

Is *broder* the proper way to spell the Cornish word for ‘brother’?¹

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ABSTRACT

The Cornish words for ‘brother’ and ‘brothers’, *broder* and *breder* respectively, do not fit their cognates in Breton and Welsh, neither can they easily be derived from the reconstructed forms in Proto-Brythonic. Here the problem is investigated in detail, and a possible solution suggested: that *broder* followed the same path as Welsh and *breder* that of Breton.

1) INTRODUCTION

The Cornish word for ‘brother’ is spelled *broder* in Old Cornish, and this spelling is also common in Middle Cornish. The same spelling, along with a plural *breder*, has been used in most orthographies of Revived Cornish, including Unified Cornish, Unified Cornish Revised (UCR), Kernewek Kemmyn (KK) and Standard Written Form (SWF). Most Cornish speakers would be unaware that the spellings are questionable, unless they thought about the cognates in Welsh and Breton. Yet if we examine the phonology of the word, questions do arise. Schrijver (1995: 204) wrote:

“the historical interpretation of the pair *broder* / *breder* – if it exists – leads to insurmountable difficulties”.

In this paper, the question is examined, taking into account data from *Bewnans Ke* (BK), which was unavailable to Schrijver, and also Late Cornish, and the pre-tonic shortening of [ɔ:] to [ɔ] in Proto-Brythonic (George 2026).

2) ATTESTATIONS OF THE WORDS FOR ‘BROTHER(S)’

2.1 The traditional Cornish texts

The Middle Cornish texts are referred to by the abbreviations in the first column of Table 1. In addition, VC is used for the Old Cornish word-list *Vocabularium Cornicum*; in the Late Cornish phase, Lh refers to Cornish writings by Edward Lhuyd and VLC stands for Vernacular Late Cornish (i.e. texts written mainly in the “signpost spelling” of the 17th and 18th centuries).

¹ This paper, completed in 2026, amplifies part of a presentation to the 17th International Congress of Celtic Studies, University of Utrecht, 2023 July.

² The views expressed in this paper are those of the author rather than the corporate views of the Board.

Table 1 Texts in Middle Cornish

	Name	Author	Date of composition	Date of text	Material
PC	<i>Passio Christi</i>	unknown	c.1400	c.1400	copy of religious play
RD	<i>Resurrexio Domini</i>	unknown	c.1400	c.1400	
OM	<i>Origo Mundi</i>	unknown	c.1400	c.1425	
PA	<i>Pascon agan Arluth</i>	unknown	c.1375	c.1475	copy of religious poem
BMa	<i>Beunans Meriasek</i>	Rad Ton	1504 ?	1504	saint's life
BMb		unknown	1504 ?	c. 1540	copy of first 10 pages
BK	<i>Bewnans Ke</i>	unknown	c. 1535	c. 1565	copy of saint's life
TH	Tregear Homilies	J. Tregear	c. 1558	c. 1558	translation
SA	<i>Sacrament of the Altar</i>	T. Stephyn	c. 1576	c. 1576	translation
CW	<i>Creacon of the World</i>	W. Jordan	c. 1555 ³	1611	religious play

2.2 Attestations

The lists of attestations below are intended to be exhaustive. The abbreviations for Late Cornish material in the first column of the tables include:

LV = Lhuyd's Vocabulary (notebook),

AB = Archaeologica Britannica (Lhuyd 1707),

M4WK = translation of Matthew chapter 4 by William Rowe,

PV = Pryce's Vocabulary.

In the third column, the translations are from:

Sandercock for the Ordinalia (PC, RD, OM);

Bonner's original homilies for TH (*in italics*);

Edwards (2000) for CW;

The King James Bible for M4WK (*in italics*);

Lhuyd's own translations for LV and AB;

2.2.1 The word for 'brother'

In Old Cornish, the word for 'brother' is given as *broder* at VC.138, glossing Latin *frater*. Also given is the word *braud*, which is taken as the Old Welsh form. These words were copied by Lhuyd into his notebook (LV023). Pryce miscopied the Welsh form. Attestations in Middle Cornish are listed in Table 2, and those in Late Cornish in Table 3. The boxes highlighted in yellow indicate copies of previous work.

³ Except for the 7% which is rewritten from *Origo Mundi*.

