

WHICH BASE FOR REVIVED CORNISH?

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INTRODUCTION

Cornish was spoken as a community language (Traditional Cornish) from about 600 A.D. to about 1800, and has been revived in the twentieth century (Revived Cornish). In a recent article, Penglase {1994} argues that “authenticity is the most desirable quality of a revived language”. Authenticity may be a desirable goal, but absolute authenticity is quite unattainable. In the absence of native-speakers and sound-recordings of traditional Cornish, any reconstruction of the grammar, syntax, phonology, lexicon, and particularly semantics, is bound to include elements of doubt. The orthography is slightly different. These aspects are discussed individually below, but firstly, the question of nomenclature must be addressed.

GETTING THE NOMENCLATURE RIGHT

The history of many European languages is divided into Old, Middle and Modern phases. The boundaries of each phase are usually not clearly definable, so different authors give different dates for them. Thus the history of English may be divided into Old English (700-1100), Middle English (1100-1500) and Modern English (1500-present). The most ancient phase of traditional Cornish (600-800), which has no surviving written records, was termed Primitive Cornish by Jackson {1953}. The terms Old Cornish (800-1200) and Middle Cornish (1200-1575) are not in dispute; but there is disagreement about the use of the term “Modern Cornish”.

The term “Modern Cornish” has been used to refer to:

- (a) the most recent phase of traditional Cornish (1575-1800), e.g. Padel {1975};
- (b) the revived language of the twentieth century, e.g. Brown {1993};
- (c) both (a) and (b) e.g. Saunders {1984}
- (d) the form of revived Cornish advocated by Gendall {1990, 1991} (*Kernuak*)

Because of the potential confusion, the term “Modern Cornish” is best avoided altogether. The best name for the last phase of the traditional language (1575-1800) is Late Cornish, in which the word ‘late’ means both ‘tardy’ (*le cornique tardif* in French) and ‘deceased’.

The revival was begun by Jenner {1904}, who based his ideas for the most part on Late Cornish. Nance's {1929} reconstruction, which he called Unified Cornish, was based for the most part on the Middle Cornish phase, for reasons which are explored below. Recently, the pronunciation and spelling of Nance's Cornish have been improved by the present author {George, 1986}. The principles behind the improved reconstruction, known as *Kernewek Kemmyn*, are discussed in the next two sections of this paper. Late Cornish has recently been re-examined by Gendall {1992}, with a view, not widely accepted, to basing a revived form of Cornish entirely on that phase.

Penglas seems to use the term "Modern Cornish" not only for the last phase of traditional Cornish, but also for Gendall's form of revived Cornish based upon that phase. This is reprehensible. It is manifestly impossible for the revived language to be identical to that spoken at a given epoch before 1800, and so names which imply that it is are to be avoided. It is essential to use a nomenclature which clearly distinguishes the traditional language from the revived. The name used for Gendall's form of revived Cornish seems to have changed several times; it has been called *Carnoack Tithiack*, Traditional Cornish (a misleading name if ever there was one!), *Carnoack Nowedga*, and in Gendall {1993}, *Curnoack* and *Kernuak*; this last will be used here.

A COMPARISON OF BASES FOR REVIVED CORNISH

General

Two fundamental questions may be asked, when comparing *Kernewek Kemmyn* and *Kernuak*.

- Q1) Which phase is more suited for the revival of Cornish, Middle or Late ?
- Q2) Are the reconstructions true to the traditional language (in Penglas's terms, authentic)?

Q2 is best answered by a detailed examination of the reconstructions, as compared with traditional Cornish. Penglas did not attempt this, preferring to examine the methodology. I have not attempted a detailed answer, either, because the question is somewhat sterile. There would be little point in setting up a revived language which was known to be significantly different from the traditional (e.g. a Cornish without mutations, however desirable that might appear to the learner!). Our knowledge of traditional Cornish has a degree of uncertainty ("experimental error") associated with it. Provided that the revived language approximates the traditional to within the error-bounds, then it may be deemed authentic (or as authentic as one is likely to get). If, subsequently, our knowledge of traditional Cornish improves to the point where there are demonstrable errors in the reconstruction, then those errors should be rectified. This is what happened to Nance's Unified Cornish, so far as the phonology was concerned; the resulting improvement was *Kernewek Kemmyn*. Authenticity is therefore relative rather than absolute. The Cornish Language Board, which adopted *Kernewek Kemmyn* in 1987, is acutely aware of the question of authenticity; for example, in the new Cornish-English dictionary {George, 1993}, the degree of authenticity of each word is indicated by a tripartite code, which deals with:

- (a) phonological and orthographic authentication;
- (b) attestation;
- (c) frequency of occurrence.

It is therefore Q1 which is the main subject of this paper. The doubts which Penglase expresses about a Middle Cornish base are considered under individual headings below. When he writes “had it been known that Modern Cornish [i.e. Late Cornish] was in reality a flexible, varied and distinctly Cornish vernacular”, he does Nance a great disservice. Nance was fully aware of the nature of Late Cornish, for it was he who published most of the traditional literature from that period, in no fewer than 29 different articles, mostly in *Old Cornwall*. The point is, that having studied the Late Cornish remains in the minutest detail, Nance came to a rather different conclusion; viz. that it was better to base Revived Cornish on Middle Cornish, a view held by the great majority of Cornish speakers.

