

# Is the Cornish language for a tourist audience?

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 **Tomás Dionnet** 6 hours ago  
i thought cornish was hard  
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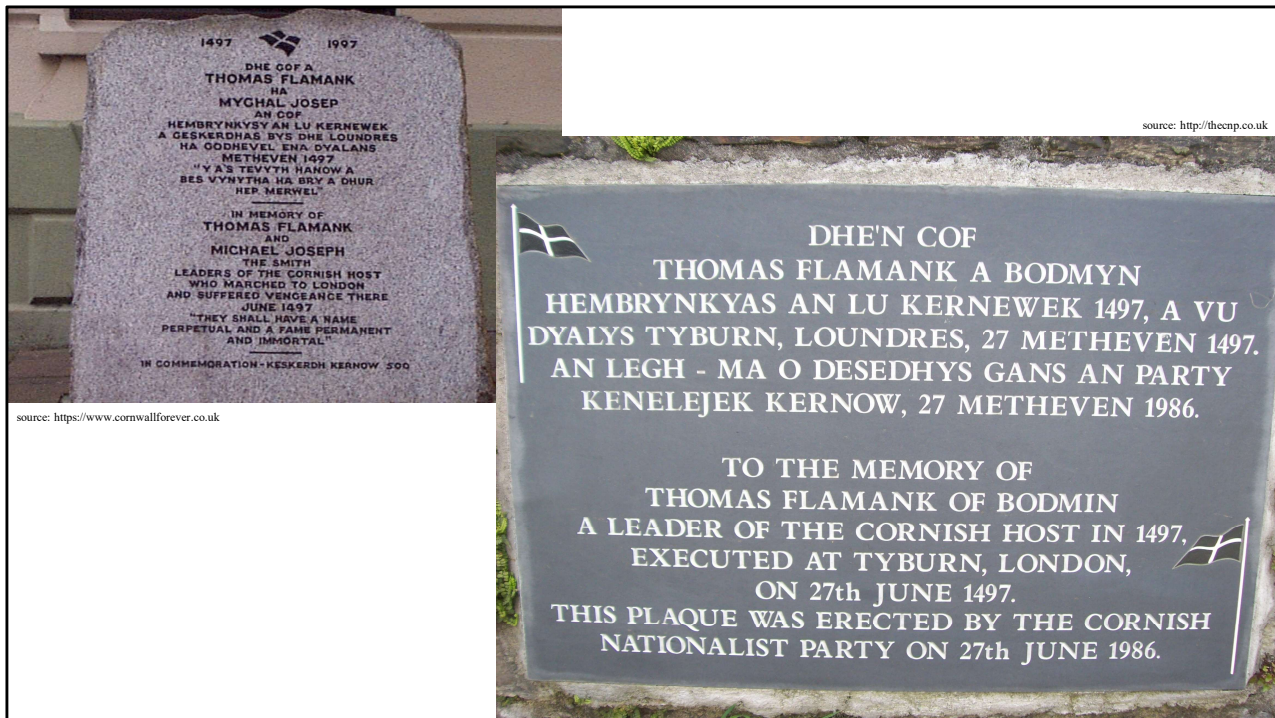
 **James Lee** 3 hours ago  
Tomás Dionnet Cornish is dead and revived for tourists- a Devonian  
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source: YouTube

Never read YouTube comments unless you want to get unreasonably angry. But how true is James Lee's claim? Very untrue, we'd think.



Certainly not to begin with—very much about the identity of the Cornish people. A well-worn tale: Jenner, etc., Nance,



right up to early uses in public inscriptions (1997/1497 etc.). All very political, built on Cornish identity, separateness, Celtic identity, exclusion, anti-Englishness (at least anti-English state). But from the 2000s,

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England Regions Cornwall

## Cornish people granted minority status within UK

24 April 2014 Cornwall

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The Cornish will gain the same status as the Scots, Welsh and Irish

Cornish people will be granted minority status under European rules for the protection of national minorities.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander made the announcement on a visit to the county.

Dick Cole, leader of Mebyon Kernow, which campaigns for Cornish devolution, said: "This is a fantastic development. This is a proud day for Cornwall."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-27132035>

that very state exerted control itself by assuming a veneer of hospitality, leading to nominal support (national minorities—what effects has this had? None). At the same time, discourses of tourism adopted distinctiveness (linguistic etc.): concessions to official use of St Piran's flag on signage, and later, more focus on the language.

