

THE PRONUNCIATION AND SPELLING  
OF REVIVED CORNISH

by

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

I first began to learn Cornish just ten years ago, in the autumn of 1976. During the decade which has elapsed since then, there has been a great expansion of interest in spoken Cornish. The number of fluent speakers, although still very small, has quadrupled. The need to convert a basically medieval written language into a modern spoken language, suitable for everyday use, has placed great stress on Cornish. For many years, the pronunciation and spelling advocated by Nance and Smith have been subject to criticism from academics; now the whole basis of their Revived Cornish is being called into question by Cornish speakers from within the revival movement. Hitherto the Cornish Language Board has tended to ignore such criticisms, but if Cornish is to be as authentic, then it is essential they be examined and answered. That is the purpose of this book. Until these problems are resolved, I see real difficulties in proceeding with the development of Revived Cornish.

My conclusions, and recommendations to the Board, are that:

- (i) the grammar of Revived Cornish continue to be based on that of Middle Cornish;
- (ii) a phonological base for Revived Cornish be defined, approximating the pronunciation of the traditional language c.1500;
- (iii) the orthography be modified so as to fit the phonological base and form a system which aspires to phonemic perfection.

Details of the phonological base and its phonemic orthography form most of the subject matter of this book. I would like to think that these recommendations, taken together, will form a blueprint suitable for taking Cornish into the twenty-first century.

It has taken me two years to write this book, in fits and starts, mainly during the school holidays, and wish to thank my wife for her patience. During this time, I have kept a diary in Cornish, and used it as a test-bed for the new orthography, with which I am now satisfied. I wish to thank the following for valuable discussions: Wella Brown, John Chesterfield, Bernard Deacon, Richard Gendall, Anthony Harvey, Andrew Hawke, Julyan Holmes, Chris Jeffery, Rod Lyon, Oliver Padel, Graham Sandercock and Tim Saunders.

I have typed the entire text myself, using an IBM golf-ball typewriter kindly lent by Plymouth Polytechnic. Many readers will be surprised that I did not use a word processor; the principal reason for this is that the book contains numerous phonetic symbols, which are (as yet) not easily dealt with by word processors. I was determined to use such symbols, even though many readers may not be familiar with them. An appendix explaining their use, and a glossary of phonetic terms are therefore included.

Bosprenn

September 1986

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This is not a revised edition, but a reproduction of the first edition, with notes appended in blue. Subsequent work has shown a few items to be incorrect; these are here printed in red.

In digitizing the text, I have attempted to preserve the general appearance of the original text. The first edition was typed using a typewriter, mainly in the Helvetica font. To print in *italic* or in a different font, I had to change the golf-ball, and phonetic symbols had to be inserted by hand. There being no digital version available, I have typed the text again, using Microsoft Word. Since Helvetica is not readily available with Word, Arial 12 point has been used as an alternative. This has a similar appearance, but since there are more words to a page, the pagination is different from the first edition. Today one would use **bold type** for headings, but this was not available on a typewriter: The “phonemic spelling”, now known as ***Kernewek Kemmyn***, is in ***bold italic*** type; Unified Cornish is in Courier New typeface; all other quoted words are in *italic* type, or where underlined in the original, kept as such.

Since studying the historical phonology of traditional Cornish, I have maintained that the orthography of Revived Cornish should reflect that phonology. For this reason, I devised ***Kernewek Kemmyn***, and continue to make small modifications to it, to take account of new discoveries. In the first edition, I pointed out mistakes in Unified Cornish; I am now concerned by deficiencies in SWF.

Morwel  
January 2026

# Part A                      Discussion

## CHAPTER 1                      PRELIMINARIES

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Most people who know anything about Cornish know that it belongs to the Brittonic [the term Brythonic is now preferred] group of Celtic languages, and that it was spoken traditionally as a community language from about 600 to 1800 A.D. Some reference books would have us believe that it became extinct in 1777, with the passing of Dolly Pentreath, oft-quoted as “the last person to speak the Cornish language.” These books need re-writing: firstly, Dolly was not the last traditional Cornish speakers, though she may have been the last native speaker of traditional Cornish; secondly, and more importantly, Cornish is now alive, having been revived in the early part of the twentieth century. [This sentence was included because at the time of writing, the existence of Revived Cornish was far less known than it is now].

Fortunately, more and more people are learning of the existence of Revived Cornish. What puzzles them is its pronunciation. I am often asked: “How do you know that you are pronouncing Cornish correctly?” This question has bothered me for a long time. Within the first few weeks of starting to learn Cornish, I became troubled by the supposed pronunciation of two numbers: *deu* ‘two (m.)’ and *seyth* ‘seven’. Does *deu* really rhyme with English dew [ˈdjuː], and if so, how is it to be distinguished from *dyw* ‘two (f.)’? And why was *sey-* in *seyth* said to rhyme with English *sigh* [ˈsaɪ], when in many European languages, <ey> means [eɪ] (more like the diphthong in English say)?

Gradually it became clear to me that a proper examination of Cornish phonology was required, indeed overdue. After an appropriate period of background study in linguistics, I executed this task during the three years 1981-84, and presented the results as a thesis. Three quarters of this work were concerned with the phonological history of traditional Cornish, and the remainder with the application of the information to improving Revived Cornish. It is this last quarter which has been greatly expanded in this book.

My researches have thrown considerable light on the pronunciation of Cornish. They have enabled a phonological base to be constructed for the revived language; this base approximates the pronunciation of traditional Cornish c. 1500. Its introduction will mean an increase in accuracy of pronunciation from perhaps 70% to 95% correct. I am now able to answer with some confidence that, in Middle Cornish at least, the word for ‘two (m.)’ was pronounced [ˈdɛu], and its feminine equivalent was [ˈdiu]: the pronunciation of *seyth* as recommended by the revivalists is clearly wrong; it should be pronounced [ˈseɪθ], (approximately rhyming with English faith).

Unfortunately, a few problems remain, and are unlikely to be solved in the absence of traditional Cornish speakers. This may worry the purist, but in my view they are not so great as to prevent us from continuing to speak Cornish as a modern language. We are not (alas!) called upon to converse with Cornish speakers from past centuries. Yet, if Revived Cornish is to gain more respectability in the academic world, it is essential that its reconstruction be seen to be as accurate as possible.

This reconstruction was pioneered by Jenner, and continued by Nance and Smith during the years 1920-40. The grammar and syntax which they prescribed are reasonably satisfactory, but until this work, the phonology had not been properly examined. The introduction of a proper phonological base has repercussions on the orthography. Smith (1947) wrote: "After years of testing, he [Nance] has succeeded in evolving a system of spelling which is near to perfection as any system can be". As a rationalization of Middle Cornish orthography, Nance's spelling (termed "Unified") was quite good in terms of the contemporary state of knowledge of the Celtic languages; but it was not properly linked to spoken Cornish. Smith evidently thought that Nance's reconstruction would last indefinitely:

"we have a compact mediaeval language .... little likely to undergo any further change; and we can take heart at the thought that what we now write in Cornish will be as fully intelligible 1000 years hence as it is in the present year of grace, 1947"

Political leaders in the twentieth century who have been rash enough to make statements about "lasting 1000 years" have been proved wrong; so it may be with Nance's Unified Cornish.

Nance's Cornish has been subjected to criticism from the academic world, some of it justified; I submit that it is time that his spelling system and associated pronunciation, which do not fit each other, be replaced by the phonological base outlined in Chapter 5 of this book and the orthography outlined in Chapter 6. The need for this change and the reasons behind it are discussed in Chapters 2 to 4.

It is intended that the proposals in this book be considered as recommendations to the Cornish Language Board. Constructive criticism will be welcome. [\[When the proposals were put to the Board, they were passed with just one person against\].](#)

## 1.2 PHASES OF CORNISH

### 1.2.1 Introduction and abbreviations

It is beyond the scope of this book to give a history of Cornish. The reader is referred in the first instance to a semi-popular book by Beresford Ellis (1974).

It is customary to divide the history of many European languages into phases, e.g.

Old English	OldE	700 – 1100
Middle English	MidE	1100 – 1500
Modern English	ModE	1500 – date
Primitive French	PrimF	500 - 800
Old French	OldF	900 – 1300
Middle French	MidF	1300 – 1600
Primitive Breton	PrimB	600 - 800
Old Breton	OldB	800 – 1100
Middle Breton	MidB	1100 – 1650
Modern Breton	ModB	1650 – date
Primitive Welsh	PrimW	600 - 775
Old Welsh	OldW	775 – 1150
Middle Welsh	MidW	1150 – 1400
Modern Welsh	ModW	1400 – date

These boundary dates are of course approximate, and vary from author to author. Other abbreviations used in the text are:

Indo-European	IE	Norman French	NorF
Classical Latin	CLat	Mediaeval Latin	MedL
British Latin	BLat	Central French	CenF

### 1.2.2 Primitive Cornish (PrimC)

In the case of Cornish, the primitive phase, which has not written records, lasted from about 600 to 800 A.D.

### 1.2.3 Old Cornish (OldC)

refers to the phase from 800 to 1200, and includes a number of personal names found as glosses in the “Bodmin Gospels”, and more importantly, a Cornish-Latin word-list known as the *Vocabularium Cornicum* (VC.).

### 1.2.4 Middle Cornish (MidC)

lasted from 1200 to 1575, but for the first third of this phase, the only written sources are personal and place-names. The second half contains the bulk of the extant traditional literature, including in chronological order:

- (a) the fragment *Charter Endorsement* (CE.) and the religious poem *Pascon agan Arluth* (MC.);
- (b) the trilogy of religious plays *Origo Mundi* (OM.), *Passio Christi* (PC.), *Resurrexio Domini* (RD.), known collectively as the *Ordinalia*;
- (c) the *saints’ plays* *Beunans Meriasek* (BM.), dated 1504, and *Bewnans Ke*, discovered in 1999;
- (d) 12 Catholic sermons by Tregear (TH.), dated c. 1558, bound together with a *catena* translated by Thomas Stephyn c. 1576.

During this phase, between thirty thousand and forty thousand people spoke Cornish (George, 1986).

### 1.2.5 Late Cornish (LateC)

The last phase of the traditional language (1575-1800) is often referred to (mistakenly, in my view) as Modern Cornish, by analogy with Modern English, Modern French, etc. This term is considered inappropriate because of the special position of Cornish as a revived language. In this book, it will be termed Late Cornish, in which the word late means both ‘tardy’ (*le cornique tardif* in French) and ‘deceased’. Other writers (Jenner 1904, Piette 1969) have placed the boundary between MidC and LateC in the early 16th century, but phonologically, the transition period is from 1550 to 1600. The play *Creacon of the World* (CW.), dated 1611 [but composed c. 1555], belongs to LateC from a phonological point of view, but is written in the literary tradition of MidC. The principal other writings in this phase were poems, articles, stories, letters and portions of Scripture, composed or translated by members of the Newlyn School (1660-1740).

### 1.2.6 Revived Cornish

The language of the twentieth century is here called Revived Cornish. The term “Unified Cornish” is used only for the spelling system devised by Nance. Wella Brown has used the term “Modern Cornish”, but since this has also been applied to LateC by others, it is perhaps better to avoid the term altogether. It would be invidious of me to judge the relative merits of twentieth-century literature in Cornish, and will mention just three works, chosen on the basis of magnitude. These are:

- (a) *Trystan hag Ysolt*, by A.S.D.Smith, an epic poem almost as long as the *Ordinalia*;
- (b) *Enys Tresor*, a translation by R.L.Lyon of *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stevenson;
- (c) *An Gurun Wosek a Geltya*, by M.Bennetto (1984), the first full-length novel in Cornish.

Since the first edition of this book, there has been an explosion of literature in Revived Cornish, listed by Davyth Fear at

[https://skrifakernewek.miraheze.org/wiki/Cornish\\_literature\\_by\\_year](https://skrifakernewek.miraheze.org/wiki/Cornish_literature_by_year).

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Twentieth century Cornish is unusual, but not unique, in that it is a revived language. In about 1680, Nicholas Boson wrote:

“Our Cornish tongue hath been so long in the Wane,  
that We can hardly hope to see it increase again.”

In the event, the traditional language lingered on for about another 120 years in the far west of Cornwall. The sad tale of its demise has been ably described by P.A.S.Pool (1982). How surprised Boson would be if he could see how the old language has been brought back to life ! The full story of the revival of Cornish has yet to be written, but useful references are Thomas (1963) and Beresford Ellis (1974). The brief description below concentrates on the work of Nance and Smith, because their ideas, rather than those of Jenner, form the basis of the Cornish hitherto promoted by the Cornish Language Board.

The revival of Cornish is considered to date from 1904, when Henry Jenner (1838-1934) published his *Handbook of the Cornish Language*. He apparently thought that Cornish should carry on from where it left off: he re-spelled some, but by no means all, MidC words in a fashion more compatible with the phonological system of LateC, writing for example *dhebm* for MidC *thym* ‘to me’.

The revival progressed under the auspices of the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies (the first founded in 1920) and the Gorsedd of Cornwall (established in 1928). The two leading figures were Robert Morton Nance (1873-1959) and A.S.D.Smith (1883-1950). [\[The contribution of W.D.Watson has been largely air-brushed out of history\]](#). Unlike Jenner, Nance based his ideas for the revived language firmly on Middle Cornish. This was reasonable, because 86% of the extant literature dates from the MidC phase. This literature, although enormous when one has to examine it line by line, is limited in scope. The religious verse which makes up its bulk is not representative of the everyday speech of Cornish people in the Middle Ages, and still less suitable as a basis for conversational Cornish in the twentieth century.

The syntax, semantics and lexicon of the traditional language are all incomplete, and in the absence of traditional Cornish speakers, all the gaps have to be filled by analogy, both within the language and with Breton and Welsh.

## 2.2 PROBLEMS OF GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX

On the whole, the problems of reconstructing Cornish grammar and syntax were solved by Nance and Smith during the years 1920-40, with the aid of the notes of Lhuyd and Stokes, and using Breton grammar as a comparative model. The results were published in two text-books: Cornish for All (Nance, 1929) and Cornish Simplified (Smith, 1939). Occasionally mistakes come to light and have to be rectified; e.g. the tek a wel construction (Padel, 1978, 1979), which Nance had wrongly interpreted as an exclamative.

Two difficulties remaining are:

- (a) The paradigms of verbs as obtained from the MidC texts are incomplete. Full reconstructed paradigms have been given by Smith (1939) and by Wella Brown (1984), and those for the third person singular by Richard Gendall (1972). These do not always agree, and the whole question needs re-investigating in the light of our improved knowledge of Cornish phonology (George, 1984).
- (b) There is doubt about what constitutes neutral and emphatic word-order in sentences. Exigencies of rhyme-schemes in MidC verse caused word-order to be distorted, so that it is difficult to extract the norm which was used in conversation.

Both of these problems can probably be resolved by analysis of the computer files of traditional Cornish which I have set up, but this is outside the scope of this book. A comprehensive grammar of the revived language has recently been published by Brown (1984). herto the Cornish Language Board has tended to ignore such criticisms, but if Cornish is to be as authentic, then it is essential they be examined and answered. That is the purpose of this book. Until these problems are resolved, I see real difficulties in proceeding with the development of Revived Cornish.

## 2.3 NANCE'S "UNIFIED CORNISH" SPELLING SYSTEM

Nance spent many years attempting to rationalize the orthography, eventually producing a system which he called "Unified Cornish". In 1938, he published A Cornish-English Dictionary, a work which contains about 8000 head-words in the unified spelling.

The principles of this system have never been fully explained. They would appear to be the following:

- (a) The unified spelling is basically a rationalization of that of MidC. Where two or more alternative spellings are found in the texts, Nance chose the commonest; in cases of doubt, he chose the simpler form, or the form found in the Ordinalia. The policy of simplification led to a number of mistakes, examples of which are given in Part B.
- (b) Two phonologically-based innovations show that Nance intended his spelling to be used as the basis for a spoken language, and not merely as an aid to students wishing to read the medieval texts. /ð/ was distinguished from /θ/ by the introduction of <dh> for the former (following Lhuyd) instead of <th> (though not in final position); and <j> was introduced for [dʒ]. In addition, the reflexes of PrimC /ei/ and MidE /ɛi/ were distinguished, by using <ey> for the former and <ay> for the latter.
- (c) A slight attempt was made to unify the different phases of Cornish.

Proper unification to a MidC base would require the application of sound-changes such that words appearing only in OldC or only in LateC are re-cast in the form which they would have taken had they been recorded in MidC.

The only change which Nance applied extensively was an orthographic one: OldC <-t> > MidC <-s>. The following words are recorded only in OldC, but Nance has applied the change and spelled them with <-s>.

<u>OldC</u>		UNIFIED SPELLING
<i>gur(h)thit</i>	‘spindle’	<i>gwerthys</i>
<i>(h)e(r)bidiat</i>	‘miser’	<i>erbysys</i>
<i>sommet</i>	‘to flit’	<i>sommys</i>
<i>iot</i>	‘gruel’	<i>yos</i>

Nance took little or no account of other changes, with the result that the “unified” system contains anachronisms. Although the bulk of his spellings reflect MidC forms, the phonological range exemplified covers the whole period for which texts are extant (11th to 18th century). Examples are to be found in Part B.

## 2.4 FILLING LEXICAL GAPS

Nance invented a number of words not found in the texts by adapting them from Welsh or Breton. Sometimes he did not do so correctly; e.g. from ModB *hevlene* ‘this year’ < PrimB /hɛβlɪneð/, he devised *hevleny*. According to the rules of phonological evolution (para. 20.5.2), this should have been *hevlyna*. [\[Nance did, however, get right a number of words subsequently discovered in \*Bewnans Ke\*\].](#)

## 2.5 PHONOLOGY

### 2.5.1 Introduction

Although the grammar is probably over 95% correct, the same cannot be said of the phonology. On inspecting Unified Cornish, I cannot help feeling that Nance first devised the orthography, and then subsequently, with the help of Smith, thought out a phonological system to fit it. This is the converse of what they should have done (see diagram 250).

The recommended pronunciation is to be found in Nance (1929, 1938) and Smith (1931, 1939, 1977). Phonetic symbols were not used in these works, but sounds were described in terms of their occurrence in well-known words in English and other languages. The bases of the recommended pronunciation appear to be the following:

### 2.5.2 Sounds of the English dialect of West Penwith

During the early years of the Cornish revival, there was a widespread belief that the vowel sounds used in the English dialect of West Penwith were practically identical to those of eighteenth century Cornish. Nance (1929) wrote:

"The vowel sounds of Cornish as last spoken can still be heard from the inhabitants of West Cornwall ..... in the familiar pronunciation of English."

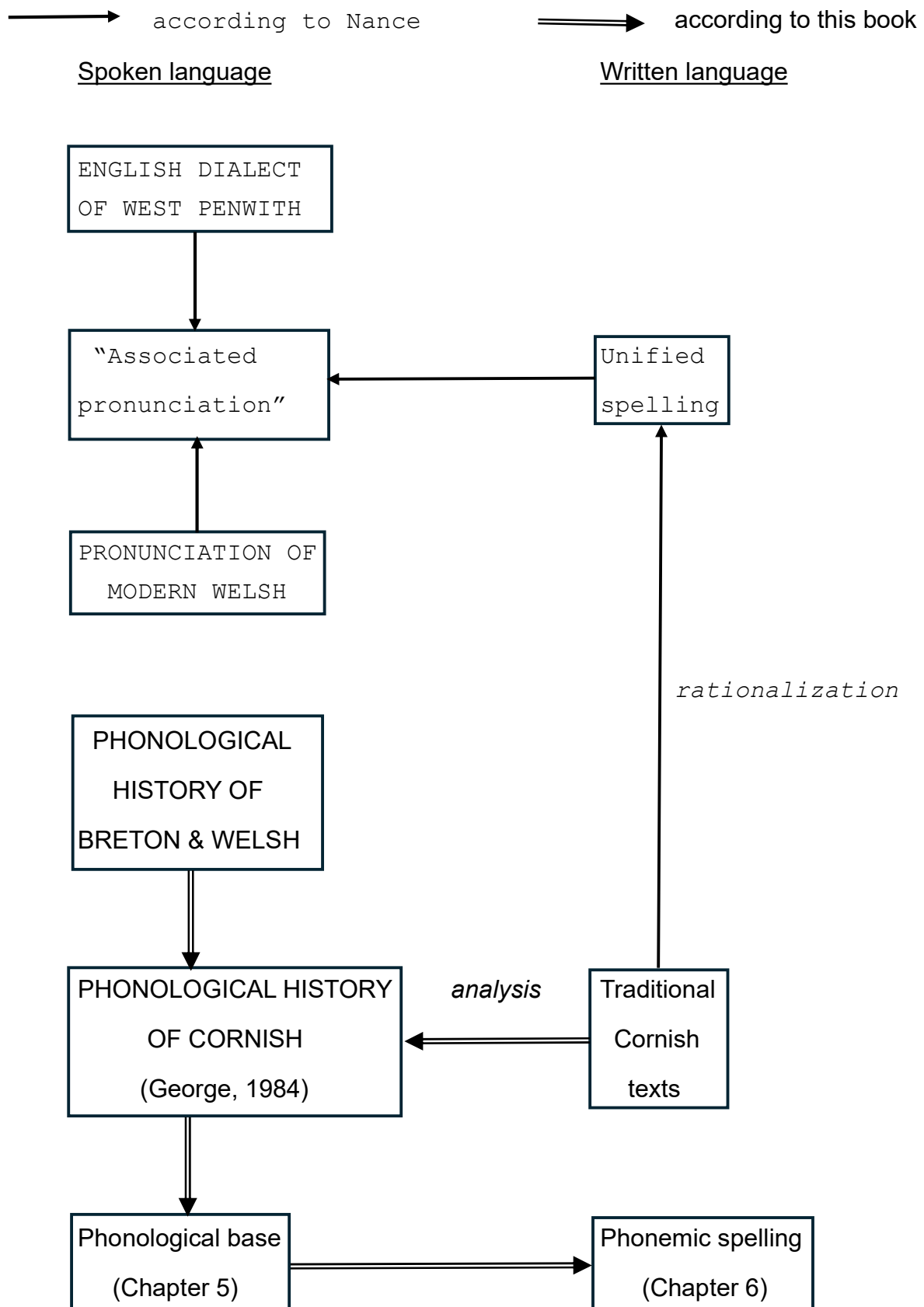
### 2.5.3 Developments of sounds in Breton and Welsh

It is obviously sensible to examine the phonology of the sister languages, Breton and Welsh. Fifty years ago, the phonological history of Welsh, described by Morris Jones (1913), was better known than that of Breton. There is evidence that the system of pronunciation recommended by Nance and Smith is based in part on that of ModW (see Chapter 5). Smith knew Welsh well, having written a text-book Welsh Made Easy (Smith, 1925) on the language. It would have been better to pay more attention to Breton; Jenner realized this when he wrote:

"In most cases of difficulty [the author] has trusted, as he would advise his readers to do, to Breton rather than to Welsh, for the living Breton of today [i.e. of 1904] is the nearest thing to Cornish that exists."

## THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CORNISH PRONUNCIATION

Diagram 250



#### 2.5.4 Supposed sounds of traditional Cornish

All the pioneers concentrated on answering the question "What sound did a given grapheme represent?" rather than the complementary but more useful question "How was a given sound represented in writing?" It seems that they did not fully appreciate that the sounds of traditional Cornish, like those of all natural languages, were constantly, if slowly, changing with time. They relied heavily on Lhuyd's description of the Cornish spoken in 1701.

It is a great pity that the phonological history of Cornish was not thoroughly investigated by Nance and Smith before launching their reconstructed language.

#### 2.5.5 Conclusion

The system of pronunciation devised by Nance and Smith to fit the Unified spelling was thus a hotch-potch of dialect sounds and the sounds of LateC, influenced by the sounds of ModW. It is this which has been passed down from teacher to pupil, and repeated without critical examination in such text-books as Cornish for Beginners (Pool, 1970).

### 2.6 REVIVALISTS VERSUS ACADEMICS

There are two principal reasons for studying traditional Cornish: for its own sake, and to improve Revived Cornish. The former has been pursued in the main by Celtic scholars in universities outside Cornwall, the latter by enthusiasts mainly within Cornwall.

When the idea of reviving Cornish was first proposed by Henry Jenner, he and the great contemporary Celtic philologist Joseph Loth were on very good terms. They both contributed to Revue Celtique, each commenting on each other's work. On one occasion Loth (1902) referred to Jenner as "mon ami M. Henri Jenner".

In later years, however, relations between academics and revivalists deteriorated, and research on traditional Cornish became polarized. The lack of communications between the two groups is typified by the reactions of the revivalists after the publication of the second edition of Henry Lewis' Llawlyfr Cernyweg Canol. Talek Hooper (1963) wrote:

"During the 20 years which had elapsed [since the appearance of the first edition in 1923] a vast amount of work had been done by Nance and Smith ..... But, unfortunately, Lewis ignored all this work in his 1946 edition."

Smith catalogued all the mistakes which he could find in the new edition, filling ten pages of quarto paper, and sent them to Lewis, who acknowledged the covering letter in Welsh, but never answered the criticisms. Annoyed, Smith wrote in 1950 to a friend in America (Hooper, 1977):

*"Nefra ny ve H.Lewis yn Kernow, ha nefra ny wruk scryfa Kernewek y honen, na'y gewsel. Yndell ef yu kepar ha dyscajoryon erel yn Kembry; examnya Kernewek y a wra ha pan ve corf marow, ha namoy."*

[H.Lewis has never been to Cornwall, never has he written Cornish himself, nor spoken it. Thus he is like other teachers in Wales; they examine Cornish as though it were a corpse, and no more.]

Hooper (1963) suggested that part of the difficulty was that: "Cornwall has never supported a learned journal in which such studies could be recorded and discussed". Certainly Old Cornwall, in which the bulk of Nance's work was published, is not the everyday reading of Celticists, any more than Studia Celtica is that of Cornish revivalists. This problem, if problem it be, has now been remedied in principle by the existence of the journal Cornish Studies.

CHAPTER 3RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN REVIVED CORNISH

## 3.1 PROGRESS

After the death of Nance in 1959, E.G.Retallack Hooper took over as the undisputed leading authority on Revived Cornish. He set up his own publishing house in the name of his quarterly magazine, *An Lef Kernewek*. He edited and published notes which had been left by Nance and Smith, and re-published many of their books.

In 1967, *Kesva an Tavas Kernewek* (the Cornish Language Board) was founded to amange the teaching and development of Cornish. A review of the first twelve years of the Board's work has been presented by Myrna Combellack (1978). Hitherto through the following five committees:

Vocabulary and grammar	--	deals with problems of grammar and creates new words
Publications	--	publishes and sells books, records and tapes
Education	--	co-ordinates the teaching of Cornish at evening classes and by correspondence
Examinations	--	conducts yearly examinations at 3 grades
Radio and television	--	attempts to increase broadcasting time in Cornish

[The Board continues with the first four of these, but the position of the Board as the pre-eminent body in charge of Cornish was usurped c. 2006 by Maga and subsequently by Akademi Kernewek].

The upsurge of interest in Cornish in the last ten years has led to the formation of four other bodies (exclduiing local groups). These are:

- 1) Consel Epscop Truru rak Devosow yn Kernewek (Bishop of Truro's Advisory Group on Services in Cornish), established in 1977, prepares devotional material for use in church services in Cornish, of which there are about ten every year.

- 2) Dalleth, established in 1979, is an organization to help parents who want their children to speak Cornish. It publishes children's books, and a monthly magazine, *Len ha Lyw*. [It is now part of **Kowethas an Yeth Kernewek**].
- 3) Cowethas an Yeth Kernewek, also established in 1979, is an organization for the Cornish-speaking population and for anyone learning or interested in the language. Its monthly magazine, *An Gannas*, edited by Graham Sandercock, has now passed its 100th edition. The Cowethas publishes books, disseminates information and organizes social events. Every spring it runs a residential Cornish weekend. [The organization is active, and **An Gannas** is approaching its 600th edition].
- 4) Kescoweth Treloryon Scriptor Sans is a group formed in 1983 to co-ordinate the translation of the Bible into Cornish. The New Testament is now almost ready. [The Bible is now complete, thanks to the work of Keith Syed, and is available at <http://www.bibelkernewek.com>.]

The recent state of all these organizations has been summarized by Brian Webb (1984). Mention should also be made of the correspondence course *Kernewek dre Lyther*, which is organized by Ray Edwards. [This is now part of **Kesva an Taves Kernewek**].

Since the date of the foundation of the Cornish Language Board, the attitude towards the use of Cornish has changed. Previously, it was largely a written medium, and the spoken language was heard for the most part only in ceremonies: in church services and at the annual Gorsedd. Recently, there has been much more emphasis on the spoken language. The more widespread ownership of cars and the use of the telephone have enabled Cornish speakers to communicate much more frequently than was the case in the 1930s. Improved communications have also enabled many more Cornish speakers to visit other Celtic countries, particularly Wales, and to see at first hand how it is possible to live one's life using a Celtic language. A few parents have been inspired to teach their children to speak Cornish from birth, the first native speakers of Cornish for 200 years. Today an increasing number of people wish to lead their lives as far as possible in Cornish, and to speak it on all possible occasions as a modern language.

## 3.2 PRONUNCIATION

### 3.2.1 The pronunciation advocated in *Kernewek Bew*

The change of emphasis from written to spoken Cornish means that the question of pronunciation assumes a much greater importance. Rather than accept the pronunciation of Nance and Smith, Richard Gendall (1972) preferred to think the whole problem out from scratch. In *Kernewek Bew*, he pointed out that we have a choice of two systems, the pronunciation of MidC or that of LateC. He chose the latter, partly on the grounds that little was known about the former. He retained the Unified spelling system, however; this automatically introduced a 300 year difference between the spelling and the pronunciation. His book, which was the first to reflect the change of attitude towards Cornish, was well received, and quickly went out of print; but most Cornish speakers took little heed of the suggested pronunciation, perhaps because they could not read the phonetic symbols. When, however, they heard it on the tape Tam Kernewek, there was instant reaction, summarized by Graham Sandercock (1977):

“.... dowsys yu prak y codhas dhe Vtr Gendall usya  
leveryans Kernewek Dewedhes”

[there are doubts as to why Mr Gendall was obliged to use the pronunciation of Late Cornish].

In fairness to Dick Gendall, it must be pointed out that since publishing the book and the tape, he has continued to study the problem in depth, and has revised some of his ideas.

Each of the principles of Nance and Smith's recommended pronunciation is now examined in turn (see paras. 2.5.3 to 2.5.5 above).

### 3.2.2 The question of the English dialect of west Cornwall

In 1975, Wakelin published a monograph containing evidence to confirm what had long been known from casual observation; that there are two dialects of English in Cornwall. That spoken in the east is similar to the English of Devon; in the west, the dialect is quite different; and mid-Cornwall is a transitional zone. Wakelin reached these conclusions after studying in particular the reflexes of MidE /a/, /o:/, /u/, /iu/ and /u:/.

Given a distinctive form of English in an area where Cornish was spoken until relatively recently, it is natural to assume that the characteristics of the English are due to Cornish. Wakelin, however, took the view that the unique accent of west Cornwall owes nothing to Cornish, but is only a reflection of the standard English of the time when this was taken up by the inhabitants. Wakelin's book was not well received by many Cornish speakers, not so much because he had destroyed one of the pillars on which Nance's phonology was built, but because he adopted an unnecessarily scornful attitude towards the Cornish language movement.

North (1983) continued Wakelin's work, concentrating on the long vowels; he used the term "Anglo-Cornish" for the dialects of English in Cornwall. He agreed with Wakelin to a large extent, writing: *"There is no need to turn to Cornish to explain any feature of Anglo-Cornish phonology"*, but he made the further point: *"A knowledge of Anglo-Cornish phonology can perhaps be of use in the study of some aspects of Cornish phonology"*. It may be remarked that neither Wakelin nor North were Cornish speakers.

My own researches (George, 1984) support the view that the English dialect of west Penwith is a development of the standard English of the late seventeenth century rather than that of LateC. This is amplified in Chapter 4.

### 3.2.3 Development of sounds in Breton and Welsh

Since the time of Nance and Smith, a great deal has been discovered about the history of the Celtic languages. The best book on this is written in Breton (Piette, 1957); otherwise, Gregor (1980) is useful as a general introduction.

Certain tendencies in [Proto-Brythonic](#) took some centuries to work themselves out, and parallel changes occurred in Old Welsh, Cornish and Breton: these and other changes were discussed in great detail by Kenneth Jackson (1953). Later, Welsh is of limited value, having deviated too far from Cornish; but Breton is still useful: an excellent account of the development of Breton is available, again by Jackson (1967). [\[A more recent book is by Schrijver \(1995\)\]](#). The languages of Brittany and Cornwall may have been mutually intelligible up to the time of the Reformation, when many of the links between the two countries were severed.

Early in 1978, Julian Holmes and I were returning from the Cornish Language weekend, held that year in St Ives. He remarked that Revived Cornish was perhaps too strongly influenced by Welsh, and that no-one in the language movement had ever learned Breton properly, in order to counteract this tendency. I resolved there and then, while crossing Goss Moor, to learn Breton; and went to Brittany the following summer in order to do so. Two years later, I spent fourteen months living in Brittany, during which time I studied Celtic linguistics, Breton language and literature, and Welsh language; after passing examinations, I was awarded the Diplôme Supérieur d'Études Celtiques.

3.2.4 Sounds of traditional Cornish

While living in Brittany, it became clear to me that there was a great need for a phonological history of traditional Cornish, not only for its own sake, but also to provide data for a framework on which a proper pronunciation of Revived Cornish could be based. On my return to Cornwall, I spent three years examining this problem in detail. The examination was based on statistical analyses of graphemes in almost the entire corpus of extant literature, using specially developed computer programs. The results were published in a thesis (George, 1984), for which the author was awarded the degree of Doctorat du Troisième Cycle by the University of Western Brittany (Brest).

Since this work, we have a very much clearer idea of the way in which the sounds of traditional Cornish developed from 600 to 1800 A.D. In particular, our knowledge of the sounds of MidC is much improved, so that Dick Gendall’s doubts about using MidC as a base are no longer valid. In addition, a chronological list of the sound-changes (see also para. 20.5.2) allows us to examine how a particular word changed. If a MidC base is adopted for the revived language, then words found only in OldC can be up-dated to it, and words found only in LateC can be back-dated. Nance did this only in a very limited way (see section 2.3), so that some of his spellings are anachronistic, and his system is not as unified as it could be.

3.2.5 Errors in the pronunciation recommended by Nance and Smith

It may seem strange, or even presumptuous, to use the emotive word “errors” here, when we shall never know exactly how traditional Cornish was pronounced. Yet, although exact values of sounds are irrecoverable, relative values are not. For example, the words for ‘foot’ and ‘noise’ were always pronounced differently throughout the history of traditional Cornish, in principle as shown in this table:

	PrimC	OldC	MidC	LateC
‘foot’	/trɔ̃ɣɛd/	/truid/	/troz/	/truːz/
‘noise’	/trus/	/tros/	/trɔs/	/troːs/

yet Nance and Smith suggested the same spelling, `trɔs`, and pronunciation, [ˈtrɔːz]. This is clearly an error: if a difference of this kind persisted throughout the history of traditional Cornish, then it should be preserved in Revived Cornish, no matter on what epoch it is based. [\[A similar error exists in SWF: the words for ‘deceit’ /toll/ and ‘hole’ /toll/ are both spelled `toll`; attempts to correct this have been met with refusal\].](#)

Errors made by Nance and Smith include the following:

- 1) Failure to recognize the phonemic differences between /o/ and /ɔ/, and between /y/ and /œ/;
- 2) Failure to recognize the existence of the phonemes /e/, /ɪ/ and /ø/;

- 3) Misidentification of phonemes in certain words;
- 4) Incorrect pronunciation of /a/ when long;
- 5) Confusion of the pronunciation of <ay> and <ey>;
- 6) Failure to recognize three degrees of vowel-length;
- 7) Failure to recognize the quantity rules.

For further details, see Part B.

### 3.3 MINOR PROBLEMS WITH UNIFIED SPELLING

#### 3.3.1 Disagreements between Nance and Smith

Unified Corish orthography is not absolutely rigid. The spelling of certain words is not fixed, and these may be taken as indicators of areas where principles are defective or lacking.

For instance, there are two common words which in MidC ended in the stressed vowel [œ:]:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| [ˈdœ:] ‘comes’ | (3rd sg. pres. ind. of <i>dos</i> ) is always spelled with <e>;                         |
| [ˈbœ:] ‘was’   | (3rd sg. pret. of <i>bos</i> ) is sometimes spelled with <e><br>and sometimes with <u>. |

Smith himself wrote about this in 1945 (Hooper, 1977, p. 40):

Yn kever an lytheren u: esya dhe dhallethoryon heb mar vyth vya scryfa “ue”, kepar del yu gwres y’n textow. Mordon a scryf bu yn pup text; mes gwell martesen vya scryfa bue y’n Ordinalia ha Meryasek ha gwytha be yn M.C. ha C.W. le mayth yns-y kefys, hep un sompel a bue ynna. Trueth yu na wruk Mordon dewys “ue” y’n kensa le rag an geryow a un syllaben.

[About the letter u: without any doubt it would be easier for beginners to write <ue>, as is done in the texts. Nance writes bu in every text; but perhaps it would be better to write bue in the Ordinalia and in Bewnans Meryasek and to keep to be in M.C. and C.W. where they are found, without a single example of bue in them. It is a pity that Nance did not choose <ue> in the first place for the monosyllables.]

Smith makes no reference to pronunciation in his comment, the confusion arises because we are dealing with a sound, [œ:], which does occur in English, and cannot easily be represented in writing. [In *be*, we see the unrounding of [œ:] to [ɛ:].] It is interesting to note, too, that Smith could contemplate a different spelling for each text. Hooper agreed with Smith, and often wrote *bue* and *a vue* in *An Lef Kernewek*.

One suspects that Smith had plenty of other ideas about the spelling, but that in arguments, Nance's views prevailed. Evidence of disagreement is afforded by another passage from Smith's letters (Hooper, 1977, p.43):

Tregear a scryf "annowy". Mes chanjya annowy dhe "enawy"  
a wra Mordon. Prag? Awos bos "enaoui" yn Bretonnek!  
Mes annowy a yl yn ta bos nes dhe'n Keltek Cotha ha  
Kernewek yu.

[Tregear writes annowy. But Nance changes annowy to enawy. Why? Because there is enaoui in Breton! But annowy could well be closer to the older Celtic, and it's Cornish.]

Questions like this cannot be answered without being sure of the principles behind the orthography. Smith appears to argue: "because the spelling *annowy* is actually found in a Cornish text, then that must be the spelling to adopt". This is a weak principle, because it again takes no account of the pronunciation. In chapter 6, I propose that the orthography of Revived Cornish be related to the phonological base described in Chapter 5, in which case the spelling of an individual word can be scientifically worked out. For this particular word, we can take each grapheme in turn (a phonological base corresponding to MidC is assumed):

- 1) The first vowel is <e> in Breton, <a> in Cornish; this shows the change [ɛ] > [a] in unstressed vowels, which occurred in Cornish c. 1550. An orthography based on an epoch earlier than this would therefore use <e>.
- 2) Both /nn/ and /n/ before a stressed vowel would have been pronounced [n] and might be spelled <n> or <nn> indiscriminately in MidC. To decide which phoneme applies here, we have recourse to the Breton; it is /n/ and should be spelled <n>.
- 3) <aou> in Breton corresponds to <ow> in Cornish when following a consonant and preceding a vowel; e.g. ModB *maouez* 'woman, MidC *mowes* 'girl': this diphthong should therefore be spelled <ow>.
- 4) The final <i> in Breton indicates that the final phoneme was /i/; Nance and Smith spelled this as <y> (they did not use <i> at all), whereas I recommend <i>.

I would therefore spell this word enowi.

### 3.3.2 Unified versions of the mediaeval texts

When the Cornish Language Board was formed in 1967, it was very firm in its policy statement (no. 3):

“The Board considers that Unified Cornish provides an acceptable common basis for spelling modern writings in the Language, such a basis being essential if the revival is to secure any degree of public acceptance. For this reason all works intended for students or for general reading should continue to use Unified Cornish and no deviation therefrom should be encouraged.”

Yet in 1972, *Passyon agan Arluth* (ed. Hooper) was published by the Board, with the word *orth* ‘at’ spelled *worth* everywhere, and the word *Yedhewon* ‘Jews’ spelled *Edhewon* everywhere, because these were [closer to](#) the spellings in the manuscript. There seems to be a division of aims here: if the orthography was unified in order to develop Cornish as a modern language for the twentieth century, then the spelling should be invariant. If it was unified to provide a readable version of the mediaeval Cornish literature, then why confine the peculiar spellings to a few words? Why not include all the idiosyncratic spellings in a particular text? Indeed, why not go the whole way, and keep the text in its original orthography?

In my opinion, the spelling system should be unified not so as to simplify the reading mediaeval literature, but to accord with the pronunciation. In any case, for any serious student of MidC, to use the Unified spelling is like examining specimens through a distorting lens.

Further problems were encountered by Graham Sandercock, when editing Nance’s typescripts of the Ordinalia. The spelling used, although supposed to be unified, actually had inconsistencies, both from text to text, and within the same text. The typescripts contained numerous amendments made by Smith. This meant that every line had to be examined and modifications made. Apart from *orth/worth* and *bu/be* mentioned above, the editor had particular difficulties with *enor/onour*, *gwrys/gwres*, *a-dal/adal*, *a-drus/adrus*, *rag/rak*, *pup/pub*, and *ryp/ryb*. In most cases, he had to make arbitrary decisions about which spelling to adopt. If the orthography is based firmly on the phonology, as is advocated in this book, then none of these particular decisions need be arbitrary.

[\[The versions of the principal texts in Unified Cornish \(only\) were followed by versions in \*Kernewek Kemmyn\* + the manuscript spelling. Now work is in hand to publish them in SWF + the manuscript spelling. Yet because these orthographies are fixed, none of them succeeds in capturing properly the rhyme-schemes of the original. Some flexibility is required.\]](#)

3.4 A CORRECTED UNIFIED SPELLING

The minimum modification possible would be to tidy up the “unified” spelling so as to improve the correspondence between the phonemes of the phonological base described in Chapter 5 and their associated graphemes. This would not violate the “principles” of the system as described in section 2.3. It would entail re-writing words as follows:

PHONEME	PRESENT GRAPHEME	REVISED GRAPHEME	EXAMPLE		
/ɪ/	<e>	<y>	gwres	→ gwrys	‘done’
/ɔ/	<u>	<o>	bulgh	→ bolgh	‘gap’
/œ/	<e>	<u>	kes	→ cus	‘cheese’
/ei/	<y>	<ey>	yl	→ eyl	‘second’
/ð/	<j>	<s>	myjy	→ mysy	‘to reap’

The commonest examples of graphemes referring to more than one phoneme would be:

<y>	/i/	/ɪ/	/j/
<u>	/y/	/œ/	
<o>	/ɔ/	/o/	
<-th>	/θ/	/ð/	
<s>	/ð/	/s/	

The commonest examples of a single phoneme being represented by more than one grapheme would be:

/eu/	<eu>	<ew>
/k/	<c>	<k>

In my opinion, such changes would be merely cosmetic in nature. If changes in spelling are to be made, then they should be made properly; a revised orthography must be linked to a firm phonological base.

[In 1995, Nicholas Williams made minimal changes to Nance’s Unified Cornish, producing an orthography called “Unified Cornish Revised” (UCR). With Michael Everson’s help, he revised it , under the optimistic name “Kernowek Standard”; this version was more linked to Williams’ ideas about the phonology, which are erroneous.]