Relatively little has been published as to why this choice was made, and this paper will redress that balance. An important general point is that Gendall’s {1991} study of Late Cornish, on which his reconstruction is based, is essentially synchronic. Nance, however, although he based his grammar and syntax on Middle Cornish, his studies embraced all phases; and he wanted to include in the revived language every scrap of Cornish that could be found, following the motto of the Old Cornwall Societies: *Cuntelleugh an brewyon us gesys na vo kellys travyth*.

Grammar

Penglase does not offer any specific criticism of the detail of Nance’s grammar; he just asserts that it is ‘in some important aspects invented’. To support this sweeping statement, he quotes no primary sources, but rather the comments of a non-Cornish speaker, Glanville Price. Penglase is misinformed. In fact, the grammar of Middle Cornish has received considerable attention; Nance was able to refer to the work of Lhuyd {1707}, Stokes {1872} and others; but in addition, he and A.S.D. Smith minutely examined, letter by letter, practically every manuscript of traditional Cornish, of all phases. Their knowledge of Cornish grammar was so detailed that Smith was able to find ten pages’ worth of mistakes in the second edition of Henry Lewis’ {1946} *Llawlyfr Cernyweg Canol*.

The only mistake which has been found in Nance’s grammar in recent years is the minor one of misinterpreting the *tek a wel* construction as an exclamative {Padel, 1978, 1979}. This has now been corrected by Brown {1993}. Another minor point has been to recommend that in *Kernewek Kemmyn* the singular form *ty* ‘thou’ be used for addressing one person, and the plural form *hwi* ‘you’ for addressing more than one person {Brown, 1993 §71(1)}; a principle which Penglase evidently approves.

A comparison of Middle and Late Cornish grammar shows that:

- (a) The English plural *-s* became commoner, even for Cornish words, e.g. *poscaders* ‘fishermen’.
- (b) The verbal noun suffixes *-a* and *-ia* were substituted for others.

- (c) Unpredictable metatheses produced words which were no longer relatable to their Breton and Welsh cognates; e.g. Late Cornish *ispak* ‘bishop’ (cf. Breton *eskob*, Welsh *esgob*).
- (d) Mutations were indicated less frequently.
- (e) Conjugated pronominal prepositions are a distinctive feature of Celtic grammar: in Cornish, they persisted into Late Cornish, but began to be replaced by more analytical forms; e.g. alongside *thym* > *them* ‘to me’, (*dhymm* in *Kernewek Kemmyn*) a form *tha vee* appeared. This may be put down to English influence during a period of terminal decline.

Syntax

The syntax of Late Cornish appears more like English syntax than that of Middle Cornish, in that conjugated main verbal clauses were replaced by periphrastic constructions. The interrogative forms of the latter are paralleled by English:

(from <i>Delkiow Sevi</i>)	<i>Ra ve moas gena why ?</i>	Shall I go with you ?
(from William Rowe)	<i>reeg Dew lawle ?</i>	Did God say ?

Compare also

BM 979	<i>desempys duen alema</i>	At once let us go hence
CW.1331	<i>Gas ny tha vos a lemma</i>	Let us go hence

where the Late Cornish has the same form as the English.

Padel {1975} pointed out numerous examples of Anglicisms in Late Cornish; e.g. in Nicholas Boson’s *Dutchesse of Cornwall’s progresse*, we find *iggeva setha war* ‘that he is sitting upon’. In *Nebbaz Gerriau dro tho Carnoack*, there are *skoother war* ‘depended upon’; *noniel* ‘neither’, used as an adverb; *gwrez aman* ‘made up’; *merwel akar* ‘die away’; *dose tho travith* ‘come to nothing’; *drez ubba* ‘over here’. In addition, John Boson wrote *Termen vedn doaz* for ‘time will come’. The use of the Late Cornish conjunction *tell* ‘as’ seems to be taken from the use of ‘as’ instead of ‘that’ in dialectal English; e.g. in William Rowe’s translation from Genesis:

<i>Preg laule theeze tell estah en noath ?</i>	Who told thee that thou wert naked ?
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Penglase is concerned that syntax reconstructed from Middle Cornish may not be authentic, because most of the extant Middle Cornish literature is verse rather than prose. I have shown elsewhere {George, 1990, 1991} that it is still possible to recover the common word-orders from verse, without recourse to the syntax of Middle Breton. These studies also show how different word-orders could be used to emphasize a particular syntactic element. This versatility was practically lost in Late Cornish; so that the language became, not “flexible” as stated by Penglase, but just the opposite.

Lexicon

The lexical legacy of traditional Cornish is insufficient for the requirements of a modern language to be used in everyday living in the twentieth century. The gaps in the extant traditional lexicon comprise:

- (a) words which must have been present in traditional Cornish, but do not happen to appear in the texts: these may often be deduced from Breton and Welsh cognates; e.g. the word for 'rat' was almost certainly *rath* (Breton *razh*);
- (b) words for concepts which did not exist at the time when Cornish was traditionally spoken:

Because of the paucity of the traditional lexicon, Nance {1938, 1953} did not restrict his choice of words to those found in Middle Cornish; he used in addition words from Old Cornish, Late Cornish, and those words in the Cornish dialect of English which appeared to come from Cornish (even though not recorded in traditional Cornish texts). In order to fill the gaps (a) and (b), he turned to Breton and Welsh, to other dialect words, and to Middle English; he also devised new words using Cornish roots.

This policy has continued in the preparation of the dictionaries for *Kernewek Kemmyn* {George, 1993, 1995}. About one hundred extra words were forthcoming from Padel's {1985} study of place-names in Cornwall. Otherwise, new words have been constructed according to a carefully prepared set of guidelines {George, 1989}.

