A CORNISH DICTIONARY FOR CONVERSATION

GERLYVER KESCOWS

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Agan Tavas 2017

Specimen pages
Page numbers dropped

PREFACE

'Cows Kernowek yw moy y vern agès cows adro dhe'n Kernowek.'
(A.S.D. Smith 'Caradar', respelled)

This *Gerlyver Kescows* is designed specifically for those who speak, or are learning to speak, 'Unified Cornish' or 'Unified Cornish Revised' or 'Standard Cornish', all of which are based on the Cornish texts that have survived from the 14th to the 18th centuries.

The Cornish in this dictionary takes William Jordan's *Gwrians an Bÿs* as its 'foundation text', while looking forward to John Keigwin, William Rowe and Nicholas Boson, and back to John Tregear, *Sacrament an Alter*, *Bêwnans Ke*, and *Bêwnans Meriasek*. Spellings are those of 'Standard Cornish'. This particular orthography has been developed under the leadership of Michael Everson in close cooperation with Professor Nicholas Williams 'Golvan'. It aims for spellings that are as unambiguous as possible in their representation of the sounds of Cornish, and which at the same time remain faithful to the forms we encounter in the traditional Cornish texts – since these are our chief source for the language. The whole corpus of traditional Cornish has been used to enlarge the vocabulary. This has been a necessary principle of the revival from the outset.

Standard Cornish is the language of the complete Cornish Bible (*An Beybel Sans*, Evertype 2011) and many other published works, including recent translations by Nicholas Williams of 'The Wind in the Willows' (*An Gwyns i'n Helyk* 2013), 'The Hobbit' (*An Hobys* 2014), 'Pride and Prejudice' (*Gooth ha Gowvreus* 2015), 'She' and 'Dracula' (*Honna* and *Dracùla*, both 2016), all published by Evertype.

The dictionary contains:

- 5000 Cornish entries in the main Cornish-English section
- a separate list of 'grammar words'
- an English-Cornish index of these words and phrases
- reference charts of essential verbs, numerals, and contact mutations
- a collection of 200 'outbursts' (a portmanteau term for greetings and exclamations)
- an appendix of 250 place names

Everything has been selected as a practical aid to **conversation**. The main source has been Nicholas Williams's *Gerlyver Sawsnek-Kernowek* (Agan Tavas & Evertype, 2nd edition 2006); this takes full account of the earlier work of R. Morton Nance 'Mordon'. Much has been adopted from Prof. Williams's *Geryow Gwir* (Evertype, 2nd edition 2014); but vigorous coinages by Nance have been retained. And there are some new expressions. It is hoped the chosen vocabulary will prove useful wherever folk are eager to speak Cornish in a vibrant manner, balancing the needs of modern communication with cherished tradition.

I am grateful to Ray Chubb 'Map Essa' for all the work he has put into the publication of this dictionary; to the Committee of Agan Tavas for its enthusiastic support; and to Nicholas Williams for his advice on several matters of inflection, pronunciation and spelling.

Ian Jackson, An Dhyw Rës, Hâv 2017

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CORNISH-ENGLISH SECTION

Alternative forms of some Cornish words, sometimes even alternative words, are supplied between round brackets; they can be used with confidence, but such alternatives will occasionally involve different grammar. Definitions are confined to those most relevant for everyday conversation. Refer to the Introduction for entries containing an asterisk.

Bear in mind that Cornish words often span several grammatical categories. Adjectives in Cornish can be used as adverbs or nouns, adverbs may also function as adjectives, prepositions may serve as conjunctions; and many nouns can be employed with adjectival force. The categories marked in this dictionary are only a starting-point.

You will find a separate list of 'grammar words' (particles, pronouns, inflecting prepositions, conjunctions, question words) at the end of this section.