### 3.5 ALTERNATIVE ORTHOGRAPHIC SYSTEMS

#### 3.5.1 Gradual disillusionment with Unified Cornish

It is worth looking at how people learn Revived Cornish. Most take three years to pass the three grades of the Cornish Language Board's examinations. On the whole, they accept Revived Cornish for what it is, without critical examination. It is quite demanding enough to learn the language to third-grade standard, without inquiring into whether the reconstruction is correct.

Having passed the third grade, they have (at least in principle) a reasonable degree of fluency. Some can already talk Cornish all day without undue difficulty or fatigue. Partly owing to the scarcity of even more fluent speakers, it is difficult for them to rise above a plateau of fluency at this stage. Many begin to teach the language to a further generation of students, often still without any clear idea of how Revived Cornish is related to traditional Cornish. Any mistakes in the reconstruction are thus self-perpetuating.

Not many people, at least at first, see a need for further study. After all, the syllabus for the third grade includes, in the words of the late lamented John Page, "all the grammar there is". Those who do proceed turn to the original texts. Previously, apart from short extracts in *St Meriasek in Cornwall* and *Kemysk Kernewek*, they may never have seen traditional Cornish in its original orthography. It is, after all, surprisingly difficult to get hold of. The MidC mystery plays, published in the last century, are either out of print or prohibitively expensive. Numerous pieces from LateC were published by Nance in early volumes of *Old Cornwall*, but even these are rarities now. The original text of Pascon agan Arluth is in print, but is published in Brittany. The only easily obtainable work is *Cornish Writings of the Boson Family*, edited by Oliver Padel, and sold by the Cornish Language Board. When Cornish speakers accustomed only to Unified spelling see this for the first time, they are astounded: it does not seem to be the same language.

[The situation is better now. The Language Board have a fourth-grade examination, for which candidates have to study set pieces of literature, one of which is taken from the medieval texts. The Board have published the principal texts, including the manuscript spelling].

At first, the vagaries of the original spelling, especially those of LateC, seem so great that Nance's Unified system appears as a beacon of rectitude against which to measure what look like distortions. Nance himself clearly felt like this, when he took to "restoring" pieces of LateC to their "correct" unified form. Gradually, however, as people become acquainted with the conventions of the original spelling, and perhaps learn some Breton and Welsh, they begin to realize that it might have some value after all, especially with regard to the pronunciation.

Indeed, in “unifying” and oversimplifying the spelling MidC, Nance distilled out of it valuable clues as to its pronunciation. Most learners of Cornish rarely get to see these clues, because their view of the traditional language is obscured, or at least coloured, by the smokescreen of the Unified spelling. Instead, they accept, as part of the “language package” passed from teacher to pupil, the incorrect scheme of pronunciation which was devised by Nance and Smith to fit their spelling.

As one goes further in studying the texts in their original spelling, the deficiencies in Nance’s Unified Cornish become increasingly apparent. Eventually disillusionment may set in.

### 3.5.2 Revision of the orthography of Revived Cornish

A number of enthusiasts have now independently reached the stage where they realize that what some academics have been saying for years is true – that Nance’s Unified Cornish is not as good as it could be; that there is room for considerable improvement. They point out that almost without exception, the speakers of Cornish have learned it as they might learn a foreign language, and have English as their first language; this means that interference is common, and in particular, it is difficult not to realize Cornish phonemes with English sounds.

All agree that the best way to remedy this situation is to improve the orthography, since most people learn Cornish by reading it. In suggesting this, they come into immediate conflict with the innate conservatism in the system of promulgating Unified Cornish, and indeed with policy statement no. 3 of the Cornish Language Board. They tend to become alienated from the Cornish-speaking “establishment”, and their activities are sometimes seen as divisive. The generally hostile reception given to their ideas may cause them to react even more strongly against “the Nancean synthesis” (Suanders, 1984); or to become disheartened with the language movement, and to withdraw from it for a time. In my view, it is essential for the good of the Cornish language movement that its official body, the Cornish Language Board, finds a way to accommodate the thought-provoking ideas of these enthusiasts. They must not be excluded from discourse about the language “for fear of upsetting the apple-cart”.

Where the would-be improvers do not agree is on the basis of the improved orthography. Two opposing suggestions are:

- (a) to make it as like English spelling as possible (“signpost spelling”), to facilitate learning;
- (b) to make it as unlike English spelling as possible, in order to emphasize to learners that there are sounds in Cornish which do not exist in English.

Orthographic systems are usually based on a mixture of etymological, phonological (phonetic or phonemic) and historical principles. Cornish has little or no historical spelling tradition of its own; it has almost always been written using contemporary English orthography. Three systems of revised spelling have emerged in recent years: these are:

- (a) Tim Saunders' system (see para. 3.5.3), which is largely etymological;
- (b) "*Carnoack Tithiack*" (see para 3.5.4), which is based on LateC;
- (c) my own system, which is largely phonemic [and etymological], and described in detail in Chapter 6 and in Part B.

Whatever orthography is chosen, there will be discrepancies between the dialectal pronunciations of place-names, which have become fossilized at all stages of development of Cornish, and their pronunciations in the revived language. Similarly, there will be discrepancies between the spellings of place-names on maps and their spellings in Revived Cornish. [This may seem obvious now, but there was a tendency on the part of some writers of Unified Cornish to use only the forms on maps].

### 3.5.3 Tim Saunders' ideas

Tim Saunders was the first to propose a spelling system radically different from Mordonnek. Its resembles an idealized Cornish which never actually existed; it seems to correspond to a language which might have evolved from Proto-Brythonic had only certain of the observed phonological changes occurred. For example, svarabhakti (see section 5.7) and the change /œ/ > /ɛ/ are apparently ignored, whereas the losses of /ɣ/ and /-v/ < /-μ/ are not. It is therefore inconsistent from the phonological point of view.

The system is largely etymological, and it is left to the reader to interpret how words should be pronounced. This appears to presuppose a knowledge of the phonological development of Cornish in order to be able to read it. For instance, the commonest adjectival ending is spelled <-eug>, which corresponds to PrimC /-ωg/ > OldC /-œg/ > MidC /-ɛg/: but on seeing <-eug>, few people would pronounce it as [-ɛk] (see table 1131). Saunders' system is very useful, however, for checking the derivations of words, since a great deal of thought has gone into it.

[Like myself, Tim Saunders believes in altering an orthographic system for Revived Cornish in order to take account of new discoveries about traditional Cornish. Both his spelling and *Kernowek Kemmyn* have evolved and are now close; if <z> is introduced into *KK*, as has long been envisaged, then they will be very close].

### 3.5.4 “*Carnoack Tithiack*”

During the last few years, a small group of Cornish speakers have become so enamoured of LateC that they wish to emulate it as closely as possible in all aspects, pronunciation, grammar and spelling. They include Rod Lyon and John Pengilly, and have recently been joined by Richard Gendall. When closely questioned, they admit to giving little weight to the writings of the younger members of the Newlyn School (1700-30), since these authors were influenced by Lhuyd, who was not a native speaker. Rather do the members of the group base their ideas on the works of Wella Kerew, dating from c. 1690. These, they claim, represent the natural development of Cornish, an argument which has a certain emotional appeal.

They wish to use Kerew’s writings as a basis for a modern conversational language, presently styled “Carnoack Tithiack”. [\[Forms of “Revived Late Cornish” have had many names over the years\]](#). This is to invite difficulties. Kerew’s grammar is simpler than that of MidC, and may be incapable of expressing all desired ideas, particularly tenses of verbs. More seriously, only about 500 words are found in Kerew’s works, compared with about 5000 (head-)words in Nance’s Cornish-English dictionary (1955). Clearly, the bulk of the lexicon required for everyday use would have to be invented, adapted from Breton or Welsh, or, ironically, re-spelled from MidC. One is bound to ask: why not continue to use a MidC base in the first instance?

### 3.5.5 [A brief update on the orthography](#)

[A result of the coup staged by “Maga” c. 2006 against the Cornish Language Board was the introduction of a new, political, orthography, aspirationally termed the Standard Written Form \(SWF\). Its treatment of the /o/ phoneme, which I identified in the 1980s, is most unsatisfactory.](#)

[It was intended to be subject to revision every five years, but in practice only one revision \(that of 2013\) has taken place. Instead all attempts to improve its framework are resisted, and its most ardent supporters wish to separate completely the revived language from the traditional - a grave mistake, in my opinion.](#)

[In contrast, new discoveries about traditional Cornish has caused changes to be made in \*Kernewek Kemmyn\*](#)

### 3.6 RECONCILING THE ACADEMICS AND THE REVIVALISTS

#### 3.6.1 Introduction

In 1963, Charles Thomas addressed the Celtic Congress on the subject *An Dasserghyans Kernewek* [The Cornish Revival]; he took an objective view of the Cornish movement at that time. After praising the achievements of Jenner, nance and Smith, he pointed out that Celtic scholars had strong reservations about Revived Cornish; some said that “*the reconstructed language is full of assumptions, accretions and inaccuracies*”. He implied that the revivalists were producing a second-best language.

Instead of reacting to this criticism by improving Revived Cornish, the Language Board on its formation in 1967 made a distressingly weak statement:

“It is however recognized that Unified Cornish has little significance for more advanced linguistic studies”.

This was indeed admitting to second-best. Having effectively cut itself off from the academic world, the Board had very little ground left to stand on when trying to defend itself against further criticism from scholars. The gap between academics and revivalists widened.

I am very concerned by this, and in this section explore the problem in depth. Let me say at the outset that I have not time whatsoever for the uninformed criticism one sometimes hears from certain scholars who are prejudiced against Revived Cornish, but who know next to nothing about it.

#### 3.6.2 Cross-purposes

The fairest interpretation that may be placed on the poor relations between revivalists and academics is that of mutual misunderstandings as to aims, the resulting arguments being at cross-purposes. The aim of most Celtic scholars, as far as Cornish is concerned, is to study the morphology, syntax, phonology and lexicon of the traditional language, and to examine how its development relates to that of the other Celtic languages. The aim of many Cornish speakers is to develop Revived Cornish as a modern language, using the traditional language as a rich fount of words and ideas.

The former are in the business of comparative philology, the latter of language planning. These two fields, though both within the discipline of linguistics, are at the opposite ends of a spectrum. Comparative philology has a respectable pedigree, dating back, as far as the Celtic languages are concerned, nearly 300 years to the time of Edward Lhuyd; language planning is probably older, but as a field of study it has only recently been recognized. It is perhaps not surprising that many Celtic scholars do not know what to make of Revived Cornish. They either ignore it completely, or criticize it.

The research done by academics (e.g. Oliver Padel's new book on the elements in Cornish place-names) is potentially of great value in improving Revived Cornish, provided that the revivalists are prepared to accept it. The research on traditional Cornish done by revivalists and then applied to Revived Cornish is of use to academics only if it is made absolutely clear what is found in the texts and what is not. Thus Price's (1984) criticism, that many of the invented minor words in Nance's English-Cornish dictionary (e.g. *pellwolok* 'television') are not marked as such, is justified from an academic's standpoint, though it matters but little to a modern Cornish speaker.

In principle, grammars of the traditional language are descriptive and those of the revived language are prescriptive. It is not really fair on the part of academics to attack grammars of Revived Cornish using criteria which apply to descriptive grammars.

Lack of communication between the two groups continues to cause problems. For example, a recently published book edited by Trudgill (1984) contains a chapter on Cornish by Alan R. Thomas. His account of MidC phonology bears little resemblance to the results of my own researches, and one can have little confidence in it. Unfortunately, the author did not approach anyone in Cornwall to write the chapter on Cornish.

### 3.6.3 How far is Revived Cornish a "made-up language"?

One criticism that is heard from time to time is that "Cornish is a made-up language". This criticism arises because it was necessary to fill gaps in the traditional language. It may be refuted forthwith, on the grounds that the percentage of invented forms is very small.

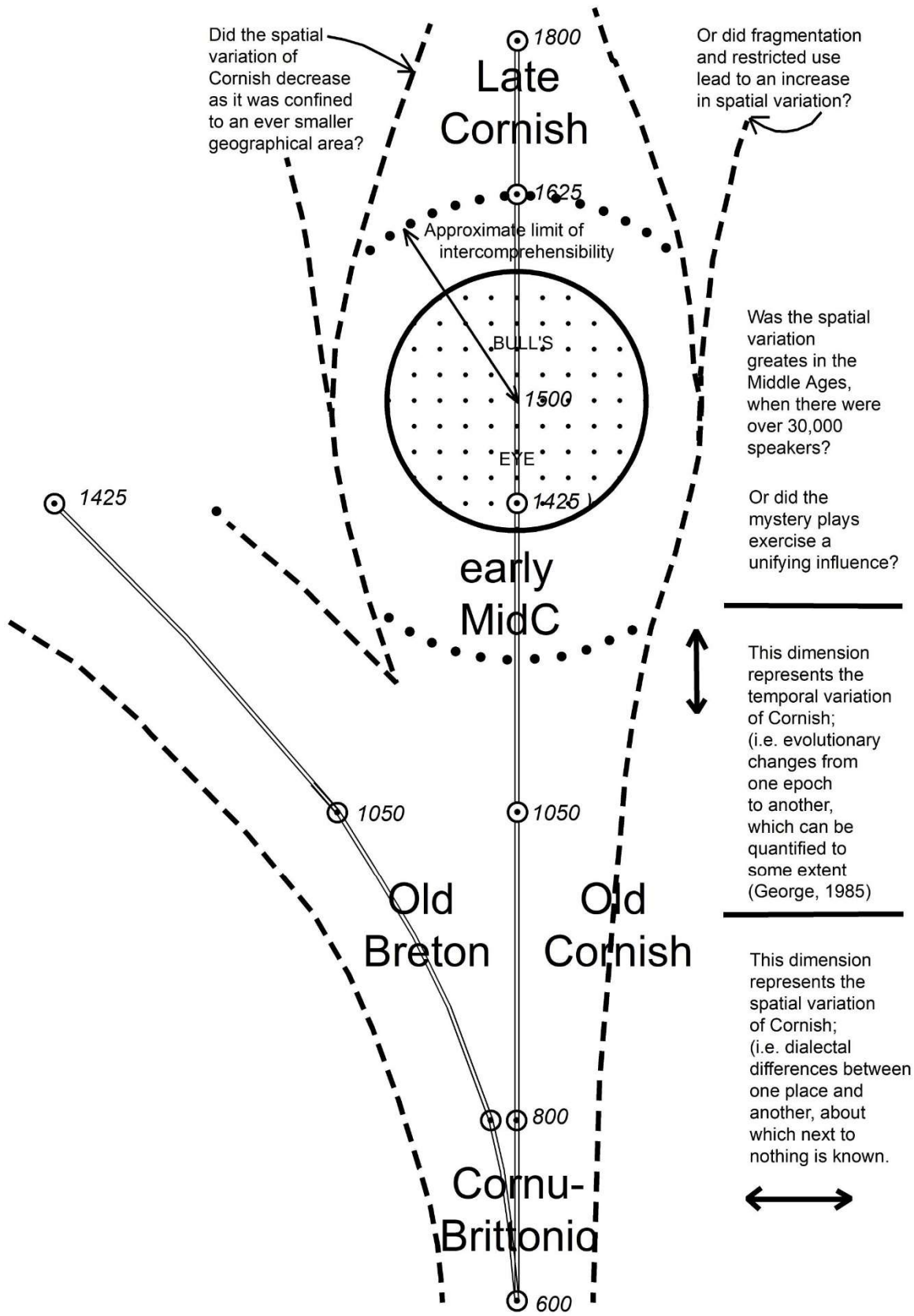
Wella Brown has found that only 8% of the Cornish words in Nance's Cornish-English dictionary (1955) are not found in the texts. This fraction is, however, unrepresentative, since not all words occur equally frequently. To take the frequency into account, he analysed all the words in *An Lef Kernewek* for 1972, and found that only 1.6% of them were new. A similar investigation for a more recent publication (*An Gannas* for July 1985) yielded a figure of 2.3%. Thus when Charles Thomas (1972) wrote of "*a high proportion of words invented by the comparative method*", he was exaggerating.

Furthermore, every modern language is "made-up" to some extent: whenever a new concept appears in the world, it is necessary to have a word or a phrase for it. Words are therefore being coined every year. Why should this process be in order for English and not for Cornish? There is even an advantage in the need to create new words in Cornish; they can be formed from Celtic roots and thereby "purify" the language.

The Cornish-speaking world was recently annoyed by a chapter in Price (1984), in which the writer, who is Professor of Romance Languages at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, wrote in disparaging terms about Revived Cornish. His major objection is that Revived Cornish is partially invented. I maintain that this is not a valid reason for objection. If the inventions are demonstrably in error with respect to traditional Cornish, then that is quite a different matter. It is a principal theme of this book that demonstrable errors in Nance and Smith's Cornish should be rectified. [\[I have the same attitude towards errors in SWF, but certain members of the Akademi refuse to correct them.\]](#) But invention is not of itself a bad thing, provided that the sources and reasoning behind the inventions are clarified.

Price could not even bring himself to use the name "Cornish" for the language of today, preferring the derogatory terms "pseudo-Cornish" and "Cornic". This is absurd. Revived Cornish is still Cornish: it is the most recent phase in the history of Cornish. One wonders whether Price has similar views towards Hebrew, which was dead for 2000 years before being revived.

Price also put the word "revived" in inverted commas, presumably on the pedantic grounds that present-day Cornish cannot be identical to the Cornish of some past epoch. The word is used in a broader sense than this. It is advantageous, when reviving Cornish, to have a bullseye at which to aim, a particular epoch in traditional Cornish; but it does not matter much if we miss, provided that we hit the target. The target is of finite size, since traditional Cornish was not homogeneous, either in space or in time (see fig. 360); neither are English or French. If the distance of Revived Cornish from the bullseye (for which the language of 1500 A.D. is proposed in Chapter 5) is significantly less than the size of the target, then the revival may be deemed satisfactory.



### 3.6.4 The status of Revived Cornish

Price (1984) also wrote: “*ill informed journalists sometimes give the impression that Cornish is now once more a living language*”. This statement makes sense only in terms of Price’s terminology. These journalists are not ill-informed. They are correct. Let us be quite clear about this: the Cornish of today may not be precisely the same as the traditional language, (for that matter, Modern English is not the same as that of Shakespeare), but is most certainly alive. I could name at least ten persons with whom all my converse is habitually in Cornish. If Cornish were not alive, then such converse would be impossible.

On the other hand, the revivalists must not get so carried away that they forget that Cornish is not in all respects like other tongues. Although unquestionably a living language, it is not a living community language. Unlike “Inner Wales”, the Gaeltachtaí or the Western Isles, there is (as yet) no village in Cornwall where a Celtic language is spoken by most of the people for most of the time, and no village where Cornish has been spoken without a break for centuries. Because of its peculiar position, Cornish is unlikely to be subject the same socio-linguistic “laws” as those which govern major languages. Thus, when speakers say that a certain feature, be it lexical, phonological, semantic or grammatical, has now become part of Revived Cornish owing to popular usage, we should be suspicious. This argument is less valid for Cornish than for a major language like English or French.

### 3.6.5 Publishing the mediaeval texts

Thomas (1963) recommended that publications of the miracle plays should comprise:

- (a) Nance’s and Smith’s version as collated from the MSS. i.e. original spelling;
- (b) optionally, a version in an agreed unified spelling;
- (c) an adequate English translation;
- (d) a proper critical apparatus.

The newly-formed Cornish Language Board (1967) accepted this recommendation, but weakened it in their policy statement no. 4:

“The Board accepts the prime need for publication of texts and translations of the mediaeval Cornish literature, and considers that where possible the original texts should be printed as well as the Unified. If however this is prevented by expense, the Unified texts could be published alone (with translation).”

In the event, the Board eventually went ahead with publishing the *Ordinalia* in the latter form. This policy is to be regretted. Not to include the original text immediately increases the alienation from the academic world, and reduces potential sales. Scholars will buy the Board's newly-published texts only for the purposes of studying the drama or the theological background of the plays. Nance's Cornish is of little interest to them. This is not to denigrate Graham Samdercock's immense task of not only editing the text (see para. 3.3.2), but also of personally typing both the Cornish and the English translation.

It may be that besides the problem of expense, there is the question of the time required to produce a fully annotated version of the original. After all, Myrna Combellack has been working on *Beunans Meriasek* for more years than she may care to remember. To think, however, that a fuller edition is beyond a voluntary organization is again admitting to second best. Not so; when Smith published *Passyon agan Arluth* in the magazine *Kernow* during the years 1934-36, he included the original spelling. Likewise, the Breton group *Preder*, which is independent of any university, managed to publish the same work in:

- (a) the original spelling, taken from Stokes' edition (1861);
- (b) a unified version, taken from the Board's edition (1972);
- (c) a literal translation into Breton.

I hope that any future publications by the Board of traditional texts will include the original orthography as well as a version in Revived Cornish. They should make use of Andrew Hawke's computer files of the MSS, which have been checked meticulously against Nance's and Smith's readings, and against photographic enlargements of the originals. Publications of this calibre would go a long way toward healing the breach between academics and revivalists. [\[This battle has been won; it is now unthinkable to publish a mystery play without the manuscript spelling\].](#)

### 3.6.6 Conclusion

If Revived Cornish is to receive more recognition from the academic world, and thereby perhaps open a door to financial support, it must be seen to be founded on strict, firm, clear defensible and linguistically sound principles. The pronunciation recommended by Nance and Smith is demonstrably erroneous, and the spelling system too simplified to accord with a MidC phonological base.

The reader will have realized by now that I am in an unusual position in this controversy. I have a foot in both camps, and realize that academics and revivalists need each other. Co-operation produces excellent results, e.g. Hooper and Padel (1976); Pool and Padel (1977). If I have been harsh in my remarks, it is only because I want to see further reconciliation and co-operation for the advancement of a language I love.

## CHAPTER 4      THE REPLACEMENT OF LATE CORNISH BY EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

A study of Late Cornish and the way in which it was replaced by Early Modern English is valuable in helping to explore two hypotheses:

- H1) LateC is a suitable basis for the revived language (see para. 3.5.4);
- H2) The sounds of the English dialect of West Penwith are practically identical to those of eighteenth-century Cornish (Nance, 1929).

A little thought shows that, if these hypotheses are valid, then the influence of English on LateC must have been very small, and that of LateC on dialectal English very great. Since English was overwhelmingly the stronger language, we can surmise straightway that both H1 and H2 are most unlikely to be true. In the terminology of Aitchison (1981), English murdered Cornish, and also Cumbric, Norn and Manx.

### 4.2 THE MECHANISM OF REPLACEMENT

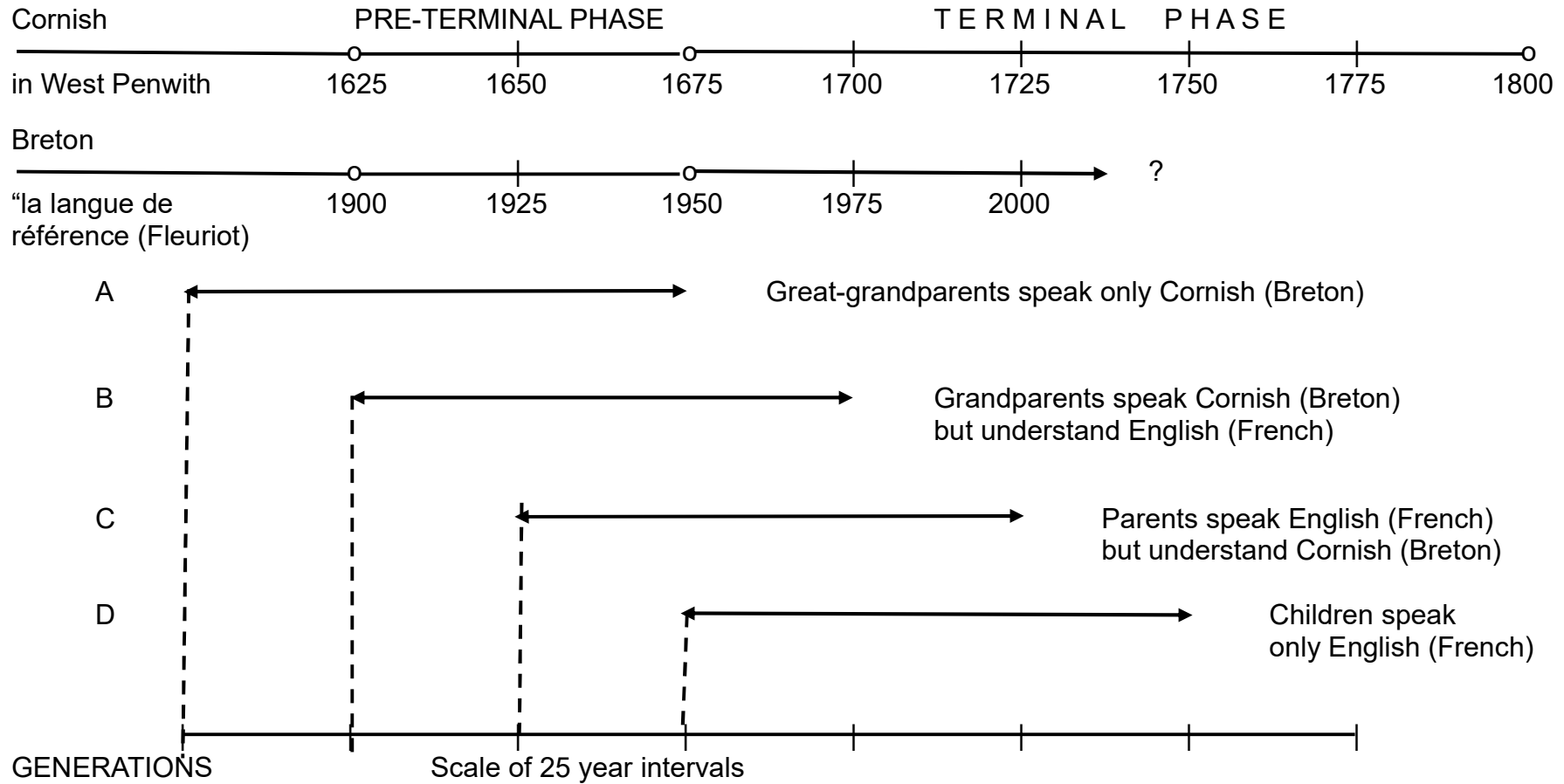
Since the time of Jenner, Nance and Smith, more has been discovered about the mechanism by which a weaker language is replaced by a stronger new one. The process is much more common and rather more complex than might be supposed.

The basic change in a family can happen alarmingly quickly, in four generations spanning 75 years:

- (A) This generation speaks only the old language.
- (B) This generation are native speakers of the old language, but during the course of their life, they learn to understand the new language, and to speak it to some extent. They are bilingual, but their competence in the new language is influenced by the old. Because the new language has a higher prestige than the old, the latter is seen as a barrier to social advancement; this generation do not, therefore, pass it on to their children.
- (C) This generation are native speakers of the new language, but they grow up to understand the old language, because they hear their grandparents using it to each other and to their parents. They are bilingual, but their competence in the old language is influenced by the new.
- (D) This generation speaks only the new language.

# Replacement of Cornish and Breton by non-Celtic languages

Fig. 420



Obviously, different families may follow the sequence of changes at different times, but in the case of Breton, the break in oral tradition occurred in a great many families at about the same time. After the Second World War, a large number of Breton-speaking parents (generation B) failed to pass the language on to their children (generation C). Thus very few people under the age of forty speak Breton. This cut-off in Breton is abrupt and alarming; e.g. of a class of 22 children in Plouvien (11 miles N.N.E. of Brest), all the 44 parents (generation B) were Breton-speaking, but not one had ever spoken Breton to the children (generation C). The result will be that, unless something is done quickly and on a large scale, in thirty years' time the number of Breton speakers will be drastically and tragically reduced. Part of the reason for this is the universal teaching of French in schools in Brittany, compared with the almost non-existent teaching of Breton. [\[Now, some forty years later, generation B has passed away, and Breton is no longer heard in the market-place.\]](#)

This reason would not have applied in seventeenth-century Cornwall, when education was largely confined to the rich, who were English-speaking anyway. So the change-over in the far west of Cornwall is likely to have been more gradual. It is interesting to note that as a child c. 1640, Nicholas Boson was prevented by his mother from learning Cornish.

This mechanism of replacement, as applied to the bulk of the populace, is illustrated in fig. 420 for Breton and Cornish. The dating for Cornish has been arrived at by noting that the last of the monoglots, notably Cheston Marchant, died c. 1675, or perhaps a little later.

1725, or thereabouts, marked the death of generation C for the bulk of the populace in the far west of Cornwall. After that date, Cornish speakers must have felt isolated in a sea of English. After 1750, Cornish speakers were a rarity. Borlase (1758) wrote that the language had "altogether ceased, so as not to be used anywhere in conversation". Had he ventured but six miles from his home at Ludgvan, he could have heard Cornish still in use. The few remaining speakers must represent exceptional families which had a tradition of speaking Cornish. [\[We have now reached this stage in Breton\].](#)

The time-scale in fig. 420 is also in general accord with the decline of Manx, which being closer to the present day, is much better recorded. Jenner (1874) was a generation different from fig. 420 in suggesting that contemporary Manx was at the same stage as Cornish was in the time of Lhuyd (1701). As with Cornish, we find that the death of the last native speaker occurred about 100 years after the preaching of the last sermons.

### 4.3 INFLUENCE OF THE NEW LANGUAGE ON THE OLD

The critical point for the weaker language is that where the percentage of monoglots is so small that no special provision (such as church sermons) is thought necessary for them. Thereafter, practically everyone can converse in the stronger language, and the weaker is doomed, since in one sense, there is no reason for its continued existence. Unless sufficiently positive steps are taken to protect it, its death will ensue.

Studies by Dorian (1981) of Scots Gaelic in East Sutherland, and by Dressler of Breton in Bro Vigoudenn, have shown that, once the critical point has been reached, the Celtic speech of the remaining bilingual speakers becomes increasingly influenced by the dominant new language. The speech of these “terminal” and “semi” speakers is not representative of the “real” Celtic language as it was when almost everybody spoke it. Their use of the Celtic language is restricted to certain social situations; e.g. in the home, or to people of their own age or older. Or, since they may feel inhibited about speaking what they feel is a less prestigious language, they may use it only to people they know to be Celtic speakers. In this way, the old language retreats from general use (town and country) to country to home.

A personal experience will illustrate this. I have found that grandmothers from generation B, who chatter freely in Breton to their contemporaries, are often incapable of speaking Breton to my young daughter. The reason for this “mental block” is not clear, but it must be to do with the tragic fact that to encounter a Breton-speaking child is now extremely rare. [\[The 75-year change-over mentioned above more or less coincides with my lifetime in the case of Breton; as a Breton speaker I find it heart-rending, but would have found it even worse had I been living in Brittany and not Cornwall\].](#)

Because the terminal and semi-speakers do not use the Celtic language all the time, they forget the Celtic words for things, and have to borrow words from the new language. Any new concepts are referred to in the new language, so that the innate capacity of the old to create new words becomes ossified, through lack of use. Grammatical structures are simplified and the endings of words are confused. The result may be a weird mixture, using the simplified syntax of the old language and the lexicon of the new. Here is a genuine example from Breton.

*“Ar vitesses zo impeccables, ’r marche arrière zo facile,  
an distance ’tre an tableau de bord hag ar volant zo .....”*

Substituting (Unified) Cornish for Breton and English for French would give:

*“An gears yu magic, an reverse gear yu easy,  
an distance ynter an dashboard ha’ n steering-wheel yu .....”*

This type of decadence is not confined to the Celtic languages; the expression “*crosser la street*” was recorded in French-speaking Quebec in 1976.

Nothing as extreme as this is to be found in written texts in LateC, though similar examples may have occurred in the unrecorded spoken language. There are, however, examples of the influence of English:

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 1) | <i>iggeva esetha war</i><br><i>merwel akar</i> | ‘that he is sitting upon’<br>‘die away’ |
| 2) | <i>Termen vedn doaz</i>                        | ‘A time will come’                      |

#### 4.4 ATTEMPTS TO ARREST AND REVERSE THE DECLINE OF CELTIC

##### 4.4.1 The struggle for the Celtic languages

The model presented in the last section is that of areas, which were once Celtic-speaking, passing through one or two centuries of unstable bilingualism, and then becoming non-Celtic-speaking. This applies to Cornwall, the Isle of Man, “outer Wales”, most of Ireland and much of Scotland. According to Humphreys (1979), the process is a two-step one: the generalization of bilingualism, followed by the abandonment of Celtic.

According to Pool (1982), the attitude of many traditional Cornish speakers to the decline of their language was one of indifference. In the Isle of Man, Jenner (1876) recorded even stronger feelings: *“there is a decided feeling on the part of the people, especially on the part of the Manx speakers themselves, that the language is only an obstruction, and the sooner it is removed the better.”*

Fortunately, there were and are many language activists in the Celtic-speaking world determined to strive for all they can to arrest and reverse this sad trend. It is not within the scope of this book to discuss the language campaigns, but a few comments will not be out of place.

It appears that of all the Celtic languages, Welsh is by far the best state, being viewed as a linguistic paradise in comparison with the others. Welsh speakers would argue that their language’s future is far from assured, and faces threats from tourism and immigration. Yet the alarming effects of an unchecked decline in Welsh were publicized by Saunders Lewis (1962) in sufficient time for effective action to be taken, indeed before the critical point had been reached in the strongholds of the language. [\[The establishment of a Welsh Government in 1997 has given Welsh a great boost; the language is a compulsory subject in all schools\].](#)

The situation in Brittany, however, gives grave cause for concern. A last-ditch effort to save Breton is the Diwan educational movement. This was started in 1977, and now has some 300 children in about 20 schools, a considerable achievement but pathetically small in comparison with the total number of children in Brittany. In my opinion, the movement has two fundamental errors in its policy:

- (a) it seeks constantly to be integrated into the state education system; but this is the French state system, which has a vested interest in supporting only French;
- (b) it offers free education, so that it is in chronic financial difficulties.

It might be better to go completely private, charge fees and appeal to people's snobbery. [\[The Diwan movement now has 49 primary schools, 7 secondary schools and 2 "grammar" schools\].](#)

Ironically, had the teaching medium in the schools been English instead of Breton, there would have been a great demand. In the Brittany of today, English rather than French is seen as the new language of self-advancement. Everywhere there are advertisements for private tuition in English. Every year, I have to lecture in English to several groups of Breton schoolchildren, who have come to Plymouth to improve their English. Less than one per cent know any Breton. Ironically, too, many of the prominent fighters for Breton are by profession teachers of English.

English is, in some respects, assuming the role of a world language, but not as far as officialdom in the E.E.C. is concerned. There and elsewhere it would be better to use Esperanto, which is extremely easy to learn, being completely regular, and has the distinct advantage of not belonging to any particular country or political grouping. Interestingly, Esperanto has its champions in the Celtic-speaking world, among them Per Denez of the University of Roazon. Conversely, the Esperantist D.B.Gregor has written a book on the Celtic languages.

#### 4.4.2 The spectrum of speakers in Celtic countries

Because of the efforts of the language activists, the spectrum of speakers in the Celtic countries is more complicated and rather more hopeful than just monoglot Celtic, bilingual, and monoglot non-Celtic. A possible classification is illustrated in fig. 440. It includes the interesting case of the young child being raised as a monoglot Celtic speaker in modern times. Fig. 441 shows the spectrum as applied to the Celtic languages of today. All have now passed the critical point, with virtually no traditional monoglots (group I) left. It would be a great improvement to insert estimated numbers of speakers in this table, instead of ticks; if any reader can estimate numbers for his or her Celtic country, please let me know. Fig. 442 shows the change in the spectrum of Cornish speakers since the time of William Scawen and Nicholas Boson. Throughout the nineteenth century, Cornish was represented only by group V, those having a traditional knowledge of scraps of the language.

SPECTRUM OF SPEAKERS IN CELTIC COUNTRIESFig. 440

GROUP	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE FROM CORNISH
I	Native-speakers of traditional Celtic, monoglot	Cheston Marchant, d. 1676
II	Native-speakers of traditional Celtic, bilingual	Dolly Pentreath, d. 1777
III	Native-speakers of traditional Celtic, who spoke Celtic in their youth, but who have forgotten much of it (semi-speakers)	
IV	Persons who learned Celtic in adult life, mainly or exclusively from group II, but who are not native-speakers	William Bodinar
V	Persons who have a traditional knowledge of scraps of Celtic, but who are not native-speakers	John Davey, d. 1891
VI	Persons with a fluent knowledge of Celtic acquired mainly or exclusively from lessons or from books	
VII	Persons with some knowledge of Celtic acquired mainly or exclusively through lessons or from books, but not fluent	
VIII	New native-speakers of Celtic, monoglot (pre-school age children)	
IX	New native-speakers of Celtic, bilingual	Alan Sandercock, b. 1977
X	Persons having no knowledge whatever of Celtic	

SPECTRUM OF SPEAKERS IN EACH CELTIC COUNTRYFig. 441

GROUP	Alba	Eire	Mannin	Cymru	Kernow	Breizh
I	--	--	--	--	--	--
II	√	√	--	√	--	√
III	√	√	--	√	--	√
IV	√	√	??	√	--	√
V	√	√	??	√	--	√
VI	√	√	√	√	√	√
VII	√	√	√	√	√	√
VIII	√	√	??	√	--	√
IX	√	√	??	√	√	√
X	√	√	√	√	√	√

SPECTRUM OF SPEAKERS IN EACH CELTIC COUNTRYFig. 442

GROUP	1680	1730	1780	1830	1880	1930	1980
I	√	--	--	--	--	--	--
II	√	√	--	--	--	--	--
III	√	√	--	--	--	--	--
IV	√	√	√	--	--	--	--
V	√	√	√	√	√--	--	--
VI	--	--	--	--	--	--	√
VII	--	--	--	--	--	√	√
VIII	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
IX	--	--	--	--	--	--	√
X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Those who have learned a Celtic language through lessons or from books (group VI) often have a different outlook from those who have a traditional knowledge. They may have a deeper appreciation of the history of the language and its relationship to the other languages; they may both speak it and write it on a different plane. They may be more aware of the capacity of the language to creat new words.

Allusion has been made to the current controversy about whether MidC or LateC should be used as a basis for Revived Cornish. Similar controversies are to be found in Breton and Manx, to name but two other Celtic languages.

#### 4.4.3 A basis for reviving Manx

The last native-speaker of traditional Manx, Ned Maddrell, died in 1974, so that recordings are available of him and of other speakers in group II. One might imagine that these sound-recordings would constitute a definitive example of spoken Manx for those who are learning Manx today, but this is not so. Controversy rages between two schools of thought: those who accept this premise, and those who argue that the speech of these terminal speakers is not truly representative of Manx. The latter faction prefer to go back to the writings of the early nineteenth century, when Manx was scarcely affected by English. Thus, while it would be extremely interesting and valuable to have a sound-recording of Dolly Pentreath, it would not necessarily resolve the current argument about a MidC versus a LateC base.

#### 4.4.4 A basis for modernizing Breton

In Brittany, the processes of language death and language renewal seem to be going on at the same time, giving a wide spectrum of speakers. There are, however, many contrasts between groups II and VI, as shown in this table:

	GROUP II	GROUP VI
LOCATION	in rural parts of Brittany west of a line from Binic to the mouth of the Vilaine	all over Brittany, including a substantial number in Roazon
NUMBER	up to half a million, but declining at a substantial rate	a few thousand
AGE	generally over 50	relatively young
LITERACY	few can read or write Breton	can read and write Breton
PRONUNCIATION	little influenced by French	heavily influenced by French
TYPE OF BRETON	dialectal	standard
VOCABULARY	full of French words, especially for modern concepts	few French words, many new words formed from Celtic roots
MOTIVATION	speak Breton because it is their native language; sometime ashamed of this	speak Breton because they want to; sometimes militant

[Group VI scarcely exists any more].

Sometimes argument flares between these two groups. On the subject of vocabulary, for instance, group VI become exasperated when group II prefer to use French words, so that the innate creative power of Breton becomes atrophied; while group II sometimes accuse group VI of using *brezhoneg chimik* ‘artificial Breton’. On big problem here is that the amount of television time in Breton is so pathetically small that there is no means by which new words can be broadcast to the Breton-speaking population.

Prof. Léon Fleuriot has pointed out that, when reconstructing a language, it is unwise to use as a base its terminal phase (i.e. after the critical point), or indeed, the pre-terminal phase (the two generations before the critical point):

*“..... quand une langue est parlée dans une société bilingue sous l’influence d’une langue dominante, on n’a plus la vraie langue.”*

[when a language is spoken in a bilingual society under the influence of a dominant language, one has no longer got the true language.]

In order to improve spoken Breton, he suggested as the reference language the Breton spoken before 1900, at which time one had a true monolingual Breton society. Since events in Cornish occurred some 275 years before those in Breton (fig. 420), this would mean going back to at least 1625 (roughly the date of the last performances of the mystery plays) in order to establish a base for Revived Cornish.

#### 4.4.5 The competence of Late Cornish

During the LateC phase, the people who tried to arrest the decline of Cornish, or at least to record it in its waning state, were a group of educated men living in and around Newlyn, and known as the “Newlyn School”. During the years 1660 to 1730, they collected songs and stories, wrote poems, translated portions of Scripture, and corresponded with one another in Cornish. For the most part, they belonged to group IV in fig. 440, so that their Cornish was a little different from that of native speakers such as Wella Kerew.

Into their midst came in 1701 the great Celtic scholar Edward Lhuyd. He spent four months in Cornwall, collecting as much of the language as he could; and later he published some of his findings (Lhuyd, 1707). Lhuyd’s testimony is the only direct evidence we have of how Cornish was pronounced, and some of it is contradictory.

At least two pieces of Cornish, both written c. 1705, do not represent the contemporary tongue as spoken by a dwindling number of native-speakers, but rather deliberate attempts to create a fuller literary language (an early example of language planning). It is interesting to note that the spelling systems of Nance and Saunders have their counterparts or prototypes in these eighteenth century writings.

The first of these is the translation of Charles Stuart's Letter of Thanks to the Cornish People (or at least the Royalists among them), by John Keigwin of Mousehole. In this, Keigwin used what was then an archaic system of spelling. He had transcribed and translated the texts of MidC, and his system was based on MidC orthography. It is therefore the forerunner of Nance's Unified Cornish.

The other is the remarkable A Cornish Grammar by Edward Lhuyd. Although primarily a philologist interested in recording actual examples of living Celtic speech, Lhuyd amused himself by composing this essay *Dhan Tiz Hegaraz ha Pednzhivik Pou Kernou* [to the beloved and noble people of the country of Cornwall]. It did not meet with approval from the Newlyn School; Oliver Pender wrote to Gwavas in 1711:

*"Rag na algia eu clappia na screffa Carnoack peccara why.*

*Thera moy Gembrack peath rig ea gweele."*

[For he could neither talk nor write Cornish like you.

What he did was more Welsh.]

Nevertheless, the Newlyn School used Lhuyd's work extensively in later writings.

The lesson to be learned from these examples is that the Cornish of 1705 had a reduced competence; it was incapable of expressing all desired concepts. To do this, Keigwin went back to MidC, Lhuyd drew on Welsh, while the remaining members of the Newlyn School drew on English.

## 4.5 THE INFLUENCE OF THE OLD LANGUAGE ON THE NEW

### 4.5.1 Introduction

Where one language has very recently been abandoned in favour of another, the influence of the former remains. The English in some parts of Wales which are no longer Welsh-speaking shows many Welsh features (Parry, 1977). Children in Brittany who speak only French, because their parents have never spoken Breton to them (generation D), still show considerable interference from Breton; they speak "French with a Breton accent", and often use Breton words and syntax in French sentences. The difference between these examples and Cornish is that a much longer time has elapsed since Cornish was abandoned (see fig. 450).