“the commodification of language and identity leads to certain types of tensions, ... These tensions involve difficulties in reimagining and putting into practice forms of symbolic capital formerly associated with politicized identities that have been traditionally constructed as ‘authentic’ and are now mobilized as commodities”

Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne, 2014, p. 542

“Indicating this ‘difference’ through the Cornish language has become more important in recent years in marketing Cornwall as a place with a distinctive cultural identity.”

Hale, 2006, p. 725

Echoes trends identified in the academic subfield of “sociolinguistics and tourism”.  
Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne: shift from “politicised identities” to “commodities”.  
Hale: in the Cornish case, the language has become a part of touristic identity.



source: <http://www.panoramio.com>



source: <http://www.k-international.com>

Greater visibility: a good thing. The results of this shift in visibility: now we have signs, myttin da on Radio Cornwall,

	cutting policy and ensure that its provisions and that of this plan are considered when formulating corporate policy and service plans.			planning guidance when refreshed.	Impact on service delivery resource to be determined on a case by case basis.	FCNM and the ECRML
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### 3.2.2. Communications

The use of Cornish in communications internally and with the public is important in underlining commitment to the language. It increases the visibility of the language and raises its status and normalises its use.

	Action	Performance Indicators	Responsibility	Timescale	Resource	
<b>Use of Cornish greetings</b>						
Current practice	Reception staff do already on occasion try to use some Cornish phrases, particularly when there are known Cornish speakers arriving for a meeting, but there is no specific provision or training offered. There has been no use of Cornish within the call centre other than for Speak Cornish week in 2013.					
Development	Encourage use of Cornish greetings by reception staff. Intranet based	Training materials in place. One two word phrase to be used.	Facilities. Language support through Language officer	Upload audio files for training by April 2016. Materials already developed for	Language office time to adapt materials. Staff time to	FCNM Article 10, paragraph 2

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/21486274/cc-draftcornishlanguageplan-2016-2018.pdf> (p. 9)

Council policy, and most visibly but also exhaustingly, an ongoing public debate about how useful Cornish actually is (which we can disregard entirely: a common feature of monolingual discourse).





This debate has been parodied for Welsh in a “bigot bingo” that circulated recently on Twitter

# Anti-Kernewek Bigot Bingo

Kernewek is a made up language	Just stop it and accept you are England now	Nobody speaks it anyway	I don't value it, thus it is worthless	Historic culture, doesn't appeal to the tourists
Speaking Kernewek is of no benefit	Your heritage is just a waste of my money	Kernewek is an inbred's language	It sounds and/or looks ugly	It's dead, so stop using it
It sounds like Urdu anyway	Another language is better	<b>Racist against English</b>	A language of idiots, or peasants	Never hear it and hate when I do
Minorities only matter if it's me	Kernewek is clearly useless as I don't use it	Irrelevant in other countries	Just sounds like gibberish to me (No I won't learn)	If I see it on signs I forget how to drive
Everyone can speak English	Only used to exclude others	Respecting Kernewek is ridiculous	Speakers are all just extremists	It's forced down our throats

source: Twitter

and was adapted similarly for Cornish.



The apogee of visibility perhaps: the Kelly's advert. I'm sure many people have opinions about that.

## Conflict

- Promote distinctiveness and the preservation of Cornish culture, risking inaccessibility and unattractiveness to potential learners

*or*

- Aim to increase speaker population, possibly risking dilution of ‘authentic’ Cornish culture?

So, the principal conflict: need to “preserve Cornish culture” (also seen in housing issues) versus need to accept others for language vitality (parallel: economic benefits of tourism).