A

a boos brâs *phr* important

a bris *phr* significant

a brow *phr* useful

a les *phr* interesting

a'n barth / tu-ma dhe[2] *phr* on this side of

a'n par-ma *phr* of this kind

a'n par-na *phr* such, of that kind

a'n sêson *phr* seasonal

a res *phr* necessary

a varhas dhâ *phr* a bargain (good value)

a vresel *phr* military

a vry *phr* highly regarded, respected

a'y anvoth *see* [oll] a'y anvoth

a'y vodh *see* [oll] a'y vodh

aba·rth *prep + noun*

aba·rth dhe[2] *prep + pronoun* on behalf of; in favour of (arguing etc)

abatty *m abattiow* abbey
abecedary *m abecedarys* alphabet
abe·rth in *phr* inside, within; into
aberveth *adv* in[side]
aberveth in *phr* inside, within; into
abhorrya *v* loathe
abm *m abmow* kiss
abma *v* (dhe²) kiss *Note pp* ibmys
aborpos *adv* intentionally, on purpose
abo·ynt *adv* punctually
abrans *m abransow* eyebrow
absù·rd *adj* absurd
abyl *adj* capable, competent
aca·demy *m aca·demys* academy
aco·rd *m acordys* accord, agreement
acordya *v* (gans, orth) agree (with)
acordyon *m acordyons* accordion
aco·wnt *m acowntys* account (financial)

aco·wnt arhow *m acowntys* deposit account
aco·wnt erbysyon *m acowntys* savings account
aco·wnt kesres *m acowntys* current account
acowntya *v* account; have a high regard for
acowntyas *m acowntysy* accountant
act *m actys* act (incl of Parliament)
adâ·l *prep + noun* **adâ·l dhe²** *prep + pronoun* opposite; compared with
a·damant *m adamantys* diamond
addys *adj* extra
aden gales *f adenyow cales* hardback
aden vedhel *f adenyow medhel* paperback
aderdro (ade·r dro) *adv* around; approximately
adermyn *adv* on time
adhevî·s *adv* exactly; first class; ideal
adhewedhes *adv* late (in time)
adhewys *adv* optionally

GRAMMAR WORDS

Here you will find many words that are best learned as grammar. The list includes particles, pronouns and other 'pronominals', inflecting prepositions, conjunctions, and question words. Some technical language has been used in order to describe them in a small compass. Consult your textbook if in doubt, or check with your teacher. Note that initial û counts as a vowel even when pronounced 'yoo'.

Particles

a^2
links subject or object of relative clause to clause verb; links subject of nominal sentence to its inflected verb (particle is dropped before vowel of inflected form of bos / mos); default particle introducing inflected verb of question beginning with question word or phrase

a^2
introduces inflected verb of 'yes/no' question (particle is dropped before vowel of inflected form of bos / mos)

a^2
optionally used before noun of address (no mutation if proper name)

ass
replaces *assa*^{2} before vowel of inflected form of bos / mos and also before w (< gw) of gwil

assa^2
introduces inflected verb to express wonder / admiration

ma
replaces *may*^{5} before na^2

yn^5
converts adjective into adverb

yth (th')
replaces *y*^{5} before vowel / h *pre-mutation*

Particle phrases

a ny^2
introduces inflected verb of interrogative negative verbal sentence (nyns replaces *ny*^{2} before vowel of inflected form of bos / mos)

an pëth a^2
'what' (relative – sometimes extended to indirect question)

bys may^5
'until' (mayth replaces *may*^{5} before vowel / h *pre-mutation*

hag a^2
replaces *a*^{2} to link subject or object of relative clause to clause verb with clearer distinction from nominal sentence (a^2 is dropped before vowel of inflected form of bos / mos)

in udn^2
precedes verb-noun to form adverbial present participle (collateral action regarded as manner in which main action is performed)

kenyver a^2
'as many as' (a^2 is dropped before vowel of inflected form of bos / mos)

le may^5
'where' (relative when no specific antecedent of place)

myns a^2
before inflected verb: 'all who / that' (a^2 is dropped before vowel of inflected form of bos / mos)

Personal pronouns

First person singular

avy·
optionally replaces *vy* as subject after certain preterites lacking a personal ending (*e.g.* deuth, gwrug), or when reinforcing for greater emphasis

'm
'me' (infixed)

-ma
'I' (suffixed as subject after verb; fusion causes sound / spelling changes)

mavy· (-ma vy)
replaces *-ma* or *vy* as subject after verb for added emphasis

me
optionally replaces *my* as subject of nominal sentence / infinitive construction or after non-inflecting preposition

my
'I', 'me' (independent)

vy
'I', 'me' (as subject after verb, as object after verb where grammar permits, or reinforcing)