As time passes, the influence of the old language diminishes. Its different elements should be considered separately. It seems that they disappear in the following order: phonology, morphology, lexicon, intonation.

#### 4.5.2 Phonology

During the period when Cornish was generally spoken in west Cornwall, the English pronunciation of bilingual speakers was affected by their native Cornish (Carew, 1602):

*“The English which they speak is good and pure, ..... but they disgrace it with a broad and rude accent”.*

The accent of the first two English-speaking generations (i.e. during the period 1675-1725) may have been similarly influenced, but the influence was apparently weak. Rather they were noted for the purity of their English, in comparison with speakers in east Cornwall and in Devon. Scawen (c. 1680) wrote:

*“Tis observed ..... where the Cornish hath been most spoken, that the English thereabouts is much better than the same in Devon, or the places bordering upon them, by being most remote from thence from whence the corruption proceeds.”*

Gibson (1695) made much the same comment:

*“Their language, too, is English; and ..... observ’d by Travellers to be more pure and refin’d than that of their neighbours, Devonshire and Somersetshire.”*

He went on to amplify the reason given by Carew:

*“English is to them an introduc’d, not an original Language; and those who brought it in were the Gentry and Merchants, who imitated the Dialect of the Court, which is the most nice and accurate.”*

The phonology of the present-day English dialect of West Penwith, or rather the most archaic form of it, is very similar to the standard English of c. 1675, the time when English was taken up by the bulk of the inhabitants in the far west.

During the remainder of the life of traditional Cornish, the number of Cornish speakers was probably too small for the phonology of Cornish to have any impact on that of English. The third- and fourth-generation English speakers would have heard the terminal and semi-speakers of Cornish pronouncing Cornish words, including place-names, and would have replaced their LateC sounds by the nearest equivalent in English. The Cornish phoneme /x/, for instance, was either replaced by /k/ (e.g. *grackle* for *graghel* ‘pile’, or lost altogether (e.g. *porl* ‘porker’ for *porghell*). In table 451, I have taken the vocalic phonemes of LateC, as deduced from the textual evidence, and appended the eighteenth-century English sounds with which they would have been identified by a contemporary native speaker of English. Allowing for slight further development, the result is consistent with the sounds of the scraps of Cornish as recorded by Jenner (1876), and the dialectal words as recorded by Nance.

## REFLEXES OF LATE CORNISH PHONEMES IN 1875

(after Jenner, 1876)

Table 451

	LateC PHONEME	REALIZATION	EXAMPLES (MidC spelling)		REMARKS
long  vowels	/i:/	[i:]	<u>Varya</u>	'Mary'	[i:] represents a development in standard English
	/e:/	[i:], [ɛ:]	<u>dek</u> <u>men</u>	'ten' 'stone'	
	/a/	---	----	----	
	/ɔ/	---	----	----	
	/u/	---	----	----	
short  vowels	/i/	[ɪ]	<u>ugens</u>	'twenty'	
	/e/	[ɛ]	<u>pypm</u>	'five'	
	/a/	---	----	----	
	/ɔ/	[ɔ]	<u>onyn</u>	'one'	
	/u/	[ʌ]	<u>gol</u>	'feast'	Here unstressed, and therefore short
i-diphthong	/ei/	[ɛɪ], [æɪ]	<u>seyth</u>	'seven'	The realizations are the contemporary stages of development of the reflex of MidE /i:/, with which LateC /ei/ was identified
u-diphthongs	/iu/	[ɪʊ]	<u>du</u>	'black'	
	/ɛu/	[u:], [ɪʊ]	<u>dev</u>	'two'	Unexpected; [ɛʊ] would have been more appropriate, but there is possible confusion here with <u>dyw</u> 'two (f.)' and Eng. <u>two</u> . No distinction between LateC /au/ and /ɔu/.
	/au/	[ɛʊ]	<u>nav</u>	'nine'	
	/ɔu/	[ɛʊ]	<u>crow</u>	'shed'	

Note: Much more is now known about LateC vocoids.

#### 4.5.3 Morphology

A detailed study of the morphology of the English dialect of West Penwith remains to be undertaken. It may be that some elements of non-standard morphology and syntax are due to the Cornish sub-stratum.

#### 4.5.4 Lexicon

A residue of words from the old language is transferred to the new. These are often words for old-fashioned concepts, and they quickly disappear. In Shetland, a Scandinavian language called Norn was spoken until c. 1825, when it was replaced by a dialect of Scots. It has been estimated (Barnes, 1984) that in 1890 there were 5000 Norn words in use, in 1950 about 1500, and in 1980 about 900.

In his 1938 dictionary, Nance included over 350 Cornish words which were found in English dialect. Probably many of these were no longer in use in 1938; they represented words taken from Courtney and Couch (1881), and words collected by Nance over the previous thirty years. It seems that less than one tenth of these are still in use. Wakelin (1975, chap. 7) examined some of these lexical loans in detail.

#### 4.5.5 Intonation

Although most elements of the supplanted language disappear within a few generations, this appears not to be the case with the intonation. Studies by Oftedal of Scots Gaelic in the Western Isles have show that its intonation is typically Norse, event though Norse died out there some centuries ago. The same has even been claimed for the intonation of the French spoken in Normandy! (Norse died out there in the tenth century). It may well be, therefore, that the distinctive “sing-song” intonation heard in the English of West Penwith respresents that of traditional Cornish. This, again, is a topic which requires recording and research.

### 4.6 CONCLUSION

- 1) The present pronunciation of the English dialect of West Penwith, even its most archaic form, represents not the authentic realizations of LateC, but rather the dialectal development of late seventeenth century English sounds. The same applies to the pronunciation of Cornish words in English dialect, and of Cornish place-names.
- 2) We should beware of using LateC (at least after 1625 A.D.) as a basis for the revived language, because Cornish during these pre-terminal and terminal stages was not truly representative, being too severely under the influence of English.

## 5.1 CHOICE OF EPOCH

Arguments have been presented to show that LateC after 1625 A.D. is unsuitable as a base for Revived Cornish, since it was too influenced by English. Quite apart from these, the preparation of dozens of tables of orthographic frequency has led me to adopt a pragmatic solution to the problem. The sheer paucity of examples in LateC means that, although nearer to the present time, its phonological system is less well-known than that of MidC.

I would go back to an epoch before the major phonological changes of the late sixteenth century, and adopt the phonology of late MidC as a basis for that of Revived Cornish. This base as described in this chapter, resembles most closely the sounds of traditional Cornish c.1500, the time of *Beunans Meriasek*. An ideological rationale for this date, should one be required, is that it just precedes the Protestant Reformation, the death-blow for traditional Cornish.

I am more open now to LateC than when I was writing PSRC. However, to devise an orthography which satisfactorily covers more than one phase of traditional Cornish is a difficult exercise; it cannot be a single written form (George 2017).

## 5.2 GENERAL REMARKS

5.2.1 Articulation

Cornish is not a language to be swallowed in the back of the throat, but to be projected from the front of the mouth, as are Breton and Welsh.

5.2.2 Speed

The speed at which Cornish is spoken is largely a matter of personal preference and fluency, and of style – whether one is addressing a public audience or chatting to friends. I can find no reference to the speed at which Cornish was traditionally spoken in normal conversation; Julyan Holmes believes it was very fast.

## 5.3 STRESS

### 5.3.1 Nature of stress

There is very little indication in the traditional texts of how Cornish was stressed. Evidence from the stress in place-names suggests that the pattern was the same as that in Breton (but not the Gwenedek dialect thereof). We may further surmise that all elements of the primary stress combined on the stressed syllable, as in Breton and English, rather than being on different syllables, as in Welsh (Humphreys, 1980). The following account is in general agreement with Wella Brown (1984, §§5-11), but differs in a few points of detail.

It seems likely that we have to deal with two levels of stress; a strong (perhaps very strong) primary stress, indicated by ' ; and a weak secondary stress, indicated by , , before the stressed syllable.

### 5.3.2 Stress in monosyllables

(a) Monosyllabic nouns and verbs are normally stressed.

(b) The following monosyllables are normally unstressed:

the definite article *an*

the possessive adjectives *ow, dha, y ,hy*

the verbal particles, e.g. *y, a, ny, na, ow, re, yn unn*

conjunctions, e.g. *dhe, war, gans*

prepositions, e.g. *ha, mes, pan, ma.*

(c) In Breton, the suffixed pronouns (personal enclitics) are not stressed (Desbordes 1983, §230), and Wella Brown (1984, §5) argued the same for Cornish. Certainly the singular forms *-ma, -ta, -va, -a, -y* are never stressed; but it seems to me that stress may sometimes be placed, at least secondarily, on the other forms, spelled by Nance as

*-vy, -jy, -ef, -hy, -ny, -why, y*; and in phonemic spelling **vi, dji, ev, hi, ni, hwi, i**. LateC *anjye*, for instance, could hardly have taken this form unless the *-y* in MidC *-ons-y* whence it came was stressed.

The re-duplicated forms have primary stress on the final syllable. Compare the following:

#### PHONEMIC SPELLING

#### UNIFIED SPELLING

<b>Piw os <i>dji</i>?</b>	[ˈpiʊ ɔs, ɹi:]	<u>Who</u> are you?	Pyu ɔs-jy?
<b>Piw os <i>ta</i>?</b>	[ˌpiʊ ˈɔstə]	Who <u>are</u> you?	Pyu ɔsta?
<b>Piw os <i>tedji</i>?</b>	[ˌpiʊ ˌɔstəˈɹi:]	Who are <u>you</u> ?	Pyu ɔsta-jy?

[The examples are now spelled **Piw os sy**, **Piw osta**, **Piw os tejy**.]

- (d) Certain monosyllables are sometimes stressed and sometimes unstressed; notably **eus** ‘is’, which is pronounced [ˈœ:s] when stressed, and [ɛs] otherwise:

Eus ki dhis? Eus, mes nyndj eus kath dhymm.

[ˌœ:s ˈki: ˌði: **s** ˈœ:s mɛs ˌnin **ð**ɛs ˈka:θ θɪmm]

‘Have you a dog? Yes, but I have not got a cat’

[This is how I spoke English when PSRC was written and still do; today one hears ‘Do you have a dog? Yes, but I don’t have a cat’, which comes from American English].

### 5.3.3 Normal stress in polysyllables

In polysyllables, normal stress follows this pattern (P = primary stress, s = secondary stress, . = unstressed):

NO. OF SYLLABLES	STRESS PATTERN
2	P .
3	. P .
4	s . P .
5	. s . P .
6	s . s . P .

The primary stress normally falls on the penultimate syllable:

NOTE

<b>puskes</b>	‘fishes’	[ˈpyskɛs]	1
<b>pyskador</b>	‘fisherman’	[pɪskˈaːdɔr]	2
<b>pyskadores</b>	‘fisherwoman’	[ˌpɪskaˈdɔːrɛs]	
<b>pyskadoresow</b>	‘fisherwomen’	[pɪskˌadɔrˈɛsoʊ]	

- N.B. 1) The rules of phonological development would give *pyskes*, but the spelling *puskes* is so much commoner in MidC that this seems to be a genuine exception.
- 2) The alternative form *pyscajor* given by Nance (1955) disobeys the **quantity** rules and is not found in the texts; it should not be used.

#### 5.3.4 Stress in close compounds

Close compounds (sometimes called strict compounds) bear normal penultimate stress. These compounds take the form (qualifier + noun). The qualifier may be:

- |     |                          |                 |             |                               |
|-----|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| (a) | a noun, e.g.             | <b>tollgus</b>  | ['tollgʁs]  | giving <u>Tolgus</u> on maps  |
|     |                          | <b>karrdji</b>  | ['karrɔ̃i]  | 'garage' [now <b>karrji</b> ] |
| (b) | an adjective, e.g.       | <b>henlys</b>   | ['hɛnlɪs]   | 'old court'                   |
|     |                          | <b>droglamm</b> | ['drɔ̃glam] | 'accident'                    |
| (c) | a numerical prefix. e.g. | <b>unnvab</b>   | ['yn:vap]   | 'only son'                    |
|     |                          | <b>dewdhen</b>  | ['dɛʊðɛn]   | 'couple'                      |
|     |                          | <b>tryden</b>   | ['tri:dɛn]  | 'trio'                        |

N.B. the difference between the numerical prefix **try-** 'tri-', as in the last example, and the number **tri** 'three (m.)', as in **tri den** [tri:'dɛ:n] 'three (unconnected) men'.

- (d) one of certain other prefixes, e.g.
- les-** 'step', as in **lesvamm** 'stepmother';
- gor-** 'super', as in **gormel** 'praise' (cf. ModB *meuliñ* 'to praise').

Note that qualifiers (a) and (b) cause soft mutation in the following noun.

In Breton, the formation of close compounds is highly developed; according to Kervella (1976, §75), all words comprising (prefix + noun), for any type of prefix (except prepositions), are treated as close compounds. The situation in Cornish is more akin to that in Welsh; it appears that only certain prefixes appear in close compounds, while others form loose compounds with the following word (see para. 5.3.5). The prefix **om-** 'self' apparently does both.

Close compounds are formed also by common adverbs and adjectives;

- e.g. **pur dha** ['pyrðɑ:] 'very good'
- re dumm** ['rɛ:dʁm] 'too warm'

these were often written as one word in MidC texts.

### 5.3.5 Double stress

This occurs in the following cases:

- (a) loose compounds, which are best spelled with a hyphen:  
e.g. **karr-tan** [ˌkar: 'ta:n] 'motor-car'
- (b) noun + adjective forming two syllables:  
e.g. **den bras** [ˌdɛ:n 'bra:s] 'big man'
- (c) disyllabic place-names of the type noun + qualifier  
(Padel's type C2); e.g. **Pennsans**, **Trenans**

### 5.3.6 Antepenultimate stress

This occurs in the cases of:

- (a) words of three syllables or more containing a svarabhakti vowel (see section 5.7);
- (b) certain loan-words from English; e.g. **oratri** ['ɔ'ratri].

### 5.3.7 Ultimate stress

This occurs in the following cases:

- (a) where longer forms have been shortened;  
e.g. **yma** [ɪ'ma:] 'there is, there are', verbs in -he,  
**ymons** [ɪ'mɒnz] 'they are';
- (b) numerous adverbs and prepositions;  
e.g. **ynwedh** [ɪn'wɛ:ð] 'also', **avel** [a've:l] 'as';
- (c) compounds of **na-** and **war-**;  
e.g. **nahen** [na'hɛ:n] 'any other', **warnans** 'downwards'
- (d) certain loan-words from English; e.g. **attes** 'at ease', **deffri** 'indeed'.

## 5.4 THE VOCALIC SYSTEM

### 5.4.1 Introduction

The vocalic system of MidC, and the one recommended for Revived Cornish, have nine members (excluding schwa):

/i/                  /y/                                  /u/  
   
/ɪ/    /ʊ/  
   
/ɛ/   /œ/   /ɔ/   /ɑ/  
      |  
      /a/

### 5.4.3 Long vowels

Nowhere does Smith's suggested scheme deviate more from the traditional pronunciation than in the long vowels. His descriptions imply a six-member system:

/i:/            /y:/            /u:/  
                  /e:/            /o:/  
                  /a:/

with the following Unified spelling and suggested realizations:

PHONEME	UNIFIED SPELLING	REALIZATION
/i:/	ȳ	[i:]
/e:/	ē	[e:]
/a:/	ā	see para. 11.4.8
/o:/	ō	[ɔ:] in most words
/u:/	ū	[u:]
/y:/	ÿ	[y:]

On comparison with the nine-member system, it is evident that Nance and Smith failed to distinguish between:

- (a) the front mid-vowels /ɪ/ and /ɛ/;
- (b) the back mid-vowels /ɔ/ and /ɒ/;
- (c) the front rounded vowels /y/ and /œ/.

Furthermore, the phoneme /u:/ which they introduced is bogus. The sound [u:] did occur in MidC, but only in words borrowed from English or French, such as *dout*, *prout*, *stout*, which were written with <ow> by Nance. [An exception is *gour* 'husband']. Words in Nance's dictionaries containing <ū> are:

- (a) taken from English, e.g. *mūl* 'mule';
- (b) taken from Welsh, e.g. *būlgh* 'gap'; the correct Cornish form of this word, ***bolgh***, actually appears in the place-name *Trebolgh* 1356 (now Treboul, GR 346 575).
- (c) taken from LateC, e.g. *gūn* 'heath'; this word was ['go:n] in MidC, spelled ***goen*** in the phonemic spelling; had the unified spelling been more consistent, it would have been written *gōn*.

N.B. BM.1014 *me a vyn guythe then won* 'I will keep to the heathland'.

How did Nance and Smith come to make such a mess of the long vowels?  
The answer is to be found in the long vowel system of ModW:

[i:] <i>	[i:] <u, y>	[u:] <w>
[e:] <e>	[o:] <o>	
[a:] <a>		

As pointed out in para. 2.5.1, Smith knew Welsh well. Clearly, he supposed that the Cornish long vowels were similar to those of Welsh, but unfortunately for him, this is not so. Cornish is much closer to Breton.

That Smith really believed in a six-member system of long vowels is shown by an analysis of the rhyme schemes in his long narrative poem in Revived Cornish *Trystan hag Ysolt* (Smith, 1973). In this work, he consistently rhymed <ū> and <ȳ>.

## 5.5 QUANTITY OF VOWELS

### 5.5.1 The quantity rules

In [Proto-Brythonic](#), as in Classical Latin, vowels were long or short intrinsically. This system broke down in the late sixth century, and was replaced by one in which the length of vowels depended upon their phonetic environment. The new system continued in Cornish until c. 1600, and is therefore appropriate for Revived Cornish. [\[At the time of writing PSRC, I supported the idea that Revived Cornish be based on Middle Cornish only.\]](#) Its rules are very similar to those which apply in ModW. They are:

- (a) In unstressed syllables, all vowels are short.
- (b) In stressed syllables, vowels are short before [most](#) consonant groups and double consonants.
- (c) In stressed syllables, vowels are long in monosyllables and half-long in polysyllables before single consonants [and the consonant groups /sp, st, sk/](#).

The length of vowels is thus dictated by the stress and by the nature of the following consonants.

### 5.5.2 Effect of MidE loan-words on the quantity rules

In PrimC, single consonants (except for /f, θ, x/) were necessarily voiced, at least phonemically, and double consonants were voiceless. In MidC, however, we find that certain loan-words from MidE had half-long (or even long) vowels preceding voiceless consonants, and others had short vowels preceding voiced consonants; examples are to be found in Part B, especially in chapters 14 and 15.

Loan-words containing a stressed vowel before /-st/ **conformed to the quantity rules, so that the vowel was long:**

<b>best</b>	'beast'	<b>Est</b>	'East'
<b>breſt</b>	'brass'	<b>feſt</b>	'feast'
<b>krouſt</b>	'picnic lunch'	<b>oſt</b>	'host'
<b>Kriſt</b>	'Christ'	<b>preſt</b>	'readily'
<b>douſt</b>	'dust'	<b>Weſt</b>	'West'

**Compare** the native word **loſt** 'tail' ['lɔ:st].

The rules are broken in the case of words containing stressed /ɔn/ before a dental consonant:

- (a) those in which MidC /ɔn/ was substituted for MidE /u:n/;  
e.g. **grond** 'ground', **hond** 'hound', **rond** 'round';
- (b) those in which MidC /ɔn/ was substituted for MidE /aun/;  
e.g. **dons** 'dance', **chons** 'chance';
- (c) native words in which the 3rd pl. ending of verbs had coalesced with the preceding stem; e.g. **ymons** 'they are', **bons** 'they might be', **gwrɔns** 'they do', **dons** 'they come'.

*Circa* 1600, the Cornish quantity system changed, so as to conform more to the English system. The half-long vowels were eliminated, usually becoming short. This is most evident in words containing /n/, in which the spelling changed from <n> to <nn>; e.g. MidC *benyn* 'woman' ['bɛːnɪn] > LateC *bennen* ['bɛnɛn]. It was a change which occurred in English. In a few words, however, e.g. LateC *krâna* 'crane' < MidE crane, the vowel became fully long.

**Some years after the publication of PSRC, Nicholas Williams (1995) promulgated a hypothesis whereby the change of vowel-length, which he called the prosodic shift, took place much earlier (c. 1175). The evidence from MidC does not agree with this (Bock & Bruch 2009).**

### 5.5.3 The quantity rules in Unified Cornish

Nance and Smith recognized only two degrees of vowel length, long and short, and treated the two separately. They were apparently unaware of the distinction between long and short consonants, and of the rule:

short vowel      +      double consonant  
long vowel      +      single consonant

and consequently made mistakes such as writing  $\bar{y}l$  'can' with a long  $\langle \bar{y} \rangle$ , meaning [i:]. This word has a short vowel before a double consonant; it should be pronounced [ʔll], and written *yll*.

## 5.6 VOWEL AFFECTION

### 5.6.1 Introduction

This is the sound-change caused in a vowel by the anticipation of a subsequent vowel. It can be treated in much the same way as consonantal mutation, except that it acts backwards instead of forwards. The whole subject is particularly difficult, especially since affection occurred at three separate periods in the the history of the language. Moreover, affection in traditional Cornish is sometimes lacking where one would expect to find it; and conversely, present where there is not phonological reason for it.

The two principal affections are as follows:

#### Final i-affection, c.500

Causing agents: Late British [\[Proto-Brythonic\]](#)  $\bar{i}$  and  $\bar{y}$ , now lost.

AFFECTION	$\bar{e} > /i/$	$\bar{a} > /e/$	$\bar{o} > /ə/$	$u > /ə/$
REFLEXES IN MidC	$/\varepsilon/ > /i/$	$/a/ > /e/$	$/ɔ/ > /ε/$	$/ɔ/ > /ε/$
PHONEMIC SPELLING	<b>e &gt; u</b>	<b>a &gt; e</b>	<b>o &gt; e</b>	<b>o &gt; e</b>

Internal i-affection, c.700

Causing agents	/i/	/ɪ/	/e/	/ə/	/j/
Reflexes in MidC	/i/	/ɪ/	/ɛ/	/ɛ/	/j/
Phonemic spelling	<b>i</b>	<b>y</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>y</b>
AFFECTION	/e/ > /ɪ/		/a/ > /e/		/o/ > /ə/     /u/ > /ə/
REFLEXES IN MidC	/ɛ/ > /ɪ/		/a/ > /ɛ/		/ɔ/ > /ɛ/     /ɔ/ > /ɛ/
PHONEMIC SPELLING	<b>e &gt; y</b>		<b>a &gt; e</b>		<b>o &gt; e</b> <b>o &gt; e</b>

Various examples of vowel affection are given in table 560. Some examples of suffixes which cause vowel affection are as follows:

PHONEMIC SPELLING	TYPE OF SPEECH	UNAFFECTED	AFFECTED
<b>-i</b>	verbal noun	<b>koll</b> ‘loss’	kelli ‘to lose’
<b>-i</b>	plural	<b>karr</b> ‘car’	kerri ‘cars’
<b>-ik</b>	diminutive	<b>bronn</b> ‘breast’	brennik ‘limpets’
<b>-ys</b>	past participle	<b>kar-</b> ‘to love’	kerys ‘loved’
<b>-yon</b>	plural	<b>mab</b> ‘son’	mebyon ‘sons’
<b>-yans</b>	abstract	<b>mag-</b> ‘to nurture’	megyans ‘nurture’

5.6.2     Enhanced affection

It is also necessary to recognize an enhanced affection, /a/ > /ɪ/. This occurs:

- (i) in the 1st and 2nd persons of the pres. subj., and the impersonal of the impf. subj., in verbs with infinitives in /-a/ and /-ja/; e.g. **del y'm kyrr** ‘as thou mayest love me’ (see table 561):
- (ii) in the 3rd person sg. of the pres. ind. of certain other verbs (see Brown 1984, §194); e.g. **a yll** ‘he can’.

This may be the same as a secondary affection, /a/ > /ɪ/. sometimes observed in MidC, in spellings like *tyrmyn* (alongside *termyn* ‘time’), *kylmys* (alongside *kelmys* ‘tied’), but not recognized in the phonological base for Revived Cornish. [Later work shows that \*kylmys\* is an example of enhanced affection, but \*tyrmyn\* is an example of a separate phenomenon, raising of /ɛ/ to /ɪ/ in late MidC.](#)

Examples of vowel affection

TABLE 560

UNAFFECTED	MEANING	AFFECTED	1ST VOWEL	2ND VOWEL
------------	---------	----------	-----------	-----------

(a) Singular (unaffected) and plural (affected)

<b>alargh</b>	swan	<b>elergh</b>	a > e	a > e
<b>askorn</b>	bones	<b>eskern</b>	a > e	o > e
<b>davas</b>	sheep	<b>deves</b>	a > e	a > e
<b>gaver</b>	goat	<b>gever</b>	a > e	svarabhakti
<b>korn</b>	horn	<b>kern</b>	o > e	
<b>margh</b>	horse	<b>mergh</b>	a > e	

(b) Verbal stem (unaffected o) and verbal noun (affected e)

<b>koll-</b>	to lose	<b>kelli</b>	}	
<b>losk-</b>	to burn	<b>leski</b>	}	
<b>mog-</b>	to smoke	<b>megi</b>	}	Verbal nouns in <b>-i</b>
<b>son-</b>	to sound	<b>seni</b>	}	
<b>toll-</b>	to bore holes	<b>telli</b>	}	
<b>torr-</b>	to break	<b>terri</b>	}	

(c) Verbal stem (unaffected a) and verbal noun (affected e)

<b>argh-</b>	to order	<b>erghi</b>	}	
<b>pask-</b>	to fatten	<b>peski</b>	}	Verbal nouns in <b>-i</b>
<b>galw-</b>	to call	<b>gelwel</b>	}	
<b>gwask-</b>	to press	<b>gweskel</b>	}	
<b>hanw-</b>	to name	<b>henwel</b>	}	Verbal nouns in <b>-el</b>
<b>marw-</b>	to die	<b>merwel</b>	}	
<b>salw-</b>	to save	<b>selwel</b>	}	

(d) Examples having affected forms only

Pr.-Bry. *donjū	man	<b>den</b>	o > e
Pr.-Bry. *garjo-	word	<b>ger</b>	a > e
Pr.-Bry. *kallīa	grove	<b>kelli</b>	a > e
Latin <i>molīna</i>	mill	<b>melin</b>	o > e
Pr.-Bry. *monijo-	mountain	<b>menydh</b>	o > e

## Vowel affection in verbal paradigms

TABLE 561

	no affection		<u>affection</u>		<u>enhanced affection</u>		
	PRES. IND.	IMPF. IND.	PRET.	PLUP.	PRES. SUBJ.	IMPF. SUBJ.	IMPV.
Verbs in <b>-a</b> , e.g. <b>kara</b> ‘to love’, <b>kana</b> ‘to sing’, <b>tava</b> ‘to touch’							
S 1	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>y</u></b>	<b>a</b>	----
2	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>y</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>
3	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>
P 1	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>y</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
2	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>y</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
3	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>
O	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>y</u></b>	----

Verbs in **-el**, e.g. **gelwel** ‘to call’, **henwel** ‘to name’

S 1	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	----
2	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>
3	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
P 1	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
2	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
3	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
O	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	----

Verbs in **-i**, e.g. **igeri** ‘to open’, **kregi** ‘to hang’, **ankevi** ‘to forget’

S 1	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	----
2	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>
3	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
P 1	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
2	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
3	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	<b><u>e</u></b>
O	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b><u>e</u></b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>o</b>	----

Table revised from the original, using data from *Cornish Verbs* and from further research.

### 5.6.3 Real and false vowel affection

- (a) The apparent *o* > *e* affection in *towl* / *tewl*- ‘to throw’ was originally /a/ > /e/ in PrimC; the case of *kows* / *kews*- ‘to talk’ is similar, but analogous, deriving from OldF causer.
- (b) The different development of PrimC /ω/ in different phonetic environments causes what appears to be *o* > *a* affection, but is not. When stressed medially, /ω/ > /ɔ/, and when unstressed, /ω/ > /ɛ/. Examples are as follows:

SINGULAR		PLURAL
<b><i>boghodjek</i></b>	‘poor man’	<b><i>boghodjogyon</i></b>
<b><i>gormel</i></b>	‘praise’	<b><i>gormolow</i></b>
<b><i>kentrevek</i></b>	‘neighbour’	<b><i>kentrevogyon</i></b>
<b><i>marghek</i></b>	‘horseman’	<b><i>marghogyon</i></b>
<b><i>tiek</i></b>	‘farmer’	<b><i>tiogyon</i></b>

- (c) The following pairs of words in the Unified spelling appear to be examples of *a* > *e* affection, but this is not the case. In the first word of each pair, Nance has taken a LateC form in *-ak*, without back-dating it; the second he has invented or re-spelled.

tyak	‘farmer’	tyeges	‘farmer’s wife’
mousak	‘stinking’	mousegy	‘to stink’
lavrak	‘breeches’	lavregow	‘breeches (pl.)’

In fact, these are all examples similar to (b) above, and in the recommended phonemic spelling would appear as ***tiek* / *tioges*, *mosek* / *mosogi*, *lavrek* / *lavrogow***.

- (d) Vowel affection in loan-words from MidE is analogous.

## 5.7 SVARABHAKTI

This Sanskrit word refers to the insertion of a vowel into a cluster of consonants, in order to make it easier to pronounce. This occurred c. 850, in two cases:

- (a) words ending in vowel + liquid or nasal consonant + /w/,  
e.g. ['marw] 'dead';
- (b) words ending in vowel + consonant + liquid or nasal consonant,  
e.g. ['ladr] 'thief'.

The vowel inserted (termed epenthetic) was [ɔ] in case (a) and [ə] > MidC [ɛ] > LateC [a] in case (b). In the phonological base, these two examples become ['maːrɔw] (spelled **marow**) and ['laːdɛr] (**lader**) respectively. Other examples are given in Table 570. Note that svarabhakti did not occur (except locally) in Breton; nor is it recognized in the standard orthography of Welsh: it occurs regularly, however, in spoken Welsh.

In Cornish, the epenthetic vowel, which is half-long when stressed in order to comply with the quantity rules, counts as a syllable for the purposes of metre, but not for the purposes of stress. This means that trisyllabic words containing a svarabhakti vowel are stressed on the first syllable;

e.g. **kenedhel** ['kɛnɛðɛl] 'nation', **kenderow** ['kɛndɛrɔw] 'male cousin'.

## 5.8 DIPHTHONGS

The inventory of diphthongs in the phonological base is the same as that in MidC: i-diphthongs /ei/, /ai/, /ɔi/

u-diphthongs /iu/, /ɪu/, /ɛu/, /au/ and /ɔu/.

A sixth *u*-diphthong, /øu/, was discovered by Keith Bailey c. 2002.

It is proposed to keep all five *u*-diphthongs, even though

- (a) English speakers could scarcely realize the difference between the first two (even /ɛu/ in Welsh and Breton is replaced in English by [ju:] or [aʊ]);
- (b) It is not certain to which of these two phonemes some words belong. See George (2022) for an examination of these.

This is to maintain differences in etymological spelling, e.g. **liw** 'colour' v. **lyw** 'rudder' [now spelled **lew**]. A set of minimal pairs is given in para. 6.3.3.

## 5.9 CONSONANTS AND SEMI-VOWELS

The consonantal and semi-vocalic phonemes, based on those of MidC, are as follows [order of presentation changed]:

/p/	/t/	/k/		/pp/	/tt/	/kk/	
/b/	/d/	/g/		/bb/	/dd/	/gg/	
/f/	/θ/	/x/	/s/	/ff/	/θθ/	xx/	/ss/
/v/	/ð/	/h/					
	/ɽ/	/ʃ/	/ʒ/				
	/ð/	/dʒ/					
/m/	/n/	/l/	/r/	/mm/	/nn/	/ll/	/rr/
/j/	/w/						

Of these, /bb, dd, gg/ are marginal; /θθ/ and /xx/ are very rare; /ʒ/ occurs exclusively in loan-words, and /ʃ/ almost exclusively in loan-words. /dʒ/ occurred only in loan-words in OldC, but in palatalized native words in MidC.

Nance's and Smith's treatment of the consonants does not call for much comment, since consonants are much easier to interpret than vowels and diphthongs. They did not understand the palatalization of OldC /-d-/ [neither did I when writing PSRC], and therefore confused its reflex with that of OldC /-s-/, spelling them both <-s-> (see section 5.11). They failed to distinguish /-ð/ and /-θ/, writing them both as <-th>, with the inevitable consequence that words with /-ð/ are pronounced, often incorrectly, with /-θ/.

## 5.10 THE INITIAL MUTATIONS

### 5.10.1 The four principal mutations

There are four principal mutation in Cornish, and they are frequently referred to by the following numbers in text-books:

1	no mutation	"radical"
2	lenition	"soft"
3	spirantization	"breathed"
4	provection	"hard"

## 5      lenition-and-provection      “mixed”

An occasional nasal mutation is described in para. 5.10.2.

Although mutations are often treated as grammatical changes to initial consonants, it is important to realize that they arose in the first place as phonological changes to almost all consonants, initial and medial. These changes took place in British [Proto-Brythonic] in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., and are described very fully by Jackson (1953, 1967). The phonological cause of the initial mutations was the nature of the final syllable of the previous word in British, a syllable which disappeared before 600 A.D.

The following mutation table applies [to the phonological base](#):

1	p	t	k	b	d	g	m	g	gw
2	b	d	g	v	ð	-	v	w	w
3	f	θ	h						
4				p	t	k			
5				f	t	h	f	hw	hw

The first g in row 1 represents the reflex of PrimC /g-/; the second g represents the reflex of PrimC /ww-/ before /ɔ/ and /y/.

Loan-words are subject to the same mutations as native words, [plus the lenition \[tʃ-\] > \[dʒ-\]](#). This was clearly the case in MidC and LateC, though obviously all such mutations are analogous, since the original causes of the initial mutations had disappeared some eight centuries before most of the words were borrowed.

5.10.2      Occasional nasal mutation

In two words, [d-] is mutated to [n-]; the first is *an nor* ‘the Earth, the world’ (to be contrasted with its unmutated form *an dor* ‘the earth, the ground’), with its compound *an norvys* ‘planet Earth’. The second word is *an navas* ‘the sheep’ as indicated by a place-name *Porranavas* 1729 (modern form Porth Navas), alongside the more usual form ***an dhavas***.

5.10.3      Lenition of /tʃ/ and /t/

Evidence exists to show that /tʃ-/, which occurred only in loan-words ([apart from chy](#) ‘house’), was in MidC sometimes subjected to lenition to [dʒ-]. This soft mutation is analogous to that described in para. 5.10.1, since it was provoked by the same features, e.g. the particle *a*. In Revived Cornish, this mutation is treated as regular.

[In the first edition of PSRC, there followed a description of lenition of /ɾ/ to /ð/, but this was erroneous, because neither of these phonemes existed.]

#### 5.10.4 New lenition

In LateC, the initial consonants [f-] and [s-] became voiced to [v-] and [z-] under similar, but not identical, circumstances to those in which lenition of other consonants occurs. Jackson (1967, §§497-519) used the term “new lenition” for this phenomenon, which also occurred in Breton. The expression “new lenition” is used to contrast with the “old lenition” of /p,t,k,b,d,g,m,gw/. From the grammatical point of view, one of the differences between old and new lenition is that, in the singular, old lenition was provoked in adjectives only when following feminine nouns, whereas new lenition was provoked in adjectives when following both genders of noun. The place-name Penzance fits these rules: MidC *pen* ‘head’ was certainly masculine, and would not therefore provoke old lenition (e.g. *pen bras* ‘big head’); yet it has caused the [s-] in the adjective *sans* ‘holy’ to change to [z-]. [Because of these differences, I would not now use the term “new lenition” for these changes].

The place-name Marazanvose would have been \**marghas an fos* ‘market by the wall’ in MidC; it shows new lenition of [f-] after the definite article *an*, and also voicing of unstressed [s-] before a vowel. Note that, in LateC, the existence of the grapheme <v-> or <z-> in a noun after *an* does not necessarily mean that the noun is feminine. Other evidence must be used to determine gender, such as the lenition of following adjectives or the form of preceding numerals.

Examination of the texts suggests that the development of new lenition was a gradual process. In MidC, [f] and [s] were apparently half-voiced, to the allophones [f̥] and [s̥], and the mutation was not written. Full voicing did not arise until c.1575. Later still, [v] and [z] were found even in absolute initial position.

Nance and Smith did not understand the true nature of new lenition; according to Nance (1938), it was “caused in exactly the same way” as “the written mutations”, which is incorrect. They recognized new lenition of [s] and [f] in their recommended pronunciation, but not in writing. Learners of Cornish find this very confusing.

The introduction of a revised orthography (Chapter 6) might seem an opportune time to include the effects of new lenition [f-] > [v-] and [s-] > [z-]. The grapheme <z> might be used for [z]. If they were to be included, however, the grammars would need to be revised, because new lenition is not the same as old lenition. In particular, a table of mutations provoked by possessive adjectives would be very different:

	<b>fer</b> 'fair'	<b>sagh</b> 'bag'	<b>cf. keyn</b> 'back'
S 1	ow ver	ow zagh	<b>ow heyn</b>
2	dha ver	dha zagh	<b>dha geyn</b>
3m	y ver	y zagh	<b>y geyn</b>
3f	hy ver	hy zagh	<b>hy heyn</b>
P 1	agan ver	agan zagh	<b>agan keyn</b>
2	agas fer	agas sagh	<b>agas keyn</b>
3	aga ver	aga zagh	<b>aga heyn</b>

Similarly, the [f-] arising from spirant mutation of [p-] would be lenited to [v-], and we should have to write **ow val** 'my spade' instead of **ow fal**, etc. The definite article **an** would cause lenition of all following nouns in /s-/ and /f-/, not just fem. sg. nouns.

In my opinion, it would be far easier to exclude "new lenition" of /f-/ and /s-/ from the phonemic orthography, but to retain [f] and [s] as allophones of /v/ and /s/. This would be in accord with the date of the phonological base.

## 5.11 PHONETIC EVOLUTION VERSUS ANALOGICAL REMODELLING

Two-year-old native speakers of English often use analogical forms like childrens, feets and goed. They have perceived that English plurals are usually formed with [-s] or [-z], and past tenses with [-d] or [-ɪd]. They soon learn the correct but less regular forms children, feet and went, because these words are commonly used. Other less common words may suffer permanent analogical re-modelling; e.g. the past tense of to dive, previously dove (which it still is in American English) has become dived in British English.

Analogical re-modelling undoubtedly occurred in traditional Cornish. A well-known case is the replacement of -a in the 3rd pl. ending of pronominal prepositions by -ans y, becoming an gye 'they', e.g. anothans y 'of them', instead of anetha. This re-modelling was often in conflict with phonetic evolution, and nowhere is this conflict more apparent than in the occlusive consonants.

Knowledge gained after the publication of PSRC shows that the original text of the next section (para. 5.11.2) contained mistakes. Rather than identifying these mistakes by printing them in red and correcting them individually, the section has been rewritten.

5.11.2 Analogical /z/ in Middle Cornish

Consider the evolution of OldC /d/, which had three different developments in MidC, according to its phonetic environment (see diagram 510).

- (i) initially, and intervocally if the second vowel was followed by /m, l, n, r/ or /ɔw/, it remained as [d].

Intervocally otherwise, it became affricated to [dz]. Then either

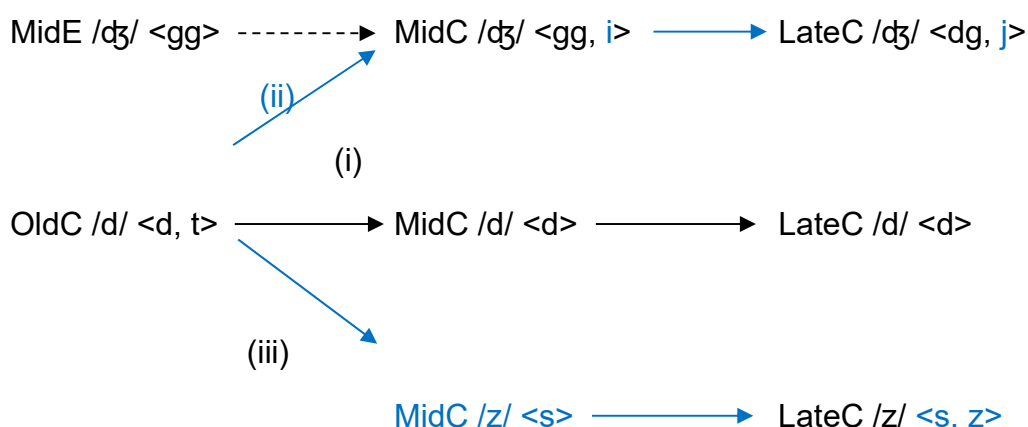
- (ii) the [dz] was strengthened to [dʒ] (palatalization); or  
(iii) the [dz] was reduced to [z] (assibilation).

Palatalization was rarer and tended to occur

Finally, it fell together with the reflex of OldC /s/ in MidC /-s/. [The rarity of rhymes between *tas* and *bras* in MidC shows that this was not the case].

DEVELOPMENTS OF OLD CORNISH /d/

Diagram 510



In OldC, the word for 'father' was /tad/, written *tat*; cf. ModB *tad* and ModW *tad*. It evolved phonetically along path (iii), becoming MidC /taz/, written *tas*. This innovative change on the part of Cornish caused one of the major differences between it and its two sister languages. The plural of this word would have been /tadow/ in OldC (cf. ModB *tadou*, ModW *tadau*); in this case one would expect the /d/ to have followed path (i), giving /tadow/ in MidC; cf. MidC *karadow* 'lovable'. The expected form \**tadow* is not found in the written texts. Instead, there are three instances of *tasow* in TH., and in LateC we find *tazow* and *tazo*. These spellings suggest an analogically remodelled form /tazow/. The plural suffix -ow > -aw was active throughout the history of traditional Cornish, and MidC speakers, on hearing the singular *tas* ['ta:z], created the analogically remodelled form *tasow* ['ta:zɔw] = *tas* /taz/ + -ow /ɔw/.

Similar considerations apply to the evolution of OldC /nt/ and /lt/, as shown in Table 511. For example, **according to the rules of phonetic evolution, OldC /kɪntav/ ‘first’ would have become MidC /kɪnta/, spelled (at least sometimes) \*kynga.** But no such spellings are found **[The fact that this spelling is not found indicates that the given interpretation of the rules was wrong. A better interpretation is PrimC /kɪntʰaɲ/ > MidC kynsa /kɪntsa/.]**

Developments of OldC /d/ and /t/ in MidC

TABLE 511

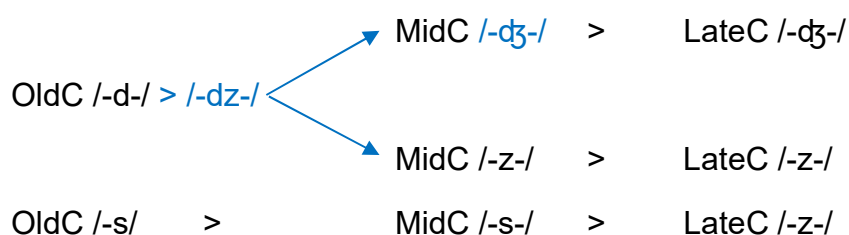
Old Cornish	Middle	Cornish	
PATH			
PHONETIC	between vowels	between	finally
ENVIRONMENT	followed by	vowels	
	/m, n, l, r/	otherwise	
/d/	/-d-/ <d>	<i>/-z-/ &lt;s&gt;</i>	<i>/-z/ &lt;s&gt;</i>
		<i>/-dʒ-/ &lt;g&gt;</i>	
	<i>padel</i>	<i>wose, woge</i>	<i>tas</i>
	‘pan’	‘after’	‘father’
/nt/	/-nt-/ <nt>	<i>/-nz-/ &lt;ns&gt;</i>	<i>/-nz/ &lt;ns&gt;</i>
		<i>/-ndʒ-/ &lt;ng&gt;</i>	
	<i>fenten</i>	<i>kerense, kerenge</i>	<i>pons</i>
	‘well’	‘love’	‘bridge’
/lt/	/-lt-/ <lt>	<i>/-lz-/ &lt;ls&gt;</i>	<i>/-lz/ &lt;ls&gt;</i>
		<i>/-ldʒ-/ &lt;*lg&gt;</i>	
	<i>alter</i>	<i>alse</i>	<i>als</i>
	‘altar’	‘could’	‘cliff’

N.B. \**alga* is not found in MidC (indeed, the number of examples of <ls> between vowels is itself small), but **is found** in LateC.

