

THE BASIS OF *KERNEWEK KEMMYN*

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INTRODUCTION

The original rationale for *Kernewek Kemmyn* was set out in the book *The Pronunciation and Spelling of Revived Cornish (PSRC)*, but since that book is now over twenty years old, and there have been some changes to the scheme given therein, it is appropriate to summarize the principles here.

An orthography may be phonological, morphological, etymological or historical. *Kernewek Kemmyn* is all four. The phonological input is largely phonemic in nature, unlike Unified Cornish, which in so far as it addresses pronunciation at all, is more phonetic.

THE PHONEMIC INPUT

The orthography depends in the first instance on the principle of using a different grapheme for each phoneme in the Middle Cornish on which the revived language is based. In cases of doubt concerning the phonemic inventory, *Kernewek Kemmyn* defaults to the maximum number of phonemes, and thereby the minimum number of homographs.

Tables of phonemes

In the tables below, the first column gives the phoneme, the second the corresponding grapheme used in *Kernewek Kemmyn*. The third column shows the principal graphemes used in one of the four historical orthographies, viz. that of Middle Cornish; here the commonest graphemes are shown in bold type, and the less common in light type. The fourth and fifth columns show the commonest graphemes used in Breton and Welsh cognates; where the correspondence fits well, bold type is used, but where the sounds are substantially different from those in Cornish, owing to different phonetic development, the graphemes are given in light type.

Vowels

The vowels in Middle Cornish are most clearly defined when long in stressed monosyllables, to which this table refers:

Phoneme	Grapheme in <i>Kemmyn</i>	MidC	Breton	Welsh	Remarks
/i/	<i>	y , <i>i</i>	i	i	
/ɪ/	<y>	y , <i>i</i> , <i>ey</i> , <i>e</i>	e	y	
/ɛ/	<e>	e , <i>ey</i>	e	e	
/a/	<a>	a , <i>ay</i>	a	a	
/ɔ/	<o>	o , <i>oy</i>	o	o	
/o/	<oe>	o , oy	oa, oue	oe, wy	<oe> found in place-names in early MidC
/u/	<ou>	ou	ou	w	
/y/	<u>	u	u	u	
/œ/	<eu>	u , <i>eu</i> , <i>ue</i>	eu	aw	

For unstressed vowels, see below.

Diphthongs

Phoneme ¹	Grapheme in <i>Kemmyn</i>	MidC	Breton	Welsh	Remarks
/eɪ/	<ey>	<i>ey, y</i>	i	i	
/aɪ/	<ay>	<i>ay, ey</i>	e	y	
/ɔɪ/	<oy>	<i>oy</i>	e	e	
/iʊ/	<iw>	<i>yw, ew</i>	iv	iw	
/ɪʊ/	<yw>	<i>ew, yw</i>	ev	yw	
/ɛʊ/	<ew>	<i>eu, ev, ew</i>	ev	ew	
/aʊ/	<aw>	<i>au, av, aw</i>	av	aw	
/ɔʊ/	<ow>	<i>ou, ov, ow</i>	aou		
/yʊ/	<yw>	<i>ew, u</i>	oue	uw	This diphthong has only recently been recognized; it occurs in only a few words; the logical grapheme for it is <uw>.

Single Consonants

Phoneme	Grapheme in <i>Kemmyn</i>	MidC	Breton	Welsh	Remarks
/p/	<p>		p	p	
/t/	<t>		t	t	
/k/	<k>	<i>c</i> before <i>a,o,u,l,r</i> ; <i>q</i> before <i>u</i> ; otherwise <i>k</i>	k	c	Lhuyd used <k> everywhere
/b/		<i>b-, -b-, -b, -p</i>	b	b	
/d/	<d>	<i>d-, -d-, -d, -t, -dt</i>	d	d	
/g/	<g>	<i>g-, -g-, -k</i>	g	g	See below
/f/	<f>	<i>f</i>	f	ff	
/θ/	<th>	<i>th, ʒ</i>	zh	th	
/x/	<gh>	<i>gh, h</i>	c'h	ch	
/s/	<s>	<i>c</i> before <i>y</i> , otherwise <i>s</i>	s	s	
/v/	<v>	<i>v-, -f-, -u-, -f, -ff</i>	v	f	
/ð/	<dh>	<i>th, ʒ</i>	z	dd	
/h/	<h>	<i>h²</i>	h	h	
/z/	<s>	<i>s</i>	s, z	s	See below
/ʃ/	<sh>	<i>sch, sc, sh</i>	ch		
/tʃ/	<ch>	<i>ch</i>			
/dʒ/	<j>	<i>g</i> before <i>e,i,y</i> ; <i>ij</i> before <i>a,o,u</i> ; <i>-g</i>	j		
/m/	<m>	<i>m</i>	m	m	
/n/	<n>	<i>n</i>	n	n	
/l/	<l>	<i>l</i>	l	l	
/r/	<r>	<i>r</i>	r	r	

Semi-vowels

Phoneme	Grapheme in <i>Kemmyn</i>	MidC	Breton	Welsh	Remarks
/j/	<y>	<i>y-, ʒ-, -y-, -i-</i>	i	i	See below
/w/	<w>	<i>u, v, w</i>	w	w	

¹ Diphthongs are here treated as single phonemes; it could of course be argued that they are pairs of phonemes.

