

## KERNEWEK DRE LYTHER.

### Pronunciation

The following notes are intended as a guide for K.D.L. students who are learning the pronunciation and spelling of “Kernewek Kemmyn” based on the research of Dr Ken George and described in his books *The Pronunciation and spelling of Revived Cornish* and *Kernewek Kemmyn, Cornish for the Twenty-first Century*.

A cassette has been made which will give an idea of the pronunciation which Dr George proposes, though no doubt with less accuracy than he would wish.

Perfectionists should study the books themselves.

Words are usually stressed on the last but one syllable. Where this rule is broken, it will be shown in the lesson vocabularies by underlining the stressed syllable.

Letters are sounded as in English with the following exceptions:

**A** As in “bat” when followed by a doubled consonant e.g. **dannvon** (to send). More as in “father” but not quite so long when stressed e.g. the first syllable of **bara** (bread). A neutral vowel as in “the” (not “thee”) when unstressed e.g. the second syllable of **bara** (bread). Never sounded as in English “made”.

**AW** To rhyme with “how” e.g. **glaw** (rain).

**AY** To rhyme with “by” e.g. **chayn** (chain).

**B** Normally as in English but as P at the end of a word, unless followed by a vowel in a word following immediately without any pause e.g. **y vab** (his son) B sounds as P; **y vab ev** (his own son) B sounds as B.

**C** Only used followed by H. K is used for the normal 'hard C' sound.

**CH** As in English e.g. **chayn** (chain).

**DH** Normally as TH in English in “this” - not as in “thin”. Sounds as TH in “thin” at end of word unless followed without a pause by a word beginning with a vowel. It then sounds as TH in “this” e.g. **pub dydh** (each day) DH as in “thin”. **Pub dydh oll** (every day) DH as in “this”.

**E** When followed by a doubled consonant or in an unstressed syllable, the sound is as in English “bet” e.g. **penn** (head), **tiék** (farmer). (Many adjectives end in unstressed **-ek**). When followed by a single consonant or stressed it has the same sound but lengthened as in French “tête”, “frêne”. This is *not* the same as the vowel sound in English “made” or the French “E acute” e.g. **den** (man).

**EU** As in English “purr” or more accurately as in French “peur” e.g. **beudhi** (to drown).

**EW** Approximately as English “cow” or more accurately as in Welsh “tew”. Try to say the sound of E in “bet” followed immediately by the vowel sound in “boot”. Cornish people can usually make this sound more easily than English people.

**EY** As in English “veil” e.g. **bleydh** (wolf).

**G** Normally as in English “get” (never as in “giant”). Sounds as English K at end of word unless followed immediately without a pause by a word beginning with a vowel e.g. **teg** (beautiful) sounds K, **teg a wel** (beautiful to behold/how beautiful!) sounds G.

**GH** Sounds as the CH in Scottish “loch” or German “achtung”. The English speaker can achieve this sound by heavily breathing an H sound, but, unlike H in English, the Cornish GH comes in the middle or at the end of words so this heavy breathing requires a slightly unnatural effort for the English speaker e.g. **yeghes** (health).

**I** Sounds as EE in “beet” e.g. **gwir** (true).

**IW** A fairly accurate pronunciation would probably be obtained by saying “seaweed” and then omitting the *-eed* leaving the sound of *ea* followed by *w* as pronounced in English rather than as a full vowel as in Cornish or Welsh. In practice, however, little distinction is made between this and YW.

**K** Normally as in English but as C at end of word if followed by a vowel.

**O** Normally as the vowel sound in “bought”, but as “pot” when followed by a doubled consonant e.g. **lost** (tail) as in “bought”, **bronn** (hill) as in “pot”.

**OE** Approximately as in “toe” but avoiding the diphthong that tends to occur in English. More accurately as French “eau” e.g. **boes** (food). As in English U in a few words where is followed by a doubled consonant, e.g. **toemm** (hot).