The case of the word for ‘mouse’ is more perplexing. In OldC, it was *logoden* (VC.580) = *logod* ‘mice’ + *-en* (singulative suffix). Phonetic evolution along path (i) would demand *\*logoden* also in MidC, but there are no examples. In CW, we find *logosan*; which is an analogical form. It arose from OldC *logod* > /logɔdz/ > MidC *\*logos* /logɔz/ (path iii), to which was added *-en*, giving *\*logosen*, which then developed to *logosan* [lɔ'gɔzan]. Lhuyd wrote *lygodzhan*, which shows the alternative development (path ii): here the [-ɛn] must have been added to /logɔdz/, giving [lɔ'gɔdzɛn] and later [lɔ'gɔɖʒan]. This palatalized form is also found in the field-name Parken Legagen 1710 (St Keverne).

Another word containing the reflex of OldC /-d/ + /-enn/ which shows both developments is that for ‘throat’: *vryongen* (PC.1007), *vryonsen* (BM.0780). Others show only palatalization, e.g. *hanadzhan* (Lhuyd) ‘sigh’, *Melledgan* (place-name) ‘slug’. Those which show only assibilation, e.g. *webesen* (BM.2421) ‘gnat’, *luhesen* (RD.0293) ‘lightning flash’, may be contrasted with those containing the reflex of OldC /-s/ + /-enn/, e.g. *keresenn* ‘cherry-tree’, *mesenn* ‘acorn’. In principle, the former had [-z-] and the latter had [-s-], but since they were both spelled with <-s-> in MidC, this cannot be confirmed.

Thus the reflexes of OldC /-d-/ and /-s-/ remained distinct in MidC, except for a few cases of confusion, such as *martegen* (BM.0061) instead of the usual *martesen* ‘perhaps’:



Para. 5.11.3 in the original PSRC is based on a misunderstanding of the development of OldC /d/, /nt/ and /lt/, and has been omitted in this edition.

## 5.12 SANDHI

### 5.12.1 Introduction

Sandhi is a Sanskrit word which refers to phonetic changes, particularly to consonants, which are caused by adjacent sounds. Sandhi is particularly important at word-boundaries (external sandhi), and for this reason it is useful to draw up a table showing the consonantal phonemes which can occur finally and initially.

INCIDENCE OF CONSONANTAL PHONEMES Table 520

	<u>Native</u>	<u>Found only in loan-words</u>
<u>Finally</u>		
PHONEMICALLY VOICED	/b, g/ /v, ð, z/	/p, t, k/ /pp, tt, kk/ /d/ /dʒ/ /bb, dd, gg/
PHONEMICALLY VOICELESS	/f, θ, x, s/	/ʃ/
<u>Initially</u>		
PHONEMICALLY VOICED	/p, t, k/ /b, d, g/ /v, ð/	/dʒ/
PHONEMICALLY VOICELESS	/f, h, s/	/tʃ/ /ʃ/

### 5.12.2 The rules of sandhi

Owing to the existence of phonemes which occur only in loan-words, the rules of sandhi are more complicated than they would be otherwise. They may be written thus:

- (a) The following are invariably voiceless:

/p, t, k/ /pp, tt, kk/

- (b) The following are invariably voiced:

/m, n, l, r/ /mm, nn, ll, rr/ /bb, dd, gg/

- (c) The following remain voiced before or after a vowel, a nasal or a liquid, and in absolute initial; but otherwise may be unvoiced:

/b, d, g/ /v, ð, dʒ/

- (d) The following may be partially voiced before or after a vowel, a nasal or a liquid; but otherwise remain voiceless:

/f, θ, x, s/     /h, ʃ/

Whether assimilation (i.e. unvoicing in (c) and partial voicing in (d)) actually takes place depends upon the speed of delivery (para. 5.2.2). In rapid speech, it will occur under all possible circumstances, whereas in slow, careful, deliberate speech, it will not occur at all. If both syllables are stressed, then assimilation is unlikely; e.g. **mabden** 'mankind' is pronounced [ˌmaːbˈdɛːn].

In speech delivered at an average speed, the following assimilations are to be expected:

- (i) a pair of like consonants will be voiceless (para. 5.12.3);
- (ii) unvoicing before phonemically voiceless consonants (5.12.4);
- (iii) unvoicing after phonemically voiceless consonants (5.12.5).

### 5.12.3 Unvoicing of like consonants

There are 17 cases; to explain the notation, consider that of a word ending in /-b/ followed by a word beginning with /b-/ , e.g. **mab bronn** 'son of the breast'. Both voiced occlusives will become unvoiced, and the two words will be pronounced [ˌmaːpˈbrɒnː]. This is written in the form /-b b-/ → [-p p-].

The 17 cases may be summarized thus:

/-b b-/ → [-p p-]	/-d d-/ → [-t t-]	/-g g-/ → [-k k-]
/-b p-/ → [-p p-]	/-d t-/ → [-t t-]	/-g k-/ → [-k k-]
/-p b-/ → [-p p-]	/-t d-/ → [-t t-]	/-k g-/ → [-k k-]
/-p p-/ → [-p p-]	/-t t-/ → [-t t-]	/-k k-/ → [-k k-]
/-v v-/ → [-f f-]	/-ð ð-/ → [-θ θ-]	/-dʒ dʒ-/ → [-tʃ tʃ-]
/-v f-/ → [-v-]		/-dʒ tʃ-/ → [-tʃ tʃ-]

(see para. 5.12.7)

Other examples are:

/-b p-/ → [-p p-]	<b>heb prena</b>	'without buying'
/-g g-/ → [-k k-]	<b>rag gorra</b>	'in order to put'
/-k g-/ → [-k k-]	<b>park garow</b>	'rough field'
/-ð ð-/ → [-θ θ-]	<b>an fordh dhe Bennsans</b>	'the road to Penzance'

#### 5.12.4 Unvoicing before phonemically voiceless consonants

Unvoicing occurs in a phonemically voiced final consonant when followed by a phonemically voiceless consonant. The commonest cases are when the second word begins with /h-/ or /s-/:

/-ð h-/ → [-θ h-]	<b>fordh hir</b>	‘long road’
/-b s-/ → [-p s-]	<b>modryp skwith</b>	‘weary aunt’

It is also possible to have examples, perhaps rather forced, with the second word beginning with /f-/ , /tʃ-/ or /ʃ-/:

/-b f-/ → [-p f-]	<b>mab fur</b>	‘wise son’
/-g tʃ-/ → [-k tʃ-]	<b>gwreg chast</b>	‘chaste wife’
/-v ʃ-/ → [-f ʃ-]	<b>liv sherp</b>	‘sharp flood’

#### 5.12.5 Unvoicing after phonemically voiceless consonants

Similarly, unvoicing occurs in a phonemically voiced initial consonant when preceded by a phonemically voiceless consonant. The commonest cases are when the first word ends in /-θ/ or /-s/:

/-s d-/ → [-s t-]	<b>mis-Du</b>	‘November’
/-s g-/ → [-s k-]	<b>mis-Genver</b>	‘January’
/-θ b-/ → [-θ p-]	<b>porth byghan</b>	‘small cove’

place-name Porthpean

These are so important as to nullify lenition of /p-, t-, k-/; e.g. **enys privedh** ‘private island’, **nos tek** ‘fine night’, **eglos koth** ‘old church’. Other final consonants causing unvoicing are /-f/, /-x/ and /-ʃ/:

/-f b-/ → [-f p-]	<b>korf borr</b>	‘fat body’
/-x d-/ → [-x t-]	<b>flogh diek</b>	‘lazy child’
/-ʃ d-/ → [-ʃ t-]	<b>lash drog</b>	‘severe stroke’

5.12.6 Unvoicing following the reflex of OldC /-nt/

The following examples show evidence of assimilation which occurred before the change /-nt/ > /-ns/. They all contain the word for ‘valley’, and are taken from Padel (1985):

SOUND-CHANGES	MODERN SPELLING	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING
/-nt b-/ → [-nt p-] > [-n p-]	Nanpean	<b>Nansbyghan</b>	small v.
/-nt b-/ → [-nt p-] > [-n p-] > [-m p-]	Namprathick	<b>Nansbrythek</b>	dappled v.
/-nt b-/ → [-nt p-] > [-n p-] > [-m p-]	Nampara	<b>Nansbara</b>	v. of bread
/-nt d-/ → [-nt t-] > [-n t-]	Nantrisack	<b>Nansdreysek</b>	brambly v.
/-nt d-/ → [-nt t-] > [-n t-]	Nantillio	<b>Nansdelyow</b>	leafy v.

In the following examples, the word for ‘valley’ is in its MidC form *nans*, which indicates supremacy of analogical remodelling over phonetic evolution. (See section 5.11). The OldC form *nant* has actually been replaced by the MidC form *nans*, presumably within the living traditional language. This justifies the use of /z/ in the revived language, as for example in the previous set of examples.

/-nz b-/ → [-ns p-]	Nanspian	<b>Nansbyghan</b>	small v.
/-nz d-/ → [-ns t-]	Nancetrisack	<b>Nansdreysek</b>	brambly v.

5.12.7 The case of words beginning with /v-/

With very few exceptions, the only words in Cornish beginning with /v-/ are those in which lenition of /b-/ or /v-/ has taken place. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that assimilations involving /v-/ do not obey the rules of sandhi as given in para. 5.12.2. In the case of *skovva* ‘sheltering place’,

/-d/ in OldC *scod* (VC.492) has been assimilated to [-v], i.e. /-d v-/ → [-v v-]. The 1st person sg. enclitic *vy* causes loss of verbal endings in /-v/, i.e. /-v v-/ → [ v-].

The following examples are worth studying:

/-v/ + vowel	→	[-v] + vowel	<b>y fynnav<u>entra</u></b>
/-v/ in absolute final	→	[-]	<b>entra a vynn<u>av</u></b>
/-v/ + /f-/	→	[-f f-]	<b>y fynnav<u>fria</u></b>
/-v/ + /v-/	→	[ v-]	<b>fria a vynn<u>av vi</u></b>

### 5.12.8 Retention of voicing before vowels

It is worth emphasizing that phonemically voiced final consonants remain voiced when followed by a vowel. This reminder is made because Nance spelled such consonants as if they are voiceless, e.g. *Cumyas tek ef a gemeras* ‘Fair leave he took’: so influenced is the average Cornish speaker by the written language that he or she tends to forget this rule, and says [..... 'tɛ:k 'ɛ:f a .....], which is incorrect. It ought to be [..... 'tɛ:g 'ɛ:v a .....]. [\[This mistake is rarely made nowadays\].](#)

### 5.12.9 Internal sandhi

The rules of sandhi given in para 5.12.2 apply also internally within words and word-compounds. For instance, in the word for ‘knowledge’, phonemically /gɔðvɔz/, the juxtaposed /ðv/ would be realized as [ðv] only in the most deliberate speech; more usually, it would be [θf], and in rapid speech, [ff], as is shown by various spellings in the texts. Other examples are /gð/ → [kθ] in LateC *ractho* ‘for him’, and /bd/ → [pt] in MidC *pup tyth* ‘every day’.

## 5.13 CONCLUSION

Modern Cornish speakers are not so naïve as to claim that the twentieth-century language is precisely the same as Cornish in some past epoch. What I claim is that, if the recommendations in this book are put into effect, then it will as accurate as can be in the light of current knowledge. The ultimate claim that one could converse with a Cornish speaker of former times cannot, of course, be proved directly. What we can do is to estimate the linguistic, or at least the phonetic, distance between the revived language and the traditional language at any epoch (George, 1983). According to a criterion I have laid down elsewhere (George, 1985), it would have been just possible for a speaker of LateC in 1800 to understand a speaker of MidC in 1425, even though there was a substantial evolution between these two dates.

I can therefore state with confidence that Revived Cornish, as exemplified by the phonological base described in this chapter, is closer to the Cornish of 1500 than were either OldC or LateC. What is more, it is closer to the Cornish of 1500 than is, say, the “Geordie” dialect to standard English. I therefore suggest that, were a Cornish speaker from Tudor times suddenly to materialize, present-day speakers would, after some initial adjustments and probably a few laughs, be chatting together without difficulty by the end of the day.

CHAPTER 6A REVISED SPELLING FOR REVIVED CORNISH

## 6.1 ORTHOGRAPHIC SYSTEMS

6.1.1 Introduction

When I began to investigate the sounds of Cornish, I had no intention of preparing a revised spelling for the language. It became increasingly clear, however, that the shortcomings of “Unified” spelling are so great that more modifications are needed than that outlined in section 3.4.

6.1.2 Principles of orthographic systems

Saunders (1979) pointed out that an orthographic system may be based on any of the following principles, or indeed on a combination of them:

- (a) phonemic, in which each phoneme is represented by a separate grapheme, and each grapheme represents a unique phoneme;
- (b) morphemic, in which graphemes refer to grammatical segments of words known as morphemes;
- (c) historical, in which the spelling applies to a pronunciation which is no longer used;
- (d) etymological, in which the spelling of each word reflects its origin.

6.1.3 The orthographies of English and Welsh

In the Middle Ages, the orthography of English was much more phonemic than it is now. In the last 500 years, the pronunciation of English has changed much more than the spelling; indeed, the latter has been almost fixed since the late eighteenth century. The result is that present English orthography is largely historical and to some extent etymological.

The view is sometimes expressed that, since English spelling is irregular (actually, it is not nearly so chaotic as some would have us believe), it does not matter that Cornish spelling is irregular. This is to ignore the vast difference between the two languages. Learners of English as a foreign language must find its orthography confusing, but in order to speak it, they have relatively easy access to hearing it spoken. Quite apart from the plethora of tapes and records, a good radio set will pick up English for 24 hours a day, from practically anywhere in the world. It is very difficult to get access to spoken Cornish, and most people still learn it from books; for this reason, the spelling must be as possible a reflection of the pronunciation.

The orthography of Welsh is often held up as a shining example of a system which is almost perfectly phonemic; for a critical examination see Humphreys (1980). No system can be perfect, but that proposed in this chapter for Cornish is thought to be as good as that for Welsh.

## 6.2 PRINCIPLES OF THE REVISED SPELLING FOR REVIVED CORNISH

### 6.2.1 Desiderata

- (a) Because most people learn Cornish from books, the orthography must be as phonemic as possible. (This requirement was not necessary for the MidC in the mystery plays, since all the players, one supposes, knew how to pronounce Cornish, and the writing was merely a “visual adjunct to aural memory” (Saunders, 1979)).
- (b) It must not, however, be so phonetic as to mask the etymology of words, and thereby their relations with Breton and Welsh cognates; i.e. it must not fall into the same trap as Manx vis-à-vis Irish and Scots Gaelic.
- (c) Although representing a phonological base dated c.1500, it should reconcile, as far as possible, the desires of different groups to pronounce Cornish in approximately MidC and LateC fashions. [\[It is impossible to do this satisfactorily without using variants \(George, 2017\)\].](#)
- (d) It should not appear so different from the Unified system as to be rejected by the users of Cornish.

The system proposed in this chapter is, like all orthographies, a compromise; but it does succeed in satisfying these desiderata. In cases doubt (when the phonology is obscure), it tends to follow the etymological spelling.

### 6.2.2 How do we know how words should be spelled ?

An orthography which is linked to the phonological development is more demanding than one which is just a rationalization of the spelling used in the Middle Ages. In many cases where a word is found only once (termed a *hapax legomenon*), all Nance had to do was to adopt the same spelling. In a phonologically-based orthography, we need to know the etymology of the word, and how its history fits into the framework as a whole. Only then can we be sure that its spelling is correct, i.e. consistent with the phonological history and the chosen principles of orthography. Clearly, there are many words whose origin and history are obscure, and their correct spelling equally so.

I have devised a formal procedure for working out the way in which native Cornish words should be spelled, and this is presented in diagram 620. It is intended for use in the compilation of a new dictionary, and cognizance is taken of the authenticity of each spelling by using a system of codes.

### 6.2.3 Diacritical marks

These are a great nuisance, especially when typing or using computers (thus in German, <ü> and <ö> are often replaced by <ue> and <oe>). People used to English spelling are not familiar with diacritical marks. They have therefore been avoided.

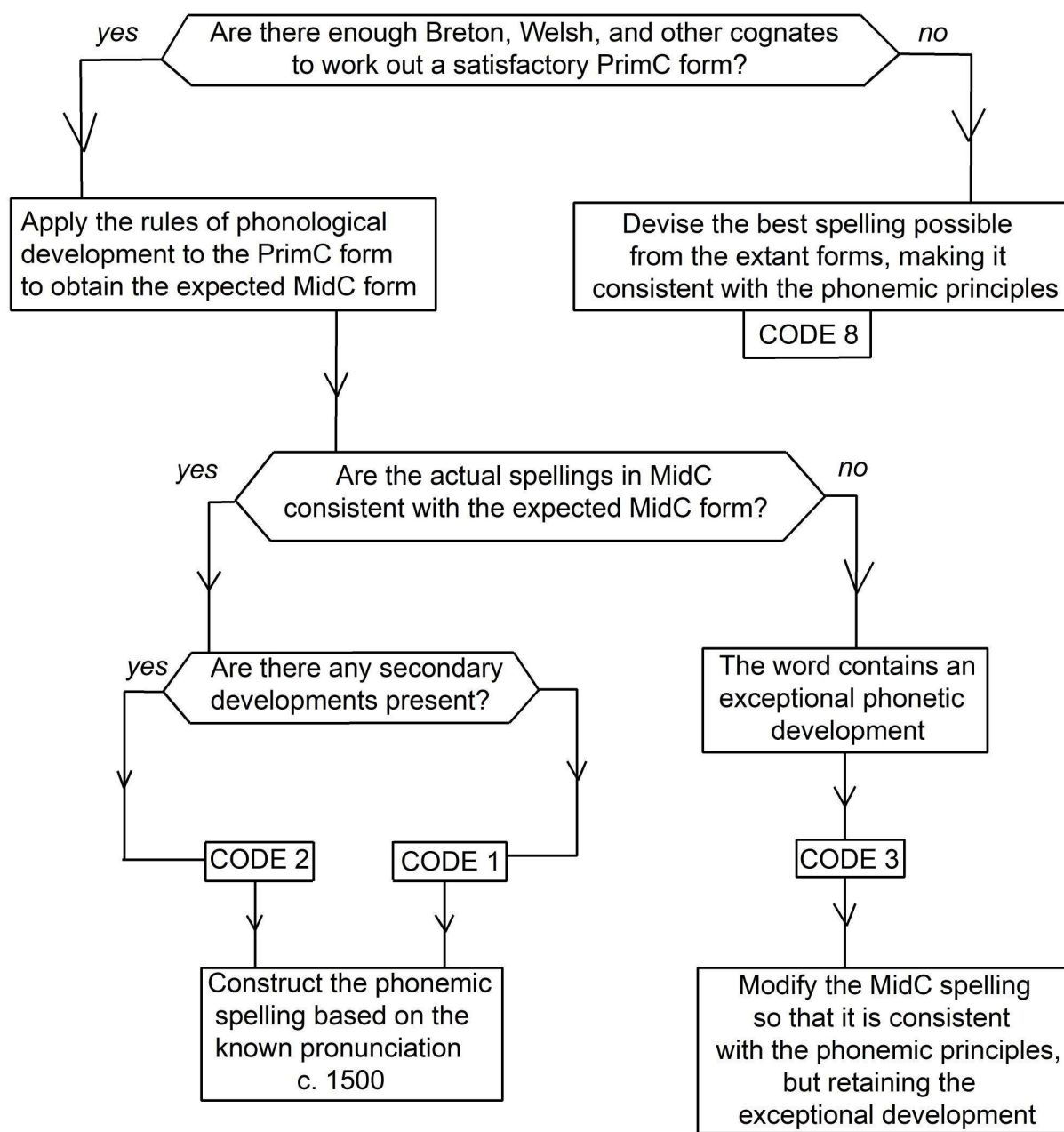
I have stuck to this principle throughout, even though it has become easier to access characters with diacritics on keyboards. Other orthographies, such as “Kernowek Standard” have made use of them. A possible application for **Kernowek Kemmyn** would be the use of an acute accent to denote syllables which bear unexpected stress (i.e. elsewhere than the penultimate), e.g. *ymá, óratori*.

### 6.2.4 Name

The revised spelling proposed in this chapter is usually referred to as the recommended phonemic spelling (although it is recognized that it is not perfectly phonemic). It may be desirable to refer to it by some shorter name, but so far, I have not devised one. The name **Kernowek Kemmyn** ‘Common Cornish’ was given by John King.

FLOW DIAGRAM FOR SPELLING NATIVE CORNISH WORDS

Fig. 620



## 6.3 SPELLING VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

### 6.3.1 Graphemes for vowels

It is desirable to have a different grapheme for each of the nine vowels in the phonological base. There are five obvious ones available, <a, e, i, o, u>; and the best fit to MidC orthography would be to assign these to /a, ɛ, ɪ, ɔ, y/ respectively.

The half-close vowels /ɪ/ and /o/ were often respresented in MidC, when long, by <ey> and <oy> respectively, but these graphemes would be unsuitable today, since English speakers would constantly misinterpret them as [the diphthongs](#) [ɛɪ] and [ɔɪ]. There are single graphemes which could be used; and <y> is the obvious choice for /ɪ/. This grapheme would also be used for the semi-vowel /j/, thus reducing the one-to-one correspondence between sounds and writing, but this choice is considered better than any other. Selecting a grapheme for /o/ is not so easy: for reasons given in para. 11.6.5, the graphemes <oe> and <u> are recommended for the long/half-long and short vowels respectively, even though this contravenes the phonemic principle. [\[<u> has not been used for short /u/ in \*Kernewek Kemmyn\*, though it may be so used in the future\].](#)

Two other graphemes are required, for /u/ and /oe/. Having eschewed diacritics, we are obliged to use digraphs. <ou> is suitable for the close rounded back vowel /u/; it is a French grapheme for words of French origin in MidC, and is used today in ModB and ModF. The mid-rounded front vowel /œ/ is more difficult; <ue> was sometimes used in MidC, but to anyone who knows German, this would suggest a centralized [y]. Other possibilities are <oe> (like the phonetic symbol [œ]), but this has already been used for [o:], and <eo> (which appears in place-names like Porthmeor). I prefer <eu>, which is used for a mid rounded front vowel in ModB, and also in ModF. The use of <eu> for /œ/ means that it cannot be used in the 2ndf person pl. impv. of verbs, not in the word for ‘two (m.)’. In these, <ew> must be used instead.

### NEAR-MINIMAL PAIRS TO ILLUSTRATE THE PHONEMIC SPELLING    Table 630 OF THE NINE VOCALIC PHONEMES

L. to R.: phonemic spelling, English meaning, Unified spelling in brackets.

<b>bis</b>	‘finger’	(bys)	<b>mus</b>	‘mad’	(mus)	<b>prout</b>	‘proud’	(prowt)
<b>mis</b>	‘month’	(mys)						
<b>bys</b>	‘world’	(bys)				<b>boes</b>	‘food’	(bos)
						<b>moes</b>	‘table’	(mos)
<b>a</b>	‘lasts’	(a)	<b>a’m</b>	‘I	a’ m	<b>bos</b>	‘to be’	(bos)
<b>bes</b>		(bes)	<b>beus</b>	have’	bus	<b>mos</b>	‘to go’	(mos)
			<b>mas</b>	‘good’	(mas)			

[bis](#) is now spelled [bys](#); [-s](#) means /-s/ in some cases and /-z/ in others.

### 6.3.2 Quantity of vowels

Unified Cornish (except in the dictionaries) gives no indication of the length of vowels, so that vowel quantity has to be learned for each individual word. This is undesirable. Common ways of showing **long vowels** are:

- (a) using a circumflex, which is undesirable for the reasons given in para. 6.2.3;
- (b) doubling the grapheme; this would work with a few vocalic phonemes, but not with nine;
- (c) using a long vowel marker, like MidC <y>; this runs the risk of confusion with diphthongs.

Fortunately, in Cornish we are not obliged to use such indicators. Instead, we can make use of the quantity rules (see para. 5.5.1). The corollary of these rules is that stressed long and half-long vowels are followed phonemically by single consonants (voiced in native words); and stressed short vowels are followed phonemically by geminate consonants (voiceless in native words), or by consonant groups.

Thus it will be possible to deduce the length of the vowel from the nature of following consonant(s). To make the system work, it will be necessary to double the consonants in certain words at present with a single consonant: e.g.

- (a) words ending in /mm, nn, ll, rr/; e.g. **penn** 'head', as in Breton, instead of pen.
- (b) English loan-words with short vowels, e.g. **skatt** 'broken', instead of scat.

### 6.3.3 Graphemes for diphthongs

The following are recommended, as being closest to the Unified spelling currently in use:

PHONEME	/ei/	/ai/	/ɔi/	/iw/	/ɪw/	/ɛw/	/aw/	/ɔw/	/œw/
GRAPHEME	<ey>	<ay>	<oy>	<iw>	<yw>	<ew>	<aw>	<ow>	<uw>
EXAMPLE				<b>liw</b>	<b>yw</b>	<b>lew</b>	<b>glaw</b>	<b>low</b>	<b>ruw</b>
				'colour'	'is'	'lion'	'rain'	'lice'	'king'

## 6.4 SPELLING CONSONANTS

- (1) Most of the consonants present no problem; the following single phonemes can be represented by single graphemes thus:

Occlusives	/p, t; b, d, g/	by	<p, t; b, d, g>
Sibilants	/s/	by	<s>
Affricates	/dʒ/	by	<j>
Spirants	/f, v; h/	by	<f, v; h>
Liquids and nasals	/m, n, l, r/	by	<m, n, l, r>

- (2) The following single phonemes can be represented by digraphs thus:

/ʃ, tʃ, θ, ð, x/ by <sh, ch, th, dh, gh>

- (3) The following geminates can be represented by doubling the grapheme for the corresponding single consonant:

/mm, nn, ll, rr/	by	<mm, nn, ll, rr>
/pp, tt; bb, dd, gg/	by	<pp, tt; bb, dd, gg>
/ff; ss/	by	<ff; ss>

- (4) The semi-vowels /j/ and /w/ may be written <y> and <w> respectively.

Note that <y> is also used for the vocalic phoneme /ɪ/.

- (5) The following call for comment:

- (a) For /k/, it seems logical to use only <k> as in ModB:  
the mutation table then becomes simpler:

STATE	PHONEMIC SPELLING	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b>k kw</b>	c, k qu
2 lenition	<b>g gw</b>	g gw
3 spirantization	<b>h hw</b>	h wh

This proposal was disliked by supporters of “traditional” spelling.

Likewise, /kk/ would be spelled <kk>; e.g. **tekka** ‘finer’ instead of *tecca*.

[SWF adopted <kk> for native words, but quite unnecessarily chose <ck> for /kk/ in loan-words].

- (b) <tj> was proposed for /ɾ/ and <dj> for /ð/, but these digraphs were withdrawn from the system when it became evident that the phonemes did not exist.

- (c) It is hardly practical to double the digraphs <th> and <gh> to represent the geminates /θθ/ and /xx/, but these phonemes are very rare. [The trigraphs <tth> and <ggh> were subsequently adopted.](#)
- (6) The full mutation table looks like this in the recommended phonemic spelling:
- |   |               |              |          |              |
|---|---------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| 1 | <b>p t k</b>  | <b>b d g</b> | <b>m</b> | <b>g gw</b>  |
| 2 | <b>b d g</b>  | <b>v dh</b>  | <b>v</b> | <b>w w</b>   |
| 3 | <b>f th h</b> |              |          |              |
| 4 |               | <b>p t k</b> |          |              |
| 5 |               | <b>f t h</b> | <b>f</b> | <b>hw hw</b> |

## 6.5 PHONETIC AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The revised orthography so far proposed is almost entirely phonemic. In order to take account of the commonest realization, and to reduce the changes from the spelling at present in use, the following are suggested for final consonants in unstressed syllables:

PHONEME	REALIZATION IN ABSOLUTE FINAL	SPELLING
/b, d, g/	[p, t, k]	<p, t, k>
/dʒ/	[tʃ]	<ch>

Stressed final syllables would, however, retain the phonemic spelling; e.g. *teg* rather than *tek* for 'fair'. It is easier for learners to unvoice the /-g/ in absolute final than it is for them to realize <k> as [g] before a word beginning with a vowel. Any stressed monosyllables ending in <p, t, k> [\[e.g. \*duk\* 'duke'\]](#) would be immediately identifiable as loan-words at variance with the original quantity rules.

A difficulty inherent in the Unified spelling, which would not be eliminated in the revision, is that groups of words ending in <s> would be spelled and pronounced differently in compounds:

<b>fos</b>	'wall'	[ˈfɔːʃ]	<b>fosow</b>	'walls'	[ˈfɔːʃɔʊ]
<b>boghes</b>	'a little'	[ˈbɒːxɛz]	<b>boghodjek</b>	'poor'	[bɒˈhɔːzɛk] [bɒˈhɔːdʒɛk]
<b>gras</b>	'grace'	[ˈgrɑːs]	<b>grassys</b>	'graces'	[ˈgrassɪs]

The alternative would be to mark the simplex in some way, but that would mean using different graphemes for the same sound. [This specific case has been solved by further research]. Such is the very nature of a living language. On the other hand, we can use <mm, nn, ll, rr> for final unstressed /mm, nn, ll, rr/ with little danger that they be mispronounced; this has the great advantage that compounds are spelled and pronounced correctly (see section 18.1). It was argued by the proponents of SWF that this spelling would cause learners to pronounce these sounds as geminate; simple application of penultimate stress avoids this.

It is suggested that internal sandhi (para. 5.12.9) be recognized in the orthography only in exceptional cases.

An example of the new orthography is given in fig. 650. Deviations from the phonemic principle are listed in fig. 652.

#### EXAMPLES OF THE RECOMMENDED PHONEMIC SPELLING

Fig. 650

##### 1. The Lord's Prayer

**PADER AGAN ARLUDH**

*Agan Tas ni, eus yn nev, bennigys re bo dha Hanow, re dheffo dha Wlaskor, Dha vodh re bo gwrys, y'n nor kepar hag y'n nev. Ro dhin ni hedhyw agan bara pub dydh oll; Ha gav dhin agan kammwith, Kepar dell aven nini dhe'n re na eus ow kammwul er agan pynn ni; Ha na wra agan gorra yn temtashon, Mes delyrv ni diworth drog. Rag dhis edji yw an wlaskor, ha'n gallos, ha'n gordhyans, Bys vykken ha bynari. Amen.*

##### 2. "Bro Goth"

*Bro goth agan Tasow, dha flegthes a'th kar,  
Gwlas ker an Howlsedhes, pan vro yw dha bar?  
War oll an norvys, 'th on ni skullys a-les,  
Mes agan kerentja yw dhis.*

*Kernow! Kernow! Y keryn Kernow,  
An mor hedra vo yn fos dhis a-dro,  
'Th on "Onan hag oll" rag Kernow.*

##### 3. from "John of Chyannor"

*Y'n termyn eus passys, yth edja trygys yn Synt Leven  
den ha benyn, yn tyller kriys Tji an Hordh.*

*Ha'n hwel a goedhas skant; hag yn-medh an den dhe'n wreg:  
"My a vynn mos dhe hwiles hwel dhe wul,  
ha hwi a yll dendil agas bywnans omma."*

*Kumyas teg ev a gemmeras, ha pell dhe est ev a dravalys,  
ha wor'tiwedh ev a wrug dos dhe dji tiek,  
hag a wrug hwiles ena hwel dhe wul.*

*“Pana hwel a yllysta gul?” yn-medh an tiek. “Pub hwel oll”  
yn-medh Jowann: “my a yll aras tir ha gonis has; treghi gora,  
ha mydji ha fusta ys; knyvyas davas, godra bugh ha ruttya margh.”  
“A vynn'tedji ow servya omma blydhen?” yn-medh an tiek.  
“Ya”, yn-medh Jowann: “mes py pegans a vynnnowgh hwi ri dhymm?”  
Ena i a vargenyas rag tri feuns an vlydhen gober.*

This is a draft of what later became *Kernewek Kemmyn*. As a result of on-going research, the spelling has been improved. Minor differences from the standard in GM20 are shown in orange; errors are in red.

#### DEVIATIONS FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PHONEMIC SPELLING Fig. 652

	DEVIATION	REASON	COMMENT
1.	<y> is used for both /ɪ/ and /j/	Lack of suitable alternatives	This should not cause too much difficulty
2.	<u> is used for both /y/ and <o> when short  <o> is represented by <oe> when long and half-long and <u> when short	A compromise solution: see para. 11.6.5  Lack of a suitable single grapheme for /o/	This works because /y/ is never short  Satisfactory, since the realizations when long/half-long and short are very different
3.	<gh> is used for both /x/ and /xx/  <th> is used for both /θ/ and /θθ/	To avoid the inconvenience of doubling digraphs	The phonemes /xx/ and /θθ/ are rare
4.	Final unstressed /b, d, g, ɟ/ are written <p, t, k, ch>	To correspond more closely with all existing spellings	This is a phonetic rather than a phonemic spelling

Note: in due course, different solutions were found for (2) and (3).

## 6.6 PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

It is envisaged that the change-over to a revised orthography would take place like the change in Sweden in 1968 from driving on the left to driving on the right. Assuming that the recommendations in this book are accepted by the Cornish Language Board [they were so accepted with every member in favour except one], a period of discussion will ensue, so that the minutiae of the orthography may be critically examined. Some Cornish speakers will need to be convinced that the superiority of the phonemic system over the Unified system is so great that it warrants the abandonment of the latter. Then, on a particular day, to be advertised years in advance, Nance's "Unified Cornish" would cease to be the "official" orthography of the written language, and would be replaced by the system proposed in this book, or one very similar to it.

[In practice, the change-over was not so abrupt. Most teachers of Cornish adopted **Kernewek Kemmyn** enthusiastically and began to teach it. A majority of Cornish speakers (at one time estimated at 80%) saw the advantages of **Kernewek Kemmyn**, and began to use it. A minority continued to use Unified Cornish, and another minority used Late Cornish as a base.]

It goes without saying that the change would need to be accompanied by the publication of new text-books and other teaching apparatus. This is not so large a task as it might appear, because most publications have to be reprinted every few years anyway, and new editions could be prepared for the change-over.

A new dictionary is another matter; for some years now, Cornish speakers have been looking forward to the publication of such a work, which would include in one volume both the words taken from traditional Cornish and the new words hitherto promulgated in supplements. The opportunity should be taken to include the pronunciation and simple etymology of each word. I already have the kernel of such a dictionary on a computer disc-file. Use could be made of the software being developed for the Welsh and English dictionaries. A possible layout for such a dictionary is given in fig. 660. [After the publication of a **Gerlyver Servadow** in 1990, the first edition of the new dictionary, **Gerlyver Meur**, appeared in 1993, to be followed by the second edition in 2009 and the third in 2020]..

## EXAMPLE OF A PORTION OF A NEW CORNISH-ENGLISH DICTIONARY

Fig. 660

## E

<f> grapheme used to represent /f/; occurs in all positions, but medially and finally is restricted to loan-words, apart from exceptional cases.

faborden [fa'bo:ɾɛn] (M: RD.2359) MN, bass (Mus.) -yon (I) [MidE *faburden* < F *faux bourdon* 'drone']

fagel [fa'gɛl] (D "fackel") fn, flame, inflammation, torch faglow [fa'glɔu] (I) [FAGL<S : W fflag] U *fakel* follows the dialect, which is inconsistent with the expected MidC \**fagel*.

[Williams (2016) offers a possible reason for this inconsistency.]

(fagl) [BLat \**fac'la* < CLat *facula*]

faglenn [fa'glɛn] (I) fn, torch -ow (I) [FAGL + -ENN : W *ffaglenn*]

fagla [fa'gla] (C) VN, to flame, inflame [FAGL + -A(1) : W *ffaglu*] U *fakly* shows incorrect VN ending, since W -*u* corresponds to C -*a*, not -*y*.

fagos [fa'gɔs] (C) CN, faggots fagotjenn [fa'gɔtɛn] (I) [MidE *fagots* < OldF *fagots*] It is necessary to assume here that the MidE pl. would have been treated as a CN in MidC.

falgh [fa'lx] (C) fn, scythe filghyer (q.v.) [Brit \**falcio*- OR CLat *falcem* {M} : B *falc'h*]

falghas [fa'lfas] (c) VN, to scythe [FALGH + -AS(2) : B *falc'hat*]

[One sees here in embryonic form the layout used in all three editions of *Gerlyver Meur* (1993, 2009, 2020).]

## Part B      Phonemes

### CHAPTER 10      VOWELS

#### 10.1    GENERAL REMARKS

It is no use pretending that the phonological system of Cornish is simple. It is not. It is extremely complex. If it were simple, then Nance and Smith would have got it right long ago. Its complexity means that some points will never be resolved in the absence of traditional speakers. That is not so worrying as it might appear, when one remembers that experts cannot agree about the phonological systems of major languages with plenty of traditional speakers.

The complexity means also that I have had to go into some arguments in the following chapters in great detail. Similar complex arguments have already been presented in sections 5.11 and 5.12. I ask the reader not to be put off by the difficulty in comprehending these arguments. I am determined to make Cornish phonology as accurate as possible. For those who wish to modify my recommended phonemic orthography, let them remember that the phonological system is an edifice like a complex organic molecule. If one disturbs one small constituent part, it may have repercussions throughout the whole system. *Nevertheless, as a result of continued research, modifications have been made and will be continued to be made to **Kernewek Kemmyn**, as it is now known. In contrast, those in charge of SWF currently envisage no modifications to it, even when a feature is shown to be incorrect.*

#### 10.2    NOTES TO ACCOMPANY DESCRIPTIONS OF EACH PHONEME

##### 10.2.1      Introduction

Part B consists of a description of each phoneme in the phonological base outlined in Chapter 5, under the following heading:

##### 10.2.2      Recommended pronunciation

This is given in the phonetic symbols of the I.P.A., and also, wherever possible, in terms of known words in another language. This language cannot always be English, since there are sounds in Cornish which do not exist in English.

##### 10.2.3      Sources

- The principal sources of the phoneme are given, these being usually
- (1) Proto-Brythonic      }      native
  - (2) Latin                      }      words
  - (3) Loan-words, mainly from Middle English.

If the phoneme has a restricted distribution, this is noted.

#### 10.2.4      Developments in LateC

These are included for general interest, and as a series of notes to Chapter 4.

#### 10.2.5      Significant spellings in MidC

These have been taken from the orthographic frequency tables in my thesis (George, 1984). By “significant” is meant a spelling which accounts for at least 10% of the total; though this criterion is here used as a guideline, rather than a strict rule.

#### 10.2.6      Recommended phonemic spelling

Except where the phonemic principle is breached (see fig. 652), there is only one spelling recommended for each phoneme.

#### 10.2.7      Unified spelling

The Unified spelling has been taken from Nance's Cornish English Dictionary (1955).

#### 10.2.8      Examples

These are given with the sources, or in separate tables which are described in section 10.3.

### 10.3 NOTES TO ACCOMPANY THE TABLES OF EXAMPLES

#### 10.3.1 Introduction

Most of the examples in the tables have been taken from a data-base of some 1250 words, compiled by the author and stored on a computer disc-file; this could form the kernel of a new dictionary. The columns in the tables are usually the following:

#### 10.3.2 Etymological code

Preceding the Cornish word is a code to indicate its source:

- 1 Proto-Brythonic (i.e. Celtic root-stock)
- 2 Latin (*actually* the vulgar Latin spoken in Roman Britain)
- 3 Later borrowings, almost entirely from English and French
- D Disputed
- U Unknown

#### 10.3.3 Cornish word in recommended phonemic spelling

#### 10.3.4 English meaning

This is intended more for identification of the word than for precise semantic definition.

#### 10.3.5 Modern Breton and Modern Welsh

These words are the phonological cognates of the Cornish words; they may have a somewhat different meaning. The Breton words have been taken from Hemon's *Dictionnaire Breton-Français* and are therefore spelled using the *zedachek* system. The Welsh words have been taken mainly from Davies' *Y Geiriadur Mawr*.

A word preceded by + is no longer current, but existed in an earlier phase of the language. A word enclosed in brackets contains a phonological feature which is contrary to the normal phonetic evolution of the language.

#### 10.3.6 Cornish word in Unified spelling

The Unified spelling devised by Nance is included for the purposes of comparison. *[It must be remembered that in 1986 almost all Cornish speakers used Unified Cornish]*. In many cases its deficiencies are self-evident, and in others they are indicated by code letters.

## CHAPTER 11      VOWELS

### 11.1      VOCALIC PHONEME /i/

#### 11.1.1      Recommended pronunciation

When long, [i:], as ee in English beet, or preferably even closer, like French /i/; when half-long and short, the same sound appropriately reduced in duration.

#### 11.1.2      Principal sources

- PrimC /i/ < Late British ī <
- 1)      British ī
  - 2)      Latin ī
  - 3)      MidE /i/ and /i:/

#### 11.1.3      Developments in LateC

In stressed open monosyllables, [-i:] took part in the English Great Vowel Shift, and changed as follows:

[-i:]	>	[-ɪ]	>	[-əɪ]
		c.1525		c.1625

In the case of the reflex of MidC *chy* ‘house’, the development went one stage further, to [-ʌɪ], as is shown by the spelling *choy*. [\[The details here are questionable\]](#).

When unstressed, there was a tendency for the sound to become lowered, to [-ɪ] or even further.

Otherwise, the sound remained stable. The retention of [i:] in loan-words containing MidE /i:/ meant that a difference arose between the pronunciation of these words in English and in Cornish; in English the vowel became a diphthong, but in Cornish it did not. Examples from LateC are *feen* for English *fine*, and more remarkably, *Chreest* for English *Christ*. This shows that, if we borrow from English a word, unrecorded in Cornish, containing the reflex of MidE /i:/, it would be best to pronounce it with the original [i:] rather than the [aɪ] which this has become in ModE: e.g. *ris* ‘rice’, pronounced ['ri:s] to rhyme with fleece, not ['rais] to rhyme with price. Compare French *riz* ['riz], in which there has been no change of vowel sound.

#### 11.1.4      Significant spellings in MidC

<y> finally, otherwise both <y> and <i>.

