

Terminology and Definitions

“When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less.”¹

Agricultural Revolution: this term is used to describe the developments in animal husbandry and crop management that took place during the eighteenth century. Although in their ultimate effects the changes over many decades were revolutionary, nothing cataclysmic is implied by this expression.

Aristocracy or *nobility*: describe members of the peerage, both spiritual and temporal, together with their spouses, children and any of their parents who had not themselves been ennobled.

Cis- and *trans-fatty acids*: these are formulaically identical unsaturated fatty acids, the former occurring more commonly in natural fats, the latter in margarines. They differ in the spacial arrangements of hydrogen atoms attached to double bonded carbon atoms and function differently in vivo.

Coronary heart disease: this refers to the common atherosclerotic disease of the coronary arteries unless otherwise specified, for example in reference to coronary ostial narrowing of syphilitic origin. When epidemiological data concerning unstable angina, myocardial infarction or sudden death are mentioned, the definitions used by the investigators being quoted have been accepted.

England: the name is never used in the Continental sense as synonymous with the United Kingdom. It refers strictly to England, excluding Wales and Monmouthshire. When these *are* included, the term England and Wales is employed. Prior to the Act of Union with Scotland of 1707, England and Wales was a distinct political entity. Even after the Union, demographic, economic and sociological data for either England alone or for England and Wales continued to be compiled separately from Scotland. From 1707 until 1800 the term Great Britain applied strictly to the geographical description of the island. Politically, the country created by the union of England and Wales with Scotland became “the United Kingdom of Great Britain”. The term United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was included after the union of 1800. In 1922 the name was finally modified to “The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland”.²

¹ Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll, *Through the looking glass and what Alice found there* (first published 1872), London, Macmillan, 1968, p. 130.

² Frank O’Gorman, *The long eighteenth century: British political and social history 1688–1832*, London, Arnold, 1997, p. 124.

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Gentry: includes baronets, knights and large-scale landowners together with their immediate families.

Georgian era: has been used on occasion in place of “eighteenth century”, although not quite identical with it. The consecutive reigns of the four monarchs named George extended from 1714 to 1830. However, as the changes in cardiac risk factors to be described were gradual and continuous and did not fit neatly into the years 1700 to 1800, no serious inaccuracy results from the substitution and needless repetition is thereby avoided.

Middle aged and elderly: unless stated otherwise, both these terms indicate all persons aged 45 or more. A little arbitrary, but includes almost all people susceptible to coronary heart disease. A frequent division in demographic tabulations.

Middle class: although this term was not used before the late eighteenth century and many of the more affluent members of society would have considered themselves demeaned by being so classified, the term has sociological value. Here it is used to include families whose heads were in offices, places, liberal arts and sciences, clergymen below the rank of bishop, naval and military officers (unless members of the nobility), merchants, professional persons, freeholders and small landowners not engaged personally in farm work. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, manufacturers and providers of financial services became important additions to this group. Eighteenth-century writers sometimes referred to “the middling sort” or “the middling orders”.³

Monounsaturated fats or monounsaturates: triglycerides in which fatty acids bound by glycerol have one double bond linkage in the carbon chain.

Polyunsaturated fats or polyunsaturates: As above, except for two or more double bonds linking the carbon chain.

Saturated fats or saturates: triglycerides in which all bonds in the carbon chains are single.

Secondary study: one designed to observe the effect of an intervention on the recurrence rate of cardiac events in a population whose members had already suffered a CHD episode.

South Asian: this term is used to describe migrants from the Indian subcontinent whose forebears had lived there for very many generations. The adjective Indian would have applied prior to 1947, Indian or Pakistani after independence and Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi after 1971. A further complication is introduced because migrants from India to the United Kingdom during the late 1940s

³ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

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consisted very largely of people of British origin leaving the subcontinent when imperial rule ended. The term South Asian circumvents these complexities, providing it is understood that it excludes both British returnees from the subcontinent *and* migrants to the UK from any other parts of Asia.

Traditional risk factors: include age, male sex, abnormalities of lipid profile, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, smoking, stress and physical inactivity. Any other risk factors, of which some 246 were listed at a recent count,⁴ are specified when alluded to. Examples of the latter include elevation of serum homocysteine, Lp(a) levels and coagulation or clotting factors. On occasion, the term “nontraditional risk factor” is used as a generalization.

Traditional societies: communities in developing countries whose farming practices had not been affected appreciably by the types of change introduced into Western Europe and North America during the past three centuries.

Victorian era: strictly from 1837 to 1901. It has been used in practice to denote the middle and late nineteenth century.

1768: this date is used at times without explanation in order to denote the year of Heberden’s first description of angina pectoris.

⁴ Paul N Hopkins and Roger R Williams, ‘A survey of 246 reputed coronary risk factors’, *Atherosclerosis*, 1981, **40**: 1–52, pp. 2–8.