**OU** As OO in “boot” e.g. **gour** (husband).

**OW** As in “grow” e.g. **down** (deep), *not* as in “cow”.

**Q** Not used, being replaced by KW.

**R** Should *always* be sounded i.e. rolled in words like **kar** (friend).

**U** Usually pronounced as in French “tu”. The sound is sometimes used by Scottish speakers of English in words like “you” and in the second syllable of “Glasgow”. It is a cross between English “ee” and “oo” and is notoriously difficult for English speakers. It has been recommended as the correct sound for “u” in Cornish for many years but very few Cornish speakers actually use it! They tend to use “i” or “ee” instead! e.g. **tus** (men, people).

**V** Normally as in English, but as F at the end of a word unless followed by a vowel in a word following immediately without any pause e.g. **genev** (with me) as F, **ev a drig** (he dwells) as V.

**W** See **EW**, **IW** and **YW**. Otherwise W sounds as in English.

**X** Not used, being replaced by **KS**.

**Y** When found at the end of word or between consonants (i.e. not with another vowel) the sound is as I in “bit” e.g. **bys** (world). When followed by a vowel the sound is as in English e.g. **redya** (to read).

**YW** Very much like **IW** above except that Y is short and I is long. The sound is well illustrated in the name *Pythywwar* coined by John Richards in a series of stories published in *An Gannas* based on Sherlock Holmes. *Pyth yw war* means *What is on* and is used for Dr Watson. If sounded as *Pythy-war*, the *y-w* gives the correct pronunciation of *yw*.

**Z** Not in use (though Dr George is now suggesting it could usefully be introduced)

### **Doubled consonants**

Where these occur at the close of a stressed syllable they should be sounded separately and distinctly, as, for example, the two t's in “hot tap”. In practice, it is quite difficult to sound a double n or double m except by following the Late Cornish practice of sounding the first n as d, e.g. **penn** (head) as “pedn”; and the first m as b, e.g. **toemm** (hot) as “toebm”. This is acceptable.

Double th is written “tth” and double gh as “ggh”. A vowel before a doubled consonant is short.

Although clear sounds are described above for vowels, when these occur in unstressed syllables at the end of words there is a tendency for the vowel to be weakened or pronounced as a neutral vowel, i.e. as in the English word “the” (not “thee”). The texts sometimes indicate this also by making apparently different vowels rhyme together.

It has been decided that most Biblical names beginning with “J” should start with “Y” and be pronounced accordingly in Cornish. There is possibly some doubt about this but at the moment the Language Board is using this Y pronunciation and the names “Yowann” and “Yesus” appear in K.D.L. courses.

Please note that there is a pronunciation error on the cassette. The reader tends to pronounce *ow* in words like “Kernow” to rhyme with the English word *cow*. They should rhyme with *grow*, as stated above.

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MUTATION TABLE.

<b>1</b> Unmutated.	<b>2</b> Soft.	<b>3</b> Breathed.	<b>4</b> Hard.	<b>5</b> Mixed.	<b>6</b> Mixed after "th"
<b>B</b>	<b>V</b>		<b>P</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Ch</b>	<b>J</b>				
<b>D</b>	<b>Dh</b>		<b>T</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>T</b>
<b>G+a</b> <b>G+e</b> <b>G+i</b> <b>G+y</b>	—		<b>K</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>
<b>G+l</b> <b>G+r</b>	—		<b>K</b>		
<b>Gw</b>	<b>W</b>		<b>Kw</b>	<b>Hw</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>G+o</b> <b>G+u</b> <b>G+ro</b> <b>G+ru</b>	<b>W</b>		<b>K</b>	<b>Hw</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>K</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>			
<b>M</b>	<b>V</b>			<b>F</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>F</b>			
<b>T</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Th</b>			

