

Names, varieties, and ideologies in revived Cornish

Merryn Davies-Deacon • University of York

“names can create identity” (Rymes, 1999, p. 164)

“Names, then, while associated with an individual, are laden with social history and power, and they are easily manipulated in the hands of others. Across societies, people carefully control the way names are used, who uses them, and in what context. A proper name, then, is not simply a useful label, but a repository of accumulated meanings, practices, and beliefs, a powerful linguistic means of asserting identity (or defining someone else) and inhabiting a social world.” (Rymes, 1999, p. 165)

“one strand of the debate about the Celts today seems to be that if these Iron Age people did not all call themselves ‘Celts’, if they did not all use La Tène culture, or the same sort of La Tène culture, if the speaker of one of these languages in Ireland was not aware of the existence of similar languages in Spain and Turkey, then it is not permissible for us to identify them as ‘Celts’.” (Koch, 2003, p. 42)

“academic controversy over the use of the term ‘Celts’”
(Koch, 2003, p. 43)

“Cornwall is not part of the larger territory. There are no nearby areas of Celtic speech or further Llŷn Peninsula to conform more closely to the model, nor is Cornwall redeemed by national institutions and a critical mass of population. The Cornish are consequently slightly suspect, Cinderella Celts, ranked in fifth or sixth place.” (Kennedy, 2013, p. 136)

Types of names

- Names for varieties of Cornish
- Names of organisations
- Personal names

“to many readers phonology is an unfamiliar subject. Spelling is what really upsets some people.” (Dunbar and George, 1997, p. 12)

“To make the Cornish of this book as useful as possible to beginners it is therefore all put back into a ‘unified’ spelling that is based on the Cornish of the three days’ plays of the *Ordinal* (‘Prompt-Book’), the accepted model of Cornish at its best.” (Nance, 1929, p. 6)

“Middle Cornish ... in unified form” (Nance, 1952, p. vii)

“Cornish class members ... have a persistent interest in Unified Cornish” (Combella, 1978, p. 46)

“recommended phonemic spelling ... It may be desirable to refer to it by some shorter name, but so far, I have not devised one.” (George, 1986, p. 96)

“most Cornish speakers have now changed over to the improved orthography, which, at the suggestion of John King, has become known as *Kernewek Kemmyn*.” (George, 1993, p. 7)

“An lytherennans noweth yu coynt y semblant, estranj dhe weles” (Brown, 1987, p. 2)

“Traditional Cornish? That’s the Cornish that was spoken by our last native speakers. Many words from Traditional Cornish have survived into Cornish dialect and place-names, and you may already be familiar with some of them.” (Gendall, 1988, p. 2)

“So recently, indeed, was Cornish in use, that for Cornish people it is in a very real sense the language of our forefathers who lived and worked in Penwith where the language survived longest” (Gendall, 2000, p. i)

Cornish language organisations

(adapted from MacKinnon, 2000, pp. 33–34)

Official Cornish name	Official English name
Gorseth Kernow/Gorsedh Kernow	Gorsedd of Cornwall
Kesva an Taves Kernewek	Cornish Language Board
Kowethas an Yeth Kernewek	Cornish Language Fellowship
Dalleth	—
Agan Tavas	—
Cussel an Tavas Kernuack	Cornish Language Council
Teer ha Tavas	Land and Language
Maga	Cornish Language Partnership
Movyans Skolyow Meythrin	—

Original name	‘Kernowised’ name	Favoured variety
George Ansell	Jori Ansell	Kernewek Kemmyn
Michael Palmer	Myghal Palmer	Kernewek Kemmyn
Paul Dunbar	Pawl Dunbar	Kernewek Kemmyn
Catherine Hosken	Katell Hosken	Kernewek Kemmyn
John King	Yowann Byghan	Kernewek Kemmyn
Michael Angove	Myghal An Gof	Kernewek Kemmyn
Pauline Preece	Polin Prys	Kernewek Kemmyn
Gary Angove	Gari An Gof	Kernewek Kemmyn
William Brown	Wella Brown	Kernewek Kemmyn
John Rowe	Jowan Kereve	Unified
Andrew Thompson	Andrew Climo	Unified
Catherine Loveday Moore	Loveday Carlyon	“unknown”
(from Harasta, 2013, p. 197)		

“Kernowising names is a patterned phenomenon which occurs primarily amongst users of Kernwek Kemmyn ... the evidence ... points to a situation where the more ones studies and becomes involved in Kernewek Kemmyn, the more likely one is to Kernowise one’s name from an English form to a more Cornish one.” (Harasta, 2013, p. 196)

“The Kesva has received a grant of £5,000 ...” (Brown, Chubb, Chubb, Kennedy and Ninnis, 1991, p. 8)



“I will choose to use the term ‘Kernewek’ to describe the language while writing in English ... to respectfully mark it as a language with the right to name itself” (Harasta, 2013, p. 1)

“The 30-second ad, which features a Cornish ice cream seller speaking the ancient Kernewek language while he sells his product, launches on Monday and will run for six weeks in programmes including Channel 4’s Food Unwrapped and ITV’s Britain’s Got Talent.” (from *The Guardian*, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/may/20/first-cornish-tv-ad-to-air-weeks-after-language-funding-is-axed>, accessed 24 May 2016)

“I believe that Kernowek Kemyn is not Cornish and am very unhappy that it was ever proposed or promoted.” (Williams, 2006, p. 26)

(Julyan Holmes)

“I set and marked the papers of Julian Holmes, Graham Sandercock and William Brown” (Gendall, 2007, p. 4)

(Wella Brown)

“Because of the potential confusion, the term ‘Modern Cornish’ is perhaps best avoided altogether. The best name for the last phase of the historical language (1575–1800) is Late Cornish, in which the word late means both tardy (*le cornique tardif* in French) and deceased.” (George, 2005, p. 105)

Ideologies at work

- Celticity: Cornish identity within a Celtic framework
- Cornish prioritised over English
- (De)legitimisation of different varieties

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