

THE NOUN SUFFIXES *-ter/-der, -(y)ans* AND *-neth* IN CORNISH

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INTRODUCTION

The primitive Brittonic languages had a wide potential range of abstract noun suffixes, but whereas Breton and Welsh have developed this potential, in Cornish only two suffixes have attained widespread use, as shown in Table 1. The first of these, *-ter/-der* is also common in Breton and Welsh, but the second, *-(y)ans*, is not. Neither is the third commonest suffix in Cornish, *-neth*. This restricted development in Cornish is of interest as a feature distinguishing the language from Breton and Welsh.

THE NOUN SUFFIXES *-ter* AND *-der*

These suffixes convert adjectives into nouns.

The suffixes *-ter* and *-der* arise from Brit. **-tero-*, and are therefore found in all three Brittonic languages. When internal lenition took place, *-ter-* > *-der-*, but in actual realizations, internal sandhi may devoice *-der* to *-ter*. The orthographic conventions in Breton and Welsh vary slightly as to whether or not to show this devoicing in spelling, as shown in table 2 :

Welsh uses (d) except after /ll/, /s/ and /g/;

Breton uses (d) except after /s/ and /g/;

Cornish, as regularized in *Kernewek Kemmyn* (George, 1986) uses (d) except after /θ/, /s/, /b/ and /g/.

Table 1. – Abstract noun suffixes in Brittonic

Cornish	T	R	Breton	Welsh
-ans / -yans	50	46	-añs	-ans -(i)ant
-der / -ter	54	45	-der / -ter	-der / -ter
-neth	12	6	-nez	
-a < -edh	4	0		
-a = F é	12	0	-e	
-as	1	2	-ad	-aid
-asbyon < F, L	7	3	-asion	-asiwn
-edh	3	4	-ez	-edd
-enep	3	0		
-esigeth	1	2	-idigezh	
-eth	8	3	-ezh	-aeth
-ethes	4	1		
-ieth	1	6	-iezh	-ieth
-ni	2	4	-ni	-ni
-oleth	4	1	-elezh	-olaeth
-ri < F	3	0		
-ses	2	6	-ded	-dod
-uri in loan-words	3	0		
-yjyon	4	4	-ijenn	
-ynsys	1	0	-entez	
-va (abstract)	0	3	-va	-fa
-ogeth	0	3	-egezh	
-onieth	0	5	-oniez	

Table 2. – Spelling conventions for *-ter* and *-der*

Preceding phoneme	Welsh	Breton	Cornish
/mm/	twymder	tommder	toemmdr
/nn/	gwander	gwannder	gwannder
/n/	iawnder	eeunder	ewnder
/ll/	pellter	pellder	pellder
/l/	uchelder	uc'helder	ughelder
/rr/	byrder	berrder	berrder
/r/	hirder	hirder	hirder

1. T refers to the numbers of words containing the suffix which are found in traditional Cornish; R refers to the numbers of additional words in the revived language.

2. The list is not exhaustive, and the numbers are approximate.

3) The only suffixes used in revived Cornish which are not attested in traditional texts are the last three: *-va* is attested but only with the meaning of 'place', not that of an abstract noun; *-ogeth* and *-onieth* are based on Breton.

4) There are other abstract noun suffixes in Breton and Welsh which do not appear to have cognates in Cornish; these include B *-adenn*, *-adeg*, *-adur*, *-adurezh*, *-erezh* and W *-oni*, *-rwydd*, *-wch*.

Preceding phoneme	Welsh	Breton	Cornish
v	cryfder	kreñvder	krevder
w	tewder	tevder	tewder
x	sychder	sec'hder	syghder
ð	—	—	heudhder
θ	poethder	—	poethter
	—	serzhder	serthter
s	braster	braster	braster
b	—	—	hevelepter
g	gwacter	gwakter	gwakter

The suffixes *-ter* and *-der* were active throughout the period of traditional Cornish, and are alive today in the revived language.

Table 3 lists most of the occurrences of *-ter* and *-der* in Cornish, taken from George (1991). In this and similar tables, the columns are as follows:

- a** century in which the word in column 'b' was first recorded;
- b** compound word, spelled in *Kernewek Kemmyn* (GEORGE, 1986);
- c** number of recorded occurrences of the word before 1800;
- d** meaning of the word in English;
- e** existence of cognates of the word in Breton and Welsh;
- f** associated word: adjectives for *-der* *-ter* and *-neth*; mostly verbs for *-ans* and *-yans*;
- g** century in which associated word was first recorded; (P means found in place names)
- h** existence of cognates of the associated word.