## KERNEWEK DRE LYTHER.

### Glossary of Grammatical Terms.

- Adjective. A word that describes a noun. e.g. “a tall man”, “a heavy bag”. In English, it goes before the noun, but in Cornish, after it more often than not.
- Adverb. Usually a word showing how something is done, and so goes with a verb, e.g. “He walks slowly.” “They talk quickly.” It is often formed in English by adding “-ly” to an adjective. In Cornish, the corresponding adjective can be used alone or after “yn<sup>5</sup>”. See *dyskans* 17.
- Affirmative. An affirmative verb shows an action which does happen, as opposed to one that does not, which is described as “negative” e.g. “I am learning Cornish”. is affirmative. “I am not learning Cornish” is negative.
- Auxiliary. An auxiliary verb is used to form a tense of another verb. e.g. “I have spoken.” “I shall go.” “Do you smoke?”
- Cardinal. A cardinal number is a normal number as used in counting, “one, two, three etc. as opposed to Ordinal numbers “first, second, third” etc, and numeral adverbs “once, twice (thrice)” etc.
- Clause. We are mainly concerned with expressions such as “when he came”, “because he went,” etc. These are subordinate clauses. A sentence such as “I saw him when he came.” has a main clause, “I saw him”, (which makes sense by itself) and a subordinate clause, “when he came”, which only makes sense when joined to the main clause to add to its meaning and make a complete sentence.
- Collective. Some nouns have a form which refers to a group or collection, e.g. “sheep, fish, swine, cattle, hair, etc.” This feature is more common in Cornish than in English. See *Dyskans* 23. Such nouns are called “collective nouns” or “collective plurals”.
- Comparative. Adjectives ending in “-er”, such as “bigger, smaller” are called “comparative” because they compare one thing with another, e.g. “Cornish is easier than Welsh.” See *Dyskans* 29.
- Complement. What follows the verb “to be” and a few other verbs is usually the complement. e.g. “John is big.” “Jane is his sister.” See *Dyskans* 12.
- Conditional. In the sentence “I would go if I could,” whether, in fact I go or not depends on a condition: Can I go or can’t I? So a verb which shows an action which depends on a condition is conditional. It is shown by the auxiliary verb “would” or “should.”
- Conjunction. A word which joins two ideas together, e.g. “bat and ball,” “red and white “He came and saw.” We are mainly concerned with words which

join a main clause to a subordinate clause, e.g. "I saw him when he came," "Cornishmen learn Cornish because they are Cornish."

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Definite Article. This is the word "the" which precedes a noun which has been mentioned already, so is now "definite". The Indefinite Article "a(n)" is used with a noun not previously mentioned. e.g. "Is that a cat?" "Yes, it is the cat from next door!"

Demonstrative. The words "this, that, these, those," are called "demonstrative" adjectives or pronouns because they point things out. e.g. "This is my friend." (pronoun). "That book is yours." (adjective)

Direct Object. See "Object"

Feminine. See "Masculine."

Finite. This is the form of the verb found in a simple sentence, e.g. "I like Cornish." as distinct from the infinitive or verb-noun, or participles which cannot form the verb in a simple sentence.

First Person. This is the person speaking as shown by the pronoun "I" or "We". The term is used, both with these pronouns and any verb of which they are the subject. e.g. "I speak" is the First Person (singular) of the verb "to speak."

Imperative. The form of a verb which gives a command. e.g. "Sit down!" "Get up!" "Go away!" The command may be directed at the speaker, or to a third person. Such forms are really lacking in English, but phrases like "Let us go!" "Let him see!" are used to make up for the lack.

Imperfect. The imperfect tense of a verb shows an action which occurred continuously, habitually, or repeatedly in past time. English uses such forms as "I was going," "I used to go," "I would go," "I went" (every day), to indicate this meaning. See *dyskansow* 26, 28, 32.