Table 2 *Attestations of the word for 'brother' in Middle Cornish*

Ref.	Manuscript spelling	English translation	Speaker
PC.0188	<i>dvn yn kerth ow bruder whek</i>	Let us go away, my sweet brother	James to Matthew
OM.0449	<i>ov broder pur lowenek</i>	my brother, very gladly	Abel to Cain
OM.0450	<i>my a genes then meneth</i>	I will go with thee to the mountain	
OM.0525	<i>ow broder whek dun the dre</i>	my dear brother, let us go home	Abel to Cain
OM.0571	<i>caym lauar ple ma abel</i>	Cain, say where is Abel	God to Cain
OM.0572	<i>the vroder ov servont lel</i>	they brother, my faithful servant.	
OM.0577	<i>otte voys mernans abel</i>	Lo, the voice of the death of Abel	God to Cain
OM.0578	<i>the vroder prest ov kelwel</i>	thy brother, continually calling	
OM.0606	<i>ow map py theth the vroder</i>	My son, where has thy brother gone	Adam to Cain
OM.1819	<i>me a leuer ow broder</i>	I say, my brother	Aaron to Moses
OM.1827	<i>a vroder ov banneth thys</i>	O brother, my blessing on thee	Moses to Aaron
OM.1841	<i>moyes kemer the welen</i>	Moses, take up thy rod,	God to Moses
OM.1842	<i>ha ty hath vroder aren</i>	both thou and thy brother Aaron	
OM.1872	<i>ty na the vroder aaron</i>	thou nor thy brother Aaron	God to Moses
BM.1696	<i>broder povle duen alema</i>	Brother Paul, let us go hence	Peter to Paul
BK18.07	<i>me a debis etho thy</i>	I therefore thought that thither,	Bedivere to Kay
BK18.08	<i>ow broder e fennowgh why⁴</i>	my brother, you would wish	
BK18.09	<i>laverrya gans weras Christ</i>	to travel with Christ's help.	
TH23v	<i>Rag penagull ew henna na garra y brothar</i>	<i>For whosoever dothe not loue hys brother</i>	
TH27r	<i>penagoll a vo angry gans y brothar</i>	<i>whosoever is angry with his brother</i>	
TH28v	<i>Neb a lavarra thy brothar</i>	<i>He that saieth to his brother</i>	
TH31v	<i>Mar te the brother ha gul treusspass war the byn</i>	<i>Yf thy brother trespasse against the</i>	
TH45v	<i>brother Androw, henna o pedyr</i>	<i>the brother of Andrewe, that was Peter</i>	
TH47r	<i>Symon pedyr, mab Joannes, brother the Androw</i>	<i>Simon Peter, the sonne of Ioannes, the brother of Andrewe</i>	
CW.1098	<i>cayne ow brodar</i>	Cain, my brother	Abel to Cain
CW.1119	<i>cayne ow brodar</i>	Cain, my brother	Abel to Cain
CW.1153	<i>yta voice mernans abell</i>	Lo, the voice of the death of Abel	God to Cain
CW.1154	<i>thethe vrodar prest ow kyllwall</i>	thy brother, continually calling	(< OM.0577-78)
CW.1193	<i>a rogella ye vrodar</i>	Has he lost his brother?	Cain to Adam
CW.1298	<i>theth owne vrodar ythova</i>	He was your own brother	Calmana to Cain
CW.1299	<i>haw brodar ve magata</i>	and my brother as well.	
CW.1632	<i>drefan latha ow brodar</i>	because I killed my brother	Cain to Lamech
CW.1676	<i>prag ye wrusta ye latha</i>	Why did you kill him when he was	Lamech to Cain
CW.1677	<i>hag eve tha vrodar nessa</i>	your brother next in line?	
CW.1679	<i>drefan eve thom controllya</i>	Because he ordered me about,	Cain to Lamech
CW.1680	<i>he me y vrodar cotha</i>	me, his elder brother!	
CW.1716	<i>theth vrodar te a lathas</i>	you killed your brother	2nd devil to Cain
CW.1831	<i>hag ena ow brodar cayne</i>	And there I see my brother Cain	Seth to Angel
CW.1832	<i>me an gweall ef in mur bayne</i>	in great suffering	
CW.1905	<i>ythesa in trobell braes</i>	there was my brother Cain	Seth to Adam
CW.1906	<i>ow brodar cayne in paynes</i>	in great trouble, in torment	
CW.2048	<i>ef a lathas ye vrodar</i>	He who slew his brother	Lucifer to devils
CW.2049	<i>ny gemeras yddrag vyth</i>	had no regrets	

⁴ Although the 2nd pl. is used here, it is clear from the text that Bedivere is speaking only to Kay.