The problem with Gendall's reconstruction is that Late Cornish contains only a subset of the extant traditional lexicon. In his English-Cornish dictionary {Gendall, 1990}, he has been forced to go backwards in time, and include Jordan's *Creacon of the World*, dated 1611, a work which is Late Cornish in its spelling, but Middle Cornish in its content; and even the Tregear Homilies, which really belong to Middle Cornish, having been translated *circa* 1558. What is far more questionable is his inclusion of hosts of dialect words: whereas words found in the numerous texts are listed, often with variant spellings each with its own provenance, the dialect words, Cornish and non-Cornish, are all listed under the catchall label 'T' (for 'Traditional'), which includes "material transmitted orally from 18th, 19th and 20th cent."

Phonology

Although the testimony of Lhuyd is a help, two difficulties remain when trying to work out the phonology of Late Cornish.

- (a) There is insufficient evidence to be sure about many of the phonemes.
- (b) The degree of influence of English on the sounds of Late Cornish, and the source of the sounds in the dialect of West Penwith, are both controversial and indeterminate. Wakelin {1975} maintained that the dialectal sounds are a reflection of 17th century English, while Ó'Coileán {1990} argued that they fitted Lhuyd's description of Cornish sounds.

The historical phonology of traditional Cornish was studied in detail by the present author {George, 1984}. In his article, Penglase extensively criticizes my work, but his criticisms are almost all methodological, and some are quite superficial, such as his questioning my choice of computer language. He regards my methods as “unconventional”, but here, as in many other fields, it is the unconventional approach which leads to the successful advance of knowledge. The method used for developing *Kernewek Kemmyn* is summarized here for reference.

The first step was to trace the history of all the sounds of Cornish throughout its traditional phase, using a knowledge of phonetics, subject to the boundary conditions:

- (a) in Primitive Cornish {Jackson, 1953, 1967};
- (b) the evidence of Lhuyd for Late Cornish, which is sometimes contradictory;

with the aid of the following evidence, in decreasing order of reliability:

- (a) the written record in texts and place-names;
- (b) the development of sounds in Breton and Welsh;
- (c) rhyming schemes.

Working hypotheses of the phonological history could then be tested against the evidence. This may seem like a circular argument, but in practice it worked as a spiral; successive iterations resulted in improvements to the history. With hindsight, the only change which I would make to the method would be to place more emphasis on synchronic analyses.

Orthography

The only feature of traditional Cornish where one might hope to achieve authenticity is the orthography, but even here a problem arises. The following four orthographic systems may be distinguished as being used for traditional Cornish:

- (a) the orthography of Old Cornish, which was similar to those of Old Breton and Old Welsh;
- (b) the orthography of Middle Cornish;
- (c) the orthography of Late Cornish;
- (d) the orthography of Edward Lhuyd {1707}.

All other systems are based to some degree on one or more of these, as shown in Figure 1:

With the exception of Lhuyd’s phonetic system {1707}, the orthography of traditional Cornish was not fixed, and was based on contemporary English orthography. Unless Lhuyd’s system is used, therefore, anyone wishing to use a traditional orthography as a base has to exercise an element of choice as to which spellings to use.

TRADITIONAL ORTHOGRAPHY	REFORMIST ORTHOGRAPHIES	<i>FIGURE 1</i>
Old Cornish		Williams {1863}
Middle Cornish		Keigwin {Nance, 1926, 1927}
	--> Unified Cornish	Nance {1929}
	---> <i>Kernewek Kemmyn</i>	George {1986}
Late Cornish		Gendall {1992}
Lhuyd {1707}		Saunders

N.B. Jenner's orthography appears to be based on the writings of both Lhuyd and the writers of the Newlyn School (1660-1720).

It is surprising that, when choosing an orthography for *Kernuak*, Gendall did not use as a basis Lhuyd's system, which is far more scientific than that of the writers in the Newlyn School. In Gendall {1992}, he gives no reasons for this; neither does he explain the principles by which he chooses one spelling rather than another from the collection in his dictionary {Gendall, 1990}. He has re-spelled certain words, recorded only by Lhuyd, in a fashion which is more in accordance with the style of the Newlyn School; e.g. Lhuyd's *kýnyfan*, *kýnyphan* 'nut' is re-spelled as *knuffan*, an unattested form. This is hardly the authenticity desired by Penglase.

One of the useful features of Lhuyd's orthography was the consistent distinction between /ð/ and /θ/, whereas the Newlyn School tended to use the English grapheme <th> for both phonemes. Nance followed Lhuyd, using <dh> and <th> respectively, except in final position, where /-ð/ is often realized as [θ]. Compare Breton <z> and <zh> (not always an exact correspondence); Welsh <th> and <dd>. In ***Kernewek Kemmyn***, the distinction is made even in final position. Gendall has not availed himself of this, preferring to use English <th>: He remarks "a working rule is difficult to form. Reference should be made to the dictionary" in order to discover which of the two phonemes is meant. For the learner, this is authenticity carried to the point of obscurity.