Second person singular

dhejy· (tejy·)
replaces *jy* when reinforcing for added emphasis

jy
'you' *one person familiar* (as subject after verb, as object after verb where grammar permits, or reinforcing)

sy
optionally replaces *jy* when reinforcing

ENGLISH-CORNISH SECTION

The English-Cornish section is an index designed to be used in conjunction with the earlier parts of the book. For every Cornish word you should check the entry in the Cornish-English section or look it up in the separate list of 'grammar words' where it is marked 'G'. Cross-checking will ensure you choose the right word or phrase for the context, and will help you employ it correctly. Be especially careful to understand entries containing square brackets; and to identify entries that are available in quite limited circumstances (*e.g.* hadre·[2], in kever), and words / phrases used only with express or implied negatives (*e.g.* den vëth, nameu·r).

A

A Level *n* Level A
abandon *v* forsâkya; sqwattya
abbey *n* abatty
abdomen *n* torr
be **able to** *phr* gallos
abode *n* adneth
abortion *n* avortans
about *prep* a[2] [G]; adro· dhe[2]; in kever; [ow] tùchya
above *adv* wàr vàn
above *prep* a-ugh[G]
above all *phr* kyns oll
abrupt *adj* desempys
abruptly *adv* desempys
in the **absence** of *phr* saw
be **absent** *phr* fyllel
absurd *adj* absù·rd
abundant *adj* pals
abuse *v* tebel-dyghtya
academy *n* aca·demy
accelerate *v* uskys'he·

accept *v* degemeres
accident *n* gwall; droglam
Accidents and Emergencies Department (**A&E**) *n* [Asran] Droglabmow ha Gorothobmow
acclaim *n* gormola
acclaim *v* gormel
accommodation *n* gwest
accompanist *n* keveylyth
accompany *v* keveylya
accomplish *v* collenwel
accord *n* aco·rd
according to *phr* herwyth; in herwyth; warle·rgh[G]; orth[G]
accordion *n* acordyon
account *n* aco·wnt
account *v* acowntya
current **account** *phr* aco·wnt kesres
deposit **account** *phr* aco·wnt arhow

savings **account** *phr* aco·wnt erbysyon
account for *phr* styrya
accountant *n* acowntyas
accusation *n* cùhudhans
accuse *v* cùhudha
ace *n* âss
achieve *v* obery, cowlwil
achievement *n* cowlwrians
acid *adj* trenk
acid *n* trenken
acknowledge *v* aswon, alowa, avowa
acquire *v* aqwîrya
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (**AIDS**) *phr* Syndrom an Imûndyfyk [Aqwîrys] (SIDA)
acquisition *n* cafosyans
acquit *v* delyvra
acre *n* erow
across *prep* dres[G]
act *n* act
act *v* obery; gwary
action *n* gweythres
action *v* gweythresa
actions *n* gwrith
activate *v* bewhe·
active *adj* gweythresek
activist *n* gweythresor
activity *n* gwrians
actor *n* gwarior
actual *adj* gwrionedhek
actually *adv* in gwrioneth
acute *adj* lybm
acuteness *n* lymder

adapt *v* aswywa
adapter *n* aswywor
add *v* keworra
add up *phr* sùmya
adder *n* nader
addicted to *phr* in danjer
addition *n* keworrans
in **addition to** *phr* kefrës ha
additive *n* keworansyn
address *n* trigva
adjective *n* hanow gwadn
adjust *v* desedha
administer *v* menystra
administrator *n* menystror
admirable *adj* wordhy
admiration *n* estê·m
admire *v* estêmya
admit *v* alowa, avowa, amyttya
admittedly *adv* res yw avowa
adopt *v* degemeres, recêva; asvaba
adore *v* gordhya [dhe[2]]; leungara
adult *adj/n* tevysak
advance *n* avauncyans
advance *v* avauncya
advantage *n* prow; poynt a brow
adventure *n* aventur
adverb *n* adverb
adversary *n* contrary
advertise *v* argemydna
advert[**isement**] *n* argebmyn
advice *n* cùssul
advise *v* cùssulya

KEY VERB TABLES FOR REFERENCE

Forms are given for careful but unpedantic speech. Alone or combined with a verb-noun, present participle or past participle, they are sufficient to express every verbal idea in ordinary conversation.