Table 3 Attestations of the word for ‘brother’ in Late Cornish

Ref.	Manuscript spelling	Translation	Remarks
LV023	Bredar	<i>Brawd</i> [Welsh]	error?
LV024	Broder [v/el <i>Braud</i>	<i>frater</i> [Latin]	copied from OldC
AB013c	Bredar	<i>A brother</i>	all of these entries apparently stem from that in LV023
AB061b	Bredar	<i>A brother</i>	
AB242a	bredar	<i>Brother</i>	
AB242b	e vredar	<i>his Brother</i>	
AB243a	Bredar	<i>A Brother</i>	
AB245a	a Bredar vi	<i>my Brother</i>	
AB293a	Bredar	<i>brother</i>	
M4WK18	brodar	brother	
M4WK21	broder	brother	
PV077	†Brauder	<i>a brother</i>	miscopied from OldC
	Bredar		copied from Lhuyd
PV190	ye vrodar	<i>his brother</i>	copied from CW.2048

2.2.2 The words for ‘brothers’

There appear to be two different plurals: the disyllabic *breder* / *vredar* and various trisyllabic forms. Cases are listed in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4 Attestations of the disyllabic word for ‘brothers’

Ref.	Manuscript spelling	English translation	Speaker
PC.0691	<i>fystyn leman me ath pys</i>	Hasten now, I pray thee,	Peter to John
PC.0692	<i>may fo dyghtys a[n] vredar</i>	so that the brethren may be served.	
RD.1163	<i>ha fasta sy the vredar</i>	go, confirm thou thy brethren	Jesus to Peter
RD.1164	<i>in luen grygyans</i>	in the true faith	
RD.2368	<i>faste the gy the vredar</i>	Confirm thou thy brethren	Jesus to Peter
RD.2369	<i>pup vr ol yn lel grygyans</i>	always in the true faith	
BM.2848	<i>ov breder duen ny the dre</i>	My brethren, let us go home	Dean to ?
AB243a	Breder	brothers	
PV10214	vredar	brethren	

Table 5 Attestations of the trisyllabic word for ‘brothers’

Ref.	Manuscript spelling	English translation	Speaker
PC.0714	<i>ham bredereth ol yn weth</i>	and all my brethren too	Peter to Jesus
PC.1429	<i>my ny fethaf sur rak meth</i>	I dare not, indeed, for shame,	Peter to Jesus
PC.1430	<i>dos yn mysk ow brudereth</i>	come among my brethren	
BM.1755	<i>ov bredereth</i>	My brethren,	Silvester to messenger(s)
BM.1756	<i>duen alema kescolen</i>	let us go hence with one heart	
TH13r	<i>crist a res in pub poynt oll bos havall thy bredereth</i>	<i>Christe muste in all pointes become lyke to his brethren</i>	St Paul: Hebrews 2
TH31v	<i>ow disky an order a bredereth in congregacion</i>	<i>teachynge the order of brotherly reconciliation</i>	
TH48v	<i>mar pe an holl fraternity han bredereth</i>	<i>yf the hole fraternitye were</i>	
TH48v	<i>ny vynsa den vyth gwaya na styrrya warbyn an bredereth a crist</i>	<i>no man woulde any thing moue, or styrrre against the brotherhood of Christ</i>	
M4WK18	<i>Ha Jesus, gwandra reb a môr Alale, wellas deaw broderath</i>	<i>And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren</i>	
M4WK21	<i>Ha moaze alenna e a wellaz Moy deaw a broderath,</i>	<i>And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren</i>	

2.3 Discussion

The essentials of Tables 2 to 5 have been combined into Table 6. Again, yellow highlighting indicates copies; pink highlighting is used to mark Welsh forms.

Table 6 Summary of attestations

Text	Singular		Disyllabic plural		Trisyllabic plural	
	Spelling	No.	Spelling	No.	Spelling	No.
VC	<i>broder</i>	1		0		0
	<i>braud</i>	1				
PC	<i>bruder</i>	1	<i>vreder</i>	1	<i>bredereth</i>	1
					<i>brudereth</i>	1
RD		0	<i>vreder</i>	2		0
OM	<i>broder</i>	3		0		0
	<i>vroder</i>	6				
BM	<i>broder</i>	1	<i>breder</i>	1	<i>bredereth</i>	4
BK	<i>broder</i>	1		0		0
TH	<i>brothar</i>	3		0	<i>bredereth</i>	4
	<i>brother</i>	3			<i>brederath</i>	1
				0	<i>brodereth</i>	1
CW	<i>brodar</i>	6		0		0
	<i>vrodar</i>	7				
Lhuyd (LV)	<i>broder</i>	1				
	<i>breder</i>	1				
Lhuyd (AB)	<i>breder</i>	6	<i>breder</i>	1	<i>brederedh</i>	1
	<i>vredar</i>	1				
Rowe	<i>broder</i>	1		0	<i>broderath</i>	2
	<i>brodar</i>	1				
Pryce	<i>Brauder</i>	1				
	<i>Bredar</i>	1	<i>vreder</i>	1	<i>bredereth</i>	1
	<i>vrodar</i>	1			<i>brudereth</i>	1