Table 3. – Occurrences of *-ter* and *-der* in Cornish

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
12	toemmder	7	'warmth'	BW	toemm	12	BW
14	bolder	1	'boldness'	— E	bold	16	—
	gwannder	4	'weakness'	BW	gwann	12	BW
	ughelder	14	'height'	BW	ughel	14	BW
15	dader	50	'goodness'	—	da	12	BW
	divoetter	1	'starvation'	—	—	—	B—
	golowder	9	'brightness'	—W	golow	12	BW
	euthokter	1	'dread'	—	euthek	15	B—
	goskotter	1	'shade'	—	goskeus	15	—
	gwirder	2	'truth'	—W	gwir	14	BW
	hwekter	2	'kindness'	B—	hweg	14	BW
	kaletter	4	'hardness'	B—	kales	14	BW
	klamder	2	'swoon'	— ?	klav	12	BW
	melder	2	'sweetness'	—	mel	12	BW
	poenvotter	3	'misery'	—	poenvos	15	—

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
	tekter	8	'beauty'	—	teg	12	—W
	uvelder	5	'humility'	BW	uvel	12	BW
	yeynder	4	'cold'	B—	yeyn	12	BW
16	braster	4	'size'	BW	bras	12	BW
	bennesikter	8	'blessedness'	—	bennesik	—	—
	brogther	1	'brightness'	— ?	bryght	15	—
	glander	1	'purity'	BW	glan	14	BW
	gwynnder	1	'whiteness'	BW	gwynn	12	BW
	hwerowder	1	'bitterness'	BW	hwerow	15	BW
	iselder	4	'lowness'	BW	isel	15	BW
	karadowder	3	'amiability'	—	karadow	14	—
	kompoester	5	'evenness'	—	kompes	15	BW
	krevder	4	'strength'	BW	krev	12	BW
	lowender	4	'joy'	B—	lowen	12	BW
	onester	4	'honesty'	—	onest	15	BW
	pellder	4	'distance'	BW	pell	14	BW
	ryalder	1	'royalty'	— F	ryal	15	—
17	hakter	1	'ugliness'	B—	hager	14	BW
	havalder	1	'similarity'	B—	haval	15	BW
	splannder	5	'brightness'	B—	splann	14	B—
18	downder	2	'depth'	BW	down	14	BW
	drokter	1	'wickedness'	—	drog	12	BW
	glanythter	2	'cleanliness'	—	glanyth	18	BW
	gwithter	1	'deterioration'	—	gwith	14	BW
	gwrhevelepter	1	'identity'	—	gwrhevelep	18	—
	liester	1	'plurality'	B—	lies	14	BW
	medhelder	1	'softness'	—	medhel	15	—W
	muskokter	1	'madness'	—	muskok	15	—
	mygylder	1	'tepidity'	—	mygyl	20	—
	ner'der	1	'strength'	—	nerth	12	BW
	poester	1	'heaviness'	—	poes	15	BW
	sawder	1	'safety'	—	saw	14	—
	sekerder	1	'security'	—	—	—	—W
	skavder	1	'lightness'	BW	skav	14	BW
	skwithter	1	'tiredness'	B—	skwith	14	B—
	syghter	1	'dryness'	BW	sygh	14	BW
	tanowder	1	'thinness'	BW	tanow	15	BW
	tewder	1	'thickness'	BW	tew	15	BW
	tewlder	7	'darkness'	B—	tewl	15	BW
20	adhvetter	0	'ripeness'	—	adhves	20	BW
	anhwekter	0	'unkindness'	—	anhwek	20	—
	baster	0	'shallowness'	—	bas	20	BW
	berrder	0	'brevity'	BW	berr	12	BW
	bravder	0	'finery'	B—	brav	17	BW
	bywder	0	'liveliness'	B—	byw	12	BW
	difrethter	0	'feebleness'	—	difreth	17	B—
	diokter	0	'laziness'	—	diek	12	BW