Indefinite Article. See "Definite Article"

Indefinite Subject. A subject (of a sentence) not previously mentioned or defined, e.g. "A man came." "Some bread is on the table." "Horses can run fast This concept is important in connection with "eus" and "usi", the 3rd person singular of "bos" "to be." (See *Dyskans* 33) and use of the subjunctive (*dyskans* 44)

Indirect Object, This usually refers to a person to whom something is given, told, shown, etc. e.g. "He gave me the book" "The book" is the direct object, and "me" indirect. See *dyskans* 36.

Indirect Statement. A statement may be quoted direct, using the actual words a person speaks, e. g. “John said, ‘I like Cornish’”, or it may be made as an Indirect Statement, e.g. “John said (that) he liked Cornish.” Such statements require special care in Cornish See *Dyskansow* 32,33, 34, & 38.

Infinitive. See “Verb-Noun.”

Infix Pronouns. Object pronouns which in Cornish are placed between a verb and its particle. They do not exist in English. See *Dyskans* 27.

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Interrogative Particle. See *Dyskans* 14. “Interrogative” means “connected with a question.”

Masculine and Feminine. In English, living things of the male sex are masculine, and living things of the female sex are feminine. In Cornish, every noun, even though lifeless, and therefore sexless, is either masculine or feminine in gender. See *Dyskans* 2, 4, 11.

Mutation. This is a Celtic phenomenon with no English counterpart. See *Dyskans* 1. Every word causing the following word to mutate is shown with the number of the appropriate mutation state throughout grades one and two of the K.D.L. course. However, it is not necessary to write these numbers when writing Cornish normally.

Negative. See “Affirmative.”

Nominal Sentence. A Sentence starting with a noun or pronoun subject. This is then followed by the particle “a<sup>2</sup>” and a verb in the third person singular. It is always affirmative.

Noun. This is really another word for “name”. All words that name people/places/things/ideas, etc. are “nouns” e.g. “dog, man, village, happiness” etc.

Object. The part of a sentence that receives or suffers the action indicated by the verb. e.g. “I saw the man.” “He saw me.”

Ordinal numbers. The numbers that show order, e.g. First, Second, Third, etc. See *Dyskans* 21.

Particle. These are very short words which have an important role in sentence construction, but are not usually translated. In English there is only one, the word “to” before a verb as in “I want to go.” However, there are several in Cornish. See *Dyskansow* 2 and 8.

Passive. The normal word order of a simple English sentence is reversed when the verb is passive, because now, the Subject suffers the action of the verb. e.g. “The man was seen.” “I was heard.” The passive is formed with the verb “to be” as an auxiliary and the past participle. This is the normal pattern in Cornish too.

Past Participle. In English, this is used with the verb “to have” to make up the perfect tense, e.g. “I have spoken.” but it is not used in this way in Cornish. It is also used with the verb “to be” to form the passive, e.g. “The man was seen”: and this is its commonest use in Cornish

Past Tense. The verb usually has a special ending or form which shows that the action described occurred in the past. A common ending in English is “-ed”, e.g. “He looked.” “We opened.” In Cornish “-as” and “-is” are common endings, but the term “preterite” is used to refer to the corresponding Cornish tense to distinguish it from other past tenses,

Perfect Tense. See “Past Participle”. In Cornish, the perfect particle “re<sup>2</sup>” is used with the preterite tense. See Dysk. 6.

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Personal Pronouns. These are pronouns referring to persons. In English they are: I; (thou); he/she/it; we; you; they. The old second person singular pronoun “thou”, is, of course, replaced by “you” in modern English, so that “you” is both singular and plural, but Cornish, like most languages, still has two words.

Plural. See “Singular.”

Possessive Pronouns. See Dyskans 14. K.D.L. follows the Cornish convention of calling the words “ow<sup>3</sup>, dha<sup>2</sup>, y<sup>2</sup>, hy<sup>3</sup>, agan, agas, aga<sup>3</sup>,” pronouns although, strictly speaking, they are adjectives.

