

## Ten Good Reasons for adopting *Kernewek Kemmyn* as our Official Standard

### HANDOUT FOR CONFERENCE AT TREMOUGH, 30.09.2006

1. *Kernewek Kemmyn* was first introduced in 1987 and has been used successfully ever since. It is generally held to have been a great improvement over Unified Cornish which it replaced. The system is essentially stable and unlikely to undergo any major revision in the foreseeable future. Unlike Unified, however, it is not "set in stone", so that improvements can be made from time to time in the light of practical experience or as a result of improved scholarship.
2. *Kernewek Kemmyn* is constructed according to clearly stated explicit principles. This means that any proposed changes or improvements can be openly debated, and decisions made in the light of those principles. Maintenance of the system is not dependent upon the whim of any one individual "expert".
3. *Kernewek Kemmyn* is largely phonemic, that is there is a clear, simple and regular relationship between the written and spoken word, without any of the irregular or capricious spellings so familiar in English. While this is an advantage for any minority language, it is especially important for a revived language like Cornish. Almost all Cornish speakers have Cornish as their second language, usually acquired as adults. This, together with the absence of any concentrated body of Cornish speakers, means that the written form has a very strong influence on the quality of the spoken language. The learner above all needs to be able to pronounce an unfamiliar word correctly from its spelling, as far as possible without help from a dictionary or a teacher.
4. *Kernewek Kemmyn* uses only the normal roman alphabet with no special symbols or accented characters. Admittedly there are a few very rare cases where a diaeresis or a length mark (circumflex or macron) might usefully be employed, (and dictionaries and learners' books need to indicate irregular stress), but these markings are not essential. A page of *Kernewek Kemmyn* therefore has a clean modern appearance. Documents can also be stored, transmitted, retrieved and processed electronically as plain text if necessary, without the need for any special hardware or language specific software.
5. *Kernewek Kemmyn* has a greater range of published material than its rivals, including original modern works of prose and verse, translations from other languages, and all of the mediaeval Cornish verse dramas in transliteration. There is a Cornish New Testament in *Kernewek Kemmyn* (as there is in UCR), and translation of the remainder of the Bible is well in hand.
6. *Kernewek Kemmyn* is better resourced than the other orthographies, in terms of dictionaries, grammars, and learning materials. A variety of beginners' courses are available, including multimedia, and correspondence classes using *Kernewek Kemmyn* are available throughout Cornwall, in London, the USA and Australia.
7. *Kernewek Kemmyn* also leads in terms of human resources, having a greater number of competent teachers, advanced students and fluent speakers than its competitors.
8. It is not surprising, therefore, that *Kernewek Kemmyn* is preferred and used by the great majority of Cornish speakers, teachers and learners. Although there are no exact statistics, the best estimate available (MacKinnon, Table 3.2) suggests a figure of around 80%. Informal guesses range between 60% and 95%. It must also be remembered that the remaining 40% or less are divided between three or more competing orthographies and their variants.
9. *Kernewek Kemmyn* is regulated by *Kesva an Taves Kernewek* (The Cornish Language Board), a well established, recognised and generally respected accountable body. Established in 1967 by the Gorsedd of Cornwall and the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies, the majority of the Board's members are democratically elected by the membership of *Kowethas an Yeth Kernewek* (The Cornish Language Fellowship), membership of which is open to anyone interested in learning or promoting the Cornish Language. Other Board members are appointed by the Gorsedd, the FOCS, and local government. The structure of the Cornish Language Board would allow it to act as the governing body for an official standard.
10. Students of *Kernewek Kemmyn* students may sit a series of graded examinations administered by the Language Board. (For historical reasons, the Board still organises equivalent examinations in Unified Cornish). At present there are no state-sponsored qualifications in Cornish, and none organised by the promoters of any other variety of Cornish (other than the occasional university course or research project generally in historical Mediaeval Cornish). The Board's Fourth Grade Examination is recognised by the Cornish Gorsedd, and successful candidates may be invited to become Language Bards.