

# ***Kernewek Kemmyn***

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a-barth

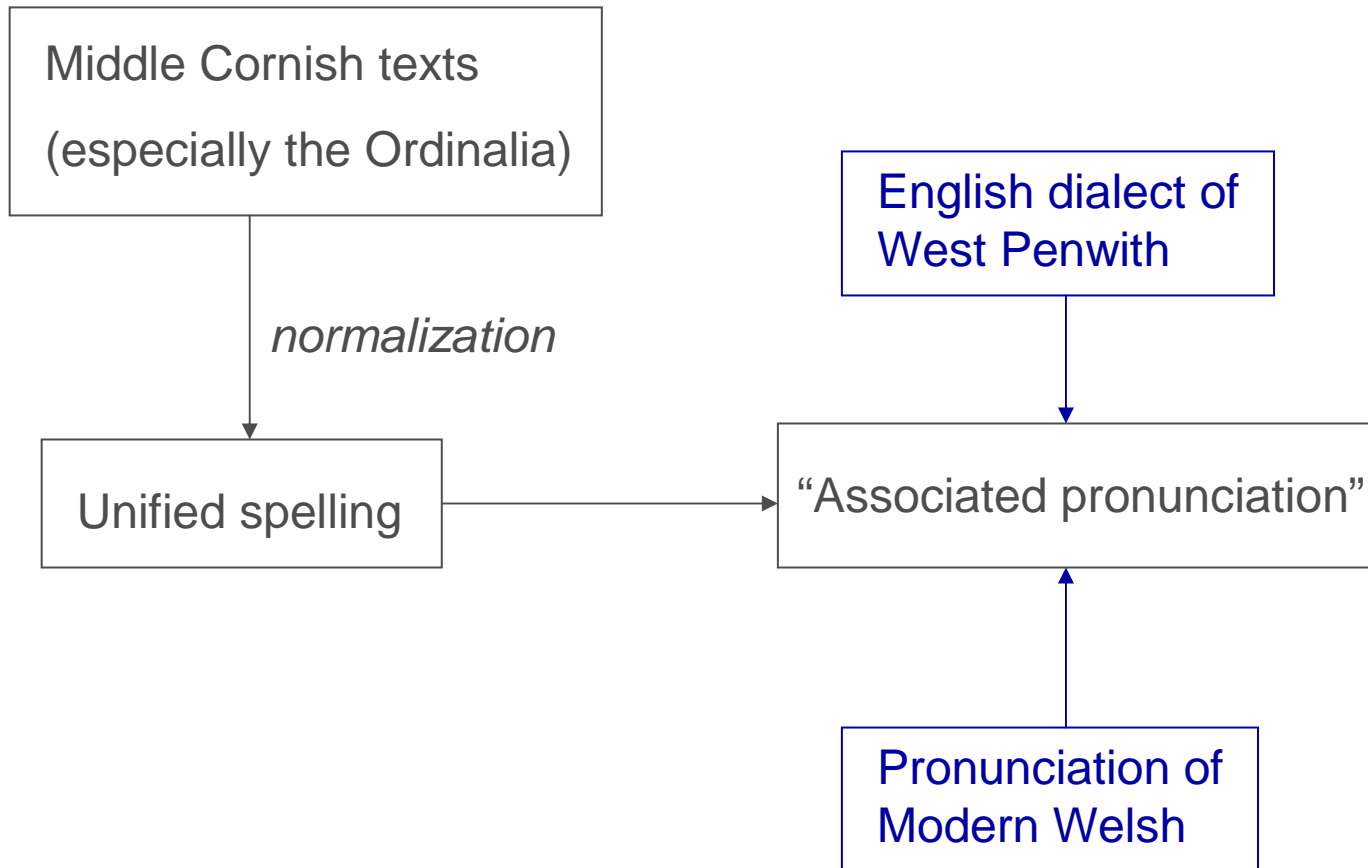
**Kesva an Taves Kernewek**

an 30ves a vis Gwynngala 2006

# The basis of Unified Cornish

## SPELLING

## PRONUNCIATION



# GENESIS

- 1981-86 Ken George studied the phonological history of Cornish, and proposed an improved spelling system.
- 1986-88 The changes were discussed at a series of public meetings.
- 1988 The Language Board voted 15 to 1 in favour of replacing Unified Cornish by the new standard written form, known as *Kernewek Kemmyn*.
- 1998-93 During this change-over period, a dictionary, grammar, and other materials were published. The improvements over Unified were so obvious that there was great pressure to do this quickly.