Preposition. A word showing the relationship between two things, or ideas, e.g. “The book is on the table.” “He went without speaking.” “That is the man to whom she is married.” It is followed by a noun, verb-noun, or pronoun,

Present Participle. This is a verbal adjective ending in “-ing” in English, e.g. “a man looking” “a boy reading”

Present Tense. A verb usually shows by its form or ending that the action takes place in the present time. e.g. “He looks” “We go.”

Preterite Tense. See “Past Tense.”

Pluperfect Tense. This tense shows an action which took place before the main action of the sentence. e.g. “After the rain had stopped I went out.” In English the past tense of the verb “to have” (“had”) is used as the auxiliary, with the past participle. In Cornish the verb has the same

form as the conditional. See *Dyskansow* 26, 28, 32. The perfect particle “re<sup>2</sup>” may be used.

Pronoun. A word replacing a noun, and so avoiding repetition of a noun many times in a narrative. e.g. “Yann went fishing, He caught some fish and he came home and sold them.”

Reflexive Verb. These verbs show an action done to oneself, e.g. “to wash (oneself)”. They use a pronoun ending in “self” or “selves”, although it is sometimes possible to omit this. e.g. “He is shaving (himself)”. See *Dyskans* 28.

Relative Clause. A clause starting with a relative pronoun. See *Dyskansow* 31, 44, 46, 47.

Relative Pronoun. The pronouns “who, whom, and which,” used to relate to a noun in the main clause, e.g. “I know a man who speaks Cornish.”

Second Person. The person spoken to, denoted by the pronoun “you.” The term is used both with this pronoun and any verb of which it is the subject. e.g. “You speak”. In English this may be singular or plural, but Cornish uses different forms for both the pronoun and verb. See *Dyskans* 7.

Singular and Plural. “Singular” refers to one thing/person etc only. “Plural” refers to more than one.  
e.g. Singular: man, boy, woman, girl, I am, she is, he is going.  
Plural: men, boys, women, girls. We are, they are, they are going.

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Subject                      This is normally the person or thing that performs the action shown by the verb, e.g. “Wella sells books.” However, with a passive verb, the subject receives or suffers the action. e.g. “Books are sold.”

Subjunctive.                      This term is very difficult to define, but its use is explained in *Dyskansow* 31, 41, 42, 43, 44, and 46.

Superlative.                      Refers to adjectives ending in “-est”. e.g. “greatest, longest, fastest.” They show the extreme point which an attribute attains in a given situation. e.g. “I am the greatest.” “Cornish is the easiest language.”

Third Person.                      This is the person or thing spoken about. It is shown by the pronouns He/She/It/They. The term is used both with these pronouns and any verb of which they are the subject. Any noun being spoken about is also third person as is the verb of which it is the subject. e.g. “He speaks” “She speaks”, “The men speak,”

Verb.                      A word showing an action. However, the verb “to be” shows a state rather than an action.

Verbal Sentence. A sentence starting with the verb preceded by the particle “y<sup>5</sup>” if affirmative, or “ny<sup>2</sup>” if negative. The verb agrees with the subject if a pronoun, but remains singular if the subject is a plural noun. However, it is possible for a noun subject to precede the “ny” in a negative sentence, in which case the verb agrees with it in number.

Verb-noun. This is the form of the verb usually described as “infinitive”. However, the term “verb-noun” or “verbal noun” is preferred by Celtic grammarians, and is probably more appropriate to Celtic grammar. In English, it is often, but not always, preceded by the particle “to”. e.g. “I want to go.” The “to” is omitted when used with “can” and “do” as auxiliary verbs. e.g. “I do go”, “I can go”,

Vocative Particle. We sometimes use “O” before a noun in English in archaic or poetic texts. e.g. “O Lord, in thee have I trusted:” The Cornish equivalent is “A<sup>2</sup>” See *Dyskans* 6. This is the vocative particle. Use of it is optional but more common than in modern English.