## EXAMPLES OF /i/

Table 1110

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
<u>Stressed closed monosyllables</u>					
1	<b>gwir</b>	true	<i>gwir</i>	<i>gwir</i>	gwyr
1	<b>kig</b>	meat	<i>kig</i>	<i>cig</i>	kyk
3	<b>Krist</b>	Christ	<i>Krist</i>	<i>Crist</i>	Cryst
2	<b>mil</b>	thousand	<i>mil</i>	<i>mil</i>	myl
1	<b>mis</b>	month	<i>mis</i>	<i>mis</i>	mys
<u>Stressed open monosyllables</u>					
1	<b>bri</b>	esteem	<i>bri</i>	<i>bri</i>	bry
1	<b>hwi</b>	you (pl.)	<i>c'hwi</i>	<i>chi</i>	why
1	<b>ki</b>	dog	<i>ki</i>	<i>ci</i>	ky
3	<b>kri</b>	cry	<i>kri</i>	<i>cri</i>	cry
1	<b>tri</b>	three (m.)	<i>tri</i>	<i>tri</i>	try
<u>Stressed in polysyllables before a consonant</u>					
1	<b>hireth</b>	longing	<i>hiraezh</i>	<i>hiraeth</i>	hyreth
1	<b>isel</b>	low	<i>izel</i>	<i>isel</i>	ysel
2	<b>kibell</b>	tub	<i>kibell</i>	<i>cibell</i>	kybel
<u>Stressed in polysyllables before a vowel</u>					
1	<b>dial</b>	vengeance	<i>dial</i>	<i>dial</i>	dyal
1	<b>diek</b>	lazy	<i>diek</i>	<i>diog</i>	dyek
2	<b>pries</b>	spouse	<i>pried</i>	<i>priod</i>	pryas
<u>Unstressed in final closed syllables</u>					
2	<b>kegin</b>	kitchen	<i>kegin</i>	<i>cegin</i>	kegyn
1	<b>levrith</b>	sweet milk	<i>livrizh</i>	<i>llefrith</i>	levryth
2	<b>melin</b>	mill	<i>milin</i>	<i>melin</i>	melyn
<u>Unstressed in final open syllables</u>					
1	<b>(dhedhi)</b>	to her	<i>(dezhi)</i>	<i>(iddi)</i>	dhedhy
1	<b>dybri</b>	to eat	<i>debriñ</i>	-----	dybry
3	<b>mersi</b>	mercy	<i>mersi</i>	-----	mercy
<u>Pre-tonic</u>					
1	<b>lwerdhon</b>	Ireland	<i>(lwerzhon)</i>	<i>lwerddon</i>	Ywerdhon

11.1.5      Recommended phonemic spelling      <i>

11.1.6      Unified spelling      <y>      (Nance did not use <i> at all).

11.1.7      Examples      See table 1110

11.2      VOCALIC PHONEME /ɪ/

11.2.1      Recommended pronunciation

Whe snort, as i in English bit, i.e. [ɪ]; when half-long and long, the same sound extended. The sound lies between [i] and [ɛ].

11.2.2      Principal sources

PrimC /ɪ/ < 1) Proto-Brythonic ĭ;      2) Latin ĭ  
3)      MidE /i/

11.2.3      Development in LateC

The vowel was lowere, and fused with the reflex of MidC /ɛ/ c. 1650. When stressed finally, it became [i:]. [\[See also George \(2018\)\]](#).

11.2.4      Significant spellings in MidC      <i, y, ey (when long), e>

11.2.5      Recommended phonemic spelling      <y>

11.2.6      Unified spelling

Nance and Smith did not appreciate the existence of this phoneme; they assigned some its words (labelled A in table 1120) to their <y>, and others (labelled B) to their <e>.

11.2.7      Examples      See table 1120

## EXAMPLES OF /ɪ/

Table 1120

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING	
<u>Stressed and long in closed monosyllables</u>						
1	<b>bys</b>	world	<i>bed</i>	<i>byd</i>	bys	A
1	<b>glyb</b>	wet	<i>gleb</i>	<i>gwlyb</i>	glyp	A
1	<b>lys</b>	court	<i>lez</i>	<i>llys</i>	lys	A
1	<b>prys</b>	time	<i>pred</i>	<i>pryd</i>	prys	A
<u>Stressed and short in closed monosyllables</u>						
1	<b>gwynn</b>	white	<i>gwenn</i>	<i>gwyn</i>	gwyn	A
1	<b>hyns</b>	way	<i>hent</i>	<i>hynt</i>	hens	B
1	<b>kylgh</b>	circle	<i>kelc'h</i>	<i>cylch</i>	kelgh	B
1	<b>kyns</b>	before	<i>kent</i>	<i>cynt</i>	kens	B
1	<b>tynn</b>	tight	<i>tenn</i>	<i>tyn</i>	tyn	A
<u>Stressed and long in open monosyllables</u>						
1	<b>my</b>	I	<i>me</i>	<i>(mi)</i>	my	A
1	<b>ty</b>	thou	<i>tw</i>	<i>(ti)</i>	ty	A
<u>Stressed and half-long in polysyllables</u>						
1	<b>byghan</b>	small	<i>bihan</i>	-----	byghan	A
1	<b>hwydja</b>	to vomit	<i>c'hwedañ</i>	<i>chwŷd-</i>	wheja	B
2	<b>lyver</b>	book	<i>levr</i>	<i>llyfr</i>	lyver	A
<u>Stressed and short in polysyllables</u>						
1	<b>dybri</b>	to eat	<i>debriñ</i>	-----	dybry	A
D	<b>dyski</b>	to learn	<i>deskiñ</i>	<i>dysgu</i>	dysky	A
1	<b>mynnes</b>	to wish	<i>mennout</i>	<i>(mynnu)</i>	mynnes	A
<u>Unstressed in monosyllables</u>						
1	<b>hy</b>	her	<i>he</i>	<i>(ei)</i>	hy	A
1	<b>ny</b>	(neg. particle)	<i>ne</i>	<i>(ni)</i>	ny	A
1	<b>y</b>	his	<i>e</i>	<i>(ei)</i>	y	A
<u>Unstressed in final closed syllables</u>						
1	<b>kelynn</b>	holly	<i>kelenn</i>	<i>celyn</i>	kelyn	A
1	<b>menydh</b>	mountain	<i>menez</i>	<i>mynydd</i>	meneth	B
1	<b>-ys</b>	(past ptcpl.)	<i>-et</i>	-----	-ys	A

### 11.3 VOCALIC PHONEME /ɛ/

#### 11.3.1 Recommended pronunciation

When short, as e in English bet, i.e. [ɛ]; when half-long and long, a closer sound [e̞] extended appropriately in duration.

#### 11.3.2 Principal sources and distribution

- (a) PrimC /ɛ/, mainly from: 1) Proto-Brythonic e; 2) Latin e.
- (b) PrimC /e/ and /ə/, the results of final *i*-affection in Proto-Brythonic.
- (c) PrimC /ɔ/ and /u/, which gave /ə/ > /ɛ/.
- (d) PrimC /ω/, in unstressed final closed syllables.
- (e) OldF e, OldE æ; MidE /ɛ/ and /ɛː/.
- (f) OldC /ai/, the reflex of which became a monophthong, and early loan-words containing /ai/.

/ɛ/ does not normally occur unstressed finally; the reflex of OldC /ɛ/ when unstressed finally was lowered to /a/, and is spelled <a>.

#### 11.3.3 Developments in LateC

- (a) When long, it became closer, approximately [eː], and there was a tendency for it to break to [eə].
- (b) In unstressed final closed syllables, /ɛ/ > /a/ c. 1550; this sound-change is very clear: e.g. the adjectival ending *-ek* became *-ack*.
- (c) In pre-tonic position, /ɛ/ > /ə/ c. 1600

#### 11.3.4 Significant spellings in MidC

Almost exclusively <e>; spellings in <y> in such words as *tyrmyn* and *gylwys* (alongside *termyn* and *gelwys*) represent a restricted secondary affection, which is not recognized in the recommended phonological base.

#### 11.3.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <e>

## EXAMPLES OF /ɛ/ WHEN STRESSED AND LONG

Table 1130

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
<u>PrimC /ɛ/</u> ≡ ModB <e>, ModW <e>					
1	<b>bedh</b>	grave	<i>bez</i>	<i>bedd</i>	beth
1	<b>deg</b>	ten	<i>deg</i>	<i>deg</i>	dek
1	<b>hen-</b>	old	<i>hen-</i>	<i>hen</i>	hen
1	<b>hwegh</b>	six	<i>c'hwec'h</i>	<i>chwech</i>	whegh
1	<b>lev</b>	voice	<i>leñv</i>	<i>llef</i>	lef
1	<b>medh</b>	mead	<i>mez</i>	<i>medd</i>	meth
1	<b>nev</b>	heaven	<i>neñv</i>	<i>nef</i>	nef
2	<b>pleth</b>	plait	<i>plezh</i>	<i>pleth</i>	pleth

PrimC /e/ > /ɛ/ ≡ ModB <e>, ModW <ai> in monosyllables,  
<ei> in polysyllables

1	<b>begh</b>	burdenl	<i>bec'h</i>	<i>baich</i>	begh
2	<b>breggh</b>	arm	<i>brec'h</i>	<i>braich</i>	breggh
1	<b>ger</b>	word	<i>ger</i>	<i>gair</i>	ger
1	<b>gwreg</b>	wife	<i>gwreg</i>	<i>gwraig</i>	gwrek
1	<b>res</b>	need	<i>red</i>	<i>rhaid</i>	res
1	<b>yeth</b>	language	<i>yez</i>	<i>iaith</i>	yeth

OldC /ai/ > /ɛ/ ≡ ModB <ae>, ModW <ae>

1	<b>dren</b>	thorns	<i>draen</i>	<i>draen</i>	dren
1	<b>freth</b>	fluent	<i>fraezh</i>	<i>ffraeth</i>	freth
1	<b>hel</b>	generous	<i>hael</i>	<i>hael</i>	hel
D	<b>leth</b>	milk	<i>laezh</i>	<i>llaeth</i>	leth
1	<b>mes</b>	open field	<i>maez</i>	<i>maes</i>	mes
3	<b>pe</b>	pay	<i>pae</i>	-----	pe
3	<b>plen</b>	plain	<i>plaen</i>	<i>plaen</i>	plen
2	<b>treth</b>	beach	<i>traezh</i>	<i>traeth</i>	treth

## FURTHER EXAMPLES OF /ɛ/

Table 1131

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING	
<u>PrimC /ə/ &gt; /ɛ/</u> ≡ ModB <e>, ModW <y>						
1	<b>den</b>	man	<i>den</i>	<i>dyn</i>	den	
1	<b>kern</b>	horns	<i>kern</i>	<i>kyrn</i>	kern	
1	<b>mels</b>	sheep (pl.)	<i>meot</i>	<i>myllt</i>	mels	
<u>PrimC /ɔ/ and /u/ &gt; /ə/ &gt; /ɛ/</u> ≡ ModB <o>, ModW <e> or <y>						
1	<b>gelvin</b>	beak	<i>+golbin</i>	<i>gylfin</i>	gelvyn	
1	<b>(gweli)</b>	bed	<i>gwele</i>	<i>gwely</i>	gwely	
1	<b>gwerin</b>	folk	<i>gwerin</i>	<i>gwerin</i>	gweryn	
2	<b>kegin</b>	kitchen	<i>kegin</i>	<i>cegin</i>	kegyn	
1	<b>kelynn</b>	holly	<i>kelenn</i>	<i>celyn</i>	kelyn	
2	<b>melin</b>	mill	<i>milin</i>	<i>melin</i>	melyn	
1	<b>menydh</b>	mountain	<i>menez</i>	<i>mynydd</i>	meneth	
<u>PrimC /ω/ &gt; /ɛ/ when unstressed</u> ≡ ModB <e>, ModW <o>						
2	<b>alter</b>	altar	<i>aoter</i>	<i>allor</i>	alter	
1	<b>ebel</b>	colt	<i>(ebeul)</i>	<i>ebol</i>	ebol	O
1	<b>-ek</b>	(adj. ending)	<i>-eg</i>	<i>-og</i>	-ek, -ak	L
2	<b>estren</b>	stranger	<i>estren</i>	<i>estron</i>	estren	
1	<b>lavrek</b>	trousers	<i>lavreg</i>	<i>llafrog</i>	lavrak	L
1	<b>marghek</b>	rider	<i>marc'heg</i>	<i>marchog</i>	marghak	L
1	<b>nebes</b>	few	<i>(nebeud)</i>	<i>+nebawd</i>	nebes	
2	<b>pries</b>	spouse	<i>pried</i>	<i>priod</i>	pryas	L
1	<b>(puskes)</b>	fishes	<i>pesked</i>	<i>pyscod</i>	puskes	
1	<b>tavel</b>	dock	<i>(teol)</i>	<i>tafol</i>	tavol	O
1	<b>taves</b>	tongue	<i>(teod)</i>	<i>tafod</i>	tavas	L
1	<b>tiek</b>	farmer	<i>tieg</i>	-----	tyak	L

### 11.3.6 Unified spelling

In most cases, Nance used <e>, but in some words where /ɛ/ occurs in final unstressed closed syllables, he failed to up-date from OldC (examples marked O in table 1131); more often, he failed to back-date from LateC, using <a> instead of <e>. [Williams did the same.] Some examples are marked L in table 1131: others are:

UNIFIED SPELLING	dynar	ugans	gwynsak
PHONEMIC SPELLING	<b>diner</b>	<b>ugens</b>	<b>gwyn<b>t</b>jek</b>
ENGLISH MEANING	penny	twenty	windy

### 11.3.7 Examples

In the cases of /i/ and /ɪ/, there was a need to give a wide range of examples of phonetic environments, to illustrate the differences between the two, differences which were not recognized by Nance. This is not the case with /ɛ/; most of the occurrences are self-evident, with the exceptions just dealt with. The tables of examples (1130 and 1131) therefore concentrate on illustrating the correspondences with Breton and with Welsh, for the different sources of /ɛ/.

## 11.4 VOCALIC PHONEME /a/

### 11.4.1 Recommended pronunciation

[a], which is the sound heard in the English dialect of **east** Cornwall, in words like *bat*. The vowel sound used in west Cornwall, and in older speakers of RP is [æ], which is slightly less open. When the vowel is half-long and long, the same sound should be extended appropriately in duration; see also §11.4.8 below.

### 11.4.2 Principal sources

- (a) PrimC /a/, from: 1) [Proto-Brythonic a](#); 2) Latin *a*.
- (b) OldE *a*; MidE /a/ and /a:/, from both OldE *a* and OldF *a*.
- (c) OldC /ɛ/ and MidE /ə/ in final unstressed open syllables.

### 11.4.3 Development in LateC

In pre-tonic position, [a] was reduced to [ə] c.1625, and was lost altogether c.1675.

Otherwise, /a/ remained generally stable, as indicated by Lhuyd. He used <a> consistently, not only for the reflex of PrimC /a/ when long in monosyllables, but also for the reflexes of PrimB /a/ and PrimW /a/ in similar circumstances. We may be sure that the latter were [a:] in 1700, as they are now: the identical spellings suggest strongly that the sound in LateC was also [a:]. Examples from Lhuyd are:

WELSH	CORNISH	BRETON	
<i>Tâd</i>	<i>Tâz</i>	<i>Tat</i>	'father'
<i>Tân</i>	<i>Tân</i>	<i>Tân</i>	'fire'
<i>Pâs</i>	<i>Pâz</i>	<i>Pâs</i>	'cough'

Now [a:] hardly existed in the standard English of 1700; MidE /a:/ had changed to [ɛ:] in the Great Vowel Shift, taking its commonest grapheme <a-e> with it. Thus there was no adequate grapheme to represent LateC /a:/. Most of the time it was still spelled <a-e>, but it is interesting to note two spelling-types which attempted to represent the more open [a:]. These are:

- (a) <aa-e> and <aa>, which are found in Wella Kerew's translations of parts of Scripture; e.g. *haaze* 'seed', *maab* 'son';
- (b) <ah>, which was used for final /-a/, e.g. *dah* 'good' in Jenkins' second poem; cf. the English exclamation ah, one of the few words in ModE to have [-a:].

In the word *bras* 'big', [a:] > [ɔ:] c. 1575, as is shown by a number of spellings like *brause*. The comparative, MidC *brassa* 'bigger', became *braôza* by analogy. [\[It is possible that \*bro\*s is a separate word, derived from assibilation of English \*broad\*\].](#)

In English, [wa] > [wɔ] c. 1650 (though not in all words), e.g. war, swan. There is some evidence that this change also occurred in Cornish at this date. This change does not apply to the recommended pronunciation of Revived Cornish; i.e. the Cornish word **war** 'on' is NOT pronounced like the English word war; a is pronounced identically in its two occurrences in the word **war-barth** 'together'. In Cornish, **war** and **par** are rhymes.

#### 11.4.4 Significant spellings in MidC

The usual spelling was <a>, but <ay> was often used for [a:].

In the Ordinalia, there are eight stanzas in which words spelled with <-a> contrasted with words spelled in <-e>. The example of PC..431-442 is given here.

EXAMPLE OF [-ə] [should be -ε] CONTRASTING WITH [-a] IN THE ORDINALIA

Passio Christi, lines 431 to 442

PILATUS

*ihesu pendra leuerta  
an fleghys vs ow cane  
yowynkes menogh a wra  
yn yowynkneth mur notye*

IHC

*yn lyfryow scryfys yma  
bos collenwys lowene  
a ganow an fleghys da  
han re mvnys ow tene*

PILATUS

*ny amont travyth hemma  
cayphas ny yllyn spedye  
yma ol tus an bys ma  
yn certan worth y sywe*

PILATE

Jesus, what dost thou say  
of the children who are singing?  
The young often do  
in youth remark much.

JESUS

In the Scriptures it is written  
that joy is fulfilled  
out of the mouths of good children  
and little sucklings.

PILATE

This avails nothing,  
Caiaphas, we cannot succeed:  
all the people of this world are  
certainly following Him.

The other cases are OM..641-647, 1165-72, 2179-86; PC.1977-84, 2423-30, 2439-46.

Words in groups A1 and A2 (in table 1141) rhymed with those in A0, in [-a]. Because the demonstratives *-ma* and *-na* belong here, it is suggested that these suffixes were often stressed, not only at the end of a line of poetry, but whenever there was a need to emphasize ‘this’ or ‘that’. This is in disagreement with Breton (and with Wella Brown’s book [the first edition of *Grammar of Modern Cornish*]), but Breton *-mañ* and *-se* are sufficiently different to be distinguished even when unstressed; *-ma* and *-na* are not.

No stanzas of the type described above are found in *Bewnans Meriasek*. In this work, the spelling <-a> was the usual one for all groups in table 1141 (except those in E0, which were always [-ε]). This shows that unstressed /-ε/ had fallen together with unstressed /a/ c.1475. Later still, the grapheme <-ah> was sometimes used, which suggests that the sound was [-a] rather than [-ə].

GROUPS OF VISUALLY RHYMING WORDS  
SPELLED <-a> AND <-e> IN THE ORDINALIA

Table 1141  
 (MidC spelling)

- A0 Monosyllables ending in stressed [-a] e.g. *a wra* 'does'  
*a* 'goes'
- A1 Words containing the reflex of PrimC /-aμ/ ≡ ModB <-añ>
- (a) the demonstrative suffixes *ma* and *na*, and their compounds  
*henna*, *hemma*, *honna*, *homma*, *ena*, *omma*, *alemma*, *alena*.
  - (b) superlatives, e.g. *gwella* 'best', *kerra* 'dearest'; and by analogy,  
 comparatives, e.g. *pella* 'further'.
- A2 Individual words, e.g. *bara* 'bread'
- E0 Monosyllables ending in stressed [-ε] e.g. *le* 'place'  
*tre* 'home'
- E1 Words containing the reflex of OldC /-ε/ ≡ ModB <-e> [-e]
- (a) the 3 sg. ending of the impf. and plupf. of verbs,  
 e.g. *a vye* 'would be', *kemerse* 'would take':
  - (b) the 3 pl. of pronominal prepositions, e.g. *thethe* 'to them',  
*ganse* 'with them', *anethe* 'from them'; (In LateC, this ending was  
 replaced by *-ans*, taken by analogy from verbs)
  - (c) individual words, e.g. *arte* 'again', *woge* 'after'.
- E2 Words containing the reflex of MidE /e/ ≡ ModE <y> ≡ ModF <é>
- |      |      |                |               |              |                   |
|------|------|----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|
| e.g. | MidC | <i>cherite</i> | <i>dynyte</i> | <i>loute</i> | <i>pryue pyte</i> |
|      | ModE | charity        | dignity       | loyalty      | privy pity        |
|      | ModF | charité        | dignité       | loyauté      | privé pitié       |
- E3 Words containing the reflex of PrimC /ɪ/ or /ε/ + spirant
- (a) from PrimC /-ɪð/: *lowene* 'joy', *kerenge* 'love'
  - (b) from PrimC /εμ/: *ene* 'soul'
- E4 Loan-words containing MidE /-ə/
- (a) silent in ModE and sometimes in ModF: *dame* 'mother', *eve* 'Eve'
  - (b) others, e.g. *neffre* 'ever', *wharre* 'forthwith', *temple*.
- E5 Verbal nouns containing the reflex of PrimC /-jaμ/ and /-aμ/,  
 e.g. *bewe* 'to live', *lathe* 'to kill', and many more.

11.4.5      Recommended phonemic spelling      <a>

The orthographic solution to the problem posed in para. 11.4.4 is the same as that in Unified Cornish, viz. to use <-a> for all groups in table 1141, except group E0. This is equivalent to choosing the date of BM. as that of the phonological base. [Critics of the phonemic spelling, later named *Kernewek Kemmyn*, made too much of this dating, but it was forced by the perceived need to copy Nance in writing <a> in words like *prena* 'to buy' (< *prene*) and <e> in words like *gweles* 'to see' (> *gwelas*).]

11.4.6      Unified spelling      <a>11.4.7      Examples      See table 1140EXAMPLES OF /a/ WHEN LONG IN CLOSED MONOSYLLABLESTable 1140

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b>bras</b>	big	<i>bras</i>	<i>bras</i>	bras
3	<b>fas</b>	face	<i>fas</i>	<i>ffas</i>	fas
1	<b>glan</b>	pure	<i>glan</i>	<i>glan</i>	glan
3	<b>gras</b>	grace	<i>gras</i>	<i>gras</i>	gras
1	<b>gwas</b>	servant	<i>gwaz</i>	<i>gwas</i>	gwas
1	<b>gwas</b>	country	<i>glad</i>	<i>gwlad</i>	gwas
1	<b>has</b>	seed	<i>had</i>	<i>had</i>	has
3	<b>kas</b>	case	-----	<i>cas</i>	cas
D	<b>kath</b>	cat	<i>kazh</i>	<i>cath</i>	cath
1	<b>klav</b>	sick	<i>klañv</i>	<i>claf</i>	claf
1	<b>mab</b>	son	<i>mab</i>	<i>mab</i>	map
1	<b>mas</b>	good	<i>mat</i>	<i>mad</i>	mas
3	<b>plas</b>	place	<i>plas</i>	<i>plas</i>	plas
1	<b>tan</b>	fire	<i>tan</i>	<i>tan</i>	tan
1	<b>tas</b>	father	<i>tad</i>	<i>tad</i>	tas

### 11.4.8      The realization of “long a”

The realization of /a/ when long (i.e. in stressed monosyllables) has been a matter of dispute among Cornish speakers, those in the east using [a:], and those in the west favouring “the long a of the West Cornwall dialect of English”. Table 1142 shows the realizations suggested for Cornish “long a” and “long e” in terms of English words, and I have added my interpretation of the intended sounds in phonetic symbols.

Consider first the English words trade, main, say and day, which appear in the table. These words containing the reflexes of MidE /a:/ and /ɛi/, which fell together c. 1650 in standard English, and are also fused in the English dialect of West Penwith. According to North (1983), the resulting /e:/ phoneme may be realized by any one of four different allophones: /e:/ = [e:] ~ [eə] ~ [ɛ:] ~ [ɛə]. In my experience, [e:] is the commonest).

The following suggestions in table 1142 are compatible with these allophones:

- (a) the spellings <aya> and <êa> refer to the “broken” vowels [eə] and [ɛə];
- (b) the expression “lengthened i” would mean [e:] in the dialect of West Penwith;
- (c) the expression “like Spanish or Welsh e” means [e:].

Thus most of the suggestions in the table apply to the /e:/ phoneme in the English dialect of West Penwith.

They also fit the “long e” of LateC; i.e. the reflex of MidC /ɛ:/, which was [e:] ~ [eə]. They do not fit Cornish “long a”, which was realized as [a:], according to Lhuyd.

The pioneering revivalists here made the mistake of supposing that the contemporary realizations of the reflex of MidE /a:/ in West Penwith were appropriate also to the reflex of MidC /a:/. In order to distinguish /e:/ from /a:/ in their Revived Cornish, they sought to use distinctions which exist between the various realizations of ModE /e:/ in West Penwith. No wonder that confusion arose: for instance, Jenner used the a in trade for Cornish “long a”, while Smith used the same for Cornish “long e”! The reason for this confusion was that the sound [a:] did not exist in English c. 1700: the nearest sound was [æ:], representing the reflex of MidE /a/ before /l, s, θ/ and /f, lm/; and this was the sound used by English speakers in the eighteenth century to replace LateC [a:].

The dispute can now be settled: as far as Cornish /a:/ is concerned, [e:], [eə], [ɛ:] and [ɛə] are inappropriate realizations; for this phoneme they are English not Cornish sounds, and should not be used.

## SUGGESTED REALIZATIONS FOR “LONG a” AND “LONG e”

Table 1142

REFERENCE	“LONG a”		“LONG e”	
Jenner (1904)	the lengthened sound of <u>a</u> short  NOT as English <u>a</u> in <u>father</u>  NOT as long <u>a</u> in <u>mane</u>  the Cornish pronunciation of <u>a</u> in <u>trade</u>	[æ:]  ≠ [a:]  ≠ [ɛɪ] /e:/	as <u>ai</u> in <u>main</u> , <u>ay</u> in <u>say</u>	[ɛɪ]
Nance (1929)	<u>aya</u> as in <u>play-acting</u>	[eə]		
Smith (1931)	a in have, but longer, pronounced slowly, drawled	[æ:]	as in <u>trade</u> NOT English diphthong as in <u>say</u>	/e:/ ≠ [ɛɪ]
Nance (1938)	approximating to <u>ea</u> , <u>aya</u> of West Cornwall dialect <u>braave</u>	[eə]	like <u>ay</u> in <u>day</u>	[ɛɪ]
Smith (1939)	<u>aa</u> or <u>aya</u> of West Cornwall dialect	/e:/	<u>ay</u> in <u>say</u> approximately BUT without diphthong sound  like Spanish or Welsh <u>e</u>	[e:] ≠ [ɛɪ]  [e:]
Smith (1977)	like a greatly lengthened <u>i</u>  the <u>a</u> in <u>have</u> lengthened	[ɪ:]  [æ:]	the vowel of dialect <u>traade</u>	/e:/

N.B. /e:/ = [e:] ~ [eə] ~ [ɛ:] ~ [ɛə]

## 11.5 VOCALIC PHONEME /ɔ/

11.5.1 Recommended pronunciation

When long, [ɔ:], which is similar to that of ough in English bought, but closer; when short, [ɔ], which is similar to that of o in English pot, but closer; when half-long, between [ɔ:] and [ɔ]. It is better to err on the open side, to preserve the distinction between /ɔ/ and /o/.

11.5.2 Principal sources

- (a) PrimC /ɔ/ < 1) Proto-Brythonic o 2) Latin o
- (b) PrimC /u/ < 1) Proto-Brythonic u 2) Latin u  
which was lowered during the OldC phase, and fell together with the reflex of PrimC /ɔ/.
- (c) Prim /ui/ and /oi/ when unstressed (in certain words), finally, and before /a/;  
(see table 1151).
- (d) MidE /ɔ/, /ɔ:/ and /u/  
MidE /u:/ before /nd/ }  
MidE /ān/ < NorF /ǣ/ } (see table 1152)

11.5.3 Development in LateC

- (a) When short and stressed before liquids and nasals, /ɔ/ fell together with the reflex of short MidC /o/, in [ʀ]; it was spelled <u> from c. 1550 onwards.
- (b) In final unstressed open syllables, /ɔ/ > /a c. 1525.
- (c) In final unstressed closed syllables, /ɔ/ > /a/ c. 1575 [probably earlier than this].
- (d) Otherwise, /ɔ/ remained stable.

11.5.4 Spelling in MidC

Usually <o>; sometimes <oy> when long.

11.5.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <o>

Nance's "long o" (written <ō> in his dictionaries) comprises two separate phonemes, /ɔ/ and /o/: thus *trōs* 'noise' and *trōs* 'foot' were not homophones, but minimal pairs. [They were not really minimal pairs, being respectively /trɔs/ and /troz/ in MidC]. There are so many such pairs (table 1155) that it is difficult to believe that Nance was unaware of this difference; and one suspects that he over-simplified the language to make it easier to learn.

EXAMPLES OF /ɔ/ FROM PRIMITIVE CORNISH /ui/ AND /oi/      Table  
1151

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
(a)	<u>When unstressed</u>				
2	<b>eglos</b>	church	( <i>iliz</i> )	<i>eglwys</i>	eglos
2	<b>kadon</b>	chain	( <i>chadenn</i> )	<i>cadwyn</i>	cadon
2	<b>kador</b>	chair	<i>kador</i>	<i>cadair</i>	cadar
2	<b>kantol</b>	candle	<i>kantol</i>	<i>cannwyll</i>	cantol
(b)	<u>Finally</u>				
1	<b>lo</b>	spoon	<i>loa</i>	<i>llwy</i>	lo
1	<b>o</b>	was	<i>oa</i>	<i>oedd</i>	o
(c)	<u>Before /a/</u>				
1	<b>bol</b> > <b>boel</b>	axe	( <i>bouc'hal</i> )	<i>bwyall</i>	bol
1	<b>dor</b>	ground	<i>douar</i>	<i>daear</i>	dor
1	<b>gron</b>	gravel	<i>grouan</i>	<i>graeon</i>	gron, growan
1	<b>horn</b>	iron	<i>houarn</i>	<i>haearn</i>	horn
1	<b>klor</b>	mild	<i>klouar</i>	<i>claeon</i>	clor

EXAMPLES OF WORDS IN WHICH /ɔ/ IS LONG

Table

1152

BEFORE A CONSONANTAL GROUP

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED
	SPELLING				
(a)	<u>Where the 3rd pl. ending of verbs coalesced with the previous stem</u>				
1	<b>bons</b>	they might be	( <i>bint</i> )	<i>bônt</i>	bons
1	<b>dons</b>	they come	<i>deuont</i>	<i>dônt</i>	dons
1	<b>gwrons</b>	they do	<i>greont</i>	( <i>gwnânt</i> )	gwrons
1	<b>ymons</b>	they are	( <i>emaint</i> )	( <i>y maent</i> )	ymons
(b)	<u>Words containing /-ɔst/</u>				
1	<b>lost</b>	tail	<i>lost</i>	+ <i>llost</i>	<i>lost</i>
3	<b>ost</b>	host	-----	+ <i>ost</i>	<i>ost</i>
(c)	<u>Loan-words containing MidE /u:n/ &lt; OldE un</u>				
3	<b>grond</b>	ground < MidE <i>ground</i>	['gru:nd]	< OldE <i>grund</i>	
3	<b>hond</b>	hound < MidE <i>hund</i>	['hu:nd]	< OldE <i>hund</i>	
	PHONEMIC SPELLING	MODERN ENGLISH	<	OLD > FRENCH	MODERN FRENCH
	SPELLING				
(d)	<u>Loan-words containing MidE aun &lt; NorF /an/</u>				
3	<b>avons-</b>	advance	<i>avancer</i>	<i>avancer</i>	avons-
3	<b>chons</b>	chance	<i>cheance</i>	<i>chance</i>	chons
3	<b>dons-</b>	dance	<i>dancer</i>	<i>danser</i>	dons-
3	<b>gront</b>	grant	<i>greanter</i>	-----	gront-
3	<b>kommond-</b>	command	<i>comander</i>	<i>commander</i>	comond-
(e)	<u>Loan-words containing MidE /u:n/ &lt; OldF on</u>				
3	<b>akont-</b>	account	<i>aconter</i>	( <i>compter</i> )	acont-
3	<b>amont-</b>	amount	<i>amonter</i>	( <i>monter</i> )	amont-
3	<b>ekspond-</b>	expound	<i>espondre</i>	-----	expond-
3	<b>fond-</b>	found	<i>fonder</i>	<i>fonder</i>	fond-
3	<b>konfond-</b>	confound	<i>confondre</i>	<i>confondre</i>	
	confond-				
3	<b>rond</b>	round	<i>reond</i>	<i>rond</i>	rond



## MINIMAL PAIRS SERVING TO DISTINGUISH /ɔ/ AND /o/

Table

1155

	CONTAINING /ɔ/		CONTAINING /o/	
<u>Long vowel</u>				
✓	<b>bos</b>	‘to be’	<b>boes</b>	‘food’
✓	<b>godh</b>	‘mole’	<b>goedh</b>	‘goose’, ‘wild’
✓	<b>klos</b>	‘glory’	<b>kloes</b>	‘hurdle’
✓	<b>kog</b>	‘grandfather’	<b>koeg</b>	‘empty’
✓	<b>los</b>	‘filthy’	<b>loes</b>	‘grey’
x	<b>mos</b>	‘to go’	<b>moes</b>	‘table’
x	<b>on</b>	‘we are’	<b>oen</b>	‘lamb’
✓	<b>os</b>	‘thou art’	<b>oes</b>	‘age’
✓	<b>ros</b>	‘wheel’	<b>roes</b>	‘net’
✓	<b>tros</b>	‘noise’	<b>troes</b>	‘foot’
x				
<u>Short vowel</u>				
✓	<b>bronn</b>	‘breast’	<b>brunn</b> > <b>broenn</b>	‘rushes’
✓	<b>toll</b>	‘hole’	<b>tull</b> > <b>toell</b>	‘deceit’

Those marked ✓ are genuine minimal pairs; those marked x are not.

SWF fails to distinguish the short vowel pairs, and all attempts to correct this fault have been rejected.

## EXAMPLES OF /o/ WHEN SHORT

Table

1161

PHONEMIC	ENGLISH	MODERN	MODERN	UNIFIED
----------	---------	--------	--------	---------

	SPELLING SPELLING	MEANING	BRETON	WELSH	
1	<b>brunn</b> > <b>broenn</b>	rushes	<i>broenn</i>	<i>brwyn</i>	bron
1	<b>bumm</b> > <b>boemm</b>	blow	<i>bomm</i>	-----	bom
1	<b>pull</b> > <b>poell</b>	sense	<i>poell</i>	<i>pwyl</i>	-----
1	<b>tull</b> > <b>toell</b>	deceit	<i>touell</i>	<i>twyll</i>	tull
1	<b>tumm</b> > <b>toemm</b>	warm	<i>tomm</i>	<i>twym</i>	tom

## 11.6 VOCALIC PHONEME /o/

11.6.1 Recommended pronunciation

In most words, /o/ is long or half-long, and is then a rounded back vowel, half-close or closer; approximately [o:] or [oː]. This sound does not occur in standard English. It occurs in the English dialect of West Penwith, in words like boat ['bo:t]; and in French (e.g. in eau 'water', haut 'high', which are homophones).

In a few words, the vowel is short, and is then unrounded to [ɪ]. This is similar to the u in but, cut, in the English dialect of West Penwith, but closer.

11.6.2 Sources and distribution

The principal sources are PrimC /oi/ and /ui/. These two diphthongs, represented in ModW by <oe> and <wy> respectively, fell together partially in Breton and completely in Cornish. Table 1160 illustrates this for cases where the diphthong was stressed before a consonant. Words in class A and class C developed normally in Welsh and Breton, but words in class B changed their path from the /ui/ to the /oi/ phoneme in Breton. The fusion of the two diphthongs occurred in Cornish before the earliest known written sources; words of both origins were each written with <ui> in OldC.

During the first half of the fourteenth century, according to place-name evidence, the phoneme lost its diphthongal character. In stressed closed syllables, it became /o/. In final position, it became [ɔ], thus falling together with the reflex of PrimC /ɔ/, e.g. OldC /oe 'spoon' > MidC /o ['lɔ:] (cf. ModW /lwy, ModB /oa); this means that /o/ does not occur finally. Words containing OldC /œ/ and perhaps MidE /o:/ fell together with MidC /o/.

11.6.3 Development in LateC

The long vowel became closer: [o:] > [u:] c.1625. Words containing the reflex of MidC /o/ were spelled with <û> by Lhuyd.

11.6.4 Significant spellings in MidC

<oy> and <o> when long and half-long; <u> when short.

## WORDS CONTAINING /o/ STRESSED

Table 1160

BEFORE A CONSONANT

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
(a) <u>Words with &lt;oue&gt; in ModB, &lt;wy&gt; in ModW</u>					
1	<b>boes</b>	food	<i>boued</i>	<i>bwyd</i>	bos
2	<b>froeth</b>	fruit	<i>frouezh</i>	<i>ffrwyth</i>	fruyth
1	<b>goedh</b>	wild	<i>gouez</i>	<i>gŵydd</i>	goth
2	<b>goel</b>	sail	<i>gouel</i>	<i>gŵyl</i>	gol
2	<b>goel</b>	feast	<i>gouel</i>	<i>gŵyl</i>	gol
1	<b>koedha</b>	to fall	<i>(kouezhañ)</i>	<i>cwyddo</i>	codha
1	<b>kroeder</b>	sieve	<i>(krouer)</i>	<i>crwydr</i>	croder
1	<b>loes</b>	grey	<i>loued</i>	<i>llwyd</i>	los
2	<b>poes</b>	weight	<i>pouez</i>	<i>pwys</i>	pos
2	<b>roes</b>	net	<i>roued</i>	<i>rhwyd</i>	ros
(b) <u>Words with &lt;oa&gt; in ModB, &lt;wy&gt; in ModW</u>					
1	<b>bloedh</b>	year	<i>bloaz</i>	<i>blwydd</i>	bloth
1	<b>goedh</b>	goose	<i>goaz</i>	<i>gŵydd</i>	goth
2	<b>koen</b>	supper	<i>koan</i>	<i>cwyn</i>	con
2	<b>koer</b>	wax	<i>koar</i>	<i>cwyr</i>	cor
1	<b>moen</b>	thin	<i>moan</i>	<i>mwyn</i>	mon
1	<b>sloedh</b>	shoulder	<i>skoz</i>	<i>ysgwydd</i>	scoth
(c) <u>Words with &lt;oa&gt; in ModB, &lt;oe&gt; in ModW</u>					
U	<b>gloes</b>	pang	<i>gloaz</i>	<i>gloes</i>	glos
1	<b>koes</b>	wood	<i>koad</i>	<i>coed</i>	cos
1	<b>Loer</b>	Moon	<i>loar</i>	<i>lloer</i>	lor
1	<b>moel</b>	bald	<i>moal</i>	<i>moel</i>	mon
1	<b>oen</b>	lamb	<i>oan</i>	<i>oen</i>	on
1	<b>oes</b>	age	<i>oad</i>	<i>oed</i>	os
2	<b>poen</b>	pain	<i>poan</i>	<i>poen</i>	pon
1	<b>poeth</b>	hot	<i>poazh</i>	<i>poeth</i>	poth

In SWF, Nance's los, os, pos became the risible spellings loos, oos and poos; <oo> needs replacement.

### 11.6.5 Recommended spellings for /o/

This is a difficult case, which requires the compromise of the phonemic principle to solve it.

For some time, I considered <w> as a possible grapheme for this vocalic phoneme, but eventually rejected it on the grounds of its strange appearance (e.g. the word for ‘below’ would be *a-ww/es*), and its having to double for the semi-vowel /w/. Admittedly it is used in Welsh for a vocalic phoneme, /u/, but one which has a clear relationship with /u/.

Instead, it seems sensible to retain <o> as part of the grapheme for the long and half-long cases. Possibilities considered but dismissed are:

<oa>, which is historically wrong, since it originally meant [ɔ:] in MidE;

<oi> and <oy>, which were used in MidC, but to a speaker of ModE immediately connote [ɔi];

<oo>, which is historically correct, but suggests [u:] rather than [o:]; by “historically correct” I meant that it was used to denote [o:] in words like *forsooth* [fɔr'so:ð], but in MidE; the MidC spelling was *forsoyth*. It was not used in Cornish until later, when the sound had changed to [o:]. This Manx-like digraph has unfortunately been chosen for use in SWF-M, but it does not fit, because it reflects Late Cornish orthography and phonetics.

<ou>, which is already in use for [u:].

This leaves <oe>; the Welsh cognates of a number of words containing /o/ have this grapheme also in Welsh, but there it means [ɔi] rather than [o:].

The short form of /o/ occurs as a stressed vowel in only a few words, e.g. *toemm* ‘warm’, *toell* ‘deceit’, and as an unstressed vowel in certain place-names, also in words like *arloedh* ‘lord’. It was usually spelled <u> in MidC, and this may be retained. There is little risk of confusion with the <u> representing /y/, since the latter is almost always found as a long or half-long vowel. [This proposal has not yet been implemented; in *Kernewek Kemmyn* in GM20, /o/ is spelled <oe> exclusively.]

### 11.6.6 Unified spelling

<o> when long, and <u> when short (Nance did not recognize half-long vowels).

## 11.7 VOCALIC PHONEME /u/

### 11.7.1 Recommended pronunciation

When stressed in monosyllables, as oo in English boot, i.e. [u:]; when unstressed, the same sound shortened.

### 11.7.2 Sources and distribution

Almost all words containing this phoneme are loan-words with MidE /u:/ and /u/, since the reflex of PrimC /u/ had been lowered and fallen together with the reflex of PrimC /ɔ/. An exception is gour ‘man, husband’ (which, however, has /ɔ/ on its compounds; e.g. *gorgi* ‘male dog’).

### 11.7.3 Developments in LateC

In English, the reflex of MidE /u:/ took part in the Great Vowel Shift, and became a diphthong c.1525. This diphthong developed to [əʊ], at which stage it remained in the *English* dialect of west Cornwall in words like *cow*, although it evolved further in RP, to [aʊ]. The loan-word *croust*, found in Cornish and recorded in English dialect by Wakelin as [kɾæʏs(t)], suggests that the sound in Cornish may have developed as in English. Data are almost totally lacking, however.

There are insufficient data to be clear about the evolution of unstressed /u/.

### 11.7.4 Significant spellings in MidC

<ou> (originally a French spelling) and <ov> for the stressed case; these graphemes were used also for the reflex of PrimC /ɔw/. In the unstressed case, <ou>, <o> and <u> were significant.

### 11.7.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <ou>

11.7.6 Unified spelling

When stressed, usually <ow>, thereby causing confusion with /ɔw/, which Nance also spelled <ow>. Nance retained <ou> in most instances of the unstressed case.

11.7.7 Examples

TABLE 1170

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	MODERN ENGLISH	ORIGIN	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
(a) <u>/u/ in a stressed monosyllable</u>					
3	<b>doust</b>	dust	OldE <i>dūst</i>	<i>dwst</i>	dowst
3	<b>dout</b>	doubt	OldF <i>doute</i>	-----	dowt
3	<b>flour</b>	flour	OldF <i>flour</i>	<i>fflŵr</i>	flowr
1	<b>gour</b>	'husband'	Brit * <i>wiro-</i>	<i>gŵr</i>	gour
3	<b>klout</b>	clout	OldE <i>clūt</i>	<i>clwt</i>	clowt
3	<b>kroust</b>	crust	OldF <i>crouste</i>	<i>crwst</i>	crowst
3	<b>out</b>	out	OldE <i>ūt</i>	-----	owt
3	<b>tour</b>	tower	OldF <i>tour</i>	<i>tŵr</i>	tour

TABLE 1171

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
(b) <u>/u/ in a final unstressed closed syllable</u>					
3	<b>doktour</b>	doctor	<i>doktor</i>	<i>doctor</i>	doctour
3	<b>emperour</b>	emperor	( <i>impalaer</i> )	-----	emperour
3	<b>enour</b>	honour	<i>enor</i>	-----	enor
3	<b>favour</b>	favour	-----	<i>ffafor</i>	favour
3	<b>Savvour</b>	Saviour	( <i>Salver</i> )	-----	Savvour
3	<b>sokour</b>	succour	( <i>sikour</i> )	-----	socor
3	<b>traytour</b>	traitor	<i>treitour</i>	<i>traetur</i>	traytour

N.B. There is inconsistency in the spellings used in ModB and ModW, and also in British English, though in American English all these words are spelled with <-or>. In GM20, the word for 'honour' is spelled **enor**. The play **Bewnans Ke**, which was discovered after the publication of PSRC, often has <-or> where earlier works have <-our>.