“language and identity are mobilised as specific themes to create a sense of place and attract tourists, build attractions and make souvenirs. Such initiatives are often led by former language activists”

Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne, 2014, p. 546

“the regular practices and exchanges (both material and symbolic) of tourism consistently destabilise otherwise sedimented notions of insider/outsider, authenticity, culture and place”

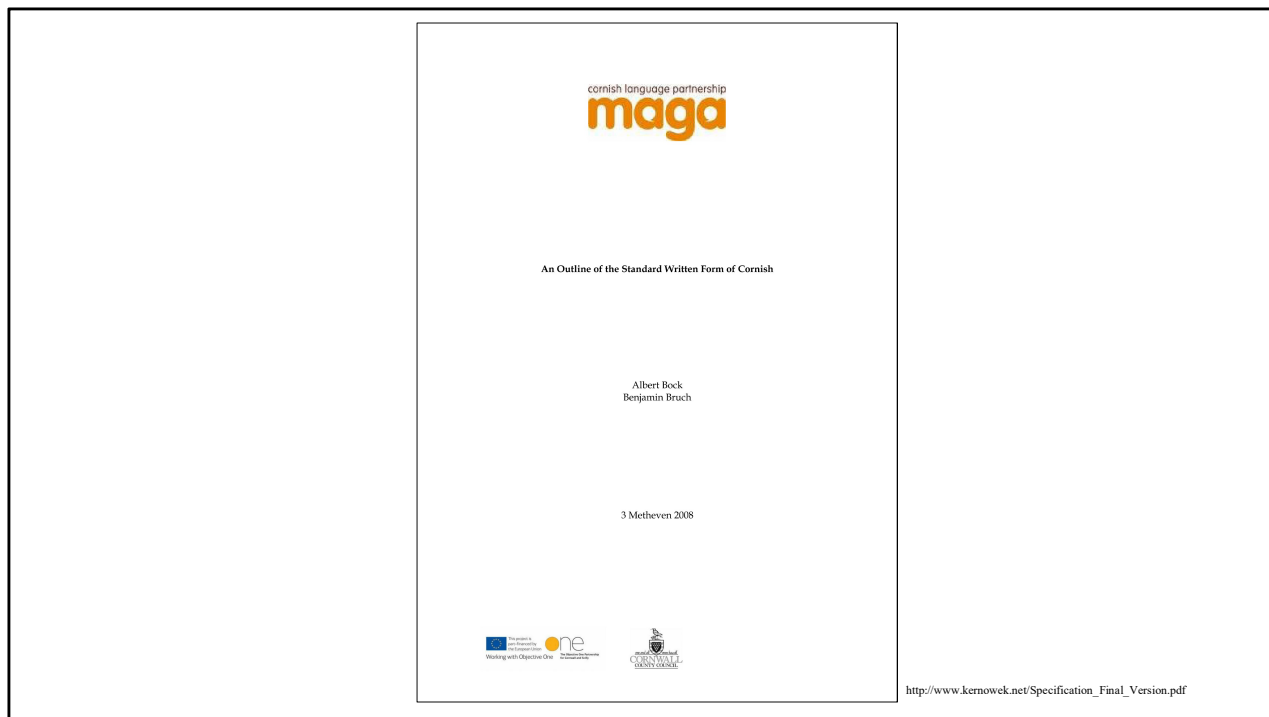
Heller, Jaworski and Thurlow, 2014, p. 427

So two currents of language promotion: militant, isolationist (earlier trend) versus newer trend of neoliberal inclusivity. Heller: activists can lead switch from one to the other (and many of us would surely dispute “former”). But as second quotation shows, tourism disrupts dichotomies. Through it, just as the pasty becomes the nationally marketed Cornish Pasty, language, can also be commodified (losing communicative function).



source: Pinterest

So a general move from grassroots, voluntary, spontaneous action, to highly coordinated, official action—along with which we see language standardisation which is thought to increase the language’s legitimacy.



Standard orthography (or orthographies ...), language office giving official seal of approval to publications, standardised conventions for place name translation. So Cornish is more visible now, but therefore we have to ask: who is its audience?