# SOURCES for *Kernewek Kemmyn*

- All extant traditional texts (including newly-found material); spelling and rhymes
- Dialect words of Cornish origin (e.g. *penn-pali* 'blue-tit')
- Cornish place-names throughout Cornwall and Scilly
- Family-names

# HISTORICAL ORTHOGRAPHIES

- **Old Cornish**      Cornish spelled as if it were Old English
- **Middle Cornish**      Cornish spelled largely as if it were Middle English
- **Late Cornish**      Cornish spelled as if it were early modern English, later sometimes modified in the light of Lhuyd's work
- **Lhuyd's spelling**      an early pan-Celtic phonetic orthography

# Problems with historical orthographies

- **multiplicity**

there are at least four

- **purpose**

Since people knew how to pronounce Cornish, there was no particular requirement for the spelling closely to reflect the pronunciation; it was

“a visual adjunct to aural memory”

- **not fixed**

the same word was often spelled in different ways (e.g. *venjans* was spelled 29 different ways)

# Solving the problems

	“Modern”	Unified	UCR	<i>Kemmyn</i>
Multi- plicity	Based on LateC	Based on MidC spelling to greater or lesser degrees		
Purpose	More thought required about the purpose of the orthography			Different from MidC
Not fixed	Problem- atic	MidC spelling fixed by a two- step process of normalization		
“Authentic”	no	no	no	no

# FIT FOR PURPOSE

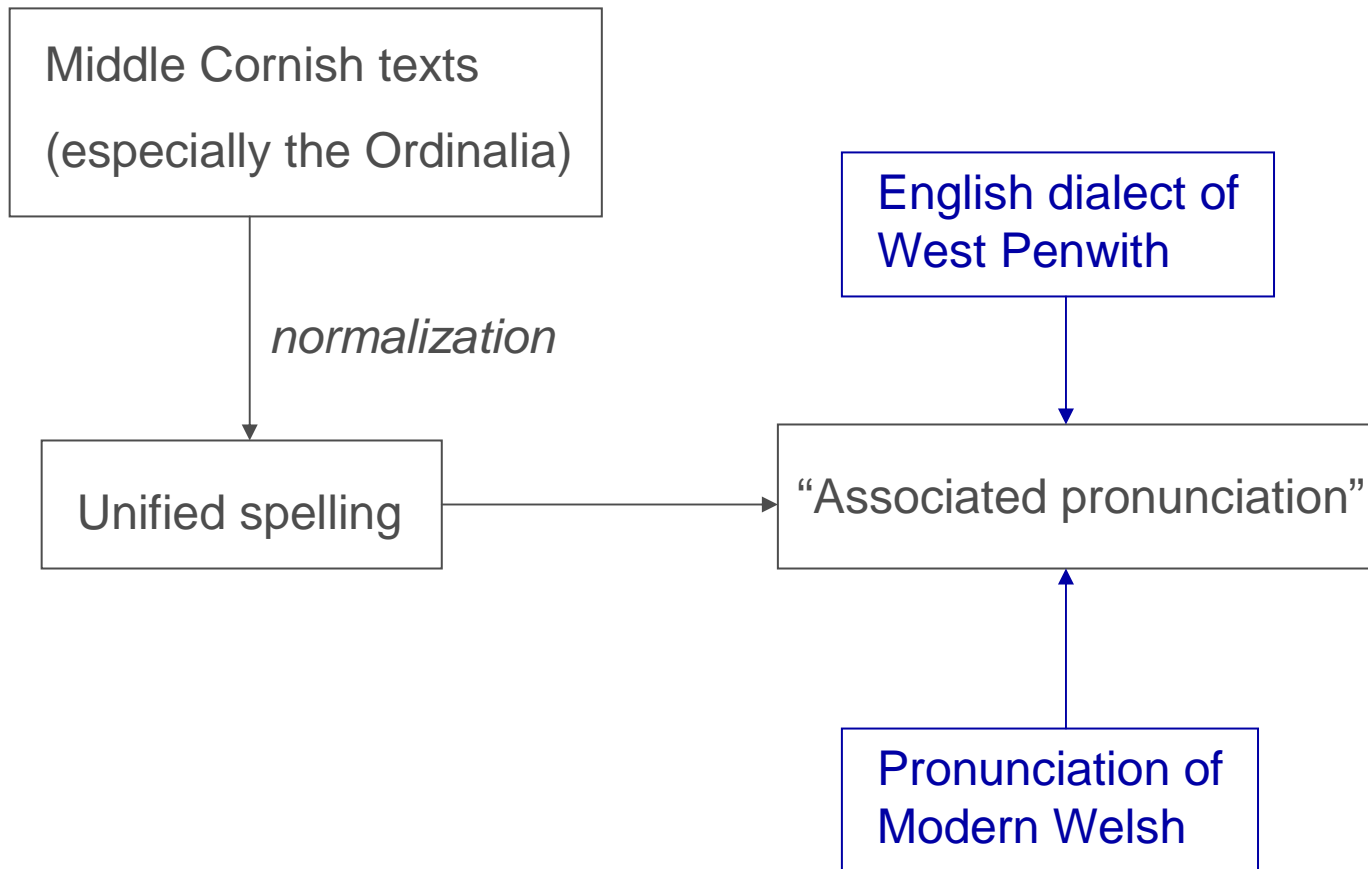
- The main purpose of writing down Middle Cornish was to have a record of mystery plays for people who could speak the language.
- One prime purpose now is to teach Cornish to as many children as may wish to read, write understand and speak it.
- We would not expect the orthography for these two purposes necessarily to be the same.



