

# East Kent Dialect

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These days you can tell the typical English southerner by how often they use the words: really, actually and absolutely. Midlanders and northerners also litter their conversations with meaningless words, while those who are into TV soaps, tend to pick up vocabulary from them. Hence the increased use of raising the voice at the end of sentences since 'Neighbours' etc. hit the small screen.

As a life long lip reader (I am registered severely deaf) these characteristics become very important in trying to make sense of what people are saying, making conversation or trying to hide the fact that you are deaf. Up until the 1995 Act, believe me, being deaf blocked you getting work. Sadly, it still carries a massive stigma, but I will not go into that here.

However, it does make you, I guess, much more aware of the intricacies of dialects. Some years ago I had a job that took me around East Kent meeting people. In order not to be foxed if I came across the words and phrases, I wrote them down.

One day I was visiting a farm and came out to find one of the workers looking at my car and shaking his head, *its chogged* he stated knowingly. I had a flat tyre. The farmer, very kindly, helped me change the tyre and when we had finished I remarked on what the worker had said. He looked at me quizzically and asked if I had heard correctly for as far as he was aware, a *chog* was a rope used to train horses. "It's not" said the farmer's wife, "it's a wedge used to keep a door open". At this point the worker

came back and so we asked him. Apparently my car was *chogged*, because it was leaning, while both the farmer and his wife were correct in their understanding of the word! It would seem that *chog* was a little word with a lot of uses!

Another word I came across was *amper*. This, I quickly learned, referred to anything which had a defect from *amper cup* - cracked cup; to *amper tooth* - toothache. However, if the tooth had decayed then it would be *doited* or *doated*. *Doited* also seemed to apply to anything that had been around a long time such as one's husband, wife, grandparents, car or house!

One rainy day I had to cross a *nailbourne* in full spate. I abandoned my car, waded through the stream and when I arrived at my destination I was told that I was *wetshod* and *dreening*. The first I correctly surmised as meaning that my feet were wet - they were. As for *dreening*, had I misheard and did the person mean dreaming? Over a steaming cup of cocoa and with a towel firmly wound round my head, I was enlightened to be told that *dreen* means dripping wet or getting a good soaking - which I had. It also meant somebody stupid enough to go out in wet weather ill-equipped! A *dreen* also meant a man whose wife was unfaithful and he didn't know it!

There are a lot more phrases that I learnt in those days and still have on file. Many of them have become part of my vocabulary and I am proud to think that I am keeping a bit of East Kent alive even if others think I am a *bow-boy* - a traditional scarecrow or eccentric!