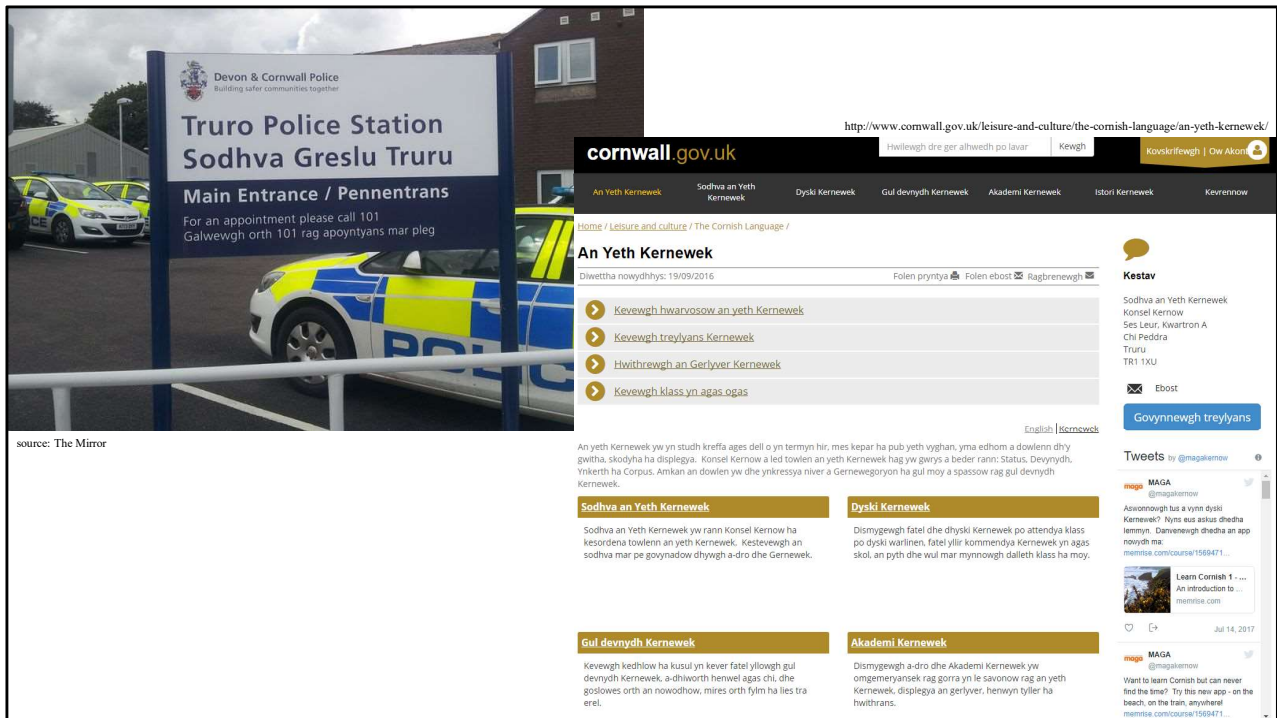
source: <http://www.panoramio.com>



source: <http://www.k-international.com>

Place names: who are they for? Made more canonically Cornish. Not for most locals, potentially for tourists??






Council buildings, services: more clearly aimed towards local people.



Tinner buses also: Redruth/Camborne route: not one that tourists would necessarily take ...



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Resrudh A'gas Dynnergh


Wolkom owgh hwi yn Resrudh. Yma genen lies vysyter a dheu dhe Resrudh awos pub sort a skila. Mars esowgh ow hwilas blas a Gernow wir po assaya kavos kolmow teyju po gwaytya mos ha bos gyllys down y'n tinwedhow dibarow ha'n istori a'n Tyller Ertach Balweyth Kernow an Bys, yth yw Resrudh an le euen. An tolen ma a veu trevyes yn Kernewek hag a bresent gorwolok verr a Resrudh. Rann aral a'n wasva a yll bos redyes yn Sownek po - dre Google Translate - yn yethow erel.