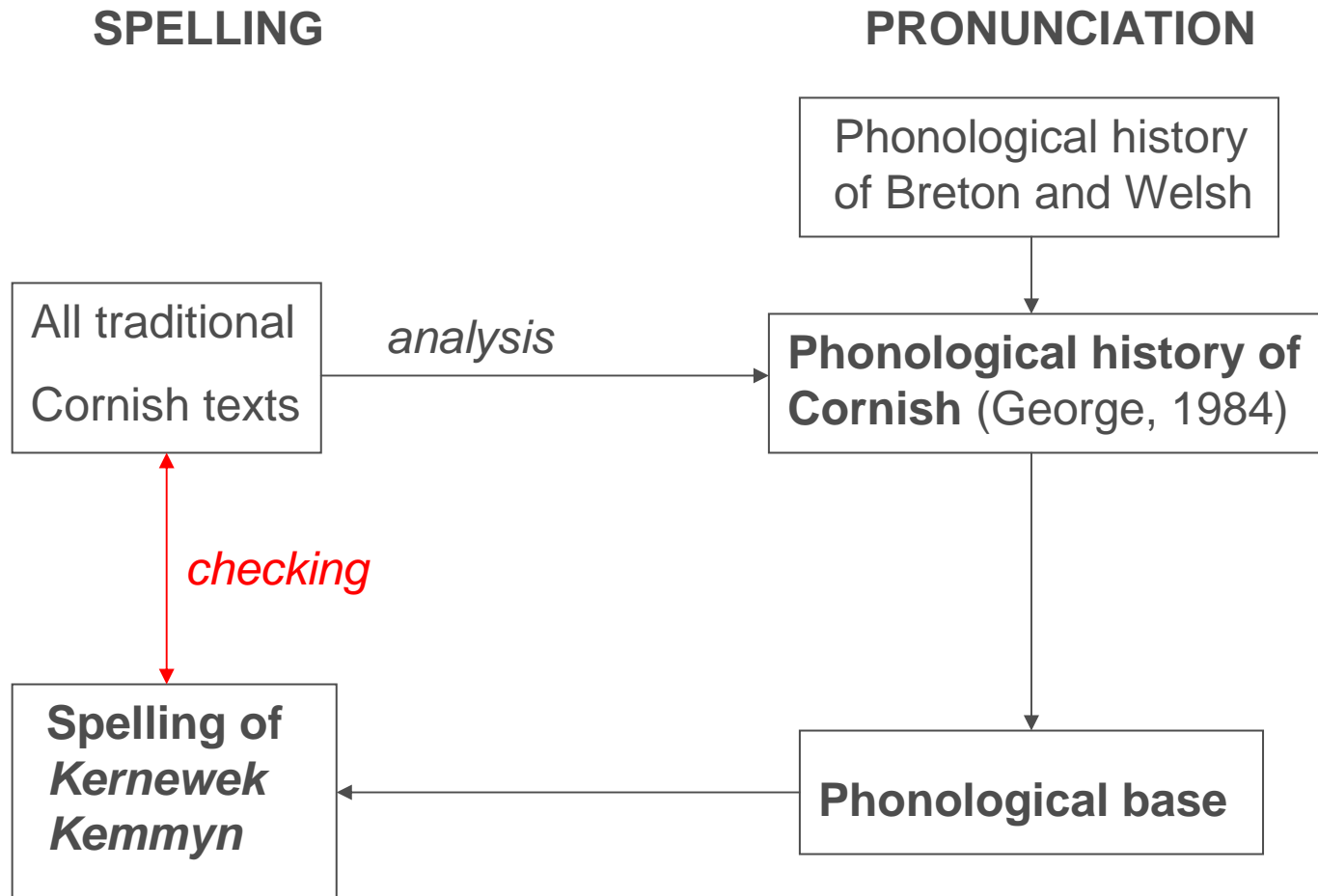
# The basis of Unified Cornish

## SPELLING

## PRONUNCIATION



# The basis of *Kernewek Kemmyn*



# PHONICS in general

- The spelling and pronunciation are closely linked in *Kernewek Kemmyn*.
- Each letter or group of letters always represents the same pair of sounds (one for stressed syllables, one for unstressed syllables) with very few exceptions.
- Thus learners acquire a reasonable pronunciation quickly and easily.
- This is ideal for teaching in schools.

# Single and double consonants

English	Unified	UCR	"Modern"	<i>Kemmyn</i>
'piece'	tam	tam	tabm	tamm
'tame'	-----	-----	-----	(tam)
'wave'	ton	ton	todn	tonn
'tune'	tōn	tōn	-----	ton
'plague'	bal	bal	bal	ball
'mine'	bal	bal	bal	bal
'car'	car	car	-----	karr
'relative'	car	cār	kar	kar

# Splitting <o> and <th>

English	“Modern”	Unified	UCR	<i>Kemmyn</i>
‘goose’	gûdh, gooth	gōth	gōdh	goedh
‘wild’	-----	gōth, gwyth	gōdh	goedh
‘falls’ 2	-----	gōth	gōdh	goedh
‘mole’	gûdh dhaôr	gōth, gō’	gōdh	godh
‘pride’	goth	gōth	gōth	goeth
‘stream’	gozan	gōth, gwyth	gōth (gwÿth)	goeth
‘old’ 2	goath +	gōth	gōth	goth
‘known’ 2	gooth	gōth	gōth	goth

# PHONICS in particular

- Only in *Kernewek Kemmyn* is the length of vowels deducible from the spelling.
- Diacritics are unnecessary.
- There are no silent letters.

What you see is what you get!

# ETYMOLOGY and MORPHOLOGY

- The spelling of words in *Kernewek Kemmyn* is also closely linked to their etymology and morphology.
- This makes it easy to create new words, which users of *Kemmyn* continue to do on a large scale.