2.3.1 Grouping of the cases into spelling-types

It is well known that Middle Cornish *e* became *a* in post-tonic syllables (Holger & Pedersen 1961: 80); George (2019) dated the mid-point of the change as c.1525 for closed syllables. Thus we may place *broder* and *brodar* in the same spelling-type, written {broder}; *vroder* and *vrodar* also belong here. Tregear's *brother* and *brothar* look as if they have been influenced by Middle English ['bro:ðər], but are also included under {broder}, since the stressed vowel is spelled <o>. That leaves *bruder* in PC. and Lhuyd's *breder*, which are treated here, at least initially, as two separate types, {bruder} and {breder}. Schrijver (1995: 205) regards {broder}, {bruder} and {breder} as being just one type, in which <o>, <u> and <e> are allographs.

The trisyllabic plural forms are formed by adding the plural suffix *-eth* > *-ath* to the singular forms. This suffix comes from Proto-Celtic **-ijās*, and its earliest attestation in Cornish (c.975) is in *modreped* 'aunts' in *De Raris Fabulis*. Corresponding to the singular types, we may identify {brodereth}, {brudereth} and {bredereth} for the plural.

When the Welsh forms and the copies are eliminated, the count of the various spelling-types is as follows:

SINGULAR		PLURAL <i>disyllabic</i>		PLURAL <i>trisyllabic</i>	
{broder}	34			{brodereth}	3
{bruder}	1			{brudereth}	1
{breder}	1	{breder}	5	{bredereth}	10

Clearly it is unsatisfactory to have {breder} as both a singular and a plural. To resolve this and other difficulties, we turn to the phonological history.

3) PHONOLOGICAL HISTORY

Like most words for ‘brother’ in European languages (e.g. Latin *frater*, German *Bruder* and English *brother* itself), the Brittonic words come ultimately from Proto-Indo-European **bʰréh₂tēr*, but we are concerned with their more immediate precursor, Proto-Brythonic **brātēr*, pl. **brāteres*. Here *ā* was raised to [ɔ:] in Proto-Brythonic.

The development of this word was regular in Welsh and in Breton, but was different in the two languages, so they are treated separately. In the phonological tables below, I have ventured to give phonetic forms, though these are necessarily speculative.

3.1 Development in Breton

The stressed vowel [ɔ:] remained long until the introduction of the new quantity system *c.* 600 (Jackson 1953: 338), by which time it had become “a slightly advanced back, round, very-open vowel” (Jackson 1967: 127). Here it is denoted by Jackson’s label [ω], in order to distinguish it from Primitive Breton /ɔ/ (Table 7).

Table 7 Phonological development in Breton

	sg. ‘brother’		pl. ‘brothers’	
Phase	Phonetics	Spelling	Phonetics	Spelling
Proto-Brythonic	[ˈbraːt̪ɛːr]	*brātēr	[braːˈt̪ɛːs]	*brāteres
	raising of both vowels		raising of long vowel	
	[ˈbrɔːtiːr]	*br̥t̪īr	[brɔːˈt̪ɛːs]	*br̥t̪eres
	lenition; loss of final syllables; new quantity system			
Primitive Breton	[ˈbrɔdr]	*brodr	[brɔˈd̪ɛr]	*broder
	fronting of [ɔ] to [œ]			
Old Breton	[ˈbröder]	brotr	[bröder]	*broder
			stress-shift	
			[ˈbröder]	*broder
	assibilation			
Middle Breton	[ˈbröder]	breuzr	[ˈbröder]	breuder
	loss of sibilant		rounding of final vowel	
Modern Breton	[ˈbrör]	breur	[ˈbröder]	breudeur

Subsequently the [d] in the singular was assibilated to [z], and then lost altogether, giving Modern Breton *breur*. It remains in the plural, in the form *breudeur* in most dialects, rather than the expected *breuder*.⁵ The pronunciation [ˈbröːdœr] given in Table 7 is my own, influenced by the Leoneg dialect; the stressed vowel lies between [œ] and [ø] (ALBB⁶) and is depicted here by [ö].

3.2 Development in Welsh

As Table 8 shows, by the Primitive phase there was already a difference between Breton and Welsh. This was caused by the shortening of [ɔː]. In Old Welsh, the short [ɔ] in the singular was diphthongized to [au] and the [-r] was lost, giving [ˈbrauð]. The plural had two forms from the Proto-Brythonic phase (Schrijver 1995: 371); they remained stable, and the form *brodyr* was generalized in Modern Welsh.

