"Official" Cornish orthography in the post-SWF era

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Cornish orthographies in the 20th century

- Unified Cornish/Unified Cornish Revised (1929/1995): Medieval language (c. 1450), spelling close to traditional texts (Williams 1995)
- Kernewek Kemmyn (1986): Medieval language (c. 1300), new orthography based on reconstructed phonology (George 1986)
- Modern (Late) Cornish (from 1980s): Early modern language (17th/18th centuries), spelling close to traditional texts (Gendall 1988)

Context for a SWF

- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, UK ratification 2001
- MacKinnon Report commissioned by the government (MacKinnon 2000)
- Establishment of the Cornish Language Partnership: visibility was prioritised

The outcome

"Originally, SWF was to be a *single* written form; all users of Revived Cornish would write the language the same way, even though they might use differing pronunciations. It is, however, impossible to have a single written form which encompasses Middle and Late" (George 2017:4)

The outcome

	Choice of temporal base	
Choice of conventions	Middle/Main	Late/Main
	Middle/Trad	Late/Trad

Middle/Main: Yth esov vy ow mos dhe'n kolji
Middle/Trad: Yth esov vy ow mos dhe'n coljy
Late/Main: *Therom* o moas dhe'n kolji
Late/Trad: *Therom* o moas dhe'n coljy

The outcome

- 20.3% of headwords have traditional forms
- 17.1% of headwords have different forms for Middle/Late versions
- 3.4% of headwords have both, i.e. four forms for a single word
- Additional Middle/Late differences in plural forms, grammar …

The outcome

"The SWF recognises Revived Middle Cornish, Revived Late Cornish, and Tudor Cornish [a mix of the two] as variants of equal standing …variations that reflect a difference in pronunciation between RMC and RLC are accommodated by alternating forms using variant graphs" (Bock and Bruch 2008:2)

"In cases where differences in pronunciation between the varieties of Revived Cornish are too great to be bridged by an umbrella graph, the SWF recognises 'dialectal' spelling variants of equal status." (ibid.:3)

Late Cornish today

- 3.9% of members of language organisations belonged to the Cussel an Tavas Kernowek in 2008 (Burley 2008:8)
- Online resources: CTK website, blogs, audio course
- Actively taught and learnt in Cornwall using the Late SWF (Harasta 2013:235; Lobb, pers. comm.)

Official use

Late forms:
Sodhva an **E**th Kern**o**wek
da **e**w genev, kas **e**w genev

Official use

"An **y**eth Kern**e**wek **y**w **y**n studh kreffa ages dell o **y**n termyn hir, **mes kep**ar ha pub **y**eth v**ygh**an, **y**ma **e**dhom a dowlenn [sic] dh'y gwitha, skodyha [sic] ha displegya. Konsel Kernow a led towlen an **y**eth Kern**e**wek hag **y**w gwr**y**s a beder ra**nn**: Status, Devynydh, Ynkerth ha Corpus. Amkan an dowlen **y**w dhe ynkressya niver a Gernewegoryon ha **g**ul moy a spassow rag **g**ul devnydh Kern**e**wek."
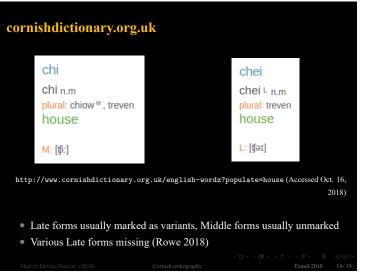

Official use

- Signage exclusively uses Middle forms
- "Official" websites (Cornwall Council, Akademi Kernewek, Gorsedh Kernow) use only Middle forms
- Exam papers use only Middle forms
- Minimal use in official place name database (and this is muddled—see Padel 2017:30)

Resources

- No textbooks and just one dictionary (*Oxford Children's Cornish–English Visual Dictionary*/Mills 2013)
- No representation in "official" online learning materials (Say Something In Cornish, What's Cornish For, Memrise)
- Some representation at cornishdictionary.org.uk …

cornishdictionary.org.uk

- Impetus for the study: the largest, most easily accessible SWF dictionary
- "two tags have been chosen to mark words that are perceived as either exclusively Revived Middle Cornish or Revived Late Cornish. Words that are in use across different groups of speakers with both RMC and RLC backgrounds are thought of as 'common' and are therefore not marked by any tag." `http://www.cornishdictionary.org.uk/content/middle-and-late-cornish-forms-formys-kres-ha-diwedhes` (Accessed Oct. 16, 2018)

cornishdictionary.org.uk

`http://www.cornishdictionary.org.uk/english-wordz?populate=house` (Accessed Oct. 16, 2018)

- Late forms usually marked as variants, Middle forms usually unmarked
- Various Late forms missing (Rowe 2018)

Perceptions

- "Most people learn a standard middle form of Cornish … [the SWF] includes some **late variant** spellings to identify different pronunciation."
- "There is SWF main form and there are optional variants that reflect minor variants in spelling like the **late [Cornish] variant**."
- "I thought that only the Main Form SWF could be used in breakthrough level teaching and official documents – no historical graphs, no **late variants**."

Perceptions

Amazon review from "Kernoweger" for *Children's Visual Dictionary*:

"The only slight gripe is that's it's not in the main form of the SWF (standard spelling system) but late Cornish SWF … [this] will limit it's [sic] future use in the education setting where SWF main form is the agreed system"

`https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/customer-reviews/R3ACTT4CO4KVMN/ref=cm_cr_dp_d_rvw_ttl?ie=UTF8&ASIN=0192735608` (Accessed Oct. 16, 2018)

Conclusions

1. The SWF: an unsatisfactory attempt to resolve a paradox
2. Late forms are only visible if you know where to look
3. "Official" commitment to parity should have been scrutinised more heavily
4. Technological potential should be explored further
5. Late form users have a responsibility to make themselves visible

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