## 11.8 VOCALIC PHONEME /œ/

### 11.8.1 Recommended pronunciation

[œ], a sound which does not occur in English. It occurs in Breton, generally in the cognates of those words in which it occurs in Cornish; and also in French (e.g. in the word peur 'fear').

### 11.8.2 Sources and distribution

PrimC /ω/ < British â; the vowel became more and more front, so that in OldC, although spelled <o>, it was approximately [œ(:)]. In unstressed syllables, it became unrounded to [ɛ] c.1075, so that in MidC and the phonological base, /œ/ occurs only in stressed syllables.

### 11.8.3 Development in LateC

This vowel became unrounded c.1525, thereby falling together with the reflex of MidC /ɛ:/.

### 11.8.4 Significant spellings

In MidC, the vowel was variously spelled <u, ue, eu, e>. In **stressed monosyllables**, Breton cognates usually have <eu>, and Welsh cognates <aw>.

### 11.8.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <eu>, as in Breton

### 11.8.6 Unified spelling

Nance and Smith failed to recognize the existence of this phoneme. They assigned words containing it:

- (a) to /y/, spelling them with <u>; this was a mistake;  
the grapheme <u> was that of MidC (M in table 1180);
- (b) to /ɛ/, spelling them with <e>; this corresponds to LateC (marked L);
- (c) to both /y/ and /ɛ/, i.e. they could not decide how to spell the word (marked B).

## EXAMPLES OF WORDS CONTAINING /œ/

Table 1180

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING	
1	<b>a'm beus</b>	I have	( <i>am eus</i> )	-----	a'm bus	M
1	<b>beu</b>	was	( <i>boe</i> )	( <i>bu</i> )	bu, be	B
1	<b>beudhi</b>	to drown	<i>beuziñ</i>	( <i>boddi</i> )	budhy	M
1	<b>bleus</b>	flour	<i>bleud</i>	<i>blawd</i>	bles	L
1	<b>breus</b>	judgment	<i>breud</i>	<i>brawd</i>	brus	M
1	<b>deu</b>	comes	<i>deu</i>	<i>daw</i>	de	L
1	<b>deuv</b>	son-in-law	<i>deuñv</i>	<i>dawf</i>	duf, def	B
2	<b>eur</b>	hour	<i>eur</i>	<i>awr</i>	ur	M
1	<b>eus</b>	is	<i>eus</i>	( <i>oes</i> )	us	M
D	<b>greun</b>	grain	<i>greun</i>	<i>grawn</i>	grun	M
U	<b>keudh</b>	grief	<i>keuz</i>	<i>cawdd</i>	cuth	M
2	<b>keus</b>	cheese	<i>keuz</i>	<i>caws</i>	kes, cus	B
1	<b>kleudh</b>	ditch	<i>kleuz</i>	<i>clawdd</i>	cleth, cluth	B
U	<b>kreun</b>	dam	<i>kreun</i>	+ <i>crawn</i>	crun, cren	B
1	<b>leugh</b>	calf	( <i>leue</i> )	( <i>llo</i> )	lugh	B
1	<b>leun</b>	full	<i>leun</i>	<i>llawn</i>	lun	M
1	<b>leur</b>	floor	<i>leur</i>	<i>llawr</i>	lur	M
1	<b>meur</b>	great	<i>meur</i>	<i>mawr</i>	mur	M
1	<b>meus</b>	thumb	<i>meud</i>	( <i>bawd</i> )	mes-	L
2	<b>Meurth</b>	Mars	<i>Meurzh</i>	<i>Mawrth</i>	Merth	L
1	<b>neus</b>	thread	<i>neud</i>	-----	nus	M
1	<b>neuv</b>	swims	<i>neuñv</i>	+ <i>nawf</i>	-----	
2	<b>peul</b>	pole	<i>peul</i>	<i>pawl</i>	pul	M
1	<b>reun</b>	coarse hair	<i>reun</i>	<i>rhawn</i>	run	M
1	<b>seudhel</b>	heel	<i>seul</i>	<i>sawdl</i>	sul	M
1	<b>seul</b>	whoever	<i>seul</i>	<i>sawl</i>	sul	M
2	<b>skeul</b>	ladder	<i>skeul</i>	<i>ysgol</i>	scul, skel	B
1	<b>skeus</b>	shadow	<i>skeud</i>	+ <i>isgaud</i>	skes, scus	B
1	<b>teudh</b>	molten	<i>teuz</i>	<i>tawdd</i>	teth	L
1	<b>treus</b>	thwart	<i>treus</i>	<i>traws</i>	trus	M

## 11.9 VOCALIC PHONEME /y/

11.9.1 Recommended pronunciation

As y in French tu 'thou', i.e. [y]. This sound does not occur in English; it may be approximated by saying [i:] (e.g. ee in English beet) with rounded lips.

11.9.2 Sources and distribution

- (a) PrimC /y/ < 1) British ū < ō  
2) Latin ō and ū
- (b) MidE /y/, which persisted in the south-west of Britain longer than in other areas.
- (c) Affection of half-long /œ/ by a following /i/, e.g. *budhi* 'to drown', alongside the unaffected development *beudhi*.

It occurs only as a stressed vowel; /y/ when unstressed had become /ɪ/ c.1425. [There are some words with unstressed /y/ in GM20].

11.9.3 Developments in LateC

- (a) In final position and before /x/, [y:] > [ɪu:] as in English, possibly c.1625.
- (b) In other environments, /y/ became unrounded, and fell together with the reflex of PrimC /i/; in closed monosyllables, this occurred c.1625.

11.9.4 Spellings

The commonest spelling in MidC, the recommended phonemic spelling, and the Unified spelling are all <u>. The same grapheme is used in cognate words in Breton and Welsh.

N.B. Since Nance used <u> for both /œ/ and /y/, failing to distinguish between them, it is difficult for Cornish speakers without a knowledge of Breton or Welsh to know which phoneme is contained in a given word. I have published a list in *AN GANNAS*. [This difficulty is now largely removed, since the spellings <eu> for /œ/ and <u> for /y/ have been in use for nearly forty years].

## EXAMPLES OF MONOSYLLABLES CONTAINING /y/

Table 1190

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
3	<i>dug</i> > <i>duk</i>	duke	<i>dug</i> ----	<i>dug</i>	duk
3	<i>frut</i>	fruit	-----	-----	frut
2	<i>fur</i>	wise	<i>fur</i>	+ <i>ffur</i>	fur
1	<i>gul</i>	to do	-----	-----	gul
3	<i>gwrug</i>	did	-----	----	gwruk
1	<i>kuv</i>	dear	<i>kuñv</i>	( <i>cu</i> )	cuf
3	<i>kur</i>	cure	-----	+ <i>cur</i>	cur
2	<i>pur</i>	pure	<i>pur</i>	<i>pur</i>	pur
1	<i>rudh</i>	red	<i>ruz</i>	<i>rhudd</i>	ruth
3	<i>sur</i>	sure	<i>sur</i>	( <i>siwr</i> )	sur
1	<i>tus</i>	people	<i>tud</i>	<i>tud</i>	tus

[For the change of spelling *dug* to *duk*, see para. 14.1.3].

## CHAPTER 12      DIPHTHONGS

### 12.1      DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /ei/

#### 12.1.1      Recommended pronunciation

[eɪ], similar to ei in English veil, but with a closer first element.

#### 12.1.2      Principal sources

All the examples are of native words, since there was no /ei/ in MidE.

- 1)      already in existence as a diphthong in PrimC (HPB §227);
- 2)      arose from later developments in PrimC (HPB §228);
- 3)      secondary development of PrimC /ɪ/ > /ei/.

#### 12.1.3      Development in LateC

This diphthong [had a sound similar to](#) the dialectal reflex of MidE /i:/, and was therefore often spelled <i>.

#### 12.1.4      Significant spellings in MidC      <ey> and <y>

#### 12.1.5      Recommended phonemic spelling      <ey>

#### 12.1.6      Unified spelling and pronunciation

Those words which Nance identified as containing /ei/ were spelled with <ey> (labelled 'A' in [Table 1210](#)). Nance failed to identify some of the words containing /ei/; influence by the MidC spelling <y>, he assigned some of them to "long y" (these are labelled 'B' in the table), or even to "long e" (labelled 'C').

Where Nance and Smith became really confused was in the pronunciations of the two diphthongs /ei/ and /ai/. They recommended that <ey> should be pronounced as ei in English *height* (i.e. [aɪ] in RP), and <ay> as ay in English *day* (i.e. [ɛɪ] in RP). This practically reverses the realizations in MidC, which were [ei] and [æɪ] respectively.

It is worth seeing how this confusion arose. The realization [aɪ] for <ey> is that of ModW, as in words like ModW *saith* ‘seven’; in MidW, however, as in MidC and MidB, the diphthong was [ei], spelled <ey>. In ModW, it changed to [ai] (spelled <ai>), but only in stressed monosyllables; in polysyllables, as in all cases in ModB and LateC, it remained as [ei], as shown in this table:

<u>MidC</u>	<u>LateC</u>	<u>ModB</u>	<u>ModW</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>seyth</i>	<i>seith</i>	<i>seizh</i>	<i>saith</i>	seven
<i>meyn</i>	<i>mein</i>	<i>mein</i>	<i>main</i>	stones
<i>*teyl</i>	<i>teil</i>	<i>teil</i>	<i>tail</i>	dung
<i>(an) neyl</i>	<i>neile</i>	<i>(an) eil</i>	<i>(y) naill</i>	the other

The realization [ɛɪ] for <ay> is that of ModE; it represents the diphthongization c. 1800 of earlier [e:] < [ɛ:] < [æɪ], and could not therefore have been the realization in traditional Cornish: indeed, [ɛ:] is still found in the English dialect of West Penwith.

12.1.7      Examples                      see Table 1210

12.2          DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /ai/

12.2.1      Recommended pronunciation  
[aɪ], as y in English by.

12.2.2      Sources

With the exception of *a’y* ‘of his, of her’ and *ha’y* ‘and his, and her’, all words containing this phoneme are loan-words from English. They contain

MidE /ai/, which represents the coalescence c. 1300 of two earlier English phonemes /ei/ and /ai/.

Examples of /ei/

TABLE 1210

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING	
1	<b>bleydh</b>	wolf	<i>bleiz</i>	<i>blaidd</i>	blyth	B
1	<b>dreynd</b>	thorns	<i>drein</i>	<i>drain</i>	dreynd	A
1	<b>dreys</b>	briars	<i>dreiz</i>	(+drys)	dreys	A
1	<b>eyl</b>	one of two	<i>eil</i>	<i>ail</i>	yl	B
1	<b>eythin</b>	gorse	+ <i>ethin</i>	<i>eithin</i>	eythen	A
1	<b>gweyth</b>	work	+ <i>gueid-</i>	<i>gwaith</i>	gwyth	B
1	<b>heydh</b>	barley	<i>heiz</i>	<i>haidd</i>	heth	C
1	<b>keyn</b>	back	<i>kein</i>	( <i>cefn</i> )	keynd	A
1	<b>meyn</b>	stones	<i>mein</i>	<i>main</i>	meynd	A
1	<b>neyth</b>	nest	<i>neizh</i>	( <i>nyth</i> )	nyth	B
1	<b>seyth</b>	seven	<i>seizh</i>	<i>saith</i>	seyth	A
1	<b>seythves</b>	seventh	<i>seizhved</i>	<i>seithfed</i>	seythves	A
1	<b>teyl</b>	dung	<i>teil</i>	<i>tail</i>	teyl	A
1	<b>teyr</b>	three (f.)	<i>teir</i>	<i>tair</i>	tyr	B

EXAMPLES OF /ai/

TABLE 1220

	PHONEMIC & UNIFIED SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH	EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH	OLD ENGLISH OR OLD FRENCH
3	<b>aray</b>	array	array	<i>arai</i>	OldF <i>arei</i>
3	<b>chaynd</b>	chain	chain	<i>chayne</i>	OldF <i>chaiene</i>
3	<b>faynt</b>	faint	faint / feint	/fɛint/	OldF <i>feint</i>
3	<b>gwaya</b>	to move	way	/wɛi/	OldE <i>weg</i>
3	<b>gwaynya</b>	to win	gain	/wain/	OldF <i>gaain</i>
3	<b>gwaytya</b>	to hope	wait	/wait/	OldF <i>guait</i>
3	<b>obaya</b>	to obey	obey	/obɛi/	OldF <i>obeir</i>
3	<b>paynd</b>	pain	pain	/pɛin/	OldF <i>peine</i>
3	<b>payntynd</b>	to paint	paint	/pɛint/	OldF <i>peint</i>

3	<b><i>pray</i></b>	prey	prey	/prei/	OldF <i>preie</i>
3	<b>(an) vayl</b>	(the) veil	veil	/vɛil/	OldF <i>veile</i>

12.2.3      Development in LateC

There are insufficient exmaple to be sure how this diphthong developed in LateC.

12.2.4      Significant spellings in MidC      <ay> and <ey> indiscriminately12.2.5      Recommended phonemic spelling      <ay>12.2.6      Unified spelling and pronunciation

In English, the reflexes of early MidE /ɛi/ and /ai/ are spelled differently, even though they fell together c. 1300: words with /ai/ are usually spelled with <ai> (e.g. gain, wait); and those with /ɛi/ are sometimes spelled with <ei> or <ey> (e.g. veil, obey), but quite often with <ai> or <ay> (e.g. pain, way). In Cornish, Nance very sensibly used the same grapheme <ay> for the combined diphthong, irrespective of the original source, as shown in table 1220.

As regards the pronunciation, Nance and Smith recommended that <ay> should be pronounced as ay in English day, which is incorrect. The reason for this mistake was confusion with the diphthong /ei/; see this phoneme (para. 12.1.6) for a further explanation.

12.2.7      Examples      see table 1220

## 12.3      DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /ɔi/

12.3.1      Recommended pronunciation  
[ɔɪ], as oy in English boy.12.3.2      Sources

- |     |            |   |           |
|-----|------------|---|-----------|
| (1) | PrimC /ωi/ | - | see HPB   |
| (2) | MidE /ɔi/  | < | OldF /ɔi/ |

### 12.3.3 Development in LateC

Occasional spellings of *moy* and *oy* suggest that the first element of the diphthong was long, which is in agreement with the quantity rules; the loan-word *joy* was not recorded after CW, but there is no need for the purposes of Revived Cornish to recommend a pronunciation different from that of the native words.

In closed monosyllables, the diphthong apparently [had a sound similar to](#) the reflex of MidE /i:/, English point and pint were homophones until spelling-pronunciation was restored in the former.

### 12.3.4 Spelling

The commonest spelling in MidC, the phonemic spelling and the Unified spelling are all <oy>.

### 12.3.5 Examples

[TABLE 1230](#)

3	<b>joy</b>	'joy'	<	MidE	<	OldF <i>joie</i>
3	<b>koynt</b>	'strange'	<	MidE	<	OldF <i>cointe</i>
1	<b>moy</b>	'more'	<	PrimC /mwi/		
1	<b>oy</b>	'egg'	<	PrimC /wi/		
3	<b>oyl</b>	'oil'	<	MidE <i>oile</i>	<	OldF
3	poynt	'point'	<	MidE	<	OldF <i>point</i>

## 12.4 DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /iw/

### 12.4.1 Recommended pronunciation

As iw in Welsh lliw 'colour', i.e. [iw]; it is similar to ew in English dew but with a closer first element.

12.4.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /iw/ < Proto-Brythonic īw
- (b) Possible metathesis of PrimC /ui/
- (c) Loan-words with OldF iu

12.4.3 Development in LateC

Apparently stable, but there is very little evidence.

12.4.4 Significant spellings in MidC

Usually <yw>, sometimes <ew>.

12.4.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <iw>12.4.6 Unified spelling

Usually <yw>; in certain words, <ew> was used in error.

12.4.7 Examples Table 1240

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b>diw</b>	two (f.)	<i>div</i>	( <i>dwy</i> )	dyw
1	<b>diwedh</b>	end	<i>diwez</i>	<i>diwedd</i>	deweth
1	<b>gwiw</b>	fitting	<i>gwiv</i>	<i>gwiw</i>	gwyw
1	<b>liw</b>	colour	<i>liv</i>	<i>lliw</i>	lyw
1	<b>niwl</b>	fog	<i>nivl</i>	<i>niwl</i>	newl
3	<b>siwya</b>	to follow	-----	-----	sewya

## 12.5 DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /ɪw/

12.5.1 Recommended pronunciation

[ɪw], which is similar to ew in English dew. In speech, there is very little difference between the realizations of /ɪw/ and /iw/, but the distinction is preserved in writing, partly for etymological reasons.

12.5.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /ɪw/ < [Proto-Brythonic](#) iw and uw.
- (b) Lowering of PrimC /iw/ when unstressed finally.

12.5.3 Development in LateC

Apparently /ɪw/ > /ɛw/, paralleling the change /ɪ/ > /ɛ/. See also para. 12.6.3.

12.5.4 Significant spellings in MidC

<yw> is found, but <ew> is much commoner; the latter can, however, mean [ɪw], since the reflexes of MidE /iu/ and /eu/ fell together in /iu/, and MidC was largely spelled according to the conventions of MidE orthography.

12.5.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <yw>12.5.6 Unified spelling

Variable, since Nance did not recognize this phoneme.

12.5.7 Examples

TABLE 1250

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b>byw</b>	alive	<i>bev</i>	<i>byw</i>	bew
1	<b>hedhyw</b>	today	<i>hiziv</i>	<i>heddiw</i>	hedhyu
1	<b>klywes</b>	to hear	<i>klevout</i>	<i>clywed</i>	clewes
1	yw	is	(eo)	yw	yu

The diphthong in **hedhyw** does not fit that in the cognates.

The word for ‘to hear’ is spelled **klewes** in GM20, with /ɛw/.

## 12.6 DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /ɛw/

### 12.6.1 Recommended pronunciation

[ɛw], as ew in Welsh tew ‘fat’. This sound does not occur in standard English, but is the diphthong found in the dialectal pronunciation of English cow in mid- and west Cornwall.

### 12.6.2 Sources

(a) The following all fell together in OldC /ɛw/:

- (i) PrimC /ɛw/ e.g. **rew** ‘frost’ < Proto-Brythonic \**rewo-*  
**lew** ‘lion’ < Classical Latin *leo*
- (ii) Prim /ɛɣu/ e.g. **tew** ‘fat’ < Proto-Brythonic \**tegu-*  
**rewl** ‘rule’ < Classical Latin *regula*
- (iii) PrimC /ew/ e.g. **tew** ‘is silent’
- (iv) PrimC /eβ/ e.g. **tewlel** ‘to throw’

(b) Analogical *i*-affection in **kewsel** ‘to talk’ < OldF *causer*

(c) MidE and MidF /-eu/, e.g. **Matthew** ‘Matthew’

**malbew** ‘plague’ < MidF *mal beau*

### 12.6.3 Development in LateC

In stressed monosyllables, the diphthong remained stable. When stressed in polysyllables, it underwent a spelling change <ew> > <ow>, which suggests a sound-change /ɛw/ > /ow/. Chris Jeffrey (1986) pointed out that this may be just an orthographic change, **because <ow> in English words like cow was (and is) pronounced [ɛw] in mid- and west Cornwall.**

12.6.4 Significant spellings in MidC <eu, ev, ew>

12.6.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <ew>

### 12.6.6 Unified spelling

Usually <ew>, but <eu> in the 2nd pl. ending -eugh and in the word *deu* ‘two (m.)’.

## 12.7 DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /aw/

12.7.1 Recommended pronunciation

As ow in standard English how, i.e. [aʊ]

12.7.2 Sources

(a) PrimC /-aw/ < [Proto-Brythonic and Latin](#) -awa- and -agu-

(b) PrimC /aʊ/ in a few words where this did not change to /ɔʊ/

12.7.3 Development in LateC

The diphthong behaved similarly to the reflex of MidE, changing from [aʊ] > [ɔ:] c. 1675.

12.7.4 Significant spellings in MidC

<au, av, aw>

12.7.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<aw>

12.7.6 Unified spelling

<aw> for source (a), <au> for source (b)

12.7.7 Examples

TABLE 1270

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b>glaw</b>	rain	<i>glav</i>	<i>glaw</i>	glaw
2	<b>lawn</b>	blade	<i>laon</i>	<i>llafn</i>	laun
1	<b>maw</b>	boy	<i>mav</i>	-----	maw
1	<b>naw</b>	nine	<i>nav</i>	<i>naw</i>	naw
1	<b>paw</b>	paw	<i>pav</i>	<i>paw-</i>	paw
3	<b>saw</b>	except	-----	-----	saw
1	<b>sawn</b>	geo	<i>staon</i>	<i>safn</i>	saun
1	<b>taw</b>	silence	<i>tav</i>	<i>taw</i>	taw

In GM20, the words in red are spelled [lown](#) and [saven](#) respectively.

## 12.8 DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /ɔw/

### 12.8.1 Recommended pronunciation

[ɔʊ], which is similar to ow in English grow ([əʊ]); see para. 12.8.6 for discussion.

### 12.8.2 Sources

When stressed:

- (a) PrimC /ɔu/ < { Proto-Brythonic ou e.g. **lowr** 'enough'  
< { Proto-Brythonic au e.g. **owr** 'gold'
- (b) The following all fell together in MidC /ɔw/:
- |           |   |            |                             |         |
|-----------|---|------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| OldC /ɔv/ | < | PrimC /ɔμ/ | e.g. <b>own</b>             | 'fear'  |
| OldC /ɔv/ | < | PrimC /uβ/ | e.g. <b>dowr</b>            | 'water' |
| OldC /ɔv/ | < | PrimC /uμ/ | e.g. <b>down</b>            | 'deep'  |
| OldC /ɛu/ | < | PrimC /ɛu/ | e.g. <b>pows</b>            | 'dress' |
| OldC /ɛu/ | < | PrimC /wu/ | e.g. <b>Howl</b>            | 'Sun'   |
| OldC /ɔu/ | < | PrimC /ui/ | irregularly in <b>krows</b> | 'cross' |
- (c) The following all fell together in early MidC /au/, which became /ɔu/:
- |            |   |            |  |         |
|------------|---|------------|--|---------|
| Old C /au/ | < | PrimC /au/ | e.g. <b>Powl</b>                             | 'Paul'  |
| OldC /av/  | < | PrimC /aβ/ | e.g. <b>towl</b>                             | 'throw' |
| NorF /au/  | < | OldF /au/  | e.g. <b>kows</b> 'talk', <b>fowt</b> 'fault' |         |

When unstressed:

- (d) PrimC /ɔw/ e.g. **golow** ‘light’  
Svarabhakti /ɔw/ e.g. **garow** ‘rough’
- (e) The following fell together in /ɔw/ in MidC:  
OldC /ɛw/ < PrimC /ɛw/ e.g. **Andrew** ‘Andrew’  
OldC /ɛw/ < PrimC /əw/ e.g. **Kernow** ‘Cornwall’  
OldC /aw/ < PrimC /aw/ e.g. **tanow** ‘thin’

As can be seen, /ɔw/ is a heavily loaded phoneme!

12.8.3 Developments in LateC

- (a) When stressed before a consonant, /ɔw/ remained stable.
- (b) When stressed before a vowel, /ɔw/ became /u:/; e.g. *lowen* 'glad' > LateC *looan*, or was smoothed, e.g. 'girl' > LateC *mēz*.
- (c) When unstressed finally, there was a tendency to reduce to [-ə].

12.8.4 Significant spellings in MidC <ou, ov, ow>12.8.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <ow>12.8.6 Unified spelling and pronunciation

Usually <ow>, but <ou> in the 2nd pl. ending -ough.

Two suggestions were made by Smith (1939) for the realization of stressed <ow>, "leaving the choice of sounds to the reader" !!

- (a) [ɛʊ], which is approximately the realization of the reflex of MidE /u:/ in the English dialect of west Cornwall (in words like cow);
- (b) [aʊ], "as in how", which would render it indistinguishable from /aw/, since [aʊ] was recommended for this phoneme also.

A minimal pair which serves to distinguish /aw/ and /ɔw/ is **glaw** 'rain' v. **glow** 'coal'. In ModB, these are pronounced ['glao] and ['glaʊ] respectively in Kastell Paol (St Pol-de-Léon), according to Sommerfelt (1978). As a speaker of English, I find it very difficult to separate these out of context: I tend to hear them both as the more familiar ModE [aʊ] as in cow, which lies between them. No doubt English speakers in the eighteenth century had the same problem, and identified both /aw/ and /ɔw/, as heard in Cornish place-names, with the reflex of MidE /u:/, viz. [ɛʊ], later becoming [ɛʊ].

Smith tackled this problem by re-spelling Nance's *glow* as *glo* (as in ModW), and assigning to it the pronunciation ['glɔ:]. This is more of an evasion than a solution. I prefer to recommend clearly that /ɔw/ be pronounced as [ɔʊ], thus making a recognizable distinction between /aw/ and /ɔw/. Thus the word **Howl** 'Sun' is more like English hole than English howl.

12.8.7	<u>Examples of /ɔw/</u>				TABLE 1280
	PHONEMIC	ENGLISH	MODERN	MODERN	UNIFIED
	SPELLING	MEANING	BRETON	WELSH	SPELLING

in stressed closed monosyllables

1	<b>down</b>	deep	( <i>don</i> )	<i>dwfn</i>	down
1	<b>dowr</b>	water	( <i>dour</i> )	( <i>dwr</i> )	dowr
1	<b>Howl</b>	Sun	( <i>heol</i> )	( <i>haul</i> )	howl
1	<b>krows</b>	cross	( <i>kroaz</i> )	( <i>croes</i> )	crows
1	<b>own</b>	fear	<i>aon</i>	<i>ofn</i>	own
1	<b>owr</b>	gold	( <i>aour</i> )	( <i>aur</i> )	owr
1	<b>pows</b>	dress	( <i>+peis</i> )	( <i>pais</i> )	pows

in stressed open monosyllables

1	<b>glow</b>	coal	<i>glaou</i>	( <i>glo</i> )	glow
1	<b>gow</b>	lie	<i>gaou</i>	<i>gau</i>	gow
1	<b>krow</b>	hut	<i>kraou</i>	<i>crau</i>	crow
1	<b>low</b>	lice	<i>laou</i>	<i>llau</i>	low
2	<b>pow</b>	country	<i>+pou</i>	<i>pau</i>	pow
2	<b>Yow</b>	Thursday	<i>Yaou</i>	<i>lau</i>	Yow

stressed before a vowel

1	<b>lowen</b>	happy	<i>laouen</i>	<i>llawen</i>	lowen
1	<b>mowes</b>	girl	<i>maouez</i>	-----	mowes
2	<b>powes</b>	rest	<i>paouez</i>	-----	powes
1	<b>yowynk</b>	young	<i>yaouank</i>	<i>ieuanc</i>	yowynk

unstressed finally

1	<b>-ow</b>	(pl. ending)	<i>-où</i>	<i>-au</i>	-ow
1	<b>ankow</b>	death	<i>ankou</i>	<i>angau</i>	ancow
1	<b>golow</b>	light	<i>goulou</i>	<i>golau</i>	golow
1	<b>Kernow</b>	Cornwall	<i>Kernev</i>	<i>Cernyw</i>	Kernow
2	<b>Yedhow</b>	Jew	<i>luzev</i>	<i>liddew</i>	Yedhow

For examples of svarabhakti /-ɔw/, see section 5.7.

## 12.9 DIPHTHONGAL PHONEME /uw/

12.9.1 Recommended pronunciation [øʊ]12.9.2 Sources

The first two elements of the OldC triphthongs /uiw/ and /oiw/ became [ø], giving a new diphthong.

12.9.3 Development in LateC

The first element of the diphthong became unrounded and lowered to [ɛ], so that the diphthong fell together with the reflex of MidC /ɛw/.

12.9.4 Significant spellings in MidC <u> and <ew>12.9.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <uw>

This spelling is due to Keith Bailey.

12.9.6 Unified spelling None; the diphthong was not recognized.12.9.7 Examples TABLE 1290

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b><i>Duw</i></b>	God	( <i>Doue</i> )	<i>Duw</i>	Dew
1	<b><i>gluw</i></b>	intense	-----	( <i>glew</i> )	glew
1	<b><i>guw</i></b>	lance	( <i>goaf</i> )	( <i>gwayw</i> )	gu, gew
1	<b><i>guw</i></b>	woe	( <i>gwâ</i> )	( <i>gwae</i> )	gew
1	<b><i>pluw</i></b>	parish	( <i>plwyf</i> )	( <i>plou</i> )	plu
1	<b><i>ruw</i></b>	king	( <i>roue</i> )	-----	ruy

This is the full set of examples in the language. The multiplicity of spellings in Unified Cornish, and the fact that the spellings of the cognates do not fit, meant that the phoneme was not identified until c. 2002, by Keith Bailey.

## CHAPTER 13

## THE SEMI-VOWELS

## 13.1 SEMI-VOCALIC PHONEME /j/

13.1.1 Recommended pronunciation

As *y* in English *yes*, i.e. [j].

13.1.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /j/ < [Proto-Brythonic](#) *j* and Latin *j*
- (b) /j/ in loan-words

13.1.3 Developments in LateC

There is some evidence for [j-] > [\[ɟ-\]](#) in proper names, e.g. *Yowan* > *Dzhuan* 'John'. In consonantal clusters, the changes [ssj] > [ʃ] and [tj] > [tʃ] occurred sporadically.

13.1.4 Significant spelling in MidC

<y> initially, also <ɜ> in BM; sometimes <i> medially. Initially, [/j/](#) was sometimes lost, e.g. *yethewon* ~ *ethewon* 'Jews'.

13.1.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <y>

N.B. Most verbal nouns formed from loan-words had their infinitive in [-ja], spelled <ya>, e.g. *redya* 'to read'. There was a tendency to lose /j/ in the past participle of these verbs, i.e. [-jɪz] > [-ɪz]. Following Wella Brown (2001, §244), I recommend the pronunciation without [j], spelled <-ys>, for the sake of simplicity. If [-jɪz] were chosen, it would have to be spelled <-yys>, which looks odd, to say the least. (In MidC <-ijs> was commonly used). [\[This needs revisiting.\]](#)

13.1.6 Unified spelling <y>

## 13.2 SEMI-VOCALIC PHONEME /w/

### 13.2.1 Recommended pronunciation

As w in English way, i.e. [w].

### 13.2.2 Principal sources

- (a) PrimC /w/ and /ww/, from 1) Proto-Brythonic w 2) Latin y
- (b) /w/ in loan-words
- (c) Lenition of /g-/ before /ɔ/

### 13.2.3 Development in LateC

Generally stable, but in the group /zw/ it was lost; e.g. MidC *peswar* ['pɛzwar] 'four' > LateC *padzhar* ['padʒar].

### 13.2.4 Significant spellings in MidC <u, v, w>

Initially in certain words, [w] was sometimes lost, e.g. *worth* ~ *orth*.

### 13.2.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <w>

### 13.2.6 Unified spelling <w>

## 14.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

14.1.1 Introduction

The occlusive consonants give rise to no fewer than fourteen phonemes [actually twelve, because /ɾ/ and /ð/ do not exist]. To avoid repetition in their individual descriptions, a summary of their historical development is given here. It is taken from George (1984), modified in the light of a paper by Harvey (1984), and revised taking account of Williams (1990).

14.1.2 Occlusive consonants in PrimC

The phonemic system of occlusive consonants in PrimC was relatively simple:

The voiceless occlusives /p,t,k/ had two allophones: [p,t,k] initially and in consonantal groups; [pp,tt,kk] between vowels, arising from the syncope of various groups. In final position, these phonemes could occur only in groups.

The voiced occlusives /b,d,g/ occurred in all positions, by themselves and in consonantal groups, and were single [b,d,g].

The quantity rules demanded that stressed vowels preceding /p,t,k/ were short, and those preceding /b,d,g/ were long or half-long.

14.1.2 Assibilation and palatalization of dental occlusives

Internal and final [d], both by itself and in the groups [ld], [nd] and [dw], became affricated to [dz]. This had two alternative co-existing developments, perhaps c. 1125: reduction to [z], and palatalization to [dʒ] (common medially but rare finally).

Likewise, internal and final [t] in the groups [lt] and [nt], became affricated to [ts], perhaps c. 1075; this could be voiced and then had the same two developments [z] and [dʒ] medially, but only [z] finally: in place-names it was often voiceless, but may be treated as an allophone of /z/.

These changes did not occur when [d] was followed by a vowel + a liquid or nasal consonant.

### 14.1.3 The effect of loan-words in MidC

In MidC, there was extensive borrowing of words from MidE. Some of these were accommodated to the Cornish sound-system, but others were not. Some loan-words had [p,t,k] following half-long and long vowels; and [t] and [d] were re-introduced after vowels in final position. New oppositions were thus set up, causing what were previously allophones to assume phonemic status:

- (a) /p,t,k/ versus /pp,tt,kk/, **medially**
- (b) **/t,d/ versus /t̪,ð/**
- (c) Finally after vowels, /p,t,k/ versus /b,d,g/; previously, only /b,d,g/ could occur in this position.

Minimal pairs, in most cases rather forced, testify to these and other phonemic oppositions (the spelling is phonemic)

/k/ v. /kk/	<b>laka</b>	‘stream’	[ˈlaːka]	<b>lakka</b>	‘worse’	[ˈlakːa]
/k/ v. /g/	<b>lok</b>	‘presence’	[ˈlɔːk]	<b>log</b>	‘cell’	[ˈlɔːg]
	<b>duk</b>	‘duke’	[ˈdyːk]	<b>dug</b>	‘carried’	[ˈdyːg]
/t/ v. /d/	<b>gront</b>	‘grant’	[ˈgrɔːnt]	<b>grond</b>	‘ground’	[ˈgrɔːnd]

In a very few loan-words, the new phonemes /bb,dd,gg/ appeared, but there were foreign to the Cornish system.

The quantity rules were modified so that stressed vowels preceding /p,t,k/ and /b,d,g/ were long or half-long, and those preceding /pp,tt,kk/ and /bb,dd,gg/ were short.

## 14.2 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /p/

### 14.2.1 Recommended pronunciation

[p], as p in English pit, taper, keep.

14.2.2 Sources, distribution and examples

- (a) In PrimC, it was not possible to have [p] between or after vowels, because British intervocal [p] had become [b] c.475. [p] therefore occurred only in initial position, except in groups.

e.g.	<b>penn</b>	'head'	<	PrimC	/penn/
	<b>poll</b>	'pool'	<	OldE	<i>pol</i>
	<b>payn</b>	'pain'	<	MidE	< OldF <i>peine</i>

- (b) When the Cornish quantity system was weakened in MidC, it allowed occasional loan-words with [p]

- (i) medially after stressed half-long vowels e.g. *paper* 'paper'
- (ii) finally after stressed long vowels e.g. *shap* 'shape'
- (iii) finally after unstressed vowels e.g. *parhap* 'perhaps'

- (c) **Loan-words with English [-p] following a short vowel** have had to be re-spelled with <pp> instead of <p>, to emphasize that the preceding vowel is short. **This is a spelling convention only; these words do not contain /pp/.**

e.g.	<b>klapp</b>	'chatter'	<	MidE	<i>clappe</i>	<	OldE	<i>clapp-</i>
	<b>hwyp</b>	'whip'	<	MidE	<	Gmc	<i>wippe</i>	
	<b>stopp</b>	'stop'	<	MidE	<	OldE	<i>stopp-</i>	
	<b>tapp</b>	'tap'	<	MidE	<	OldE	<i>tæppa</i>	

14.2.3 Development in LateC - Stable14.2.4 Spelling

The commonest spelling in MidC, the phonemic spelling, and the unified spelling are all <p>.

## 14.3 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /pp/

14.3.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [p], but of longer duration, as p P in English tap Peter.

14.3.2 Sources, distribution and examples

- (1) In PrimC, [pp] arose between vowels
- (a) by reduction of PrimC [b"h] in subjunctive tenses, e.g. **skuppo** 'may sweep';
  - (b) by reduction of PrimC [b"h] in superlatives, and (by analogy) in comparatives, e.g. **glyppa** 'wetter';
  - (c) by the reduction /bp/ > [pp], e.g. **meppik** 'infant son'
- (2) A number of loan-words fit in with this:

e.g.	<b>appla</b>	'abler'	(by analogy)
	<b>kappa</b>	'cap'	< OldE <i>cæppa</i>
	<b>lappa</b>	'lappet'	< OldE <i>lappa</i>
	<b>mappa</b>	'map'	< MedL <i>mappa</i>
	<b>supposya</b>	'to suppose'	< MidE < OldF <i>supposer</i>

14.3.3 Development in LateC      Stable14.3.4 Spelling

The phonemic spelling is <pp>, as was the commonest spelling in MidC. In the unified system, <pp> is used medially and <p> finally.

## 14.4 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /t/

14.4.1 Recommended pronunciation

An alveolar [t], as t̪ in English tea, later, beet; this is more likely to have been the realization of /t/ than the dental [t] found in French.

14.4.2 Sources, distribution and examples

- (a) In PrimC, it was not possible to have [t] between or after vowels, because [Proto-Brythonic](#) intervocal [t] had become [d] c. 475. [t] therefore occurred only in initial position, except in groups; and even in groups, its distribution was restricted owing to palatalization.

e.g.	<b>torgh</b>	‘boar’	<	PrimC /tɔrx/
	<b>tonnell</b>	‘cask’	<	OldF <i>tonnelle</i>
	<b>tollor</b>	‘tax-collector’	<	OldE <i>tollere</i>
	<b>torment</b>	‘torment’	<	MidE

- (b) When the Cornish quantity system was weakened in MidC, it allowed loan-words with [t]:

- (i) medially after stressed half-long vowels;
- (ii) finally after stressed long vowels;
- (iii) finally after unstressed vowels.

For examples, please see table 1440.

- (c) [Loan-words with English \[-t\] following a short vowel](#) have had to be re-spelled with <tt> instead of <t>, to emphasize that the preceding vowel is short. [This is a spelling convention only; these words do not contain /tt/.](#)

e.g.	<b>sett</b>	‘he sets’	<	OldE <i>settan</i>
	<b>pytt</b>	‘pit’	<	OldE <i>pytt</i>

- (d) Provection of [d-] also give [t-]; e.g. **ow tegi** ‘carrying’ from **degi** ‘to carry’.

14.4.3 Development in LateC Stable14.4.4 Spelling

The commonest spelling in MidC, the phonemic spelling, and the unified spelling are all <t>.

## EXAMPLES OF /t/ IN LOAN-WORDS

TABLE 1440

in circumstances at variance with the original quantity rules

PHONEMIC	MODERN	DERIVATION		UNIFIED
SPELLING	ENGLISH	SPELLING		
(a)	<u>medially after stressed diphthongs and half-long vowels</u>			
<b>kota</b>	coat	MidE	< OldF <i>cote</i>	cota
<b>mata</b>	mate	MidE	< Gmc <i>mate</i>	mata
<b>mater</b>	matter	MidE	< NorF <i>matere</i>	mater
<b>sita</b>	city	MidE <i>cite</i>	< OldF	cyta
<b>traytour</b>	traitor	MidE	< OldF	traytour
(b)	<u>finally after stressed diphthongs and long vowels</u>			
<b>dout</b>	doubt	MidE	< OldF <i>doute</i>	dowt
<b>fowt</b>	fault	MidE	< OldF <i>faute</i>	fowt
<b>frut</b>	fruit	MidE	< OldF <i>fruit</i>	frut
<b>out</b>	out	MidE	< OldE <i>ūt</i>	owt
<b>stat</b>	state	MidE	< OldF & MedL	stat
(c)	<u>finally after an unstressed vowel</u>			
<b>basnet</b>	‘helmet’	MidE	< OldF <i>bacinet</i>	basnet
<b>garget</b>	‘garter’	MidE	< OldF <i>gargate</i>	garget
<b>kewlet</b>	quilt	MidE	< OldF <i>cuilte</i>	kewlet
<b>polat</b>	‘fellow’	MidE	< NorF <i>poulot</i>	pollat
<b>Pilat</b>	Pilate			

## 14.5 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /ɾ/

This phoneme does not exist, so the section has been omitted.

## 14.6 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /tt/

14.6.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [t], but of longer duration; as t t in English a bit tired.

14.6.2 Sources, distribution and examples

(a) In PrimC, [tt] arose between vowels:

- (i) by reduction of PrimC [d" h] in subjunctive tenses,  
e.g. **pottro** 'may he rot'
- (ii) by a number of other reductions, notably of /td/, /θd/ /θt/, /θww/  
and /dd/; e.g. **kaletter** 'difficulty', **kettoeth** 'as quick as',  
**poenvotter** 'misery'.

(b) A few loan-words fit in with this:

e.g. **attendya** 'to pay heed to' < OldF *atendre*

14.6.3 Development in OldC                      Stable14.6.4 Spelling

The phonemic spelling is <tt>, as was the commonest spelling in MidC. In the Unified system, <tt> is used medially and <t> finally.

## 14.7 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /k/

14.7.1 Recommended pronunciation

[k], as k in English kit, taken, beak.

14.7.2 Sources, distribution and examples

- (a) In PrimC, it was not possible to have [k] between or after vowels, because **Proto-Brythonic** intervocal [k] had become [g] c. 475. [k] therefore occurred only in initial position, and in groups; e.g.

<b>koth</b> ‘old’	< PrimC /kɔθ/	< <b>Proto-Brythonic</b> *kotto-
<b>keus</b> ‘cheese’	< PrimC /kws/	< CLat <i>caseus</i>
<b>kanna</b> ‘flagon’	< OldE <i>canne</i>	
<b>kinda</b> ‘type’	< MidE	

- (b) When the Cornish quantity system was weakened in MidC, it allowed occasional loan-words with [k]:

- (i) medially after stressed half-long vowels; e.g. **tokyn** ‘token’
- (ii) finally after stressed long vowels; e.g. **hok** ‘hawk’, **duk** ‘duke’

- (c) **Loan-words with English [-k] following a short vowel** have had to be re-spelled with <kk> instead of <k>, to emphasize that the preceding vowel is short. **This is a spelling convention only; these words do not contain /kk/.**

e.g. <b>brykk</b>	‘brick’	<	Gmc <i>bricke</i>
<b>krakk</b>	‘crack’	<	OldE <i>crac-</i>
<b>kwykk</b>	‘quick’	<	OldE <i>cwicu</i>
<b>prykk</b>	‘point’	<	OldE <i>prica</i>

- (d) Provection of [g-] also gives [k-]; e.g. **ow kul** ‘doing’ from **gul** ‘to do’.

14.7.3 Development in LateC                      Stable14.7.4 Spelling in MidC

As in MidE, <c> tended to be used before <a, o, u; l, r> and <k> otherwise. This rule was not absolute, however; <k> was often found before <a>, especially in **Bewnans Meryasek**.

14.7.5 Recommended phonemic spelling                      <k> in all cases14.7.6 Unified spelling

<c> before <a, o, u; l, r>; the cluster [kw] is spelled <qu>; otherwise <k>.

## 14.8 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /kk/

14.6.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [k], but of longer duration; as ck c in English sick cat.

14.6.2 Sources, distribution and examples

(a) In PrimC, [kk] arose between vowels:

- (i) by reduction of PrimC [g"ʰ] in subjunctive tenses,  
e.g. **dokko** 'may carry'
- (ii) by reduction of PrimC [g"ʰ] in superlatives, and (by analogy) in  
comparatives, e.g. **tekka** 'fairer'.