Table 8 Phonological development in Welsh

	sg. ‘brother’		pl. ‘brothers’		
			1st form		2nd form
Phase	Phonetics	Spelling	Phonetics	Spelling	Spelling
British	[ˈbraːt̪ɛːr]	*brātēr	[braːˈt̪ɛːs]	*brāteres	
	raising of both vowels		raising of long vowel		
	[ˈbrɔːtiːr]	*brōtūr	[brɔːˈt̪ɛːs]	*brōteres	*brōtires
	shortening of ō				
	[ˈbrɔtiːr]	*brōtūr	[brɔˈt̪ɛːs]	*brōteres	*brōtires
lenition; loss of final syllables; new quantity system					
Primitive Welsh	[ˈbrɔdr]	*brɔdr	[ˈbrɔːd̪ɛr]	*broder	*brodyr
Old Welsh	[ˈbrɔdr]	*brodr	[ˈbrɔːd̪ɛr]	*broder	*brodyr
	diphthongization				
	[ˈbrauðr]	*braudr	[ˈbrɔːd̪ɛr]	*broder	*brodyr
	loss of /-r/⁷				
	[ˈbrauð]	brawd⁸	[ˈbrɔːd̪ɛr]	*broder	*brodyr
Middle Welsh	[ˈbrauð]	brawd	[ˈbrɔːd̪ɛr]	broder	brodyr⁹
generalization of 2nd form					
Modern Welsh	[ˈbrauð]	brawd			brodyr

⁵ For a discussion of this development, see Jackson (1967: 135), Schrijver (1995: 210).

⁶ *Atlas Linguistique de la Basse Bretagne*.

⁷ Dated by Schrijver (1995: 368) as “well before the 9th century”.

⁸ As listed above, this form is actually found at VC.138, but it is Welsh, not Cornish; it was miscopied by Pryce as *Brauder*.

⁹ The two forms go back to the time of British (Schrijver 1995: 371).

3.3 Development in Cornish

3.3.1 The spelling *broder*

The earliest attested singular form is Old Cornish *broder* (VC.138) gl. *frater*. This spelling shows that a svarabhakti vowel was inserted, making the word disyllabic. (Examples of this are also found in the Welsh word for ‘brother’.¹⁰) That this vowel was /ε/ is shown by the fact that it later took part in the well-known sound change [ε] > [a] in final unstressed syllables. Graves (1962) gave the pronunciation as [bröder], without any explanation. Calvete (2001) wrote that this pronunciation is:

in fact reflected by some Middle Cornish spellings such as "bruder", plural "brudereth" in *PD 608*¹¹ while "broder" which is due to orthographic conservatism is found in *OM 449*.

It is reasonable to suppose that the <o> in Old Cornish *broder* means [ö], because <o> was used in VC to denote the stressed reflex of Primitive Cornish /œ/, as shown in the first column of Table 9. The table also shows <u> and <eu> as the spellings of /œ/ in Middle Cornish; and the subsequent spellings <e>, <ê> and <ea> indicate the unrounding of /œ/ to /ε/.

Table 9 Words containing stressed historical /œ/

Old Cornish	English meaning	Middle Cornish		Late Cornish		Breton	Welsh
				Lhuyd	VLC		
		/œ/	/ε/	/ε/	/ε/		
<i>blodon</i>	flower			<i>bledzhan</i>		<i>bleuñvenn</i>	<i>bloden</i>
<i>blot</i>	flour			<i>blêz</i>	<i>blease</i>	<i>bleud</i>	<i>blawd</i>
<i>dof</i>	son-in-law	<i>duf</i>	<i>def</i>			<i>deuñv</i>	<i>dawf</i>
<i>cos</i>	cheese			<i>kêz</i>	<i>keas</i>	<i>keuz</i>	<i>caws</i>
<i>lor</i>	floor	<i>leur</i>	<i>ler</i>	<i>lêr</i>		<i>leur</i>	<i>llawr</i>
<i>lof</i>	hand	<i>leuf</i>	<i>lef</i>				<i>llaw</i>
<i>scod</i>	shadow	<i>schus</i>	<i>skesse</i>	<i>skêz</i>		<i>skeud</i>	<i>ysgod</i>
<i>troster</i>	cross-bar		<i>tresters</i>				

Based on the evidence in Table 9, one would naturally postulate a development:

['brö·dər]	>	['brö·dər]	>	['brɛ·dər]	>	['brɛ·dar]
<i>broder</i>		<i>bruder</i>		* <i>breder</i>		<i>bedar</i>
VC.138		PC.0188		??		LV023

Note that each of these spellings is recorded only once. The form **breder* is starred because although there are five cases of *breder* / *vreder*, they all appear to mean ‘brothers’ rather than ‘brother’.

¹⁰ according to *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*.

¹¹ This reference is incorrect; the spelling *brudereth* is found at PC.1430.