Tochya Resrudh

Leys y'n nans dramatek ynter pennow Karn Bre, Karn Manlys ha Karn Margh, doronieth Resrudh yw ha splann ha rann y ertach balweyth. Dredhys war an Skorren Gompoe Bras, godhes ych a gober ha sten a yllar y hedges yn es - ha tri mildir yn unnik dhiworth porth Portreth, Resrudh a kres bys an sleyneth balweyth. Kerth der an ramdriow anedhys dhe Soth a gres an dre ha ty a vydh dynerhys gans an dreheynansow meur Victorian, le may triga perhenogon an balyow hag erel neb re gavsya prow dhiworth an sten a Gernow. Ow pesya y'n Soth, ahes an Fordh Aberfal, ty a yll gweles nowythheansow pentiow stenoryon a waymyas piwasow - gwel yw kopyes dres an dre. **Lergh an dre** a olowboynt an leow a vri kowrek dhe'n Tyller Ertach a'n Bys ha dhe dhiwysyans bal dre vras, pub le gans y hwedhel dhy dherwas. An Drehegans Keschanj Balweyth yn kres an dre, rag ensampel, o an le may llyles gwertha ha prena kober ha sten ha'n keschanj ma o an keschanj unnik mes a Loundres. Yth esa dhe'n Keschanj fordh gonnek a wul da dhiworth gwres ha deray process an trad - i a spala kaptenow an balyow pan gossyans, hag oll an gwayn ow mos dhe glavj tus val! Klock an dre a vri re welas ynwedh y rann a hwarvos. Bys 1841 ev a nycha hahow keredi ha 1914 an toren a veu drehegys sibella a lewr kowal mau hvill an stenorunn dhe henn an dre wasles an klock ha

[http://www.visitredruth.co.uk/Comish\\_3121.aspx](http://www.visitredruth.co.uk/Comish_3121.aspx)

<http://duchyofcornwall.org/kernewek.html>

 **DUCHY of CORNWALL** *A private estate established in 1337 which funds the public, charitable and private activities of the Prince of Wales and his family*

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## Kernewek

Gweythres Dugeh Kernow

Stat an Dhugeth veu gwrys yn 1337 gans Edward III rag y vab hag er, Pennsevik Edward (aswonys diwettha avel an Pennsevik Du), neb a dheuth ha bos an kynsa Duk Kernow. Gweythres kynsa an Dhugeth yw dhe brovia rent a'y fythow rag an Pennsevik Kembra.

Dres lies kansblydhen y fedha hengovek dhe deyluyow as tevo statow-tir dhe worra an tir ha ken pythow yn trest, may halla pub henedh kavoes pygans an rent, byttegys dialloes ens dhe wertha an pythow. Henna vedha ordensys rag surbe an stat, keffrys ha'n rent a brovi, dhe worrywa a henedh dhe henedh. An keth argerdh veu sywys a-barth an Dhugeth Kernow.

Yn-dann an chartour a 1337, hag afdhys dre laghys ow sywya, ny dal dhin Pennsevik Kembra degemmeres les dhiworth arghans sevys po gwayn dre werth pythow, ha ny dhegemmer ev marnas an pygans blydhenyek askorys, yw keth dhe doll wober a vodh. Drefenn rowedh an degemmerer, y feu desedhys yn lagha dres an blydhenyow 'ordenansow trest' an Dhugeth, gans surbicans arghanssek an Dhugeth gorwelys gans Tresorva HM.

An Duk a dhewis devnydha rann vras an rent dhiworth an Dhugeth rag skoodha kostow y ober poblek hag alusnek. An Dhugeth a skoodh ynwedh gweythresow poblek, alusnek ha privedh an Dhuges Kernow ha'n Bennevigion Wella ha Harri.

An Dhugeth a syns neb 53,266 hektar tir yn Kernow ha 23 konteth, dre vras yn Breten Soth-west. Chyfywethres an Dhugeth yw an rewl sostenadow ha kenwerthek a'y thir ha'y fythow. An Dhugeth as teves ynwedh plegell-gevarghewi arghanssek.

An stat annerthek a syns ynno bangeryow-tir aradow ha beotes, yja myek nebes godrevi. An Dhugeth a avons towlennow-dehevel

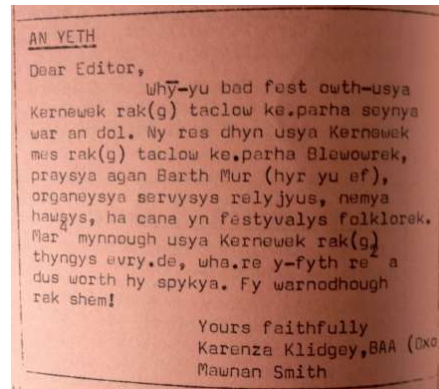
Cornish also on tourist-directed websites: visit Redruth/Truro, Duchy ... why? So some seems explicitly aimed towards tourists, some towards locals, and much in between, which is probably what we want. In general, though, all of this is predicated on acceptance within state structures.