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
	doethter	0	'prudence'	−W	doeth	14	−W
	duder	0	'blackness'	−W	du	12	BW
	efander	0	'space'	BW	efan	15	BW
	ewnder	0	'equity'	BW	ewn	14	BW
	fervder	0	'firmness'	BW	ferv	20	BW
	frethter	0	'fluency'	—	freth	14	BW
	garowder	0	'roughness'	BW	garow	14	BW
	gwakter	0	'emptiness'	BW	gwag	15	BW
	heudhder	0	'joyfulness'	—	heudh	14	−W
	hevelepter	0	'similarity'	—	hevelep	15	—
	hirder	0	'length'	BW	hir	12	BW
	kallder	0	'cunning'	−W	kall	12	−W
	kammdr	0	'crookedness'	−W	kamm	12	BW
	kasadowder	0	'hatefulness'	—	kasadow	14	—
	kewarder	0	'accuracy'	—	kewar	14	−W
	klerder	0	'clarity'	BW	kler	16	BW
	klorder	0	'mildness'	BW	klor	14	BW
	kraster	0	'aridity'	−W	kras	20	BW
	krennder	0	'roundness'	—	krenn	18	B−
	krinder	0	'dryness'	BW	krin	20	BW
	krivder	0	'rawness'	—	kriv	18	−W
	kulder	0	'narrowness'	−W	kul	12	−W
	kuvder	0	'kindness'	B−	kuv	12	BW
	lelder	0	'loyalty'	B−	lel	15	B−
	lommder	0	'bareness'	−	lomm	P	−W
	lymmder	0	'sharpness'	BW	lymm	14	BW
	moelder	0	'baldness'	BW	moel	P	BW
	palster	0	'plenty'	B−	pals	14	B−
	poethter	0	'heat'	−W	poeth	P	BW
	privetter	0	'privacy'	—	privedh	15	B−
	serthter	0	'steepness'	B−	serth	15	BW
	trenkter	0	'acidity'	B−	trenk	18	B−
	trommdr	0	'suddenness'	B−	tromm	15	B−
	unnikter	0	'singularity'	—	unnik	20	−W
	glynder	0	'limpidity'	—	glyn	15	—
	ynnder	0	'narrowness'	−W	ynn	15	−W
	yrder	0	'freshness'	−W	yr	18	−W

THE NOUN SUFFIXES *-ans* AND *-yans* IN CORNISH

These suffixes are very common in Cornish, having over 100 examples between them. Nouns formed with them are masculine, and form their plural in *-ow*.

As pointed out by Watkins (1961), the suffix *-ans* is common in Cornish because it represents the falling together of two suffixes:

(a) OldC **-ant*, corresponding to W *-ant*, which with the well-known change *-nt* > *-ns* became MidC *-ans*;

(b) MidC *-ans* < MidE *-ans* < OldF *-ance* < L *-antia*.

In Welsh and Breton, (a) and (b) have remained separate.

MidE nouns borrowed as such into Cornish are listed separately in Table 4.

Table 4. – Middle English nouns borrowed into Cornish

a	b	c	d	
14	penans	5	'penance'	13
15	konshyans	2	'conscience'	13
	ordenans	5	'ordinance'	14
16	dyffrans	6	'difference'	14
	governans	8	'government'	14
	leshyans	3	'licence'	14
	substans	25	'substance'	13
20	eksperyans	0	'demonstration'	14
	nygromans	0	'sorcery'	

The suffix *-yans* corresponds to W *-iant*. It may be regarded as a combination of the verbal noun suffix *-ya* (corresponding to B *-iañ*, W *-io*, and very commonly applied to roots from loan-words) and the noun suffix *-ans*. Thus in effect, almost any verb in English may be Cornicised by adding *-ya* to the root, and then made into a noun by further adding *-ns*.

Although most of the later words in table 5 are formed from verbal nouns, this is not true of the earlier ones, where *-ans* and *-yans* are more suffixes in their own right; those labelled A are formed from adjectives, and those marked N from nouns. Among the examples from the 14th century are the two commonest words: *bywnans* 'life' and *mernans* 'death', each apparently formed from the adjective, and each having an unexplained intrusive [n]. The words marked BF have the verb recorded at a later date than the noun, and may therefore be back-formations. Those marked E are English words, some of which appear also in Table 5.

Like *-ter* and *-der*, *-ans* and *-yans* were active throughout the period of traditional Cornish, and continue to be active in revived Cornish.