Schrijver (1995: 209) regards the various spellings of the stressed vowel (<o>, <u> and <e>) as allographs of half-long [ö]. He recognizes the problem with *breder*. Following a suggestion by Lauran Toorians, he argues that the four cases of *breder* in Middle Cornish actually mean ‘brother’. This does not stand up to scrutiny, however. The four cases are listed again in Table 10, plus the important extra two cases in Late Cornish.

Table 10 Attestations of breder/vreder

Reference	Textual spelling and conventional translation	Author’s translation
PC.0692	<i>may fo dyghtys a[n] vreder</i> so that the brethren may be served	
RD.1163	<i>ha fasta sy the vreder</i> go, confirm thou thy brethren	
RD.2368	<i>faste the gy the vreder</i> confirm thou thy brethren	
BM.2848	<i>ov breder duen ny the dre</i> my brothers, let us go home	
AB243a	<i>Breder</i>	‘brothers’ is implied
PV102	<i>faste the gy the vreder</i> (< RD.2368)	strengthen to thee thy brethren

Schrijver argues that Meryasek’s *ov breder* at BM.2848 could mean ‘my brother’, because there is nothing to suggest that, in addition to the Dean as speaker, there is anyone other than the Earl of Vannes on the stage on the time; but if that is so, then the spelling conflicts with *broder* ‘brother’ at BM.1646. The three cases in the Ordinalia have always been translated as ‘brethren’ in recent times, but the deciding factor is the evidence in Pryce’s dictionary. On page 102, Pryce quotes RD.2368 correctly as *faste the gy the vreder*, and translates the line as ‘strengthen to thee thy brethren’. This translation was made by a traditional Cornish speaker (probably Tonkin, from whom Pryce obtained most of his dictionary), and shows that *vreder* is indeed plural.

Clearly, the data as a whole are contradictory, but in my view, it is not Middle Cornish *breder*, but Lhuyd’s evidence which is questionable. In AB243 he gives examples of plurals formed “*by the change of one Vowel for another*”. These include the monosyllables: “Marh, *A horse*, merh; Yâr, *A hen*, Yêr; Mên, *A stone*, Mein;” and the polysyllables: “Davaz, *A sheep*, Devez; Gavar, *A goat*, Gever.”

In all of these examples the vowel is stressed, but in the pair under discussion, the difference is in the unstressed post-tonic vowel: “Bredar, *A Brother*, Breder;” This can hardly be correct. These two words are so close that they would be confused, and in any case, one would expect *breder* to have become *bredar* by Lhuyd’s time, just as *broder* became *brodar*. Lhuyd’s entry is open to doubt, as are some others of his words in the same category:

“Sanz, <i>A Saint</i> , Plur. Seinz”	(pl. like Middle Welsh <i>seint</i> , Middle Cornish pl. is <i>syns</i>)
“Danz, <i>A tooth</i> , deinz;”	(pl. like Middle Welsh <i>deint</i> , Middle Cornish pl. is <i>dyns</i>)
“Mab, <i>A Son</i> , †Meib”	(<i>meib</i> not found elsewhere)
“Manek, <i>A glove</i> , Menik”	(<i>menik</i> otherwise unknown)

I therefore dismiss Lhuyd’s *Bredar* as a mistake. Consequently the expected development [‘brö·der] > [‘brę·der] > [‘brę·dar] is considered doubtful.

3.3.2 Did Cornish follow a similar path to that of Breton?

On noting sets of cognates in Table 9 such as Breton *leur*, Middle Cornish *leur*, Welsh *llawr* ‘floor’ one might expect Cornish to follow a similar path to Breton; in particular, that there was no early pre-tonic shortening of [ɔ:]. The resulting developments (for singular and plural) are shown in Table 11; Each is the same as Table 7 as far as the Primitive Cornish phase, and each is coded: **Lsg** for *Long* (i.e. [ɔ:] in British) and *singular*; **Lpl** for *Long* and *plural*.

Table 11 Development assuming no early pre-tonic shortening, as in Breton

	sg. ‘brother’ (Lsg)			pl. ‘brothers’ (Lpl)	
Phase	Phonetics	Spelling		Phonetics	Spelling
British	[ˈbra:t̪ɛ:r]	*brātēr		[bra:t̪ɛres]	*brāteres
	raising of both vowels			raising of long vowel	
	[ˈbrɔ:t̪i:r]	*brōtūr		[brɔ:t̪ɛres]	*brōteres
	lenition; loss of final syllables; new quantity system				
Primitive Cornish	[ˈbrɔdr]	*brodr		[brɔˈdɛr]	*broder
	fronting of [ɔ] to [œ]				
	[ˈbrœdr]	*brodr		[brœˈdɛ:r]	*broder
	svarabhakti				
	[ˈbrœdər]	*broder		[brœˈdɛ:r]	*broder
	stress-shift				
Old Cornish	[ˈbröːdɛr]	broder	CLASH!	[ˈbröːdɛr]	*broder
Middle Cornish	[ˈbröːdɛr]	bruder (PC)		[ˈbröːdɛr]	*broder
	unrounding of [ö]				
	[ˈbrɛːdɛr]	breder (?)		[ˈbrɛːdɛr]	breder
	lowering of post-tonic vowels				
Late Cornish	[ˈbrɛːdar]	bedar (Lh)		[ˈbrɛːdar]	bedar

Here the development of the singular is self-consistent, but as we have seen, requires the instances of Middle Cornish *breder* to be interpreted as a singular, which is untenable. For this reason, the entries in this part of the table are printed in grey type.

