

Piw yw a lew war-tu ha'n bluw?

**DISENTANGLING FIVE
CORNISH DIPHTHONGAL PHONEMES**

Dr Ken George
Kesva an Taves Kernewek

Skians 2016

STARTING POINT

i.e. the start of Middle Cornish

There were six *w*-diphthongs, and also /y/:

	KK	Example	English
/iʊ/	<iw>	<i>piw</i>	who
/ɪʊ/	<yw>	<i>yw</i>	is
/ɛʊ/	<ew>	<i>dew</i>	two (m.)
/uiʊ/	<uw>	<i>Duw</i>	God
/aʊ/	<aw>	<i>glaw</i>	rain
/ɔʊ/	<ow>	<i>Yow</i>	Thursday
/y/	<u>	<i>tu</i>	direction

Examples of monosyllables

/iʊ/	/ɪʊ/	/ɛʊ/	/uiʊ/	/y/
diw	byw	dew	Duw	du
gwiw	yw	kew	gluw	lu
liw		knew	guw 'woe'	tu
piw		rew	guw 'lance'	tru
siw			pluw	
			ruw	

Pascon agan Arluth, stanza 129

Middle Cornish

ha pylat 3e war breder
a leueris 3e ihesu /y/
ol an dus~ma a leuer
3e vos cregis te yv gyw /iu/
lauar gwyr 3ymmo vn ger
mar sota mab den ha du /uiu/
cryst a gewsys dyboner
te a leuerys del yw /iu/

Kernewek Kemmyn (after Ray Edwards)

A Ha Pilat dhe war breder
B a leveris dhe Yesu
A “Oll an dus ma a lever
B dhe vos kregis ty yw gwiw.
A Lavar gwir dhymmo unn ger
B mars o’ta Mab Den ha Duw.”
A Krist a gewsis deboner:
B “Ty a leveris dell yw”.

Jenner's Handbook (1904: 57-60)

Because all five original phonemes were

- rhymed together in Middle Cornish,
- spelled <ew> in CW,

Jenner believed that they had the same sound:

eu, *ew* have the sound of *ew* in the English word *dew*, the usual English long *u*. This sound is also represented in Cornish by *y* consonant followed by *u*, as in the word *yu*, is, which has exactly the sound of the English personal pronoun *you*..

The *u* of the earlier MSS. probably once represented approximately the French *u*... In some words in Cornish [such as *du* 'black'] this sound became *ew* (as in the English word *few*).

Smith held this belief when he composed *Trystan hag Isolt*.

Diphthongs in English

due

dew

In Middle English, there were two diphthongs:

Phoneme	Spelling	Examples from Modern English
/ɪu/	<yw, ew>	<i>brew, clue, due, drew, hue, knew, new, slew, true, yew</i>
/ɛu/	<ew>	<i>dew, ewe, few, hew, mew, sew, shew, shrew, strew</i>

c.1575, /ɛu/ > /ɪu/

c.1700, /ɪu/ > [ju:]

So c.1575, <ew> became ambiguous (shown below in grey).

END-POINT

i.e. evidence from Late Cornish

	Lhuyd	Other authors	Sound
{iw}	<iu>	-----	[i'ʊ]
{ew}	-----	ew	ambiguous
{eaw}	<êu>	<eaw, eawe> <eau>	[ɛ'ʊ]

There were at least two different sounds in Late Cornish.

Words containing <yw> (1)

There are fewer of these than there used to be!

GLKK 1993	English	Breton	Welsh	KK 2016
<i>byw</i>	alive	<i>bev</i>	<i>byw</i>	√ ?
<i>Dyw</i>	God	<i>Doue</i>	<i>Duw</i>	→ <i>Duw</i>
<i>klyw</i>	hears	<i>klev</i>	<i>clyw</i>	→ <i>klew</i>
<i>lyw</i>	rudder	<i>lev</i>	<i>llyw</i>	→ <i>lew</i>
<i>ryw</i>	king	<i>roue</i>	<i>rhwy(f)</i>	→ <i>ruw</i>
<i>yw</i>	is	<i>eo</i>	<i>yw</i>	√

In fact, there are only two left!

Words containing <yw> (2)

- In the Ordinalia, PA and BM, *byw* was sometimes written {byw} and sometimes {bew}, which suggests ['biʊ]; the Late Cornish form {beaw} suggests ['bɛʊ]. But rhymes in Middle Cornish fit better if the pronunciation was ['bɛʊ]. It looks like the word changed its pronunciation in Middle Cornish.
- In the Ordinalia, PA and BM, *yw* was written {yw}; later it was often written {ew}; there is no case of {*eaw}.

Rhymes with KK <-uw>

There are more of these than one would expect, especially in BK.

The following verse provides strong evidence for them:

RD.2579	ow scons a fue crous a pren	A
RD.2580	kyns en myghtern den ha dev	B
RD.2581	in le basnet war ow fen	A
RD.2582	curyn a spern lym ha glev	B
RD.2583	ol ov ysyly yn ten	A
RD.2584	hag awel the lyes plu	B
RD.2585	in golon dren tenewen	A
RD.2586	the restye syngys ow gu	B

Words containing <uw>

In Old Cornish, *-ui* and *-uyu* suggest /-uiʊ/.