Table 5. – Occurrences of *-ans* and *-yans* in Cornish

a	b	c	d	f	g
14	bywnans	120	'life'	byw	12 A
	diskwedhyans	7	'show'	diskwedhes	14
	gevyans	23	'forgiveness'	gava	15
	gordhyans	48	'worship'	gordhya	14
	mernans	125	'death'	merwel	14 A
	myghternans	2	'kingdom'	myghtern	14 N
	tristans	2	'sadness'	trist	12 A

a	b	c	d	f	g	
15	dasserghyans	4	'resurrection'	dasserghi	15	
	dehwelans	4	'forgiveness'	dehweles	15	
	diskryjyans	8	'unbelief'	diskrysi	15	
	gwrians	8	'action'	(gul)		
	kryjyans	38	'belief'	krysi	15	
	megyans	5	'culture'	maga	14	
	ordenans	5	'ordinance'	ordena	15	E
	selwyans	3	'salvation'	selwel	15	
	skwithans	1	'tiredness'	skwitha	15	
	tervans	1	'tumult'	terva	20	BF
	tybyans	2	'idea'	tybi	16	
16	devedhyans	3	'origin'	(dos)		
	displesyans	1	'displeasure'	displesya	16	
	dyskans	40	'lesson'	dyski	15	
	governans	8	'government'	governa	16	E
	gwreydhyans	3	'foundation'	gwreydh	15	
	kyfyans	1	'confidence'	kyfya	17	
	lavuryans	2	'toil'	lavurya	15	
	movyans	1	'movement'	movya	16	
17	kessydhyans	1	'punishment'	kessydhya	20	BF
	kostyans	1	'cost'	kostya	17	
	rebellyans	1	'rebellion'	—	—	E
	sians	1	'fancy'	—	—	
18	besydhyans	1	'baptism'	besydhya	16	
	drehevyans	1	'building'	drehevel	14	
	gwithyans	1	'preservation'	gwitha	14	
	hwythfians	1	'swelling'	—	—	
	kemmeryans	1	'reception'	kemmeres	14	
	kessenyans	1	'harmony'	kesseni	20	BF
	klywans	1	'hearing'	klywes	14	
	kowethyans	1	'fellowship'	kowethya	14	
	kuhudhans	1	'accusation'	kuhudha	15	
	kuntellyans	1	'gathering'	kuntell	16	
	leveryans	1	'pronunciation'	leverel	14	
	mollethyans	1	'malediction'	molletha	18	
	myskemmaryans	1	'misunderstanding'	myskemmeres	16	
	pennsevigyans	1	'nobility'	pennsevik	12	
	perthyans	2	'sufferance'	perthi	16	
	prederyans	1	'opinion'	prederi	14	
	sevyans	1	'rising'	sevel	14	
	sewenyans	1	'success'	seweni	15	
	trelyans	1	'translation'	trelya	14	
	tremenyans	1	'passing'	tremena	15	
20	akontyans	0	'reckoning'	akontya	16	
	akordyans	0	'agreement'	akordya	14	
	akwityans	0	'bill'	akwitya	16	
	apposyans	0	'examination'	apposya	16	

a	b	c	d	f	g
	argyans	0	'argument'	argya	15
	avisyans	0	'notice'	avisya	17
	avonsyans	0	'promotion'	avonsya	15
	dastineythyans	0	'rebirth'	dastineythi	20
	dasvywnans	0	'revival'	dasvywa	15
	delinyans	0	'drawing'	delinya	20
	demmedhyans	0	'wedding'	demmedhi	16
	dewisyans	0	'election'	dewis	15
	dineythyans	0	'birth'	dineythi	15
	dyllans	0	'publication'	dyllo	15
	fydhyans	0	'confidence'	fydhya	20
	gwarnyans	0	'proclamation'	gwarnya	15
	gwaytyans	0	'expectation'	gwaytya	14
	kammdybyans	0	'error'	kammdybi	15
	kammgryjyans	0	'heresy'	—	—
	kesunyans	0	'union'	kesunya	20
	kesvywnans	0	'cohabitation'	kesvywa	17
	kevarwoedhyans	0	'guidance'	kevarwoedha	15
	kewans	0	'excavation'	kewa	20
	komunyans	0	'communion'	komunya	16
	kowsans	0	'speech'	kewsel	14
	kudhans	0	'hiding'	kudha	14
	kurunans	0	'coronation'	kuruna	15
	kusulyans	0	'consultation'	kusulya	15
	ladrans	0	'theft'	ladra	15
	lesans	0	'expansion'	lesa	15
	liwyans	0	'painting'	liwya	16
	lytherennans	0	'orthography'	lytherenna	20
	mellyans	0	'interference'	mellya	16
	menystrans	0	'administration'	menystra	16
	niverans	0	'census'	nivera	14
	obayans	0	'obedience'	obaya	15
	ostyans	0	'hospitality'	ostya	18
	plegyans	0	'tendency'	plegya	14
	plontyans	0	'propaganda'	plontya	15
	ravsyans	0	'rapture'	ravsya	15
	revyans	0	'row'	revya	20
	strivyans	0	'contention'	strivya	14
	sywyans	0	'result'	sywya	14
	temptyans	0	'temptation'	temptya	14
	untyans	0	'anointing'	untya	14
	ystynnans	0	'extension'	ystynna	14