The developments **Lsg** and **Lpl** in Table 11 lead to the same Old Cornish form [ˈbröːdɛr] for both singular and plural, as pointed out by Schrijver (1995: 204). One resolution of this clash was to retain [ˈbröːdɛr] > [ˈbrɛːdɛr] for the plural, and come up with the form *broder* [ˈbrɔːdɛr] as a new singular; this is supported by the evidence, since the vast majority of the singular forms are of the type {broder}. How did this arise? Calvete’s suggestion that the *broder* at OM.0449 is due to orthographic conservatism might possibly apply to the Ordinalia, but to extend this five centuries to the time of William Rowe is stretching credulity too far. Both the pronunciation and the spelling may have been influenced by Middle English [ˈbroːðɛr]; note *brother* and *brothar* in Tregear. The remodelling gives a result in which the vocalic alternation is similar to that in the pair *flogh* ‘child’ / *fleghe* ‘children’¹².

¹² These are Middle Cornish forms; the same alternation is found in Old Cornish *floh* / *flech*, so the remodelling may date from that phase.

3.3.2 Did Cornish follow a similar path to that of Welsh?

Most scholars (including myself) have assumed, on the evidence in Table 9, that the <o> in Old Cornish *broder* means [ö]; but theoretically it could mean [ɔ]. If this were the case, then it would explain all the 34 cases of {broder}, but we would have to account for it. Now Welsh shows an alternation between pairs such as *mawl* ‘praise’ / *moli* ‘to praise’ and *hawl* ‘question’ / *holi* ‘to question’. This alternation occurs because in the form of Proto-Brythonic leading to Welsh, [ɔ:] was shortened to [ɔ].

Let us now suppose that this shortening occurred in the forerunner of Cornish, not generally, but specifically in the words for ‘brother(s)’, and see what happens subsequently (Table 12). The first part of the table, up to Primitive Cornish, is practically the same as that in Table 8.

Table 12 Development assuming early pre-tonic shortening, as in Welsh

	sg. ‘brother’ (Ssg)			pl. ‘brothers’ (Spl)	
Phase	Phonetics	Spelling		Phonetics	Spelling
British	[ˈbra:t̪ɛ:r]	*brätēr		[bra:ˈt̪ɛrɐs]	*bräteres
	raising of both vowels			raising of long vowel	
	[ˈbrɔ:t̪i:r]	*br̥t̪ūr		[brɔ:ˈt̪ɛrɐs]	*br̥t̪eres
	shortening of ̥				
	[ˈbrɔti:r]	*br̥t̪ūr		[brɔˈt̪ɛrɐs]	*br̥t̪eres
	lenition; loss of final syllables; new quantity system				
Primitive Cornish	[ˈbrɔdr]	*br̥ɔdr		[ˈbrɔˈdɛr]	*broder
	svarabhakti				
	[ˈbrɔdɛr]	*broder		[ˈbrɔˈdɛr]	*broder
	stress-shift				
Old Cornish	[ˈbrɔˈdɛr]	broder	CLASH!	[ˈbrɔˈdɛr]	*broder
Middle Cornish	[ˈbrɔˈdɛr]	broder		this putative development does not work	
	lowering of post-tonic vowels				
Late Cornish	[ˈbrɔˈdar]	brodar			

This scheme works well for the singular, but not for the plural. Again the words for ‘brother’ and ‘brothers’ become indistinguishable by the Old Cornish phase. This time the way of maintaining a clear distinction between singular and plural was to devise a new plural by adding the suffix [-ɛð] to [ˈbrɔˈdɛr]. This comes from Proto-Celtic*-*īiās*, and its earliest attestation in Cornish (c.975) is in *modreped* ‘aunts’ in *De Raris Fabulis*. Its subsequent development is given in Table 13.