FIGURE 2

Words containing the reflex of Middle Cornish stressed /-i/

KERNEWEK KEMMYN	ENGLISH MEANING	BRETON COGNATE	WELSH COGNATE	KERNUAK {Gendall, 1993}
<i>bri</i>	esteem	<i>bri</i>	<i>bri</i>	----
<i>chi</i>	house	<i>ti</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>choy</i>
<i>devri</i>	certain	<i>devri</i>	<i>difri</i>	----
<i>dhi</i>	thither	<i>di</i>	----	----
<i>di</i>	thither	<i>di</i>	----	<i>di</i>
<i>dri</i>	to bring	----	(<i>dyry</i>)	----
<i>fi</i>	fie	----	----	----
<i>gwri</i>	stitch	<i>gwri</i>	<i>gwni-</i>	----
<i>hi</i>	she	<i>hi</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>hye</i>
<i>hwi</i>	you (pl.)	<i>c'hwi</i>	<i>ch(w)i</i>	<i>why</i>
<i>i</i>	they	<i>i</i>	----	<i>angye</i>
<i>ki</i>	dog	<i>ki</i>	<i>ci</i>	<i>kye</i>
<i>kri</i>	cry	<i>kri</i>	<i>cri</i>	----
<i>li</i>	lunch	(<i>lein</i>)	----	<i>li</i>
<i>ni</i>	we	<i>ni</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>nye</i>
<i>pri</i>	clay	<i>pri</i>	<i>pridd</i>	<i>pry</i>
<i>ri</i>	to give	<i>reiñ</i>	<i>rhoi</i>	----
<i>ti</i>	to roof	----	<i>toi</i>	----
<i>ti</i>	to swear	<i>touiñ</i>	(<i>tyngu</i>)	----
<i>tri</i>	three (m.)	<i>tri</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>try</i>
<i>yredi</i>	surely	----	----	----

Notes

- 1: There are other words in *Kernewek Kemmyn* which rhyme with the above, but they are not included in the figure, because they do not necessarily contain the reflex of Middle Cornish /-i/; these are *bi* 'may thou be', *gwi* 'weaves', *li* 'oath', *si* 'itch', *ti* 'house'. This makes 26 words in all, more than in *Kernuak*.

The situation is still worse when one considers the spelling of vowels. Figure 2 shows words containing the reflex of Middle Cornish stressed /-i/. In *Kernewek Kemmyn*, all of these words rhyme; indeed they have been taken from an as yet unpublished rhyming dictionary. It is well known that the vowel sound in these words changed, in the same way and at the same time as the English Great Vowel Shift: [-i] > [-i:] > [-ɛi]; this is held to be an example of how Late Cornish was influenced by English. We would expect all of those words which survived into the Late Cornish phase to be affected in the same way, and therefore commonsense would suggest that they ought to be spelled similarly in a system based on Late Cornish. Only 11 of these words appear in Gendall {1993}, as shown in the figure, but the vocoid therein (approximately [-ɛi] by the year 1700) has the different spellings <oy, y, ye, i> In the section on pronunciation, Gendall {1993} acknowledges that these four graphemes may each represent the same sound. This is definitely not a phonemic system: *Duw re weresso dhe'n studhyer !*

The orthography of *Kernewek Kemmyn* is an improvement on that of Nance, so as to fit the phonological base, at the same epoch. When Penglase writes of a 500 year gap between the pronunciation and the orthography, he is the victim of misinformation; the two are closely wedded, as shown in Figure 3. Almost all of the graphemes used are found in the Middle Cornish texts. The pronunciation and spelling were first explained in George {1986}, and have since been slightly modified {George, 1993}.

FIGURE 3

The phonological base and its associated orthography

<i>Phonemes</i>	<i>Graphemes</i>
/i, ɪ, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, u, œ, y/	<i, y, e, a, o, oe, ou, eu, u>
/ei, ai, oi/	<ey, ay, oy>
/iʊ, iʊ, ɛʊ, aʊ, ɔʊ/	<iw, yw, ew, aw, ow>
/j, w/	<y, w>
/p, t, k; pp, tt, kk/	<p, t, k; pp, tt, kk>
/b, d, g/	<b, d, g> (but <-p, -d, -k> in polysyllables)
/f, θ, x, s; ff, θθ, xx, ss/	<f, th, gh, s; ff, tth, ggh, ss>
/v, ð, h/	<v, dh, h>
/ʃ, tʃ, dʒ/	<sh, ch, j>

The close link between spelling and pronunciation depends upon a set of rules governing the quantity of vowels in traditional Cornish, from its beginnings *circa* 600 to about 1600. These rules were as follows:

- (a) In unstressed syllables, all vowels are short.
- (b) In stressed syllables, vowels are short before double consonants and groups of consonants.
- (c) In stressed syllables, vowels are long in monosyllables, and half-long in polysyllables before single consonants.

The principles of the orthography of *Kernewek Kemmyn* are discussed further below.

The reconstruction of the verb 'to know'

Nowhere does Penglase make even one criticism of the actual details of Nance's reconstruction of Cornish, nor of my improvements to it. It is these details which can and should be argued in an academic context, as has been done by Williams {1990} and George {1992}. In this section, I critically compare part of the reconstruction in detail.

Penglase asserts that:

“the Middle Cornish verb structure is complex and requires many verb parts not all of which naturally occur in the texts. Comparison with other Celtic languages was, therefore, naturally brought in to assist in the construction of these parts of the relevant verbs.”

The verbal structure seems complex only to English monoglots; it is no more complex than that of many major European languages, French and Spanish, for example, and has been clearly codified by Edwards {1995}. Later Penglase claims that, so far as *Kernuak* is concerned “the parts of the irregular auxiliary verbs are extant in the texts”. The validity of these statements is now tested for one of the five auxiliary verbs listed by Penglase as required to form tenses in *Kernuak*.

Cornish, in common with many European languages, has two verbs ‘to know’, semantically corresponding roughly to French *connaitre* and *savoir*. The second of these verbs has an important auxiliary function, shown by:

BM 19 *perfect ef a wore redya* ‘he knows how to read perfectly’

so that the revived language needs a full paradigm for it. The paradigms presented by Brown {1993} for *Kernewek Kemmyn* and by Gendall {1991, 1992} for *Kernuak* are shown, together with explanatory notes, in Figures 4 and 5. The following observations may be made.