In Middle Cornish

- {ew} indicates a diphthong with a fronted first element.
- The first element was not [i], because {yw} was scarcely used.
- The {u} in PA, BM, BK, TH does not mean that /-uiʊ/ changed to ['y:], rather it shows that /'y:/ had become a diphthong.
- Lenition of [g-] in **guw** was written <w->; this shows that the first element was a rounded vowel.

All of this evidence suggests the sound [øʊ] in Middle Cornish.

In Late Cornish:

- {eaw} shows that the sound had become unrounded to [ɛʊ].

Summary of spelling-types

KK	Medieval <i>M</i>		Signpost <i>S</i>				
	Ord	PA BM	BK	TH	SA	CW	Kn.D.
<iw>	{yw}		{yw} ~ {ew}				{yw} ~ {ew}
<i>byw</i>	{yw} ~ {ew}		{ew}				{ew} ~ {eaw}
<i>yw</i>							{ew}
<ew>	{ew}		{ew} ~ {eaw}				{ew} ~ {eaw}
<uw>	{ew}	{u}	{u}	{ew}		{ew} ~ {eaw}	
<u>	{u}		{u}	{u} ~ {ew}	{yw} ~ {ew}		
still 5 sounds		how many sounds here?				only 2 sounds?	

100 perfect rhymes without considering frequency

	iʊ	Iʊ	ɛʊ	y	uiʊ
iʊ	20	0	0	0	0
Iʊ		20	0	0	0
ɛʊ			20	0	0
y				20	0
uiʊ					20

100 perfect rhymes taking frequency into account

	iʊ	ɪʊ	ɛʊ	y	uiʊ
iʊ	11	0	0	0	0
ɪʊ		5	0	0	0
ɛʊ			21	0	0
y				40	0
uiʊ					23

100 fully mixed rhymes without considering frequency

100 rim	iʊ	Iʊ	ɛʊ	y	uiʊ
iʊ	7	7	7	7	7
Iʊ		7	7	7	7
ɛʊ			7	7	7
y				7	7
uiʊ					7

100 fully mixed rhymes taking frequency into account

	iʊ	Iʊ	ɛʊ	y	uiʊ
iʊ	1	5	6	10	7
Iʊ		1	7	11	8
ɛʊ			3	11	9
y				5	12
uiʊ					3

Rhymes in Ord. and PA normalized to a total of 100

	iʊ	Iʊ	ɛʊ	y	uiʊ	<i>other</i>
iʊ	1	12	4	3	1	0
Iʊ		3	8	4	2	0
ɛʊ			3	9	3	1
y				20	16	1
uiʊ					10	1
<i>other</i>						

<u,uw> rhymed with <iw,yw,ew>
rounded first element unrounded first element

- In the Ordinalia and PA, there are 34 such rhymes, 25 in <-u> and 11 in <-uw> (KK spelling).
- Of the 25 rhymes in <-u>, 23 spell the rounded sound differently from the unrounded sound, which shows that the sounds were different; i.e. the rhymes were imperfect.
- The two other examples are *forced rhymes*:
PC.0147 ter-gwyth hythew
PC.0150 may canaf trew (re-written from *tru*)
RD.1342 orth an arluth ker ihesu
RD.1343 ha mettye orto hythu (instead of *hythew*)
- The 11 rhymes in <-uw> are not so clear-cut, because the bards did not know how to write [øʊ].

Evolution of the sounds

start of MidC	time of Ord + PA	end of MidC	Late Cornish
------------------	---------------------	----------------	-----------------

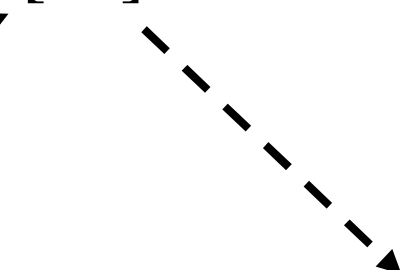
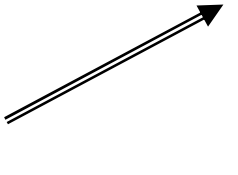
/iʊ/ → [iʊ] → [iʊ] → [iʊ]

/y/ → [yʊ]

/Iʊ/ → [Iʊ] - - - - -> [eʊ]

/uiʊ/ → [øʊ]

/εʊ/ → [εʊ] → [εʊ] → [εʊ]



A test for /ɛʊ/

When /ɛʊ/ was followed by a vowel, it was frequently spelled <ow>, in BM and subsequently, e.g. *clewes* > *clowas*.

The word for ‘bruise’

- This is *brev* in Breton and *briw* in Welsh.
- These two spellings do not correspond with each other.
- Often Breton *-ev* corresponds to Welsh *-yw*, and W. *-iw* to B. *-iw*.
- Because the verbal noun is found as *browi* yn Late Cornish, we deduce that **brew** is the best spelling.