Table 13 Development of the trisyllabic plural

Phase	Phonetics	Spelling
Old Cornish	[br̥ɔˈdɛːrɛð]	*brodereth
Middle Cornish	[br̥ɔˈdɛːrɛð]	brudereth (PC)
	unrounding of [ö]	
	[br̥ɛˈdɛːrɛð]	bredereth
	lowering of post-tonic vowels	
Late Cornish	[br̥ɛˈdɛːrɛð]	brederath

The trisyllabic forms *brodereth* (TH) and *broderath* (Rowe) are thought to be reformations based on the later form *broder* + *-eth*.

3.3.3 A possible combined solution

If the word for ‘brother’ was subject to pre-tonic shortening in British, and the word for ‘brothers’ was not, then this could account for all of the attested forms of the singular (except Lhuyd’s *bredar*, which has been dismissed, and Middle Cornish *bruder*, which has not) and all the disyllabic forms of the plural. The results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14 A possible combined development

	‘brother’ (Ssg)		brothers’ (Lpl)	
	early pre-tonic shortening (as in Welsh)		no early pre-tonic shortening (as in Breton)	
British	['bra:t̥ɛ:r]	*brātēr	[bra:'t̥ɛrɛs]	*brāteres
	raising of both vowels		raising of long vowel	
	['brɔ:t̥i:r]	*brōtīr	[brɔ:'t̥ɛrɛs]	*brōteres
	shortening of <i>ō</i>			
	['brɔti:r]	*brɔtīr	[brɔ:'t̥ɛrɛs]	*brōteres
	lenition; loss of final syllables; new quantity system			
Primitive Cornish	['brɔdr]	*brɔdr	[brɔw'dɛr]	*broder
			fronting of [ɔ] to [œ]	
	['brɔdr]	*brɔdr	[brœ'dɛ:r]	*broder
	svarabhakti			
	['brɔdər]	*broder	[brœ'dɛ:r]	*broder
	stress-shift			
Old Cornish	['brɔ'dɛr]	broder	['brö'dɛr]	*broder
Middle Cornish	['brɔ'dɛr]	broder	['brö'dɛr]	*bruder
			unrounding	
	['brɔ'dɛr]	broder	['brɛ'dɛr]	breder
	lowering of post-tonic vowels			
Late Cornish	['brɔ'dar]	brodar	['brɛ'dar]	bredar

Table 6 may now be redrawn in terms of the identified developments.

	Singular		Plural		
Code		Lsg			
Text	{broder}	{bruder} > {breder}	{breder}	{brudereth} > {bredereth}	{brodereth}
VC	<i>broder</i> 1				
PC		<i>bruder</i> 1	<i>vreder</i> 1	<i>brudereth</i> 1 <i>bredereth</i> 1	
RD			<i>vreder</i> 2	0	
OM	<i>broder</i> 3 <i>vroder</i> 6				
BM	<i>broder</i> 1		<i>breder</i> 1	<i>bredereth</i> 4	
BK	<i>broder</i> 1				
TH	<i>brother</i> 3 <i>brother</i> 3			<i>bredereth</i> 4 <i>brederath</i> 1	
					<i>brodereth</i> 1
CW	<i>brodar</i> 6 <i>vrodar</i> 7				
Lhuyd		<i>bredar</i> 1	<i>breder</i> 1		
Rowe	<i>broder</i> 1 <i>brodar</i> 1				<i>broderath</i> 2

3.3.4 The problem of *bruder*

Having dismissed Lhuyd's *Bredar* for the singular, all falls into place, except for *bruder* (PC.0188). This spelling suggests ['brö·dər], which would fit 'brothers' in Table 11, but given the context, *bruder* is far more likely to be singular. Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree that it was just two disciples that Christ sent to seek a donkey and her colt for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. PC.0175 reads *ens dev am dyscyblyon* 'let two of my disciples go'. The chosen two are named in PC as Jacobus Major and Matheus, and at PC.0188, James says to Matthew: *dvn yn kerth ow bruder whek*. Sandercock's translation 'Let us go away, my sweet brother' appears incontrovertible as regards the number of brothers (just one).

There is no easy way around this problem. The form <bruder> is hardly likely to be a variant of <broder>. One is reduced to the unsatisfactory assumption that PC (and RD) "were derived from a different dialect area" (Schrijver 1995: 203).

4) CONCLUSIONS

- This problem is like a system with more unknowns than equations. It contains inconsistencies, which need to be weighed; Lhuyd's "Bredar, *A Brother*, Breder" is likely to be erroneous, rather than the idea that *breder* really meant 'brother', not 'brothers'.
- The pair *broder* / *breder* cannot be explained fully by a Neogrammarian approach to their development; sound-changes may occur by lexical diffusion, and developments may be confused by dialectal variation.
- It is explicable by supposing that *broder* had shortening of * $\bar{5}$ and *breder* did not. No reason is readily apparent for this, but one may observe that some other independent words underwent shortening and others did not (George 2026).

5) REFERENCES

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