- (a) The full paradigm of the verb is by no means extant in the texts, and considerable reconstruction was necessary in both cases; 61% for *Kernewek Kemmyn* and 67% for *Kernuak*.
- (b) The total number of extant examples used for *Kernewek Kemmyn* is approximately fourteen times that used for *Kernuak*, indicating that the reconstruction of the former is likely to be more reliable.
- (c) No recourse to Breton or to Welsh was necessary to reconstruct the eight tenses in *Kernewek Kemmyn*, whereas reference to dialectal Breton might well have helped the reconstruction of the imperfect in *Kernuak*.
- (d) There are variant forms in *Kernuak*, and disagreement between Gendall {1991} and Gendall {1992}; where is the authenticity here?

FIGURE 4

The verb *godhvōs* 'to know' in *Kernewek Kemmyn*

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Imperfect</u>	<u>Preterite</u>	<u>Pluperfect</u>
S 1	67 <i>gonn</i>	9 <i>godhyen</i>	0 <i>godhvev</i>	0 <i>godhvien</i>
S 2	9 <i>godhes</i>	0 <i>godhyes</i>	0 <i>godhves</i>	0 <i>godhvies</i>
S 3	82 <i>goer</i>	18 <i>godhya</i>	0 <i>godhva</i>	1 <i>godhvia</i>
P 1	8 <i>godhon</i>	0 <i>godhyen</i>	0 <i>godhven</i>	0 <i>godhvien</i>
P 2	10 <i>godhowgh</i>	0 <i>godhyewgh</i>	0 <i>godhvewgh</i>	0 <i>godhvewgh</i>
P 3	1 <i>godhons</i>	3 <i>godhyens</i>	0 <i>godhvons</i>	0 <i>godhviens</i>
I	0 <i>godhor</i>	0 <i>godhyes</i>	0 <i>godhves</i>	0 <i>godhvies</i>
	<u>Pres. subj.</u>	<u>Impf. subj.</u>	<u>Imperative</u>	<u>Future</u>
S 1	0 <i>godhviv</i>	3 <i>godhven</i>	-----	1 <i>godhvydhav</i>
S 2	1 <i>godhvi</i>	4 <i>godhves</i>	3 <i>godhvydh</i>	0 <i>godhvydhyd</i>
S 3	5 <i>godhvo</i>	2 <i>godhve</i>	0 <i>godhvydhes</i>	3 <i>godhvydh</i>
P 1	0 <i>godhvyn</i>	0 <i>godhven</i>	0 <i>godhvydhyn</i>	0 <i>godhvydhyn</i>
P 2	0 <i>godhvowgh</i>	0 <i>godhvewgh</i>	7 <i>godhvydhewgh</i>	0 <i>godhvydhowgh</i>
P 3	0 <i>godhvons</i>	0 <i>godhvons</i>	0 <i>godhvydhens</i>	0 <i>godhvydhons</i>
I	1 <i>godher</i>	0 <i>godhves</i>	-----	0 <i>godhvydher</i>
	<u>Verbal noun</u>	<u>Past participle</u>		
	57 <i>godhvōs</i>	8 <i>godhvedhys</i>		

Notes:

1. The verbal paradigm has been taken from Brown {1993, §200}; all forms are given in their unmutated state.
2. The figures in front of each word indicate the number of examples of that particular tense and person being found in the Middle Cornish texts (including *Creacon of the World*); there are 302 attestations in all.
3. The data in the table are slightly different from that presented by Lewis {1946, §55}.
4. Of the 56 possible forms of the verb, 22 are attested (39%); the remainder have been reconstructed, fairly easily and with little doubt in this case, because *godhvōs* is a compound of *bōs* 'to be', a verb which is well attested.
5. The preterite is not represented in the extant literature, presumably because its use would be confined to sudden flashes of inspiration, e.g.: 'As soon as I saw her, I knew that she was the girl for me'. No such flashes are evident in traditional Cornish.
6. The phonemic nature of the orthography means that the cluster /ðv/, which occurs in most of the forms, is written <dhv>. The spellings recorded in Middle Cornish reflect rather its phonetic realization in internal sandhi [θf] (> [ff] in rapid speech).

Gendall's reconstruction of the verb *gothaz/guthvaz* 'to know' for *Kernuak*

	<u>Present</u>		<u>Imperfect</u>
S 1	3 <i>oram/orama/ora ve</i>		1 <i>oyan ve</i>
S 2	1 <i>usta</i>		0 <i>oyas che</i>
S 3m	10 <i>orava/ore e</i>		2 <i>oya e</i>
S 3f	<i>ore hye</i>		<i>oya hy [sic]</i>
P 1	2 <i>oren nye</i>		0 <i>oyan nye</i>
P 2	0 <i>oro why</i>		0 <i>oyo why</i>
P 3	0 <i>oranz/ore angye</i>		0 <i>oyanz/oya angye</i>