BOS

Imperative
bëdh, **bedhowgh**

Present copula	*Present local / auxiliary*	*Present habitual / Future*
oma	**e·soma**	**be·dhama**
or **o'vy**	*or* **eso'vy**	*or* **bedha'vy**
osta	**esta**	**bedhys jy**
yw va *or* **ywa**	**yma / usy va**	**bëdh ev**
yw hy	**yma / usy hy**	**bëdh hy**
yw	**yma / usy / eus**	**bëdh**
on ny	**eson ny**	**bedhyn ny**
o'why	**eso'why**	**bedho'why**
yns y	**ymowns / usons y**	**bedhons y**

Note: **usy** *also* **ujy**

Imperfect copula	*Imperfect local / auxiliary*	*Imperfect habitual / Future in the past*
en vy	**esen vy**	**bedhen vy**
es jy	**eses jy**	**bedhes jy**
o va	**esa va**	**bedha va**
o hy	**esa hy**	**bedha hy**
o	**esa**	**bedha**
en ny	**esen ny**	**bedhen ny**
e'why	**ese'why**	**bedhe'why**
êns y	**esens y**	**bedhens y**

NUMERALS FOR REFERENCE

If you are in doubt about the grammar of numerals, consult *Desky Kernowek* or another good textbook.

0	**màn**		*Cardinals (one, two etc)*
1	**onen** (*also pronoun*) **udn*** + *noun*	21	**onen warn ugans** **udn*** + *noun* **warn ugans**
2	**dew**^{2} (**dyw**^{2} *feminine*)	39	**nawnjek warn ugans**
3	**try**^{3} (**teyr**^{3} *feminine*)	40	**dewgans** (dew ugans)
4	**peswar** (**peder** *feminine*)	41	**onen ha dewgans** **udn*** + *noun* **ha dewgans**
5	**pymp**	50	**deg ha dewgans** *or* **hanter-cans**
6	**whegh**	59	**nawnjek ha dewgans**
7	**seyth**	60	**try ugans**
8	**eth**	61	**onen ha try ugans** **udn*** + *noun* **ha try ugans**
9	**naw**	79	**nawnjek ha try ugans**
10	**deg**	80	**peswar ugans**
11	**udnek**	81	**onen ha peswar ugans** **udn*** + *noun* **ha peswar ugans**
12	**dewdhek**	99	**nawnjek ha peswar ugans**
13	**trydhek**		
14	**peswardhek**		
15	**pymthek**		
16	**whêtek**		
17	**seytek**		
18	**êtek**		
19	**nawnjek**		
20	**ugans**		

*   Contact mutation as for **an**

dew vs **dyw** is just a spelling convention

CONTACT MUTATIONS FOR REFERENCE

In conversation do not worry overmuch if some mutations are missed. In fact the rules for leniting g are really more like guidelines. And spirantization of a verb-noun after ow 'my' ('me' with verb-noun) may be 'hyper-correct'.

Second state *(lenition)*

b > v	
c > g	No change after s, th
ch > j	
d > dh	No change before û = yoo
	Occasionally no change after s (*e.g.* after nos, tus)
g > zero	**gl**, **gr** often unchanged; growedha / groweth / grugys > wrowedha / wroweth / wrugys
	Monosyllables usually unchanged
	And many loan-words also resist this change
go > wo	
goo > wo	
gou > wo	
gù > wo	
gû > wo	
gu > wu	
gw > w	
k > g	No change after s, th
m > v	
p > b	No change after s, th
qw > g	No change after s, th
t > d	No change after s, th

In loan words **go** sometimes > **o**: *e.g.* arolegyth, An Orseth

'OUTBURSTS'

The main part of the dictionary contains a few short interjections (*e.g.* now, ogh), as well as basic expressions for 'please' and 'thank you'. But here is an array of words and phrases that will make conversation more lively, and which seem to invite an exclamation mark.