(b) A number of loan-words fit in with this: e.g.

<b>hakkyā</b>	'to hack'	<	OldE <i>haccian</i>
<b>rakka</b>	'rake'	<	OldE <i>raca</i>
<b>stokkys</b>	'stocks'	<	OldE <i>stocc-</i>

14.8.3 Development in OldC                      Stable

14.8.4 Spelling in MidC                              <k>, <ck> and <kk>

14.8.5 Recommended phonemic spelling                      <kk>

14.8.6 Unified spelling

<k> finally (and occasionally medially); either <cc> or <kk>  
medially; e.g. *lacca* 'worse', *takkyā* 'to tack'.

There is no section 15.1.

## 15.2 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /b/

### 15.2.1 Recommended pronunciation

[b], as b in English bit, tuba, cube; except when unvoiced to [p] in sandhi.

### 15.2.2 Sources, distribution and examples

- (a) Initially, from **Proto-Brythonic** and Latin b;  
e.g. **bern** 'heap', **breg**h 'arm'.
- (b) In all positions, due to lenition of [p], either in **Proto-Brythonic** c. 475, or later, due to analogy;  
e.g. **mab** 'son', **ober** 'work'.
- (c) Loan-words containing /b/  
e.g. **batel** 'battle', **obaya** 'to obey'.

### 15.2.3 Development in LateC

Stable; spellings <bb> in polysyllables indicate that the preceding vowel, which had been half-long in MidC, was short after c. 1600.

### 15.2.4 Significant spellings in MidC

Usually <b>, but sometimes <p> finally.

### 15.2.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<b>, except finally in unstressed syllables of polysyllables, where <p> is recommended for the reasons given in section 6.5.

### 15.2.6 Unified spelling

<b> initially and medially; finally Nance used <p> in polysyllables, but could not make up his mind in certain common monosyllables, e.g. from his 1955 dictionary: hep (b) 'without', map (b) 'son'.

## 15.3 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /bb/

15.3.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [b], but longer, e.g. as b B in English rob Basil.

15.3.2 Sources

/bb/ is alien to the Cornish sound-system. Any words containing /bb/ must be loan-words. The only example of any consequence in the traditional texts is *robb-* 'to rob'. If we wish to retain this word in Revived Cornish, then /bb/ will remain as a marginal phoneme.

Nance's *bobba* 'simpleton' and *hobba* 'riding-horse' appear on etymological grounds to contain /b/ rather than /bb/, and should be re-spelled with <b>.

## 15.4 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /d/

15.4.1 Recommended pronunciation

[d], as d in English dog, laden, road. In sandhi (see section 5.12), it may be unvoiced to [t].

15.4.2 Sources, distribution and examples

- (a) Initially, from [Proto-Brythonic](#) and Latin d-;  
e.g. **derow** 'oaks', **difenn** 'ban'.
  - (b) Initially and medially, due to lenition of [t], either in [Proto-Brythonic](#) c. 475, or later, due to analogy;  
e.g. **peder** 'four (f.)', **pader** 'Lord's Prayer'.
- N.B. /d/ cannot occur finally in native words, since [-d] was [subject to assibilation and palatalization](#) before the time of MidC.
- (c) Loan-words containing /d/ in all positions:  
e.g. **dons** 'dance', **steda** 'steed', **snod** 'ribbon'.

### 15.4.3 Development in LateC

Stable; spellings <dd> in polysyllables indicate that the preceding vowel, which had been half-long in MidC, was short after c. 1600.

### 15.4.4 Significant spellings in MidC

Usually <d>, but sometimes <t> or <dt> finally.

### 15.4.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<d> under all circumstances; the situation of final /-d/ in unstressed syllables of polysyllables is different from that of /b/ and /g/, in that, at least in principle, it was possible for /-d/ to contrast with /-t/.

### 15.4.6 Unified spelling <d>

## 15.5 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /ð/

[This phoneme does not exist, so the section has been omitted.](#)

## 15.6 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /dd/

### 15.6.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [d], but longer in duration.

### 15.6.2 Sources and examples

/dd/ is alien to the Cornish sound-system. Any words containing /bb/ must be loan-words. All the traditional examples are from TH. They are *badd* 'bad', *forbyddys* 'forbidden', *ryddya* 'to rid' and *addya* 'to add'. If we wish to keep these words in Revived Cornish (and [they](#) can be replaced by **drog**, **difennys**, **karthys** and **keworra** respectively), then /dd/ would remain as a marginal phoneme.

## 15.7 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /g/

15.7.1 Recommended pronunciation

[g], as g in English gap, tiger, vague; except whe unvoiced to [k] in sandhi.

15.7.2 Sources

- (a) Initially, from [Proto-Brythonic](#) and Latin g-; e.g. **gelvin** ‘beak’, **gradh** ‘step’.
- (b) From lenition of [t], either in [Proto-Brythonic](#) c. 475 (all positions), e.g. **drog** ‘bad’, **legest** ‘lobster’; or later, due to analogy (initially).
- (c) Loan-words containing /g/, e.g. **grond** ‘ground’, **gis** ‘custom’.
- (d) PrimC /ww-/ in the initial cluster /gw-/, e.g. **gwann** ‘weak’.
- (e) OldE /w-/ was treated in the same way, e.g. **gwarnya** ‘to warn’ < OldE *warnian*; note also the loan-word **gordhya** ‘to worship’ from MidE *wurthi* < OldE *wordig*, where /wɔ-/ was perceived as lenited /gɔ-/.

15.7.3 Development in LateC                      Stable15.7.4 Significant spellings in MidC

<g> initially and medially; <k> finally.

15.7.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<g> except finally in unstressed syllables of polysyllables, where <k> is recommended for the reasons given in section 6.5. This means that the common adjectival ending *-ek* remains so spelled.

15.7.6 Unified spelling

<g> initially and medially: finally, Nance used <k> in polysyllables, but could not make up his mind in certain common monosyllables; e.g. from his 1955 dictionary: *rak*(g) ‘for’, *kyk*(g) ‘meat’.

## 15.8 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /gg/

### 15.8.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [g], but longer in duration.

### 15.8.2 Sources and examples

/gg/ is alien to the Cornish sound-system. Any words containing /gg/ must be loan-words. There are very few of them. Possible candidates are *shagga* 'shag', which could well be retained, and ***jagg*** 'jag', re-spelled from MidC *iag*. Note that LateC *figgez* 'figs' does not contain /gg/ but /g/; on being moved back to a MidC base it would become *figys*.

CHAPTER 16      SPIRANTS

## 16.1      CONSONANTAL PHONEME /f/

16.1.1      Recommended pronunciation

This phoneme has two allophones:

- (a) Except as in (b) below, it is pronounced [f], as f in English fat.
- (b) When preceded by /m,n,l,r/ or a vowel, and followed by /m,n,l,r/ or a vowel, whether internally within a word, or at a word-boundary, it may be half-voiced to [ɸ]. This is a sound halfway between that of f in English fat and that of v in English vat.

N.B. Case (b) includes the example of the definite article followed by a noun beginning with /f-/; e.g.

<b><i>an flogh</i></b>	'the child'	(masc. sg.)
<b><i>an fordh</i></b>	'the road'	(fem. sg.)
<b><i>an fleghe</i></b>	'the children'	(masc. pl.)
<b><i>an fordhaw</i></b>	'the roads'	(fem. pl.)

The /f-/ in all these examples may be half-voiced to [ɸ], irrespective of whether the noun is masculine or feminine, singular or plural. We are dealing here with an allophonic variation of /f/, not a soft mutation as believed by Nance.

16.1.2      Principal sources

- (a) **Proto-Brythonic** f
- (b) Spirantization of **Proto-Brythonic** p      (i.e. 3rd state mutation)
- (c) Lenition-and-provection of **Proto-Brythonic** b and m  
(i.e. 5th state mutation)
- (d) f in loan-words
- (e) **PrimC** /β/ before /r/

N.B. The verb ***skrif*** 'to write (and its compounds)' should etymologically contain /v/, being derived from Latin *scrib-*, but there is clear evidence that in this particular word, /v/ > /f/ at an early stage. [\[In the first edition](#)

of PSRC, *niver* 'number' was also included here, but that is unwarranted.]

### 16.1.3 Development in LateC

This consonant became voiced to [v], and thereby fell together with the reflex of MidC /v/, c. 1575.

### 16.1.4 Spelling

The commonest spelling in MidC, the recommended phonemic spelling, and the Unified spelling are all <f>.

### 16.1.5 Examples of intervocal /f/

TABLE 1610

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
2	<b>difenn</b>	ban	<i>difenn</i>	( <i>diffyn</i> )	dyfen
2	( <i>ifarn</i> )	hell	<i>ifern</i>	( <i>uffern</i> )	yffarn
3	<b>Lusifer</b>	Lucifer	<i>Lusifer</i>	-----	Lucyfer
2	<b>profoes</b>	prophet	( <i>profed</i> )	<i>proffwyd</i>	profus
3	<b>sakrifis</b>	sacrifice	<i>sakrifis</i>	-----	sacryfys
2	( <i>skrifa</i> )	to write	<i>skrivañ</i>	( <i>ysgrifennu</i> )	scryfa

## 16.2 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /ff/

### 16.2.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [f], but longer; e.g. as f in English half fed.

### 16.2.2 Sources

In PrimC, [ff] arose:

- (i) by reduction of PrimC /β<sup>h</sup>/ and /μ<sup>h</sup>/ in subjunctive tenses, e.g. **a dheffo** 'may come';
- (ii) by reduction of PrimC /β<sup>h</sup>/ and /μ<sup>h</sup>/ in superlatives,

and by analogy in comparatives, e.g. **klaffa** 'sicker';

- (iii) by the assimilation of /θp/ in the word *keffrys* ‘also’ = *keth* + *prys*; [*<ff>* in *keffrys* is now thought to represent /f/, not /ff/].

Similarly, *<ff>* in MidC *neffre* ‘never’ is now thought to be /f/, not /ff/.

### 16.2.3 Development in LateC Stable

### 16.2.4 Spelling

The commonest spelling in MidC and the recommended phonemic spelling are both *<ff>*. This is also the commonest Unified spelling.

## 16.3 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /v/

### 16.3.1 Recommended pronunciation

[v], as v in English *va*t, *river, *ca*ve; except when unvoiced to [f] according to the rules of sandhi (see section 5.11).*

### 16.3.2 Sources

There are two distinct and important sources for this phoneme:

- (a) PrimC /β/, which was the result of lention of Proto-Brythonic b;
- (b) PrimC /μ/, which was the result of lention of Proto-Brythonic m;

The reflexes of these fell together in [v] c. 1100, according to Jackson (LHEB §100).

A later source was MidE /v/ in loan-words.

### 16.3.3 Development in LateC

In general, [v] remained stable, except when final after an unstressed vowel, where it was lost. Certain exceptional developments are worth noting:

- (a) [w] as well as [v] in MidC *cafos* ‘to get’ and *hafos* ‘summer pasture’;
- (b) [v] was lost in the word *levere* / > lawle ‘to speak’.

16.3.4 Significant spellings in MidC

<f>, <u> and <v> between vowels; <f> and <ff> finally after vowels.

16.3.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <v>16.3.6 Unified spelling

Nance followed the conventions of MidC, using <f> finally, and usually <v> but sometimes <f> intervocally.

16.3.7 Examples of intervocal /v/

TABLE 1630

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
3	<b>avis</b>	advice	<i>avis</i>	-----	avys
3	<b>avodya</b>	to retire	-----	-----	avodya
1	<b>davas</b>	sheep	<i>dañvad</i>	<i>dafad</i>	davas
3	<b>Davydh</b>	David	-----	<i>Dafydd</i>	Davyth
3	<b>governa</b>	to govern	<i>(gouarn)</i>	-----	governa
2	<b>govynn</b>	to ask	-----	<i>gofyn</i>	govyn
1	<b>haval</b>	similar	<i>hañval</i>	<i>hafal</i>	haval
1	<b>lavar</b>	speech	<i>lavar</i>	<i>llafar</i>	lavar
D	<b>lavur</b>	labour	<i>+laur</i>	<i>llafur</i>	lafur
U	<b>previ</b>	to prove	<i>(prouiñ)</i>	<i>(profi)</i>	prevy
3	<b>resseva</b>	to receive	<i>(resev)</i>	-----	receva
1	<b>sevel</b>	to stand	<i>sevel</i>	<i>sefyll</i>	sevel
1	<b>skevens</b>	lungs	<i>skevent</i>	<i>ysgyfaint</i>	skevens

## 16.4 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /θ/

### 16.4.1 Recommended pronunciation

[θ], as th in English thin, pithy, breath.

### 16.4.2 Sources

(a) Spirantization of [Proto-Brythonic](#) t.

(b) /θ/ in loan-words.

N.B. The verbal particle *yth* should on etymological grounds contain /ð/, but Lhuyd's evidence points to [θ].

### 16.4.3 Developments in LateC

(a) Medially after a stressed vowel, [θ] in the groups /rθ/ and /lθ/ tended to be lost or reduced to [h].

(b) Finally after a stressed vowel, [rθ] > [rh] c. 1625.

(c) Finally after an unstressed vowel, [θ] was lost c. 1575 after /r/ and occasionally otherwise.

(d) In other environments, /θ/ remained stable.

16.4.4 Spelling in MidC Usually <th>, but sometimes <ʒ> in MC.

16.4.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <th>

16.4.6 Unified spelling <th>

## 16.5 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /θθ/

16.5.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [θ], but longer, as th th in English he hath thought.

16.5.2 Sources

In principle, syncope of the PrimC groups /θ" h/ and /ð" h/ in subjunctives and superlatives would have produced a phoneme /θθ/.

16.5.3 Development in LateC No data16.5.4 Spelling in MidC

In most cases /θθ/ was spelled <th>, e.g.

<i>cotha</i>	'oldest'	/kɔθθa/	<	PrimC /kɔθ" haμ/
<i>dywetha</i>	'last'	/diwεθθa/	<	PrimC
/diwεð" haμ/				
<i>latho</i>	'may he kill'	/laθθɔ/	<	PrimC /lað" hɔ/

but there are rare examples of the grapheme <thth>, e.g.

<i>coththo</i>	'may fall'	/koθθɔ/ (PC.2552)
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16.5.5 Recommended spelling

It is considered inconvenient to double <th>; since this phoneme is rare, it is suggested that <th> be used. Note, however, that it is preceded by a short vowel. [\[The trigraph \*tth\* is now used for this phoneme.\]](#)

16.5.6 Unified spelling <th>

## 16.6 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /ð/

### 16.6.1 Recommended pronunciation

[ð], as th in English thither.

### 16.6.2 Sources and distribution

- (a) The principal source is the lenition, c. 475, of **Proto-Brythonic** d, itself from (1) Proto-Brythonic d, (2) Latin d.
- (b) The PrimC consonant groups [dl] and [dn] became [ðl] and [ðn], and upon the development of svarabhakti, [ðəl] and [ðən]. Similar changes occurred occasionally to the PrimC groups [dr] and [dw].

[ð] does not occur in absolute initial, except in two words which acquired a permanent initial lenition. These are **dhe** 'to' (and its compounds) and **dha** 'thy' (and its compounds). Both of these words are pronounced [ðə]. The difference in spelling, which was introduced by Nance, contravenes the phonemic principle, but is retained for clarity.

### 16.6.3 Developments in LateC

After a stressed vowel, [rð] > [rr], medially possibly c. 1700 and finally c. 1575. Otherwise [ð] remained generally stable.

### 16.6.4 Spelling in MidC Usually <th>, but sometimes <ʒ> in MC.

### 16.4.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<dh>, a grapheme which was introduced by Lhuyd in all positions. This often corresponds to <dd> in ModW, and <z> in ModB.

### 16.4.6 Unified spelling

<dh> initially and medially, but <th> finally. It is not clear why Nance did not distinguish /ð/ and /θ/ finally, spelling them both <th>. If it was by analogy with the occlusives, then the analogy is false. The contrast voiced v. unvoiced finally is lacking phonemically in the occlusives (at least in native words), but this does not apply to the interdental spirants /θ/ and /ð/. This is shown by minimal pairs such as **goedh** 'goose', 'wild' v. **goeth** 'vein'; **godh** 'mole' v. **goth** = lenited **koth** 'old'. Nance wrote all of these as goth. It is usually possible to recognize those words which contain /-ð/, since their

compounds are nearly always spelled by Nance with <-dh>. A selection is given in table 1660.

EXAMPLES OF /ð/ FINALLY  
1660

Table

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED
	SPELLING				
(a)	<u>after a stressed vowel</u>				
1	<b>a vydh</b>	will be	<i>a vez</i>	<i>a fydd</i>	a vyth
1	<b>bedh</b>	grave	<i>bez</i>	<i>bedd</i>	beth
1	<b>bloedh</b>	year	<i>bloaz</i>	<i>blwydd</i>	bloth
1	<b>dydh</b>	day	<i>deiz</i>	<i>dydd</i>	deth
1	<b>skoedh</b>	shoulder	<i>skoaz</i>	<i>ysgwydd</i>	scoth
1	<b>yn medh</b>	quoth	<i>(eme)</i>	-----	yn meth
1	<b>ynwedh</b>	also	<i>ivez</i>	<i>(hefyd)</i>	ynweth
(b)	<u>after a liquid consonant</u>				
1	<b>ardh</b>	height	-----	<i>+ardd</i>	arth
3	<b>fordh</b>	road	-----	<i>ffordd</i>	forth
1	<b>hordh</b>	ram	<i>(horzh)</i>	<i>hordd</i>	horth
1	<b>kerdh</b>	walk	<i>(kerzh)</i>	<i>cerdd</i>	kerth
1	<b>tardh</b>	explosion	<i>(tarzh)</i>	<i>tardd</i>	tarth
(c)	<u>after an unstressed vowel</u>				
1	<b>arludh</b> > <b>arloedh</b>	lord	-----	<i>arglwydd</i>	arluth
3	<b>Davydh</b>	David	-----	<i>Dafydd</i>	Davyth
1	<b>diwedh</b>	end	<i>diwez</i>	<i>diwedd</i>	deweth
1	<b>eledh</b>	angels	<i>elez</i>	-----	eleth
1	<b>gohydh</b>	daughter-in-law	<i>gouhez</i>	<i>gwaudd</i>	guhyth
1	<b>gorsedh</b>	gorsedd	<i>goursez</i>	<i>gorsedd</i>	gorseth
1	<b>gwiryonedh</b> gwryyoneth	truth	<i>gwirionez</i>	<i>gwirionedd</i>	
1	<b>menydh</b>	mountain	<i>menez</i>	<i>mynydd</i>	meneth
1	<b>nowydh</b>	new	<i>nevez</i>	<i>newydd</i>	noweth
1	<b>truedh</b>	sadness	<i>truez</i>	-----	trueth

## 16.7 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /x/

16.7.1 Recommended pronunciation

This phoneme has two allophones:

- (a) In final position, and in the group /xt/, it is pronounced [x]. This sound is not found in English, except in careful pronunciations of loan-words, e.g. the ch in loch. It is a voiceless velar spirant, and is written ch in German Achtung, Bach.
- (b) Between vowels, and in the groups /lx/ and /rx/ between vowels, it may be pronounced [h]. This is the sound of h in English aha, and is slightly different from that of h in initial position. MidC spellings indicate that [x] > [h] in these environments before the reference date of 1500.

16.7.2 Sources

- (a) Spirantization of [Proto-Brythonic](#) /k/;
- (b) /rx/ < /rȳ/ and /lx/ < /rȳ/, dated as c. 1125 by Jackson;
- (c) MidE /x/.

16.7.3 Developments in LateC

- (a) Intervocally, after the close stressed vowels /ɪ/ and /y/, the spirant was frequently lost.
- (b) Finally after vowels, [x] > [h] > loss.
- (c) /x/ in /-lx/ and /-rx/ usually became /θ/ c. 1525, though a few words developed an epenthetic vowel before losing the spirant completely.

16.7.4 Significant spellings in MidC <gh>, <h>

## EXAMPLES OF /x/

Table 1670

	PHONEMIC SPELLING SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED
(a)	<u>between vowels</u>				
1	<b>byghan</b>	small	<i>bihan</i>	<i>bychan</i>	byghan
1	<b>degghow &gt; dyghow</b>	right	<i>dehou</i>	( <i>de</i> )	dyghow
3	<b>lagha</b>	law	-----	-----	lagha
1	<b>nagha</b>	to deny	<i>nac'hañ</i>	-----	nagha
1	<b>ughel</b>	high	<i>uhel</i>	<i>uchel</i>	ughel
(b)	<u>after vowels in monosyllables</u>				
2	<b>breggh</b>	arm	<i>brec'h</i>	<i>braich</i>	breggh
D	<b>floggh</b>	child	<i>floc'h</i>	-----	floggh
1	<b>hweggh</b>	six	<i>c'hwec'h</i>	<i>chwech</i>	hweggh
1	<b>yaggh</b>	healthy	<i>yac'h</i>	<i>iach</i>	yaggh
(c)	<u>medially in groups after stressed vowels</u>				
1	<b>argghans</b>	silver	<i>arc'hant</i>	( <i>arian</i> )	argghans
2	<b>kargghar</b>	fetter	<i>karc'har</i>	<i>carchar</i>	cargghar
1	<b>kerghes &gt; kyrghes</b>	to fetch	<i>kerc'hat</i>	-----	kerghes
1	<b>margghhek</b>	horseman	<i>marc'heg</i>	<i>marchog</i>	margghhak
(d)	<u>finally in groups after stressed vowels</u>				
1	<b>ergh</b>	snow	<i>erc'h</i>	( <i>eira</i> )	ergh
2	<b>gwyrgh</b>	virginal	<i>gwerc'h</i>	( <i>gwry</i> )	gwergh
1	<b>kergh</b>	oats	<i>kerc'h</i>	<i>ceirch</i>	kergh
1	<b>lergh</b>	track	<i>lerc'h</i>	-----	lergh
1	<b>molgh</b>	thrush	<i>moualc'h</i>	<i>mwyalch</i>	molgh

### 16.7.5 Recommended spelling

This is another difficult case, in which the phonemic principle is not strictly adhered to. <gh> is used to apply to both allophones in medial and final position. This solution is preferred to the alternative of using <gh> finally and <h> medially, since we would then have conflicts like *nagh* v. *nagha*; i.e. the etymological spelling prevails in this case. [SWF started off using <gh> finally and <h> medially, but in the 2013 revision, changed to <gh> both finally and medially.]

In initial position, <h> is used to represent [h], which is the spirant mutation of /k-/, e.g. **teyr hath** 'three cats'; and lenition-and-protection of /g-/, e.g. **y hyll** 'he can'.

### 16.7.6 Unified spelling

<gh> is used medially and finally; <h> initially. There is indecision in certain words with intervocal /x/ (i.e. [h]); e.g. *byghan* ~ *byhan* 'small'.

## 16.8 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /xx/

### 16.8.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [x], but longer in duration.

### 16.8.2 Sources

Syncope of the PrimC group /xʰh/ in subjunctives, superlatives and (by analogy) comparatives.

### 16.8.3 Development in LateC      No data

### 16.8.4 Spelling in MidC

The evidence for the existence of this phoneme in MidC is scanty; it was spelled <gh> like the single consonant /x/. Yet in theory, there was a difference between *segħa* ['sɛxxa] 'drier' and *segħa* ['sɛːxa] 'to dry'. [These words are now spelled **syggha** and **sygha** respectively].



16.8.5 Recommended spelling

It is considered inconvenient to double <gh>; since this phoneme is rare, it is suggested that <gh> be used. Note, however, that it is preceded by a short vowel. [The trigraph **ggh** is now used for this phoneme.]

16.8.6 Unified spelling <gh>

## 16.9 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /h/

16.9.1 Recommended pronunciation

[h], as h in English hat.

16.9.2 Sources and distribution

In general, /h/ occurs only initially; it arose in the first instance by lenition of Proto-Brythonic s, c. 475. In the words *hartha* 'to bark' and *hanow* 'name', a non-etymological [h-] was accreted. Loan-words with [h-] are in theory from Germanic, since loan-words from CLat via OldF and MidC lost [h-] at the stage of Vulgar Latin.

16.9.3 Development in LateC Stable16.9.4 Significant spelling in MidC

<h> was used in most words, but the reflex of Proto-Brythonic sw- was spelled <wh> and <w> (e.g. MidC *whans* 'desire').

16.9.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<h> in all cases; MidC and Unified <wh> is re-spelled <hw>.

16.9.6 Unified spelling

The same conventions are used as in MidC: <h> and <wh>.



## CHAPTER 17      SIBILANTS, SHIBILANTS AND AFFRICATES

### 17.1      CONSONANTAL PHONEMES /s/ AND /z/

[Only the sibilant /s/ was recognized in the first edition of PSRC.  
We now recognize two sibilants, /s/ and /z/.]

#### 17.1.1      Recommended pronunciation

/s/ has two allophones:

- (a) Except as in (b) below, it is pronounced [s], as s in English sat.
- (b) When preceded by /m,n,l,r/ or a vowel, and followed by /m,n,l,r/ or a vowel, whether internally within a word, or at a word-boundary, it may be half-voiced to [ʃ]. This is a sound halfway between [s] and [z].

N.B. Case (b) includes the example of the definite article followed by a noun beginning with /s-/; e.g.

<b>an Sows</b>	'the Englishman'	(masc. sg.)
<b>an sel</b>	'the base'	(fem. sg.)
<b>an Sowson</b>	'the Englishmen'	(masc. pl.)
<b>an selyow</b>	'the bases'	(fem. pl.)

The /s-/ in all these examples may be half-voiced to [ʃ-], irrespective of whether the noun is masculine or feminine, singular or plural. We are dealing here with an allophonic variation of /s/, not a soft mutation as believed by Nance.

/z/, which was not recognized by Nance, nor in the first edition of PSRC, is pronounced [z].

#### 17.1.2      Sources

- (a) PrimC /s/
- (b) /s/ in loan-words
- (c) MidE /z/ between vowels was identified with /s/
- (d) In final position, MidC /-z/ < OldC /-d/, /-lt/ and /-nt/.  
[OldC /-d/ > MidC /-z/, not /-s/]

N.B. The loan-words *plas* 'place', *fas* 'face' and *gras* 'grace' are included here, though their final sound in MidC may have been the affricate [ts], or even the spirant [θ]. [The sound [ts] in early MidC became [s] later.]

17.1.3 Development in LateC

This consonant became voiced to [z] c.1575. [This change applied only to the allophone [ʃ], and the date was more like c.1550.]

17.1.4 Significant spellings in MidC

The commonest spelling in MidC was <s> for both /s/ and /z/, but the grapheme <c> was sometimes used before <y> [meaning [s]].

17.1.5 Recommended revised spelling <s>

[<s> has been used for both /s/ and /z/, but there is a good case for spelling /s/ as <s> and /z/ as <z>.]

17.1.6 Unified spelling

Usually <s>, but occasionally <c>, as in MidC.

17.1.7 Examples of intervocal /s/ Table 1710

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
2	<b>asyn</b> [ <i>asen</i> ]	ass	<i>azen</i>	asyn	asen
3	<b>bysi</b>	busy	-----	( <i>bisi</i> )	bysy
3	<b>desir</b>	desire	<i>dezir</i>	-----	desyr
3	<b>dises</b>	disease	-----	-----	dyses
3	<b>esel</b>	limb	<i>ezel</i>	-----	esel
3	<b>isel</b>	low	<i>izel</i>	<i>isel</i>	ysel
3	<b>kasek</b>	mare	<i>kazeg</i>	<i>caseg</i>	casek
3	<b>kasel</b>	armpit	<i>kazel</i>	( <i>cesail</i> )	casal
2	<b>(kusul)</b>	advice	<i>kuzul</i>	<i>cusyl</i>	cusul
U	<b>losow</b>	plants	<i>louzoù</i>	-----	losow
3	<b>reson</b>	reason	<i>rezon</i>	( <i>rheswm</i> )	reson
2	<b>Sowson</b>	Englishmen	<i>Saozon</i>	( <i>Saeson</i> )	Sawson
2	<b>Jesus</b>	Jesus	<i>Jezuz</i>	<i>lesu</i>	Jhesus

N.B. Following the publication of PSRC, Ray Edwards opined that the name Jesus should be written **Yesus** in Cornish, and this has been widely followed. It appears, however, that *Yesus* was a very early form, and that MidC *ihesus* was more likely pronounced with [dʒ-].

EXAMPLES OF /-z/ FROM OLD CORNISH /-d/, /-lt/ AND /-nt/ Table 1712

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
(a)	<u>Reflex of OldC /-d/ in monosyllables</u>				
1	<b>bys</b>	world	<i>bed</i>	<i>byd</i>	bys
1	<b>has</b>	seeds	<i>had</i>	<i>had</i>	has
1	<b>kas</b>	battle	<i>kad</i>	<i>cad</i>	cas
1	<b>koes</b>	wood	<i>koad</i>	<i>coed</i>	cos
1	<b>tas</b>	father	<i>tad</i>	<i>tad</i>	tas
1	<b>tus</b>	people	<i>tud</i>	<i>+tud</i>	tus
(b)	<u>Reflex of OldC /-d/ in polysyllables</u>				
1	<b>bagas</b>	group	<i>bagad</i>	<i>bagad</i>	bagas
1	<b>davas</b>	sheep	<i>dañvad</i>	<i>dafad</i>	davas
1	<b>kales</b>	hard	<i>kaled</i>	<i>caled</i>	cales
1	<b>nebes</b>	few	<i>nebeud</i>	<i>+nebawd</i>	nebes
1	<b>spedhas</b>	briars	<i>spezad</i>	<i>ysbyddad</i>	spedhes
1	<b>-ys</b>	(past ptcpl.)	<i>-et</i>	-----	-ys
(b)	<u>Reflex of OldC /-lt/ and /-nt/ in monosyllables</u>				
1	<b>hwans</b>	want	<i>c'hoant</i>	<i>chwant</i>	whans
1	<b>kans</b>	hundred	<i>kant</i>	<i>cant</i>	cans
1	<b>mols</b>	wether	<i>maout</i>	<i>mollt</i>	mols
1	<b>myns</b>	quantity	<i>ment</i>	<i>maint</i>	myns
1	<b>nans</b>	valley	-----	<i>nant</i>	nans
1	<b>pons</b>	bridge	<i>pont</i>	<i>pont</i>	pons
(b)	<u>Reflex of OldC /-nt/ in polysyllables</u>				
1	<b>abrans</b>	eyebrow	<i>abrant</i>	<i>amrant</i>	abrans
1	<b>arghans</b>	silver	<i>arc'hant</i>	<i>(arian)</i>	arghans
1	<b>skevens</b>	lungs	<i>skevent</i>	<i>ysgyfaint</i>	skevens
2	<b>skians</b>	knowledge	<i>skiant</i>	-----	skyans
1	<b>ugens</b>	twenty	<i>ugent</i>	<i>(ugain)</i>	ugans

[All of these words would be better spelled with <-z>.]

## 17.2 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /ss/

### 17.2.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [s], but of longer duration.

### 17.2.2 Sources, distribution and examples

This phoneme occurs only medially, between vowels.

- (a) In PrimC, [ss] arose:
  - (i) by reduction of PrimC /s"ʰ/ in subjunctive tenses, e.g. **blasso** 'may he taste';
  - (ii) by reduction of PrimC /s"ʰ/ in superlatives, and (by analogy) in comparatives, e.g. **brassa** 'bigger', **nessa** 'nearer'
- (b) MidE /s/ between vowels was identified with this phoneme; e.g. **grassa** 'to thank', **resseva** 'to receive'.
- (c) The word **dassorgh** 'resurrection' is included here, although the sound in early MidC may have been the affricate [ts].

### 17.2.3 Development in LateC

There is insufficient evidence to be clear about this, but the realization of /ss/ apparently remained distinct from that of /s/.

### 17.2.4 Significant spellings in MidC

Usually <ss>, but sometimes <s> in native words; <ss>, <s> and <c> in loan-words.

### 17.2.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <ss>

### 17.2.6 Unified spelling

<ss>, except in certain loan-words like *receva* 'to receive', where <c> was used, following the custom of MidC. [This practice has been continued in SWF. It is quite unnecessary.]

## 17.3 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /ʃ/

17.3.1 Recommended pronunciation

[ʃ], as sh in English ship.

17.3.2 Sources

This sound did not occur in PrimC, and therefore all words containing it are loan-words. The commonest are **sham** ‘shame’ and **shyndya** ‘to injure’; others are words deriving ultimately from CLat *-ssionem* (e.g. **passhyon**) and *-tionem* (e.g. **temptashyon**). [The spelling **-syon** for the words from Latin fits the MidC spellings better].

17.3.3 Development in LateC      Stable17.3.4 Spelling in MidC      <sch> and <sc> at first, later <sh>17.3.5 Recommended phonemic spelling      <sh>17.3.6 Unified spelling

<sh> initially; <sy> in loan-words with English *-tion* and *-sion*.

## 17.4 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /tʃ/

17.4.1 Recommended pronunciation

[tʃ], as ch in English church.

17.4.2 Sources

This affricate did not occur in PrimC; it is alien to the Cornish sound system, and is therefore found only in loan-words, with the notable exception of **chi** ‘house’. Most of these derive from OldF, but a few are from OldE.

17.4.3 Development in LateC

Stable, except for occasional variation [tʃ-] > [ʃ-].

17.4.4 Spelling

The usual spelling in MidC, the recommended phonemic spelling and the Unified spelling are all <ch>.

17.4.5 Examples

TABLE 1740

PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MidE FORM	ETYMOLOGY	UNIFIED SPELLING
<b>chanj</b>	change	<i>change</i>	OldF <i>change</i>	chanj
<b>chaptra</b>	chapter	<i>chapitre</i>	OldF <i>chapitre</i>	chaptra
<b>charj-</b>	charge	<i>charge</i>	OldF <i>charge</i>	charj
<b>cherita</b>	charity	<i>charite</i>	OldF <i>charite</i>	cheryta
<b>chyf</b>	chief	<i>chief</i>	OldF <i>chef</i>	chyf
<b>marchons</b>	merchants	<i>merchants</i>	OldF <i>marchants</i>	marchons
<b>rychys</b>	riches	<i>richesse</i>	OldF <i>richesse</i>	rychys
<b>strechya</b>	to stretch	----	OldE <i>streccan</i>	strechya
<b>tochya</b>	to touch	<i>touch-</i>	OldF <i>tochier</i>	tochya
<b>damach</b>	damage	<i>damage</i>	OldF <i>damage</i>	damach
<b>ertach</b>	heritage	<i>heritage</i>	OldF <i>heritage</i>	ertach
<b>imach</b>	image	<i>image</i>	OldF <i>image</i>	ymach

## 17.5 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /dʒ/

17.5.1 Recommended pronunciation

[dʒ], as g in English ginger.

17.5.2 Sources

- (a) This affricate did not occur in PrimC; it arose later by the assimilation of /dj/ > /dʒ/ in native words, the best example of which is MidC *nyge* 'to fly' (cf. ModW *neidio*).
- (b) Loans from MidE fitted in with this, e.g. *joy*.
- (c) Lenition of /tʃ/ gives /dʒ/; although this mutation may have been sporadic in MidC, it is treated in Revived Cornish as a soft mutation, similar to the old lenitions like /b-/ > /-v-/.

17.5.3 Development in LateC

Stable

17.5.4 Significant spellings in MidC

The same convention was used as in MidE, viz., initially and medially, <g> before <e, i, y> and <i> or <j> before <a, o, u>, sometimes <gg>; finally, <g> was used.

17.5.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

&lt;j&gt;

17.5.6 Unified spelling

&lt;j&gt;

17.5.7 Examples

TABLE 1750

PHONEMIC SPELLING	MODERN ENGLISH	OLD FRENCH	MODERN FRENCH	UNIFIED SPELLING
<i>jentil</i>	gentle	<i>gentil</i>	<i>gentil</i>	jenty1
<i>jeyler</i>	jailer	<i>jaiolier</i>	<i>géolier</i>	jayler
<i>jorna</i> 'day'	journey	<i>jerne</i>	<i>journée</i>	jorna
<i>joy</i>	joy	<i>joie</i>	<i>joie</i>	joy
<i>jujya</i>	to judge	<i>jugier</i>	<i>juger</i>	jujjya
<i>danjer</i>	danger	<i>dangier</i>	<i>danger</i>	danjer
<i>messejer</i>	messenger	<i>messagier</i>	<i>messenger</i>	messejer
<i>venjans</i>	vengeance	<i>vengeance</i>	<i>vengeance</i>	venjans

When unstressed, there was a tendency for the sound to become lowered, to [-ɪ] or even further.

Otherwise, the sound remained stable. The retention of [i:] in loan-words containing MidE /i:/ meant that a difference arose between the pronunciation of these words in English and in Cornish; in English the vowel became a diphthong, but in Cornish it did not. Examples from LateC are *feen* for English *fine*, and more remarkably, *Chreest* for English *Christ*. This shows that, if we borrow from English a word, unrecorded in Cornish, containing the reflex of MidE /i:/, it would be best to pronounce it with the original [i:] rather than the [aɪ] which this has become in ModE: e.g. *ris* 'rice', pronounced ['ri:s] to rhyme with fleece, not ['raɪs] to rhyme with price. Compare French *riz* ['riz], in which there has been no change of vowel sound.

## 18.1 INTRODUCTION

The nasal consonants m, n and the liquid consonants l, r each have two phonemes, single and geminate. In accordance with the quantity rules, the preceding vowel, if stressed, is short before the geminate consonants /mm, nn, ll, rr/, and long or half-long before the single consonants /m, n, l, r/. In traditional Cornish, the difference between the single and the geminate consonants was marked in the case of the nasals, but in the case of the liquids it became blurred, especially in LateC. Minimal pairs illustrating the differences /nn/ v. /n/, /ll/ v. /l/ and /rr/ v. /r/ are given in Table 1810.

In final position after unstressed vowels, the geminate consonants /mm, nn, ll, rr/ are reduced to single consonants; i.e. they are realized as [-m, -n, -l, -r]. [It is now thought that this reduction did not occur for /ll/ and /rr/]. In the recommended phonemic spelling, the graphemes <mm, nn, ll, rr> are retained. If another syllable is then added at the end of the word, the geminate pronunciation “re-appears”. In particular, there is a difference in the plural ending between the single and geminate cases. Words ending in /mm, nn, ll, rr/ commonly form their plurals in **-ow**, but those ending in /m, n, l, r/ commonly form their plurals in **-yow**. This rule [guideline] was not appreciated by Nance and Smith.

The palatal sound [ɲ], which is that of ñ in Spanish señor ‘gentleman’, may have existed in the loan-word meaning ‘to reign’, which was spelled regnya or raynya by Nance. In the phonological base, this is treated as the combination /nj/, and the word is spelled **reynya**.

The velar nasal [ŋ], which is that of ng in English long, may have existed in words containing the reflex of Proto-Brythonic and Latin *ng*, e.g. **mong** ‘mane’, **spong** ‘sponge’. In the phonological base, this is treated as the combination /ng/.

EXAMPLES OF MINIMAL PAIRS

Table 1810

	SINGLE		GEMINATE	
/m/ v. /mm/	<b>tam</b>	‘tame’	<b>tamm</b>	‘piece’
/n/ v. /nn/	<b>gen</b>	‘chin’	<b>genn</b>	‘chisel’
	<b>gwan</b>	‘stab’	<b>gwann</b>	‘weak’
	<b>hen</b>	‘old’	<b>henn</b>	‘that’
	<b>kan</b>	‘song’	<b>kann</b>	‘white’
	<b>len</b>	‘faithful’	<b>lenn</b>	‘cloth’
	<b>on</b>	‘we are’	<b>onn</b>	‘ash trees’
	<b>prena</b>	‘to buy’	<b>prenna</b>	‘to bar’
	<b>tan</b>	‘fire’	<b>tann</b>	‘take!’
/l/ v. /ll/	<b>bal</b>	‘mine’	<b>ball</b>	‘plague’
	<b>gevel</b>	‘tongs’	<b>gevell</b>	‘twin’
	<b>gwel</b>	‘sight’	<b>gwell</b>	‘better’
	<b>mel</b>	‘honey’	<b>mell</b>	‘joint’
/r/ v. /rr/	<b>ber</b>	‘spit’	<b>berr</b>	‘short’
	<b>kar</b>	‘friend’	<b>karr</b>	‘car’

## 18.2 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /m/

18.2.1 Recommended pronunciation

[m], as m in English mad, homing, dame.

18.2.2 Sources and distribution

Medially and finally, /m/ occurs only in loan-words, since **Proto-Brythonic** m became lenited c. 475 to [μ], which later became [v]. Initially, **Proto-Brythonic** mm was simplified to m, so that in this position /m/ can be found in both native and loan-words.

18.2.3 Development in LateC

Stable, but /mj/ > /bmj/ c. 1575. In LateC, <mm> was often used medially, but this meant merely that the previously half-long vowel had become short.

18.2.4 Spelling

The commonest spelling in MidC, the recommended phonemic spelling and the Unified spelling are all <m>.

18.2.5 Examples

Table 1820 shows the commonest words ending in /-m/; since /m/ could not occur in final position in PrimC, all these examples are of loan-words.

				<u>Table 1820</u>
	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	DERIVATION	UNIFIED SPELLING
3	<b>blam</b>	blame	MidE < OldF <i>blasme</i> -	blam
3	<b>doem</b>	doom	MidE < OldE <i>dōm</i>	dom
3	<b>groem</b>	groom	MidE <i>grōm</i>	grom
3	<b>klem</b>	claim	OldF <i>claim</i>	clem
3	<b>roem</b>	room	MidE < OldE <i>rūm</i>	rom

## 18.3 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /mm/

18.3.1 Recommended pronunciation

When following a stressed vowel, as mm in English Mummy, i.e. [mm]. The pronunciation [bm], although not recorded until c. 1575, and therefore somewhat anachronistic, is acceptable since it increases the difference between /m/ and /mm/.

When following an unstressed vowel, the length of the consonant is reduced to [m].

18.3.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /mm/ < 1) Proto-Brythonic mm 2) Latin mm  
 (b) MidE /m/ after short stressed vowels, e.g. **grammer** 'grammar'

18.3.3 Development in LateC

After stressed vowels, /mm/ > /bm/ c. 1575.

Between vowels, /bm/ > /bb/ c. 1575.

Finally, /-bm/ > [-bəm], perhaps c. 1750.

[probably earlier]

## 18.3.4 Significant spellings in MidC

<m> was found in all environments; <mm> was found medially after a stressed vowel.

18.3.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<mm> in all positions.