	<u>Conditional</u>		<u>Past subjunctive</u>
S 1	0 <i>uffeean ve</i> (<i>uffyen</i>)		1 <i>cuffan ve</i>
S 2	0 <i>uffeeas che</i> (<i>uffyes</i>)		0 <i>cuffas</i>
S 3m	1 <i>uffeea e</i> (<i>uffya</i>)		0 <i>cuffa e</i>
S 3f	0 <i>uffeea hye</i> (<i>uffya</i>)		0 <i>cuffa hye</i>
P 1	0 <i>uffean nye</i> (<i>uffyen</i>)		0 <i>cuffan nye</i>
P 2	0 <i>uffeo why</i> (<i>uffyo</i>)		0 <i>cuffo why</i>
P 3	0 <i>uffeean angye</i> (<i>uffyenz</i>)		0 <i>cuffan'gye</i> (<i>cuffanz</i>)

Notes

1. The verbal paradigm has been taken from Gendall {1992, p.72}; where the reconstructed forms in Gendall {1991, §26} disagree with this, the latter are indicated in brackets.
2. The paradigms for the first three of the four tenses are shown in the lenited state; the past subjunctive is shown in the prolected state.
3. The figures in front of each word indicate the number of examples of that particular tense and person which are given in Gendall {1991} (including four examples from *Creacon of the World*); there are 21 attestations in all. The figures given for the 3rd person singular masculine form actually apply to all cases of the 3rd person singular.
4. Gendall {1992} gives alternative forms in certain cases; these are indicated with an oblique stroke (/).
5. Of the 24 possible forms of the verb, 8 are attested (33%); the remainder have been reconstructed; as Gendall freely admits, the reconstruction of the conditional and the past subjunctive each depend on single examples in *Creacon of the World*.
6. Gendall {1991} gives the verbal noun as *gothaz/guthaz*, and the past participle as *guthvethes*. In Gendall {1992}, the verbal noun is given as *gothaz/guthvaz*.
7. The present tense as given by Gendall represents a re-modelling in Late Cornish, using the 3rd person singular as a root; the same re-modelling occurs in some Breton dialects.

It is clear that Penglase's statements are invalid, so far as this verb is concerned, and by extension of the same principle to many other circumstances. If this means, as he states, that Unified Cornish and *Kernewek Kemmyn are* 'invented', and by implication, 'artificial', then *Kernuak* is even more so.

Richness and registers

The sources whence *Kernewek Kemmyn* and *Kernuak* are drawn are unequal in size. *Kernuak* is ideologically restricted to Late Cornish as a source (though, as shown above, this is inadequate for lexical purposes, and Gendall has had to borrow extensively from dialect, and go backwards to the Tregear homilies). *Kernewek Kemmyn*, on the other hand, although based on a date of c.1500, takes words from all phases, and re-spells them (wherever possible) to accord with the phonological base. This philosophy may appear Procrustean, but it makes the revived language immeasurably richer, and a suitable vehicle for future development.

One result of this richness is that *Kernewek Kemmyn* has more than one register. Figure 6 presents two translations of the same text, using practically the same grammatical structures, but with different vocabulary. Text A (“*Kernewek Ughel*”) contains mainly words of Celtic origin, whereas Text B (“*Kernewek Isel*”) has a lexicon mainly of loan-words from Latin, French and English. It would be very difficult to do this in *Kernuak*, which appears to possess only one register.

This is partly a reflection of the different status of Middle and Late Cornish. In 1500, Middle Cornish was spoken by about 33,000 people (48% of the Cornish population), including an educated class who were responsible for the mystery plays, i.e. a real literature. In 1700, Late Cornish was geographically and socially restricted to about 5000 speakers (5% of the population), all bilingual, “deserted by the educated” {Gendall, 1991}. Fleuriot {1986} has pointed out that when a language is spoken in a bilingual society under the influence of a dominant language, one has no longer got the true language. One has only to look at Brittany today to see the truth of this statement.

The restriction to a Late Cornish base means that *Kernuak* has no access to the rich source of mediaeval poetry. In former years, Richard Gendall was well known as a writer of excellent songs in (Unified) Cornish, using a wide variety of rhyme-schemes and metres. There is no evidence of this in his book *An Curnoack Hethow*; the only song therein is the traditional *Pelea era why a moaz ?* The only poems in the book are two by James Jenkins (c.1700), which, like most Late Cornish verse, use rhyming couplets. Since his espousal of the cause of Late Cornish, Gendall’s output of songs, at least publically, seems to have practically stopped. One cannot help feeling that *Kernuak* is a less efficient vehicle for verse than a Cornish based on that of the mystery plays.

TEXT A

Nans yw dew dhydh, ow mamm a dhegemmeras an negys a hol: “Dha lowarth re beu diswrys. Deus desempis !”

Yn uskis y kerdhas ha treweythyow resek a-hys an hyns hir dhe dre. An bleujennow ha froeth re bia levenhes, martesen gans mil mus.

“An diwedh yw hemma !” hi a armas. “Res yw dhymm kavoes skila ragdho.”

“My a geredh an gowann gann” yn-medh ow thas. “Re bo gorrys dhe ankow !”

Ow henvamm, pup-prys moy skentyl, a dhiskwedhas moy a dregeredh. “Na hwil dial” o hy husul. “An awel a’n gwrug.”

TEXT B

Nans yw dew jorna, ow dama a ressevas an messach a fol: “Dha jarn re beu distruys. Deus sket !”

Kwykk y travalyas ha war-eyryow poenya a-hys an fordh hir dhe dre. An flourys ha’n frutys re bia platthes, par happ gans enyval fol.

“Ottomma an fin !” hi a grias. My a dal trovya reson ragdho.”

“My a vlam an oula gwynn” a leveris ow sira. “Re bo gorrys dhe’n mernans !”

Ow dama-wynn, prest fur fest, a dhiskwedhas moy a versi. “Na wra hwilas venjans” o hy avis. “An gwyns a’n gwrug.”

