

K1.2

Relevant tapescripts in Collins and Mees, Practical Phonetics and Phonology:

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1 Cockney (Greater London) © Track 41

Steve: there was one of our blokes – one of his family – like cousins or uncles – or you know – in that range – had had an accident – and been taken to hospital – so he spent – I think most of his weekend without any sleep at all – at this hospital like – until he knew – that the person was going to be OK – anyway – come Monday morning – he decides to go straight to work – and – he comes to work – and say he has had no sleep at all and he's got a job to do in this house to provide – an extension phone – you know – and usually – it's – you run the cable upstairs into a bedroom – it's the usual place to have the phone – and – the bed – was fitted into slots in the floor – so he couldn't sort of – move it over. I mean – he could only get two legs out of the hole in the floor and he couldn't – he needed two people to actually lift it and move it – so he laid across the bed – to – finish the cabling – and screw the – terminal box on the wall – and – not having had any sleep – he just sort of drifted off – and the thing is – the gentleman who let him in – but said he was going to work – and his wife would be in shortly – and *she's* come in – and not knowing the telephone man was there – I mean – to see a van outside – but she didn't – you know – sort of put two and two together – she's come in – she's gone upstairs – into the bathroom – and she's – taken her clothes off like – you know – and gone into the bedroom to get her housecoat – she was going to have a bath – and there's a strange man laying on the bed – snoring his head off – needless to say – our bloke spent about six hours in the nick – trying to explain what had happened – yes – spent six hours in the police station

Notes

bloke (colloquial) = *man*

lying = *lying*. Many southern British varieties conflate the two verbs *lie* and *lay*.

nick (general slang) = *police station, prison*

Description

The traditional word for the broad accent of London is 'Cockney'. The origins of the word, which go back at least 700 years, are uncertain; one attractive theory is that it may come from an old tale of the fool who believed in a 'cocken ey', a cockerel's egg. Cockney is allegedly someone born 'within the sound of Bow Bells' – that's to say where you can hear the bells of St Mary-le-Bow church in the East End of London. This definition would cut the number of Cockneys down to a few thousand, but 'Cockney' is generally used to refer to all London, and to the speech of the Greater London area, which has a population of nearly seven million. Outer London, where most people speak with accents similar to London, covers a huge area and takes in 2.5 million inhabitants. Our speaker, Steve, is a telephone engineer from Lewisham in south-east London.

Cockney is non-rhotic with variable h-dropping. Steve, for instance, pronounces *hospital* on two occasions but drops /h/ in *hole*. Syllable-final stop consonants are strongly glottalised. In medial and final position, Steve often replaces medial /t/ with a glottal stop [ʔ] (e.g. © *without any, move it over*). Post-vocalic /l/ is very dark, sounding rather like [ɹ] (e.g. © *usual, terminal, wall*). Many speakers replace /θ ð/ by /f v/, e.g. *three feathers* = ['frɛɪ 'fevəz] (not heard in this sample). /j/-dropping can be heard in *knew*.

Londoners use virtually the same vowel system as NRP, but the realisations of the vowels are very different. The STRUT vowel is front and open [a] (e.g. © *come Monday*). FLEECE and GOOSE are extended glides [ɛi əu] (e.g. © *needed, move*). The diphthongs FACE, PRICE and GOAT (e.g. © *straight, like and phone*) sound like NRP diphthongs PRICE, CHOICE and MOUTH. The Cockney MOUTH vowel (e.g. © *house*) is fronted and often raised ([a:] or [ɛə]), sounding rather like NRP SQUARE. Front checked vowels DRESS and TRAP (e.g. © *bed, van, family*) tend to be closer. Like NRP, unlike most other British accents, Cockney has the PALM rather than the TRAP vowel in the BATH words (e.g. © *bathroom*).