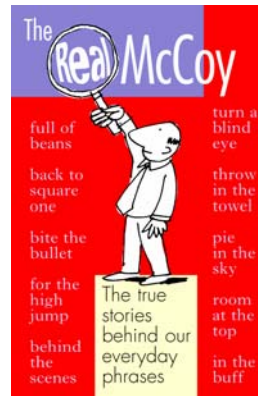


The Real McCoy

Mad as a hatter or just *off your trolley*?
Have you got *a lot of bottle* when it all
goes pear-shaped? Is it *raining cats and
dogs* or *cold enough* to freeze the balls
off a brass monkey?



Words do not always mean what they say – in fact:

A plane's *black box* has nothing to do with the colour
black

There have never been any envelopes pushed in *pushing
the envelope*

There are no Indian restaurants when you *curry favour*
kick against the pricks refers to ... the spurs of an ox

So why do we use these phrases? Find out the true stories
behind our everyday phrases in *The Real McCoy*,
published by Oxford University Press on 1 September 2005.

At other times the words we use are surprisingly literal. Have you
ever wondered why we talk about **licking someone into shape**?
Endearingly, the phrase comes from an ancient belief that bear
cubs were born as formless lumps which were then licked into the
correct bear shape by their mothers.

Ranging from very old expressions (*at sixes and sevens*, *on the nail*)
to much more recent inventions (*go commando*, *push the
envelope*, *jump the shark*), *The Real McCoy* offers an intriguing
exploration of phrases which have a particularly interesting history,
and sheds light on obscure and surprising origins. Based on the
unique in-depth resources and research of Oxford Dictionaries, *The
Real McCoy* tells the true stories behind everyday phrases and
quirky expressions, and dispels a few myths and old wives' tales
along the way.

Published on 1 September 2005, priced £9.99 hardback
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