Two days ago, my mother received the following message: “Your garden has been destroyed. Come at once !”

She walked quickly and sometimes ran along the long road home. The flowers and fruit had been flattened, perhaps by a mad animal.

“This is the end !” she cried. “I must find a reason for it.”

“I blame the white owl” said my father. “Let it be put to death !”

My grandmother, always very wise, showed more compassion. “Don’t seek vengeance” was her advice. “The wind did it.”

Meanwhile, there is an explosion of interest in poetry in *Kernewek Kemmyn* {Sandercock, 1995; Kent and Hodge, 1995}. A new group, *Berdh Arnowdydh Kernewek*, has been giving public recitals of their works, in Cornish with English translation, or *vice versa*. Saunders and Snell are writing poetry in Cornish using specifically Celtic verse-forms. The present author has translated into *Kernewek Kemmyn* the whole of *Die Zauberflöte*, and made it rhyme and scan for the purposes of performance. It is doubtful whether such a thing could be done in *Kernuak*.

In short, a Late Cornish base has a reduced competence compared with a Middle Cornish base. This was effectively recognized even *circa* 1700; to obviate the problem, Keigwin {Nance, 1926, 1927} went back to Middle Cornish, Lhuyd drew on Welsh, while the remaining members of the Newlyn School drew on English; today Gendall turns to dialect.

The small amount of twentieth-century literature published with Late Cornish as a basis may be a reflection of this reduced competence. On the other hand, it may be a reflection of the miniscule number of people who support this form of Cornish.

Revival and planning

Since it is impossible *sensu stricto* to recover traditional Cornish (of any phase), one has to question how important Penglase's goal of authenticity really is. Do we want to write Cornish in a spectral form of the original, sticking as closely as possible to the spelling of some historical epoch, or do we want Cornish to be a vibrant, living, modern, everyday language, capable of expressing ideas in more than one register ?

“The real concern was language planning rather than language revival”, writes Penglase. Indeed it was; and it still is. This is the nub of the argument. For the speakers of *Kernewek Kemmyn*, the revival phase passed long ago. To them, Cornish is a modern language in its own right, which is going its own way, keeping true to the spirit of traditional Cornish, but not being straitjacketed by it.

THE ORTHOGRAPHY OF KERNEWEK KEMMYN

The principles behind the orthography of *Kernewek Kemmyn* were laid down by the author {George, 1986}:

- (a) It must be as phonemic as possible.
- (b) It must not, however, be so phonetic as to mask the etymology of words.
- (c) It should reconcile, as far as possible, the desires of different groups to pronounce Cornish in approximately MidC and LateC fashions.
- (d) It should not appear so different from the Unified system as to be rejected by the users of Cornish.

It is of interest to see how far these principles have succeeded.

The phonemic principle

The properties desirable in an orthography of Cornish are not the same for Middle Cornish speakers and for learners of Revived Cornish. All the players in the mediaeval mystery plays, one supposes, knew how to pronounce Cornish, and the writing was merely “a visual adjunct to aural memory” {Saunders, 1979}. Today, because most people learn Cornish from books, the orthography must be fixed, and as phonemic as possible. The Middle Cornish orthography satisfies neither of these requirements, and was therefore replaced by one which does. The texts are still available in their original spelling to anyone who wishes to study them, and the orthography of *Kernewek Kemmyn* is not so far removed from those originals. One of the valuable results to emerge from the current language debate is a wider acknowledgement that texts in traditional Cornish should be published in their original spelling.

A phonemic orthography is one in which each phoneme (i.e. a minimal contrastive unit of sound in the phonological system of a language) is represented by a separate grapheme (i.e. a minimal distinctive unit of writing in a language); and each grapheme represents a separate phoneme. It is easy to learn to read languages with phonemic orthographies, such as Esperanto, because a given set of letters always stands for the same group of sounds. The orthography of Modern Welsh is often held up as a shining example of a system which is almost perfectly phonemic (for a critical examination, see Humphreys, 1980); it is the result of a scientific spelling reform by Morris Jones {1913}.

In practice, the phonemic principle is a goal which was aspired to, but not quite reached. The principal deviations from the principle are:

- (a) The occlusive consonantal phonemes /b,d,g/ are spelled <b,d,g> initially and medially, and finally in stressed monosyllables, but <p,t,k> finally in unstressed monosyllables. This takes account of the commonest realization, and was done to reduce the changes from the Unified spelling. Thus the commonest adjectival ending appears as *-ek* rather than as *-eg* (as in Breton).
- (b) The unstressed neutral vowel known as schwa has no separate distinct grapheme. This is one of the few features of the traditional phonology which remains difficult; which words actually contained schwa? Lhuyd is quite helpful in indicating that the reflexive prefix contained it; this is spelled *om-* in *Kernewek Kemmyn*, as in Unified spelling, but elsewhere it is difficult to identify with certainty.

These deviations are minor, and any difficulties which they cause are far outweighed by the substantial benefit which a phonemic spelling brings. This benefit is that Cornish is far easier to learn. The spelling of *Kernewek Kemmyn* also indicates the length of vowels (which Unified Cornish does not), by application of the quantity rules. Once beginners have mastered these rules, and the near one-to-one relationship between writing and sounds, and know how Cornish is stressed, they can read Cornish with a fairly accurate pronunciation. The result is that *Kernewek Kemmyn* is a great success; according to figures recently presented to the Cornish Language Board, of the 22 Cornish classes in Cornwall, 2 use Unified Cornish, 2 use *Kernuak*, and 18 use *Kernewek Kemmyn*.