Singular you-forms (familiar) are given throughout, except where only a polite form would be used. Plural / polite forms can often be substituted: *e.g.* by changing dhis to dhywgh [why] or dhewy.

Hello and goodbye

Bednath Duw genes!	Hello! Goodbye!
Bys avorow!	Till tomorrow!
Bys-bys!	Bye-bye! Cheerio!
Bys whare·!	I'll be back!
Da weles!	So long! See you!
Deus ajy·!	Come in!
Dohajë·dh dâ!	Good afternoon!
Dùrda dhewy!	How do you do?
Dùrnosta dhis!	Good night!
Duw genes!	Goodbye!
Farwe·l!	All the best!
Gordhuwher dâ!	Good evening!
Hayl dhis!	Hello! Hi [there]!
Lowena dhis!	Hi [there]!
Myttyn dâ!	Good morning!
Nos dâ!	Good night!
Remai·n in dadn dava [**gene'**]!	Keep in touch!
Wèl, campoll an jowl!	Well, talk of the devil!
Wolcùm!	Welcome!

APPENDIX

PLACE NAMES

A dot has been inserted to show when the primary stress is not on the penultimate syllable, as elsewhere in the dictionary. Place names are usually written without diacritical marks, though u ù û are distinguished here as an aid to pronunciation.

Cornish place names have been taken from Craig Weatherhill, *A Concise Dictionary of Place-Names* (Evertype 2009), where you will find many more. I have occasionally adapted a vowel to Standard Cornish spelling.

Cornwall

It is often difficult to identify the gender of a Cornish place name. Feminine gender is marked for a few names where it is well established (*e.g.* Kernow). Some may wish to treat names beginning with elements such as Lan- as feminine too, but this is left to personal preference. It is usual to refer to a city, town or village as hy in any event, because cyta, tre and treveglos are all feminine nouns.

An E·denva *f* The Eden Project
An Lesard Lizard Point
An Tireth Uhel North Cornwall
Arwednek (Falmoth) Falmouth
Ash Saltash
Austol St Austell
Bosvena Bodmin
Bronel Brannel
Cambron Camborne
Carrek Loos i'n Coos St Michael's Mount

Din Kernowyon Tintagel Castle
Dowr Fala The [River] Fal
Dowr Tamer The [River] Tamar
Ewny Redru·dh Redruth
Fawy The [River] Fowey; West Wivelshire
Goon Bren Bodmin Moor
Helles Helston
Heyl Hayle
Kernow *f* Cornwall
Keryer Kerrier

Malaysya Malaysia
Menydhyow Andes The Andes
Menydhyow Hyma·laya The Himalayas
Menydhyow Ùral The Ural Mountains
Me·xyco Mexico
Mongolya Mongolia
Myanmar (Bùrma) Myanmar (Burma)
Nepa·l Nepal
North-Ame·ryca North America
North-Corea North Korea
Pakysta·n Pakistan
Palesti·n Palestine
Pedn Ehel an North / **Soth** The North / South Pole
Penrin an Corn Cape Horn
Penrin an Govenek Da The Cape of Good Hope

Pow an Pùscas Newfoundland
Pow Tay Thailand
Selond Nowyth New Zealand
Soth-A·fryca South Africa
Soth-Ame·ryca South America
Soth-Corea South Korea
Sry-Lanca Sri Lanka
Sy·bery Siberia
Syngapo·r Singapore
Syrya (Sùrry) Syria
Taywa·n Taiwan
Trovan an Canker / **Avar** The Tropic of Cancer / Capricorn
Tùnisya Tunisia
Tybe·t (Tubek) Tibet
Vyetna·m Vietnam
Yemen Yemen

Ethnicities, inhabitants, languages

Standard Cornish has a system of nouns and adjectives for ethnicities, inhabitants, languages; but a full list of these words is outside the scope of a small dictionary. In conversation you can always use the name of the country to make a paraphrase. Thus, 'a Frynk' (from France) may be substituted for an adjective meaning 'French', and you can say 'den a Frynk' for 'Frenchman' and 'tavas Frynk' for 'French' (the language).