18.3.7 Examples

TABLE 1830

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b>amm</b>	kiss	(añ)	----	am
1	<b>bramm</b>	fart	<i>bramm</i>	<i>bram</i>	bram
1	<b>bumm</b> > <b>boemm</b>	blow	<i>bomm</i>	----	bom
1	<b>dramm</b>	swathe	<i>dramm</i>	----	dram
1	<b>dhymm</b>	to me	(din)	(im)	dhym
2	<b>flamm</b>	flame	<i>flamm</i>	<i>fflam</i>	flam
2	<b>gemm</b>	gem	----	<i>gem</i>	gem
1	<b>kamm</b>	bent	<i>kamm</i>	<i>cam</i>	cam
1	<b>kamm</b>	step	<i>kamm</i>	<i>cam</i>	cam
1	<b>komm</b>	valley	<i>komm</i>	<i>cwm</i>	cum
1	<b>kromm</b>	crooked	<i>kromm</i>	<i>crwm</i>	crom
1	<b>lamm</b>	jump	<i>lamm</i>	<i>llam</i>	lam
1	<b>lomm</b>	drop	<i>lomm</i>	----	lom
1	<b>lomm</b>	naked	----	<i>llwm</i>	lom
1	<b>lymm</b>	sharp	<i>lemm</i>	<i>llym</i>	lym
1	<b>mamm</b>	mother	<i>mamm</i>	<i>mam</i>	mam
1	<b>namm</b>	defect	<i>namm</i>	<i>nam</i>	nam
2	<b>plomm</b>	lead	<i>plomm</i>	<i>plwm</i>	plom
1	<b>stumm</b>	bend	<i>stumm</i>	<i>ystum</i>	stum
1	<b>tamm</b>	piece	<i>tamm</i>	+ <i>tam</i>	tam
1	<b>tumm</b> > <b>toemm</b>	warm	<i>tomm</i>	<i>twym</i>	tom
1	<b>edhomm</b>	need	<i>ezhomm</i>	----	ethom
2	<b>kolomm</b>	dove	(koulm)	<i>colom</i>	colom

### 18.3.6 Unified spelling

<mm> medially following a stressed vowel, otherwise <m>. The word *kemer* 'take!' was so spelled by Nance under the influence of the verbal noun *kemeres* 'to take', in which the phonemically geminate /mm/ has been reduced to [m], since it is preceded by an unstressed vowel. As LateC *kebmer* shows, the spelling *kemmer* is the correct one. Likewise, the recommended phonemic spelling of the verbal noun is ***kemmeres***.

## 18.4 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /n/

### 18.4.1 Recommended pronunciation

As n in English nut, tenor, seen, i.e. [n].

### 18.4.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /n/ < 1) Proto-Brythonic n 2) Latin n
- (b) OldF and MidE /n/
- (c) [n-] also rose from initial nasal mutation; see para. 5.10.2.

### 18.4.3 Development in LateC

Generally stable, but note that /nj/ > /dnj/ c. 1575. The grapheme <nn>, which was often used medially, (e.g. LateC *bennen* 'woman') indicates merely that the preceding vowel had become short instead of half-long.

### 18.4.4 Spelling

The commonest spelling in MidC, the recommended phonemic spelling and the Unified spelling are all <n>; a few words were mis-spelled by Nance with <nn>, e.g. *alenna* 'thence', *crenna* 'to shake', which, in the phonemic spelling, become ***alena*** and ***krena***.

## 18.5 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /nn/

### 18.5.1 Recommended pronunciation

When following a stressed vowel, [nn], which is to be interpreted as similar to a prolonged [n], but stronger. The realization [dn], although not widely recorded until c. 1575, and therefore somewhat later than the date of the phonological base, is acceptable since it increases the difference between /n/ and /nn/.

When following an unstressed vowel, the length of the consonant is reduced to [n].

### 18.5.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /nn/ < 1) IE nn, sn and nd 2) Latin nn and nd
- (b) Reduction of PrimC /n"h/ in superlatives and subjunctives.
- (c) MidE /m/ after short stressed vowels.

### 18.5.3 Development in LateC

After stressed vowels, /nn/ > /dn/ c. 1575.

Between vowels, /dn/ > /dd/ c. 1725.

Finally, /-dn/ > [-dən], c. 1750. [probably earlier]

### 18.5.4 Significant spellings in MidC

Finally, <n> was used. Medially, <nn> was found after stressed vowels, and both <nn> and <n> after unstressed vowels.

### 18.5.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<nn> in all positions.

### 18.5.6 Unified spelling

<nn> medially and <n> finally. The use of <n> finally for both /n/ and /nn/ means that students have to learn, for each word individually, which phoneme it contains; unless this is done, they cannot know whether the preceding vowel is long or not, nor the form of the word's compounds. [The same applies to users of SWF]. A list of words ending in /nn/ is given in Table 1850.

Examples of words ending in /nn/

TABLE 1850

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b>bann</b>	summit	<i>bann</i>	<i>ban</i>	ban
1	<b>bronn</b>	breast	<i>bronn</i>	<i>bron</i>	bron
1	<b>brunn</b> > <b>broenn</b>	rushes	<i>broenn</i>	<i>brwyn</i>	bron
1	<b>genn</b>	chisel	<i>genn</i>	<i>(gaing)</i>	gen
1	<b>glann</b>	bank	<i>glann</i>	<i>glan</i>	glan
1	<b>glynn</b>	valley	<i>glenn</i>	<i>glyn</i>	glyn
1	<b>gwann</b>	weak	<i>(gwan)</i>	<i>gwan</i>	gwan
1	<b>gwynn</b>	white	<i>gwenn</i>	<i>gwyn</i>	gwyn
1	<b>hwenn</b>	fleas	<i>(c'hwenn)</i>	<i>chwain</i>	whyn
1	<b>hwyenn</b>	weeds	<i>c'hwenn</i>	<i>chwyn</i>	when
1	<b>kann</b>	white	<i>kann</i>	<i>can</i>	can
1	<b>kenn</b>	skin	<i>kenn</i>	<i>cen</i>	ken
1	<b>lann</b>	enclosure	<i>lann</i>	<i>llan</i>	lan
1	<b>lenn</b>	cloth	<i>lenn</i>	<i>llen</i>	len
1	<b>lynn</b>	pool	<i>lenn</i>	<i>llyn</i>	lyn
1	<b>myenn</b>	kid	<i>menn</i>	<i>myn</i>	myn
1	<b>onn</b>	ash-trees	<i>onn</i>	<i>on</i>	on
1	<b>penn</b>	head	<i>penn</i>	<i>pen</i>	pen
1	<b>prenn</b>	timber	<i>prenn</i>	<i>pren</i>	pren
1	<b>rann</b>	part	<i>rann</i>	<i>ran</i>	ran
2	<b>tenn</b>	pull	<i>tenn</i>	<i>(tynn-)</i>	ten
1	<b>-enn</b>	(singulative)	<i>-enn</i>	<i>-en</i>	-en
1	<b>govynn</b>	to ask	-----	<i>gofyn</i>	govyn
1	<b>kempenn</b>	tidy	<i>kempenn</i>	-----	kempen
2	<b>kudynn</b>	lock of hair	<i>kudenn</i>	<i>cudyn</i>	cuden
2	<b>oferenn</b>	mass	<i>oferenn</i>	<i>offeren</i>	oferen

## 18.6 CONSONANTAL PHONEME //

18.6.1 Recommended pronunciation

A clear [ɪ], which was the usual realization of // in English before the eighteenth century, and which persists today in Irish dialects of English. In standard English, the clear [ɪ] has been replaced in certain environments (notably finally after a vowel) by a dark [ɪ̞]; this in turn is apparently being replaced by the vowel [ʊ]; both of these realization should be avoided.

18.6.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC // < 1) IE l, sl-, ld, ln 2) Latin l  
 (b) OldE and MidE //

18.6.3 Development in LateC

Stable; the grapheme <ll>, which was often used in LateC, indicates merely that the preceding vowel had become short instead of half-long.

18.6.4 Significant spellings in MidC

Usually <l>, but also <ll> after an unstressed vowel.

18.6.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <l>18.6.6 Unified spelling <l>

## 18.7 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /l/

18.7.1 Recommended pronunciation

When following a stressed vowel, as [l] but longer; similar to ll in English filling, but more like ll in Italian bello, Breton pelloc'h.

When following an unstressed vowel, the length is reduced to [l].

18.7.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /ll/ < 1) Proto-Brythonic ll 2) Latin ll
- (b) Reduction of PrimC /l'h/ and /ll'h/ in superlatives and subjunctives.
- (c) MidE /ll/, e.g. in **ell**as 'alas'.

18.7.3 Development in LateC Stable18.7.4 Significant spellings in MidC

<ll> and <lh> after a stressed vowel; <l> medially after an unstressed vowel; both <ll> and <l> finally after an unstressed vowel. There was a clear distinction between /ll/ and /l/ after a stressed vowel; in SA, /ll/ was written <ll> and <lh>, and /l/ was written /l/, without exception (Bock 2010).

18.7.5 Recommended phonemic spelling

<ll> in all positions.

18.7.6 Unified spelling

Medially, Nance used <ll> consistently, but finally, he was very confused: in monosyllables, he usually wrote <ll>, but sometimes <l>; in polysyllables, he usually wrote <l>, but sometimes <ll> Examples are given in Table 1870. This led to mistakes, e.g. Nance gave the plural of *stevel* as *stevel*yow, but this cannot be right; the word derives from Latin *stabellum*, and therefore contains /ll/: we should have **stevell** and **stevellow**. SWF gets **stevellow** correct, but writes **stevel**, assuming that /-ll/ is reduced to [-l] after an unstressed vowel. This analogy with /mm/ and /nn/ is unlikely to be right; /ll/ had a different quality from /l/, evident in the English dialect in West Penwith. It is perhaps not as distinctive as the Welsh equivalent [t̪], but note the spelling *ethlays* 'alas' (CW.1038). Words like Welsh *castell* ['kaːstɛt̪] suggest that the distinct sound applied finally after an unstressed vowel. <ll> is also used in Breton, e.g. *kastell*.

Examples of words ending in /ll/

TABLE 1870

	PHONEMIC SPELLING	ENGLISH MEANING	MODERN BRETON	MODERN WELSH	UNIFIED SPELLING
1	<b>ball</b>	plague	+ball	<i>ball</i>	bal
1	<b>dall</b>	blind	dall	dall	dall
1	<b>gell</b>	brown	gell	+gell	gell
1	<b>gwell</b>	better	gwell	gwell	gwell
1	<b>kall</b>	cunning	-----	call	cal
1	<b>kell</b>	cell	kell	<i>caill</i>	kell
1	<b>koll</b>	loss	koll	coll	coll
1	<b>koll</b>	hazels	+coll	coll-	coll
U	<b>mall</b>	haste	mall	-----	mal
1	<b>mell</b>	joint	mell	-----	mel
1	<b>pell</b>	far	pell	pell	pell
1	<b>pull &gt; poell</b>	sense	poell	pwyll	-----
1	<b>toll</b>	hole	toull	twll	toll
1	<b>tull &gt; toell</b>	deceit	touell	twyll	tull
1	<b>antell</b>	trap	antell	(annel)	antel
1	<b>arall</b>	other	arall	arall	aral
1	<b>askall</b>	thistles	(askol)	ysgall	ascal
2	<b>askell</b>	wing	askell	asgell	askel
2	<b>astell</b>	plank	astell	astell	astell
2	<b>gevell</b>	twin	gevell	gefell	gevell
2	<b>kastell</b>	castle	kastell	castell	castel
2	<b>kawell</b>	cradle	kavell	cawell	cawal
2	<b>kibell</b>	tub	kibell	cibell	kybel
1	<b>logell</b>	tomb	logell	llogell	logel
2	<b>mantell</b>	cloak	mantell	mantell	mantel
2	<b>padell</b>	pan	padell	padell	padel
2	<b>porghell</b>	porker	porc'hell	porchell	porghel
2	<b>skavell</b>	stool	skabell	ysgafell	scavel
1	<b>skudell</b>	dish	skudell	-----	scudel
2	<b>stevell</b>	room	-----	ystafell	stevel

## 18.8 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /r/

18.8.1 Recommended pronunciation

There are a number of different ways in which /r/ is realized in various dialects and languages, and I am sometimes asked how it was pronounced in traditional Cornish. Unfortunately, the method of orthographic analysis used in my research cannot answer questions like this. For initial /r-/, we have the testimony of Lhuyd, that:

"The Cornish very rarely asperate their Initial r...; but they had this aspiration formerly, for I have frequently observ'd them to say *Rhag* 'for' as well as *Rag*."

In other positions, the phonetic nature of /r/ is obscure. All that I can say is that /r/ was certainly pronounced; in the language of phonetics, Cornish was a *rhotic* tongue. This is no longer the case for /r/ in some positions in standard English; the RP realizations of car, park are ['kɑ:], ['pɑ:k], with no trace of [r]. As far as we know, /r/ was always pronounced in MidE. In some rhotic dialects (e.g. most Scottish dialects), [r] is still fully pronounced; in others (e.g. some American dialects), the [r] has been weakened, and is said to "colour" the preceding vowel. In non-rhotic dialects (e.g. in the north and east of England), [r] has been lost in certain phonetic environments.

I believe that Cornish speakers should pay attention to the dialects of English where [r] is well preserved, particularly Scottish dialects. In Cornish, /r/ was stronger than /ð/; thus the MidC word *forth* 'road' ['fɔrð] became *vor* ['vɔr:] in LateC. An English-type pronunciation ['fɔ:θ] is quite wrong. The realization of /r/ recommended here is a voiced alveolar roll, which is found in some dialects of Breton, especially among older people. (The few younger Breton speakers tend to use French uvular [ʁ], which is confusable with [x]). [Compare Spanish /r/, which is an alveolar tap.](#)

It is also important to note the retention of original values in vowels before /r/ in Scottish dialects. In standard English, vowels before /r/ changed their character (in particular, MidE /i/, /ɛ/ and /u/ became [ɜ]), but there is no evidence of this in Cornish. Thus **Kernow** is pronounced ['kɛrnɔʊ], not ['kɜ:nɔʊ]. This is thought to apply even to unstressed vowels: **lyther** 'letter' is pronounced ['lɪθɛr], not ['lɪθə].

### 18.8.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /r/ < 1) Proto-Brythonic r 2) Latin r
- (b) OldE r and OldF r
- (c) MidE /r/

### 18.8.3 Development in LateC

Stable; the grapheme <rr> in LateC indicates that the previously half-long vowel had become a short vowel; e.g. MidC *hyreth* 'longing' ['hiːrɛθ] > LateC *hirrath* ['hiraθ]. In a few words, /r/ > //.

### 18.8.4 Spelling

The commonest spelling in MidC, the recommended phonemic spelling, and the Unified spelling are all <r>.

## 18.9 CONSONANTAL PHONEME /rr/

### 18.9.1 Recommended pronunciation

As [r], but longer in duration: [like Spanish /rr/](#).

### 18.9.2 Sources

- (a) PrimC /rr/ < 1) IE rr, rs and rts 2) Latin rr
- (b) Reduction of PrimC /rʰ/ and /rrʰ/ in superlatives and subjunctives.

### 18.9.3 Development in LateC

It seems that the distinction between /rr/ and /r/ had been lost by the time of LateC.

### 18.9.4 Significant spellings in MidC

Both <rr> and <r>.

### 18.9.5 Recommended phonemic spelling <rr>

### 18.9.6 Unified spelling

<rr> medially and <r> finally. [This is also the SWF spelling, but there is little justification for it; /rr/ is not like /nn/.](#)

## Part B      Appendices

### CHAPTER 20      PHONETIC SYMBOLS

#### 20.1 INTRODUCTION

In this book I have not hesitated to use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to denote sounds. It is unfortunate that this is not more widely taught in British schools, for it means that many readers will be unfamiliar with the notation. I have, however, considered it better to use this system, off-putting though it may be, rather than to use a phonetic notation based on the sounds of English, such as is found in some dictionaries. One sometimes sees the latter used in an attempt to represent the pronunciation of Cornish. Any such attempt is doomed to failure because Cornish contains sounds which are not found in English. Thus, when I am asked to write the pronunciation of a song in Cornish “phonetically” (by which is meant “using the orthographic conventions of English”), I refuse. It is better that the interested person take the trouble to learn the IPA. I had to.

This chapter is intended as a concise description of the phonetic symbols used in the book.

#### 20.2 SYMBOLS FOR VOWELS

##### 20.2.1      Conventional description of vowels

Vowels may be described in terms of four parameters:

- (a) height of tongue in the mouth: for languages which have vowels at three distinct levels, the terms high, mid and low are used to describe these levels. In Cornish (as in French), vowels exist at four distinct levels, and the terms close, half-close, half-open and open are used for these.
- (b) position of tongue fore-and-aft in the mouth: the terms front, central and back are used to describe three discrete tongue positions.
- (c) rounding of lips: different vowels are produced according to whether the lips are rounded or unrounded (spread).

- (d) nasality: in principle, any vowel may be nasalized; i.e. be produced by air passing through the nose rather than the mouth. In PrimC, there were no nasal vowels; and it seems that the nasal vowels in NorF were replaced by oral vowels when borrowed into MidC. We may therefore discount this parameter for the purposes of this book.

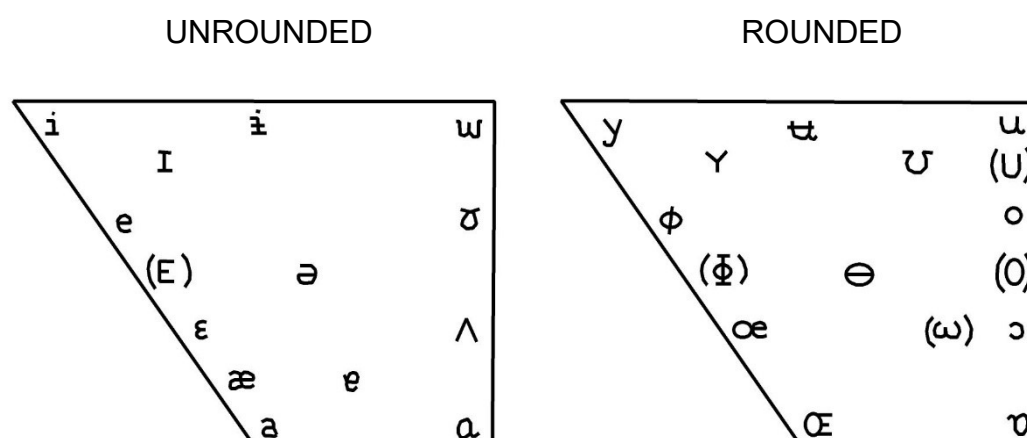
### 20.2.2 IPA symbols for vowels

Permutation of the first three parameters gives the following table, with IPA symbols added:

	UNROUNDED			ROUNDED		
	front	central	back	front	central	back
CLOSE	i	ɨ	ʉ	y	ɥ	u
HALF-CLOSE	e		ɤ	ø		o
HALF-OPEN	ɛ		ʌ	œ		ɔ
OPEN	a		ɑ	œ̃		ɒ

It will be observed that there are more boxes than symbols in this table. This is because the domain defined by parameters (a) and (b), in effect the space within the mouth, is not rectangular. There is more space aloft than below. Thus vowel diagrams are often presented in the form of a trapezium, as in fig. 2020. On this figure further symbols have been added; those in brackets are used in this book, but are not in the IPA list.

Fig. 2020

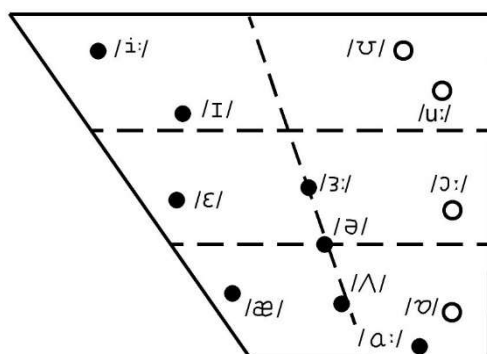


N.B. The symbol [ɜ] is used for a stressed vowel with the same quality as [ə].

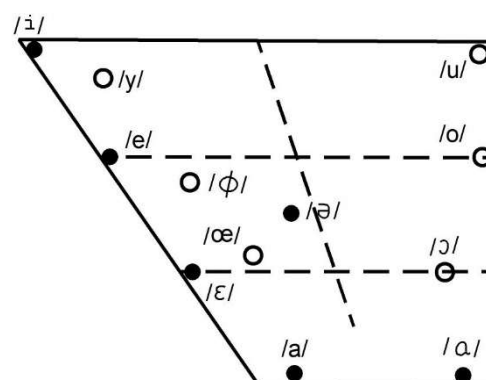
It is noteworthy that the symbols are still not evenly distributed throughout the diagrams. To specify the quality of a vowel more precisely (close phonetic transcription), recourse has to be made to a battery of diacritical signs. To my mind, the whole system of notation lacks precision, and cries out for quantification; for an attempt at a numerical coding, see George (1983). These problems arise because the quality of vowels can be perceived much more precisely than just the few discrete categories listed above would imply. Fig. 2021 shows the approximate positions of the vocalic phonemes in English and French, and fig. 2022 is a vowel diagram for the phonological base of Revived Cornish. Note that the vocalic phonemes in fig. 2022 occupy finite areas; the important requirement, when prescribing a pronunciation, is not to specify precise realizations but to make sure that phonemic differences are preserved.

Fig. 2021

## VOWELS OF STANDARD ENGLISH



## VOWELS OF STANDARD FRENCH

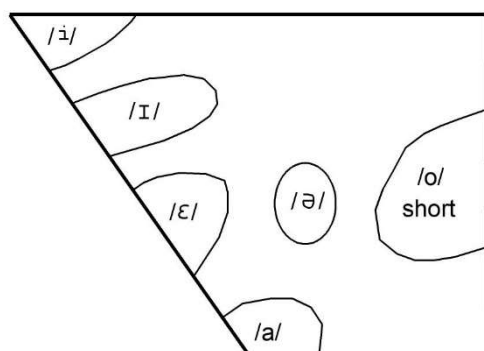


Unrounded vowels are shaded; rounded vowels are not.

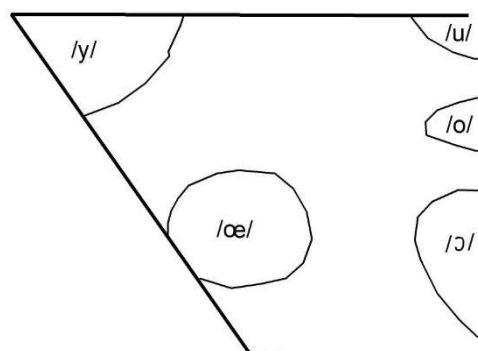
Fig. 2022

## VOWELS IN THE PHONOLOGICAL BASE FOR REVIVED CORNISH

## Unrounded



## Rounded



### 20.3 SYMBOLS FOR DIPHTHONGS

A diphthong may be regarded as a speech sound whose quality varies continuously from that of one vowel to that of another, within one syllable. For the purposes of this book, diphthongs are regarded as phonemes in their own right (rather a combination of two phonemes). The symbol representing a diphthong consists simply of the the symbols for the starting vowel (first element) and ending vowel (second element). In the case of u-diphthongs (i.e. those where the second element is a u-type vowel, the symbol u is often replaced by that of the semi-vowel w. [Bock and Bruch (2009) showed that Cornish diphthongs may be divided into two classes, light and heavy; this is not shown in any orthography].

### 20.4 SYMBOLS FOR CONSONANTS AND SEMI-VOWELS

Consonants can be described conventionally in terms of three parameters:

- (a) nature of constriction of the air-flow: this classifies consonants under the headings occlusives, affricates, spirants, nasals and liquids.
- (b) position of the tongue during articulation: from front to back of the mouth the positions are bilabial, labio-dental, dental, alveolar, palatal, velar and glottal.
- (c) presence or absence of voice: we thus have voiced and voiceless consonants; note that in the phonological base, there exist also semi-voiced consonants [f̥] and [s̥], which are allophones of /v/ and /s/ (see paras. 16.1.1 and 17.1.1).

A typical conventional table of common consonants is given in table 2040; here most of the symbols are from the IPA, and those which are not are bracketed.

## CONVENTIONAL TABLE OF CONSONANTS AND SEMI-VOWELS

Fig. 2040

with recommended phonemic spelling added for phonemes in Revived Cornish

		BILABIAL	LABIO-DENTAL	INTER-DENTAL	ALVEOLAR	PALATAL	VELAR	GLOTTAL
OCCLUSIVES	voiceless	p <p>			t <t>	(ɾ) <tj>	k <k>	
	voiced	b <b>			d <d>	(ð) <dj>	g <g>	
AFFRICATES	voiceless				ts	tʃ <ch>		
	voiced				dz	dʒ <j>		
SPIRANTS	voiceless	ɸ	f <f>	θ <th>	s <s>	ʃ <sh>	x <gh>	h <h>
	voiced	β	v <v>	ð <dh>	z <s>	ʒ	ɣ	ɦ
NASALS	single	m <m>			n <n>	ɲ	ŋ	
	geminate	mm <mm>			nn <nn>			
LIQUIDS	single				l <l> r <r>			
	geminate				ll <ll> rr <rr>			
SEMI-VOWELS						j <y>	w <w>	

## 20.5 CHECK-LISTS

### 20.5.1 Phonemes in standard English

When I was learning phonetic notation, I found it very useful to have a check-list of the phonemes in English, and have therefore included one here for those to whom phonetic symbols may be familiar. The standard English used is often called Received Pronunciation (RP).

### 20.5.2 Primary developments from PrimC to LateC

A list of this type is valuable for checking the expected development of a word in PrimC (see fig. 620). Three sets of symbols are used to denote the PrimC phonemes:

- K - those used by George (1984)
- J - those used by Jackson (1967)
- C - those used in a computer simulation of phonological development (George, 1983)

This check-list includes developments only up to c. 1500 (the date of the phonological base). Many of the MidC phonemes underwent further development in LateC, which is described in Part B.

## 20.6 OTHER SYMBOLS

//	phoneme
[ ]	phonetic realization
< >	grapheme
~	varies with
>	becomes
<	comes from
'	primary stress
,	secondary stress
"	syncope

CHECK-LIST OF PHONEMES IN STANDARD ENGLISHFig. 2050SYMBOL  
EXAMPLE

DESCRIPTION

Vowels

/ɪ/	short close front unrounded	bit
/ɛ/	short mid front unrounded	bet
/æ/	short open front unrounded	bat
/ɒ/	short open back unrounded	bot
/ʌ/	short half-open central unrounded	but
/ʊ/	short close back rounded	put
/i:/	long close front unrounded	beet
/ɜ:/	long mid central unrounded	Bert
/ɑ:/	long open back/central unrounded	Bart.
/ɔ:/	long mid back rounded	bought
/u:/	long close back rounded	boot

Diphthongs

/ɛɪ/
bait
/aɪ/
bite
/ɔɪ/
buoyed
/əʊ/
boat
/aʊ/
bout
/ɪə/
beer
/ɛə/
bear
/ʊə/
boor

CHECK-LIST OF PHONEMES IN STANDARD ENGLISH

(continued)

Consonants

/p/	voiceless bilabial occlusive	<b>pale</b>
/t/	voiceless alveolar occlusive	<b>tale</b>
/k/	voiceless velar occlusive	<b>kale</b>
/b/	voiced bilabial occlusive	<b>bale</b>
/d/	voiced alveolar occlusive	<b>dale</b>
/g/	voiced velar occlusive	<b>gale</b>
/tʃ/	voiceless palatal affricate	<b>chap</b>
/dʒ/	voiced palatal affricate	<b>Jap</b>
/f/	voiceless labio-dental spirant	<b>fie</b>
/v/	voiced labio-dental spirant	<b>vie</b>
/θ/	voiceless dental spirant	<b>thigh</b>
/ð/	voiced dental spirant	<b>thy</b>
/s/	voiceless alveolar spirant	<b>sip</b>
/z/	voiced alveolar spirant	<b>zip</b>
/ʃ/	voiceless palatal spirant	<b>mesher</b>
/ʒ/	voiced palatal spirant	
measure		
/h/	voiceless glottal spirant	<b>high</b>
/m/	voiced bilabial nasal	<b>might</b>
/n/	voiced alveolar nasal	
night		
/ŋ/	voiced velar nasal	<b>long</b>
/l/	voiced alveolar liquid - lateral	<b>light</b>
/r/	voiced alveolar liquid - retroflex	<b>right</b>

Semi-vowels

/j/	voiced palatal semi-vowel	<b>Yale</b>
/w/	voiced velar semi-vowel	<b>wail</b>

## PRIMARY DEVELOPMENTS FROM PRIMITIVE TO MIDDLE CORNISH

Vowels

PrimC PHONEMES			DESCRIPTION	MidC PHONEME	PHONEMIC SPELLING
K	J	C			
i	i	I.	1 Stable	/i/	<i>
ɪ	ɪ	IC	1 Stable	/ɪ/	<y>
e	ɐ	E1	1a Lowering to /ɛ/, except	/ɛ/	<e>
			1b Affection to /ɪ/ when /i, ɪ, e, ɐ, j/ occurs in the following syllable	/ɪ/	<y>
ɛ	e	E.	1 Stable	/ɛ/	<e>
a	a	A.	1a Stable, except	/a/	<a>
			1b Affection to /e/ > /ɛ/ when /i, ɪ, e, ɐ, j/ occurs in the following syllable	/ɛ/	<e>
ɔ	o	O.	1a Stable, except	/ɔ/	<o>
			1b Affection to /ə/ > /ɛ/ when /i, ɪ, e, ɐ, j/ occurs in the following syllable	/ɛ/	<e>
u	u	U.	1a Lowering to /ɔ/, except	/ɔ/	<o>
			1b Affection to /e/ > /ɛ/ when /i, ɪ, e, ɐ, j/ occurs in the following syllable	/ɛ/	<e>
ω	ω	OM	1a Fronting to /œ/ when stressed in words of 1 or 2 syllables	/œ/	<eu>
			1b Fronting and unrounding to /ɛ/ when unstressed	/ɛ/	<e>
			1c Backing to /ɔ/ when stressed in words of 3 or more syllables	/ɔ/	<o>
ə	*	O2	1 Lowering and unrounding	/ɛ/	<e>
y	y	Y.	1a Stable when stressed	/y/	<u>
			1b Lowering and unrounding to /ɪ/ when unstressed	/ɪ/	<y>

\* means o with two dots underneath (not a standard Unicode character)

## PRIMARY DEVELOPMENTS FROM PRIMITIVE TO MIDDLE CORNISH

Diphthongs

PrimC PHONEMES			DESCRIPTION	MidC PHONEME	PHONEMIC SPELLING
K	J	C			
ei	ɛi	E1l.	1 Stable	/eɪ/	<ey>
ɛi	ei	E.l.	1 Raising to /eɪ/	/eɪ/	<ey>
əi	*i	O2l.	1 Unrounding to /eɪ/	/eɪ/	<ey>
ai	ai	A.l.	1a Tonically and post-tonically, reduction to	/ɛ/	<e>
			1b Pre-tonically, reduction to	/a/	<a>
oi	oi	O.l.	1c Finally, and when followed by /a/, reduction to /ɔ/	/ɔ/	<o>
Early fusion			1a Otherwise, when stressed and long or half-long, reduction to [o:] or [oː]	/o/	<oe>
ui	ɔi	U.l.	1b Otherwise, when stressed and short, or unstressed, reduction to [ʊ]	/o/	<oe>
wi	wi	OMl.	1 Fusion with reflex of MidE /oi/ in loan-words	/ɔɪ/	<oy>
iu	iu	I.U.	1 Stable	/iʊ/	<iw>
ɪu	iu	ICU.	1 Stable	/ɪʊ/	<yw>
eu	ɛu	E1U	1c When unstressed finally, rounding to /ɔu/	/ɔw/	<ow>
Early fusion			1b In stressed closed monosyllables, rounding to /ɔu/	/ɔw/	<ow>
			1c Otherwise, stable	/ɛw/	<ew>
ɛu	eu	E.U.			
au	au	A.U.	1a Stable in stressed open monosyllables	/aw/	<aw>
			1b Otherwise, raising to	/ɔw/	<ow>
ɔu	ou	O.U.	1 Stable	/ɔw/	<ow>
wu	wu	OMU.	1 Fusion with /ɔu/	/ɔw/	<ow>
					<uw>

## PRIMARY DEVELOPMENTS FROM PRIMITIVE TO MIDDLE CORNISH

Consonants

PrimC PHONEMES			DESCRIPTION	MidC PHONEME	PHONEMIC SPELLING
K	J	C			
p	p	P.	1 Stable	/p/	<p>
t	t	T.	1c Finally, in groups /nt/ and /lt/ assibilation to	/z/	<s>
			1b Intervocally, in groups /nt/ and /lt/, unless the 2nd vowel was followed by a liquid of nasal, palatalization to	/t/	<tj>
			1c Otherwise stable	/t/	<t>
k	k	K.	1 Stable	/k/	<k>
b	b	B.	1 Stable	/b/	<b>
d	d	D	1c Finally, assibilation to	/z/	<s>
			1b Intervocally, unless the 2nd vowel was followed by a liquid or nasal, palatalization to	/ð/	<dj>
g	g	G.	1 Stable	/g/	<g>
f	f	F.	1 Stable	/f/	<f>
β	β	BL	1 Change from bilabial to labio-dental	/v/	<v>
μ	μ	MU	1 Change from bilabial to labio-dental, and subsequent denasalization	/v/	<v>
s	s	S.	1 Stable	/s/	<s>
ð	ð	DH	1 Stable	/ð/	<dh>
θ	θ	TH	1 Stable	/θ/	<th>
ɣ	ʒ	GA	1b Unvoicing after liquids	/x/	<gh>
			1a Otherwise a complete loss		

## PRIMARY DEVELOPMENTS FROM PRIMITIVE TO MIDDLE CORNISH

### Consonants (continued)

PrimC PHONEMES			DESCRIPTION	MidC PHONEME	PHONEMIC SPELLING
K	J	C			
x	x	X.	1b [x] > [h] intervocally 1a Otherwise stable	/x/ /x/	<gh> <gh>
h	h	H.	1 Stable	/h/	<h>
m	m	M.	1 Stable	/m/	<m>
mm	mm	M.M.	1 Stable when stressed	/mm/	<mm>
n	n	N.	1 Stable	/n/	<n>
nn	nn	N.N	1 Stable when stressed	/nn/	<nn>
l	l	L.	1 Stable	/l/	<l>
r	r	R.	1 Stable	/r/	<r>

Note: the only double consonants listed above are the nasals.

### Semi-vowels

PrimC PHONEMES			DESCRIPTION	MidC PHONEME	PHONEMIC SPELLING
K	J	C			
j	y	J.	1 Stable	/j/	<y>
w	w	W.	1 Stable	/w/	<w>
ww	W	WC	1b before /u, ɔ, y/ 1a Otherwise	/g/ /gw/	<g> <gw>

CHAPTER 21      GLOSSARY OF PRINCIPAL LINGUISTIC TERMS  
USED IN THIS BOOK

- ABSOLUTE INITIAL**      The commencement of an utterance after a pause or break. e.g. in **Ke dhe-ves!** 'Go away!', [k] is in absolute initial.
- ABSOLUTE FINAL**      The end of an utterance, before a pause or break. e.g. in **Ass yw hi teg!** 'How fair she is!', /g/ is in absolute final, and **may be** unvoiced to [k].
- ACCENT**      A collection of distinctive traits in the pronunciation of a language, including predictable phonological features. See Petyt (1980) for the difference between dialect and accent.
- AFFECTION**      The sound-change caused in a vowel by the anticipation of a subsequent vowel (see section 5.6). e.g. the past participle of **kara** 'to love' is **kerys** rather than **\*karys**, since **a** is affected to **e** under the influence of the subsequent **y**.
- AFFRICATE**      An occlusive consonant which is released as a spirant, and which functions as a single phoneme. e.g. [tʃ], [dʒ].
- ALLOPHONE**      One of a set of similar speech sounds, which together constitute a phoneme. e.g. in English [p<sup>h</sup>], [p̚] and [p] are the three allophones of the phoneme /p/; these sounds are slightly different from one another, but we do not normally notice the differences, because they are not phonemic. In Cornish, [oː], [oː̯] and [ɹ] are allophones of /o/; [x] and [h] are allophones of /x/.
- ALVEOLAR**      A consonant pronounced with the tongue touching the gum above the upper teeth.
- BILINGUAL PERSON**      One able to speak two languages.
- CLOSE COMPOUND**      In Cornish, a combination of two words which acts as a single word so far as stress is concerned. e.g. **karrji** 'garage'.
- CLOSED SYLLABLE**      A syllable ending in one or more consonants.
- CLUSTER**      A group of phonemes, often consonants. e.g. /sk/, /kl/.
- COGNATE**      Having the same phonological origin as a word in another language. e.g. Breton *douar* and Welsh *daear* are cognate with Cornish *dor* 'ground'.
- CONSONANT**      A speech sound produced by obstructing or impeding the passage of air from the lungs.
- DENTAL**      A consonant produced with the apex of the tongue touching the upper teeth. e.g. [θ] and [ð].

**DIALECT** A form of a language differing in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary from the standard language, often associated with a geographical area.

**DIPHTHONG** A speech sound whose quality varies continuously from that of one vowel to that of another, within one syllable. e.g. [ɔɪ] is the diphthong in English and Cornish *joy*.

**ELEMENT OF A DIPHTHONG** The first or second of the two vowels defining the beginning and the end of the diphthong.

**EPENTHETIC** A vowel or consonant interpolated into a word to make it easier to pronounce is said to be epenthetic. e.g. the e [ɛ] in *lyver* 'book', cf. Breton *levr*, Welsh *llyfr*.

**ETYMOLOGY** The origin and history of words.

**GEMINATE** A consonant which is repeated. e.g. [nn] in *pennow* 'heads'.

**GRAPHEME** A minimum distinctive unit of writing in a language. e.g. <k>, <ch>

**GRAMMAR** A set of rules, either prescribing (prescriptive grammar) or describing (descriptive grammar) the generally accepted use of a language.

**HOMOPHONE** One of two or more words which have the same pronunciation, but differ in meaning (and perhaps also in spelling). e.g. English *there*, *their*; Cornish *breggh* 'arm', *breggh* 'pox'.

**INTERVOCAL** Between two vowels.

**INTONATION** The musical characteristics (particularly pitch and tone) of the speaking voice.

**LENITION** The mutation sometimes called soft, which occurs in all the Celtic languages; in Cornish the changes are:

[p, t, k]	→	[b, d, g]
[b, d, g]	→	[v, ð, w or nil]
[m, <b>t</b> , tʃ]	→	[v, <b>ð</b> , dʒ]

**LEXICON** The total stock of words in a language.

**LIQUID** An [l]- or [r]-like consonant.

**LOAN-WORD** A word taken into a language from another language, and then naturalized. e.g. *chons* 'chance', a loan-word from Norman French. Most loan-words in Cornish come from Middle English.

**LOOSE COMPOUND** A combination of two words which acts as two words so far as stress is concerned. e.g. *karr-tan* 'motor-car'.

- MINIMAL PAIR** Two words which differ only in a single sound, and this serve to define phonemic differences. e.g. English *pet* / *bet* shows /p/ v. /b/. Cornish *Sul* 'Sunday' v. *seul* 'whoever' shows /y/ v. /œ/, a phonemic difference not recognized by Nance.
- MONOGLOT** Speaking only one language.
- MONOPHTHONG** A vowel sound with no change in its quality during its production. e.g. [i:].
- MONOSYLLABLE** A word consisting of only one syllable.
- MORPHOLOGY** The study of the structure of words.
- MUTATION** The change of sounds in an utterance caused by neighbouring sounds. In grammars of the Celtic languages, it is often restricted to the initial mutation of consonants.
- NASAL** A speech sound produced by air passing through the nose. In Cornish, the nasal consonants are [m] and [n] (and their geminates): there are no nasal vowels.
- NATIVE WORD** A word which has developed from the original root-stock of a given language. In Cornish, this means words from [Proto-Brythonic](#), some of which can be traced back through [Proto-Celtic](#) to Indo-European; and also loan-words into [Proto-Brythonic](#) from Latin, which were naturalized before [Proto-Brythonic](#) was fragmented into Cumbric, Welsh, Cornish and Breton.
- OCCLUSIVE** A consonant produced by completely blocking the passage of air from the lungs, and then suddenly releasing it (also called stop or plosive). e.g. [p], [t], [k]; [b], [d], [g].
- OPEN SYLLABLE** A syllable ending in a vowel [or diphthong](#).
- ORTHOGRAPHY** The rules for spelling a language.
- PALATALIZATION** The changing of a consonant which is not normally palatal into one which is palatal; i.e. one produced by raising the tongue towards the hard palate.
- PARADIGM** A table of all the inflected forms of a verb.
- PHASE** A period in the history of a language. e.g. Middle Cornish.

**PHONEME** A minimal significant contrastive unit in the phonological system of a language. It is essential, in order to understand the arguments in this book, that the reader grasps the idea of the phoneme. It will help to realize that a given phonetic contrast may be phonemic in one language, but merely allophonic in another. For example, in English, /l/ and /r/ are separate phonemes, but in certain dialects of Chinese, they are allophones of the same phoneme; whence all the “fled lice” jokes. The /l/ phoneme in English is separable into three allophones: clear [l], dark [ɫ] and voiceless [ɬ]; it is impossible in English to find phonemic contrasts between these varieties of /l/. Yet in Polish, clear /l/ and dark /ɫ/ are separate phonemes.

**PHONETICS** The study of speech sounds in the absolute.

**PHONOLOGY** The study of speech sounds within the framework of language.

**POLYSYLLABLE** A word containing two or more syllables.

**PRE-TONIC** The syllable immediately preceding the stress. e.g. the first syllable in the word *leverel* ‘to speak’ [lɛˈvɛrɛl].

**PROVECTION** The initial mutation sometimes called hard. In Cornish, this means [b, d, g] → [p, t, k].

**QUANTITY** The relative duration of a speech sound. In Cornish, three degrees of vocalic quantity occur: these are termed long, half-long and short.

**REALIZATION** The actual way in which a phoneme is pronounced by a speaker or group of speakers in a given phonetic environment, often described in great phonetic detail. e.g. English /æ/ is realized as [a] in east Cornwall, and as [æ] in west Cornwall; Cornish /g/ is realized as [g] before a vowel, but as [k] in absolute final.

**REFLEX** A word or sound in a language which is derived from an earlier phase of the same language. e.g. the reflex of PrimC /ω/ is MidC /œ/ when stressed in monosyllables.

**SANDHI** Phonetic change caused to a speech sound, particularly to a consonant, by adjacent sounds, notably at word-boundaries. See section 5.12.

**SCHWA** An unstressed mid central vowel, represented by [ə]. e.g. the sound of *a* in English *around*. The extent of its occurrence in Cornish is not clear; it occurs in **dhe** ‘to’, **dhe’m** ‘to my’, and in **re’m** ‘by my’.

**SEMANTICS** The study of the meaning of words.

**SEMI-VOWEL** A speech sound which is neither a vowel nor a consonant, but shares characteristics of both. e.g. /j/ and /w/ in Cornish.

**SEMI-SPEAKERS** Bilingual speakers, who have spoken their second language rather than their native language for so long that they have forgotten how to speak their native language properly.

**SPELLING PRONUNCIATION** The pronunciation of a word according to its spelling. e.g. the pronunciation of English hotel changed quite recently, c. 1950, from [əʊ'tel] to [həʊ'tel], because of the spelling. Much of the pronunciation of Revived Cornish heard today is heavily influenced by spelling pronunciation, because people learn Cornish from books. e.g. one often hears the sound [s] in the word for 'after', because it was spelled *wosa* by Nance; this is quite wrong, since the evolution was OldC [d] > MidC [z] and [dʒ]. This shows how important it is to have a spelling system which reflects the pronunciation; if this word were spelled *woza* or *woja*, then it would not be pronounced with a sound which it never had at any phase of Revived Cornish.

**SPIRANT** A consonant produced by partially blocking the passage of air from the lungs, and forcing the air through (also fricative). e.g. [f], [v], [x], [h].

**STRESS** Emphasis on a particular syllable in an utterance.

**SVARABHAKTI** The insertion of an *epenthetic* vowel into a cluster of consonants, in order to make it easier to pronounce. See section 5.7.

**SYNTAX** The structure of sentences.

**TERMINAL SPEAKERS** The last speakers of a language, who speak it to their contemporaries, but do not pass it on to their children.

**VELAR** A consonant produced with the tongue raised towards the soft palate or velum. e.g. [k], [g].

**VOICED** A *speech sound* produced with vibration of the vocal cords.

**VOICELESS** A *speech sound* produced without vibration of the vocal cords.

**VOWEL** a speech sound produced with vibration of the vocal cords, and with no obstruction to the passage of air from the lungs.

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