Relationship to Breton and Welsh

Penglas finds it strange that Cornish orthography should be such that one can recognize the relationship of words to their Breton and Welsh cognates. As a Celtic scholar in a European context, it seems to me quite natural. It seems sense to me to spell /i/ as <i>, the same grapheme for the same phoneme as in Breton and Welsh (see Figure 2). In choosing an 18th century English orthography for Cornish, Gendall has fallen into the same trap as Manx *vis-à-vis* Irish and Scots Gaelic.

Reconciliation of Middle and Late Cornish pronunciations

One reason for choosing c.1500 as a date for the phonological base was that it goes some way towards Late Cornish, without losing the Middle Cornish grammar. Because the orthography is based closely on the phonology (and is not, as one sometimes hears, a creation of the present author), it inherently contains the potential for some of the sound-changes which were manifest at a later date. For example, the use of <nn> for /nn/ allows those speakers who prefer the realization [dn] readily to recognize those words which contain /nn/. Other possibilities are shown in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7

REALIZATIONS OF SELECTED GRAPHEMES IN KERNEWEK KEMMYN

<i>Phonetic environment</i>	<i>Graphemes</i>	<i>MidC style</i>	<i>LateC style</i>
after a stressed vowel	mm, nn	[mm, nn]	[bm, dn]
long in open monosyllables	i, y	[i:, i:]	[ʌi, i:]
long in closed monosyllables	i, y, e, a	[i:, i:, e:, a:]	[i:, e:, e:, a:]
long in closed monosyllables	oe, ou, eu, u	[o:, u:, œ:, y:]	[u:, ʌu, e:, i:]
unstressed	-ek	[-ek]	[-ak]

Differences from the Unified system

The differences between Unified Cornish and *Kernewek Kemmyn* are slight. They are smaller than the differences between either and the spelling of the *Ordinalia*. Yet so sensitive are some people to the written word that they over-emphasize these differences. One change to the orthography of Cornish has probably caused more comment than any other. This is the universal use of <k> to represent the /k/ phoneme. The adoption of <k> in places where English uses <c> immediately makes *Kernewek Kemmyn* appear un-English, and therefore “foreign” to those used to English orthography. Unified Cornish followed the English convention, whereby <c> is used before <a,o,u; l,r> and <k> otherwise. (In addition, the cluster /kw/ was spelled <qu>). There was a tendency to follow the same rule in MidC, but it was not absolute, however; <k> was often found before <a>, especially in *Beunans Meriasek*. The universal use of /k/ makes the mutation table easier:

	PHONETICS		<i>Kernewek Kemmyn</i>		Unified system	
radical state	[k-]	[kw-]	<k->	<kw->	<c-, k->	<qu->
lenition	[g-]	[gw-]	<g->	<gw->	<g->	<gw->
spirantization	[h-]	[hw-]	<h->	<hw->	<h->	<hw->

FIGURE 8

Although the orthography of *Kernewek Kemmyn* was carefully chosen so as to be as close as possible to the Unified system, while aspiring to the phonemic principle, some people have been unable to bring themselves to use it. In the main, these are people who learned Cornish many years before the reform, and had therefore been attached to the Unified spelling for a much longer period. They include people whose written fluency is much greater than their spoken fluency. Most of the present teachers of Cornish, however, learned Cornish via the Unified system, and are more than happy with the change to *Kernewek Kemmyn*.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions concerning the suitability of different phases of traditional Cornish as a base for Revived Cornish are:

1. Because the volume of extant Middle Cornish material is greater than the volume of Late Cornish material, less reconstruction is necessary when starting from a Middle Cornish base.
2. Doubts about word-order in sentences, occasioned by the fact that most of Middle Cornish is in verse, have been resolved.
3. Middle Cornish has more than one register, offering a greater choice of styles to the author than does Late Cornish.
4. Middle Cornish is closer to Breton and to Welsh than is Late Cornish.

5. Both external and internal evidence (Figure 9) indicate that Late Cornish was heavily influenced by English, which to most Cornish speakers makes it unacceptable as a base.

FIGURE 9

The influence of English on Late Cornish

PHONOLOGICAL

- Changes to the vocoids [-i:], [u:], [y:], [aʊ] were the same in Cornish as in English
- The non-English consonant /x/ was lost or changed
- The quantity rules changed to conform with the English system

MORPHOLOGICAL

- The Cornish plural suffix *-oryon* was sometimes replaced by the English *-s*
- The pronominal prepositions were changed to an analytic form, as in English

SYNTACTIC

- Main verbal forms were replaced by periphrastic forms, as in English

Conclusions concerning the actual reconstructions are:

6. The relationship between the spelling and the recommended pronunciation is much more clear-cut (being nearly phonemic) in the case of ***Kernewek Kemmyn***, making it easier to learn.
7. ***Kernewek Kemmyn*** is vastly richer than *Kernuak*, particularly as regards the lexicon and the flexibility of word-order, so that the quality and range of literature (particularly poetry) are much greater.
8. The superiority of ***Kernewek Kemmyn*** is demonstrated by the fact that it is the form of Cornish actually used by the great majority of Cornish speakers, and by the amount of publications using it (60 new publications in the last 5 years).

To study Late Cornish in detail, as Gendall has done, is a laudable aim. To reconstruct a revived form of Cornish based on Late Cornish is a legitimate exercise. But to try to pass off such a reconstruction as the same as actual eighteenth-century Cornish is a fraud; and any claim that it is more authentic than a reconstruction based on an earlier epoch is incorrect.

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