So we've moved on from early 20th century when it was a right-wing ethnonationalist medievalist thing (when these were the *prevailing* images of the Cornish movement),



c. 1970; reproduced in Tredinnick-Rowe and Khanwalka, 2015, p. 29



An Weryn (1980s)

and we've moved on again from 70s/80s when it was more of an anti-state thing (so I'm told!). So have we gone in the right direction? Perhaps most important question: is it sustainable?

“The neoliberalisation of the State led to the withdrawal of funding for minority language maintenance, and turned it into funding for economic development.”

Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne, 2014, p. 547

“Over the course of the 1990s and in the early 2000s it became increasingly difficult to find funding for activities focussed on the maintenance of minority language and culture [in Canada], as the Canadian state shifted its concerns to neoliberal understandings of economic development.”

Heller, Jaworski and Thurlow, 2014, p. 442

Something that sounds very familiar (I was amazed by how familiar): state withdrawing funding: in general and a case study.

“I have interviewed 60 individuals ... and yet never encountered a student who took the language for what they identified as an economic or purely communicative purpose.”

Harasta, 2013, p. 143

At odds with Harasta’s findings about why people learn Cornish. Minority languages seem at odds with business, which requires categorisation, standardisation, simplification, creating stereotypical subsets of the population and pitching marketing efforts at them.



## Rationalism versus romanticism (Berthele, 2017)

- Rationalism: language as a medium of communication
- Romanticism: language as a medium of expression
- Major languages: shift from rationalism to romanticism
- Minority languages: shift from romanticism to rationalism

I heard Raphael Berthele talking about it: for larger languages, a shift from rationalism to romanticism: “exception française” etc. For minority languages, becoming more business-orientated; but he pointed out that this doesn’t make much sense. So coming back to the conflict, the main source of opposition to tourism: do tourists dilute our culture, impose their own culture? Can we, on the other hand, sustainably convert tourists into language learners?



“Most interviewees identified a combination of factors as motivating them to learn Gaelic. The most important were music ..., interest spurred by holiday visits to Scotland and an interest in languages in general”

McLeod and O’Rourke, 2017, p. 8

McLeod & O’Rourke 2017, p. 8: “interest spurred by holiday visits to Scotland” (new speakers of Gaelic). I think probably all of us know people from up-country who’ve come and taken a proper interest in Cornish and actually become involved with the community in a way that supports it.



In fact, while Bernard Deacon theorised lifestyle/lifestruggle Cornwall, revivalist culture contains elements that are alien to both. Celtic harp, bardic robes, Cornish tartan, druidic symbolism: all in one picture ...



Back to the Kelly's advert. Can at least unequivocally say that this was for tourists: shown on national TV, selling ice cream of all things. Not well received by some revivalists, mostly through use of non-speaker actor, which was an easily fixable problem and something they really ought to have thought about. Implies lack of commitment of the industry (I'm generalising!) to actually valuing Cornish and its speakers: not a sustainable position, and presumably one driven by profit. The other thing that annoyed people was translanguaging: continued prevalence of ideology that advocates the complete (linguistic) separateness of Cornish from English. But this goes back to the closed-off position, and denies linguistic vitality; languages are naturally influenced by each other and it's not a sign of death.

“Late modernity erodes the boundaries of nation-States and their economic bases. Old discourses about language and identity are drawn upon and recontextualised in fields such as tourism and heritage that are no longer contained and containable within the logic of bounded languages and communities.”

Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne, 2014, p. 565

In the same way, but on a less linguistic level, it's difficult to keep languages as bounded now: fuzzy conceptions of nations, internet contributes to a global community.



Mineral Point, Wisconsin

Source: <http://www.cornishfest.org>

On this subject, we can perhaps turn to/appeal to the diaspora, which appears to have a genuine interest in Cornish and is aware of the complexities of Cornish identity, and knows the same industrial struggles. Perhaps we should stop focusing on bounded categories, on this tourist/local dichotomy, which plays into the hands of the capitalist state, and rather appeal more holistically to the local population, encouraging the expression of multiple ideologies (not a single canonically revivalist ideology), valourising Cornish dialect, and so on. And we can't rely on the state, which provides inconsistent support.

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## Full image URLs

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Images obtained and websites accessed 9 August 2017