² The group /hw/ was written *wh* or *w*.

Double Consonants

Phoneme ³	Grapheme in <i>Kemmyn</i>	MidC	Breton	Welsh	Remarks
/pp/	<pp>	<i>pp</i>	p	p	
/tt/	<tt>	<i>tt</i>	t	t	
/kk/	<kk>	<i>k, ck, kk</i>	k	c	
/ff/	<ff>	<i>ff</i>			
/θθ/	<tth>	<i>th, thth</i>			
/xx/	<ggh>	<i>gh</i>			
/ss/	<ss>	<i>ss, s, c</i>			
/mm/	<mm>	<i>mm, m</i>	m	m	
/nn/	<nn>	<i>nn</i>	nn	-nn-, -n	
/ll/	<ll>	<i>ll, lh</i>	ll	ll	
/rr/	<rr>	<i>rr, r</i>	rr	-rr-, -r	

DEVIATIONS FROM THE PHONEMIC PRINCIPLE

Common deviations

- 1) <y> is used for both the vowel /i/ and the semi-vowel /j/. This was also the case in Unified Cornish, and could not easily be changed because of the lack of suitable graphemes.
- 2) <s> is used for both /s/ and /z/. This was also the case in Unified Cornish. From time to time it has been suggested that <z> be used for /z/; the history of /s/ and /z/ is very complicated, and it is not clear which words contained /z/.

Deliberately planned deviations

- 1) <k> is used in final position for /g/ in unstressed syllables, so that *Kernewek* is thus spelled instead of *Kerneweg*. This is a phonetic spelling, which works because /g/ and /k/ were neutralized finally in unstressed syllables.
- 2) Although /mm/ and /nn/ are realized as [m] and [n] when unstressed, they are still spelled <mm> and <nn>. These are morphemic and etymological rather than phonemic spellings. It is helpful to distinguish etymological /mm/ and /nn/ from their single counterparts, even when unstressed, because the latter do not (with very few exceptions in the texts) form compounds in <mm> and <nn>. This ensures the correct formation of compounds in new words.
- 3) Although /i/ (and sometimes /y/) are realized as [ɪ] when unstressed, they are still spelled <i> and <y>. These are morphemic rather than phonemic spellings.

³ Diphthongs are here treated as single phonemes; it could of course be argued that they are pairs of phonemes.

THE RECOMMENDED PRONUNCIATION

The tables given above may be reversed, with the spelling as the input and the recommended pronunciation as the output. In order to pronounce a vowel correctly, **it is first necessary to know whether it is stressed or unstressed**. Most Cornish words are stressed on the penultimate syllable. Unstressed syllables are short. Stressed syllables are short when preceding a cluster of two consonants (except *sp, st, sk*): they are otherwise long in monosyllables and half-long in polysyllables. Thus the length of a vowel may be deduced from the orthography, without the need for any diacritics.

Vowels

<i>SPELLING</i>	<i>STRESSED</i>			<i>UNSTRESSED</i>
<i>i</i>	[i:]	[iˑ]	[i]	[ɪ]
<i>y</i>	[ɪ:]	[ɪˑ]	[ɪ]	[ɪ]
<i>e</i>	[ɛ:]	[ɛˑ]	[ɛ]	[ɛ]
<i>a</i>	[a:]	[aˑ]	[a]	[a]
<i>o</i>	[ɔ:]	[ɔˑ]	[ɔ]	[ɔ]
<i>oe</i>	[o:]	[oˑ]	[ʊ]	[ʊ]
<i>ou</i>	[u:]	[uˑ]	[u]	[u]
<i>eu</i>	[œ:]	[œˑ]		
<i>u</i>	[y:]	[yˑ]	[y]	[ɪ] in final syllables

Diphthongs

The Cornish diphthongs are as follows:

<i>SPELLING</i>	<i>SOUNDS</i>
<i>ey</i>	[eɪ]
<i>ay</i>	[aɪ]
<i>oy</i>	[ɔɪ]
<i>iw</i>	[iʊ]
<i>yw</i>	[œʊ]
<i>ew</i>	[ɛʊ]
<i>aw</i>	[aʊ]
<i>ow</i>	[ɔʊ]

Semi-vowels

y and *w* are pronounced respectively [j] and [w].

Consonants

The following stressed Cornish consonants have the same values as the English ones:

<i>SPELLING</i>	<i>SOUNDS</i>
<i>p- ,t- ,k-</i>	[p, t, k]
<i>b, d, g</i>	[b, d, g]
<i>ch, f, th</i>	[tʃ, f, θ]
<i>j, v, dh</i>	[dʒ, v, ð]
<i>sh, h, ng</i>	[ʃ, h, ŋ]
<i>m, n, l, r</i>	[m, n, l, r]

s stands for both [s] and [z].

The grapheme *gh* in Cornish is pronounced [x] (as **ch** in *loch*) when at the end of a word and following a vowel; otherwise it is pronounced [h] (the sound of **h** in *aha*). The following consonants may be doubled: [pp, tt, kk], [ff, θθ, xx, ss], [mm, nn, ll, rr]; and the corresponding graphemes are also doubled (except that [θθ] and [xx] are represented respectively by *tth* and *ggh*). Unstressed consonants are pronounced the same as the stressed consonants, except that **mm**, **nn**, **ll** and **rr** are reduced to [m, n, l, r] respectively.