvey looked at a different aspect of the English language each month through a link to Shakespeare’s writing... in 2017 we will be exploring the relationship between the English language and India.

**Acknowledgements**

The English Project would like to thank Sarah Lewin, Principal Archivist, Records & Research, Hampshire Record Office; Download compiled and written by Marcus Barrett, English Language, Richard Huish College, Taunton, Somerset. The English Project @ Winchester Ltd, Registered Charity: 1121323, Registered in England: 06195533 [www.englishproject.org](http://www.englishproject.org)