THE NOUN SUFFIX *-neth* IN CORNISH

Like *-ter* and *-der*, the suffix *-neth* converts adjectives into nouns, but is much rarer, and the nouns which it forms are more abstract. It is represented in Breton in a few words, and appears, in the 'zedachek' spelling as *-nez*, e.g. *furnez* 'wisdom', implying Cornish *-nedh*. This spelling system is, however, notoriously defective in respect of the endings written as *-z* and *-zh*. It appears that *furnez* is pronounced [fyrnes] in Leoneg and [fyrneh] in Gwenedeg; it therefore corresponds to words containing /-θ/ in Welsh and Cornish, and should be spelled *furnezh*.

As indicated in column e, the suffix is commoner in Cornish than in Breton, and does not appear to be represented in Welsh. In Cornish it was doubtless reinforced by English *-ness* < OldE *nes(s)*, and it is noteworthy that there are relatively more English words in column f of Table 5 than in Table 4. If this was the sole source, however, then the presence of *-nezh* in Breton is more difficult to explain.

Table 6. — Occurrences of *-neth* in Cornish

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
14	sherewneth	2	'roguery'	— E	sherew—	14	—
	sleyneth	1	'skill'	— E	sley	18	—W
15	folneth	4	'folly'	—	fol	12	BW
	gokkineth	4	'stupidity'	— E	gokki	15	—
	gowogneth	2	'falsehood'	—	gowek	12	—W
	muskogneth	4	'madness'	—	muskog	15	—
	pithneth	1	'greed'	—	pith	15	B—
	yowynketh	1	'youth'	—	yowynk	12	BW
16	boghosogneth	1	'poverty'	—	boghosek	12	—
	sotelneth	1	'sleight'	— E	sotel	15	—
17	hirneth	1	'long time'	B—	hir	12	BW
18	sygerneth	2	'sluggishness'	—	syger	18	—
20	furneth	0	'wisdom'	B—	fur	12	B—
	glasneth	0	'verdure'	—	glas	P	BW
	kerneth	0	'dearness'	B—	ker	14	B—
	kethneth	0	'slavery'	B—	keth	12	BW
	kowlogneth	0	'gluttony'	—	kowlek	20	—
	yeunogneth	0	'craving'	—	yeunek	20	—

CONCLUSIONS

While the widespread use in Cornish of the suffix *-neth* is well known, the

use of *-(y)ans* is an innovation. The suffix *-neth* has been influenced by English *-ness*, but a cognate appears in Breton.

The revived Cornish currently in use reflects the widespread use of *-ter/-der* and *-(y)ans*, but the language planners might care to consider a greater use of the other attested suffixes in Table 1, to enable fine shades of meaning to be expressed.

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RÉSUMÉ

Dr. Kenneth J. GEORGE, «Suffixes nominaux *-ter/-der*, *-(y)ans* et *-neth* en Cornique»

Alors que le suffixe de nom abstrait *-ter/-der* est très fréquent dans les trois langues brittoniques, l'emploi des suffixes de noms abstraits *-(y)ans* et *-neth* a été davantage développé en cornique qu'en breton et en gallois. Le rendement des trois suffixes corniques est examiné.

ABSTRACT

Kenneth J. GEORGE, "The noun suffixes *-ter/-der*, *-(y)ans* and *-neth* in Cornish"

Whereas the abstract noun suffix *-ter/-der* is very common in all three Brittonic languages, the usage of the abstract noun suffixes *-(y)ans* and *-neth* has been greater in Cornish than that of their counterparts in Breton or in Welsh. The activity of all three Cornish suffixes is examined.

use of *-(y)ans* is an innovation. The suffix *-neth* has been influenced by English *-ness*, but a cognate appears in Breton.

The revived Cornish currently in use reflects the widespread use of *-ter/-der* and *-(y)ans*, but the language planners might care to consider a greater use of the other attested suffixes in Table 1, to enable fine shades of meaning to be expressed.

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