- Speakers tend to prefer well-formed new words from Celtic roots to borrowings from English.

# *Kernewek Kemmyn* since 1993

- At least 180 items (books, tapes and CDs) have been published and are still available; this is far more than in any other spelling.
- About 160 editions of the monthly magazine *An Gannas* have been published.
- “*Kemmyn* has been perfect” for the project of translating the Bible (Keith Syed).
- This translation and the publication of the texts has exposed *Kemmyn* to scrutiny; minor modifications have been made.



# *KERNEWEK KEMMYN*

- is the easiest form of Cornish spelling to read out loud or sing.
- is closer to our sister languages of Welsh and Breton.
- is based on a period when all of the great plays were written.
- does not mix up the Celtic language with Cornish dialect.
- tells you exactly where to use Late Cornish pronunciation... if you want to.
- is flexible enough to accommodate new discoveries

# IS IT ANY WONDER THAT

## *Kernewek Kemmyn*

- ... is used by most Cornish speakers (an absolute majority)
- ...is used by the greatest number of filmmakers, poets and musicians
- ... is used by the greatest number of Cornish language teachers

# SUMMARY

## *Kernewek Kemmyn*

- has been the **standard written form** of most Cornish speakers for about 15 years
- is the **easiest** Cornish spelling to learn
- is rational and **fit for purpose**
- has most of the necessary materials for teaching **already in place**
- is the most **accessible** form available