The word for ‘hear(s), hearing’

- On noting B. *klevout* and W. *clywed*, one might reasonably suppose, as did Jackson, that the form in Primitive Cornish was **kliwed*.
- This would result in *klywes*, the form given in GM93.
- But the Late forms of the verbal noun, such as *clowas*, show that the original diphthong was /ευ/, as shown by Schrijver.
- The form *clov* (found in BM) is a back-formation from *clowas*.
- These words should be written **klew, klewes**.

This error in KK was corrected after the publication of *Gerlyver Meur* in 2009.

The word for ‘today’

- W. *heddiw* and B. *hiziv* indicate that the original diphthong was /iʊ/.
- *hepeu* (VC.467) suggests that /iʊ/ had changed to /ɛʊ/ in Old Cornish.
- Evidence from Middle Cornish (spellings and rhymes) supports /ɛʊ/.

	Spellings	PA	OM	PC	RD	BM	BK	TH	SA	CW	Lh	LateC
{yw}	<yv, yw, yu>		2	2	3	8					1	
{ew}	<eu, ev, ew>	1		11	16		2	3		1		
{ow}	<ow>	1		1		2		3			1	11
{u}	<u, u>				1						2	

- The change to {-ow} in Late Cornish supports /ɛʊ/.
- It would be better, then, to spell this word as **hedhew**.

The word for ‘weir’

map	Cutcrew	map	Lescrow	map	Scraesdon
KK	<i>Koeskryw</i>	KK	<i>Ryskryw</i>	1349	Creulisdon
1316	Cutcreu	1483	Rescrewe	1357	Crewlesdon
1327	Cutkreu	1696	Liscrow	1610	Skreysdon
1360	Cotkrew	1840	Liscrow	1749	Scrowson
1621	Cutcrew	1855	Lescrow		
1664	Cutcrewe	1884	Liscrow		
1884	Cutcrew				

These place-names exhibit the change <ew> → <ow>; so the word should be spelled **krew**.

The word for ‘owns’

- This word is spelled *piw* in KK (under the influence of Breton *piaou*), and *pyw* in SWF (why?).
- But the attested spellings indicate a mixture of {ew} and {eaw}; {yw} is not found; so the word should be written **pew**.

Form	PA	OM	PC	RD	BM	BK	TH	SA	CW	Lh	LateC
{ew}		1	3		3	7	1		1		2
{eaw}											2

Confirmation of this comes from the word *peuas* (PA.1173) ‘reward’, which is found in Late Cornish as *poes*; i.e. {ew} > {ow}. So we should write **pewas** ‘reward’ and **pewa** ‘to own’.

The word for ‘from’

<i>a-dhiworth</i>	+	12	Welsh	<i>oddi wrth</i>
<i>diworth</i>	+	42	Breton	<i>diouzh</i>
<i>dhiworth</i>	+	227		

The elements are a^2 + *di-* + *(w)orth*

The second element is *di-*, not *dy-*;
So SWF *dhyworth* is incorrect.

The word for ‘follow(s)’

This word is attested as follows:

syw (PA.226, PC.3087, RD.1760), *syv* (PC.0648, 2433);
sew (OM.0711), *sev* (BK17.68), *seu* (Pryce)

Its root is found in French *suivre* and in English *sue*, *pursue*.

The Late Cornish forms *suyah* (verbal noun) and *suyow Vee* (imperative) support *iw* rather than *yw*.

A form **sowya* is not found, so SWF *sew* cannot be correct.

This word is better spelled **siw**.

Summary of improvements

KK	English	FSS	should be	Notes
<i>§bryw</i>	bruise	<i>brew</i>	brew	KK needs amendment
<i>dhiworth</i>	from	<i>dhyworth</i>	dhiworth	SWF needs amendment
<i>§hedhyw</i>	today	<i>hedhyw</i>	hedhew	KK & SWF need amendment
<i>§Jyw</i>	Jew		Jiw	KK needs amendment
<i>klew</i>	hear	<i>klew</i>	klew	KK <i>klyw</i> now amended
<i>§kryw</i>	weir	<i>kryw</i>	krew	KK & SWF need amendment
<i>lew</i>	rudder	<i>lew</i>	lew	KK <i>lyw</i> now amended
<i>§piw</i>	owns	<i>pyw</i>	pew	KK & SWF need amendment
<i>§syw</i>	follows	<i>sew</i>	siw	KK & SWF need amendment

Conclusions

- Of the five phonemes /iʊ, ɪʊ, εʊ, y, uiʊ/ at the start of the Middle Cornish phase, only /iʊ/ and /εʊ/ were left in Late Cornish.
- /ɪʊ/ and /uiʊ/ became /εʊ/; /y/ fell together with /iʊ/.
- It is advisable to keep the spellings <iw, yw, ew, y, uw> for the five, but some words are mis-spelled and need correction.

Piw yw a lew war-tu ha'n bluw?