

In his book *The Cornish consonantal system*, Nicholas Williams (2016) wrote:

The phrase *yn chymma* ‘in this house’ is attested at PC 667 and 1207. (1)
When the enclitic particle *–ma* (2) is added to *chy*, a long and thus dimoric final syllable, the whole behaves as a single accentual group and the *chy* is shortened: [ən 'ʃi:mə] > [ən 'ʃimə] (3) and to show that the stressed vowel is short, the following *m* is doubled. (4).

The following observations may be made:

- (1) This statement is correct.
- (2) The particle is not *–ma* but /mma/, being a shortening of *omma* ‘here’. Tim Saunders recognized this in the 1970s, when he suggested writing the particle as *'mma* rather than the Unified *–ma*.
- (3) The attested phrase contains not /m/ but /mm/; it is /ɪn ʃi mma/, which would have been realized as [ɪn 'ʃimma] (rhymes in *PC* show that unstressed vowels were not reduced to schwa, as Williams suggests).
- (4) The following *mm* has not been doubled from *m*; it is intrinsically double, because it is part of *omma*.

Williams continued:

The same shortening happened with *le* ‘place’ in the phrase *a'n le-ma* (5) ‘from this place, hence’, which regularly gives *alemma* [in the Ordinalia]. Later the *m* (6) after a stressed short vowel is pre-occluded: *a lebma* CW 2080; *alebma* BF: 19 (7).

- (5) This should be *a'n le 'mma*.
- (6) The word *alemma* contains /mm/, not /m/.
- (7) Pre-occlusion is expected when /mm/ follows a stressed vowel.

Williams then tried to link *chymma* and *alebma* with his putative prosodic shift:

This development is, incidentally, excellent evidence that half-length had been eliminated from Middle Cornish. (8)

- (8) This claim is false. The word *alemma* never had half-length in the first place. It cannot be used to support any arguments about Williams’ putative prosodic shift.

Dr Ken George
April 2017