

UNIVERSITY OF WALES, ABERYSTWYTH

DEPARTMENT OF WELSH

PhD THESIS 2007

STUDIES IN THE CONSONANTAL
SYSTEM OF CORNISH

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to address a small number of highly significant, unresolved issues in the consonantal system of the Cornish language, providing an analysis of the relevant sound changes during the crucial formative periods of their development. These studies draw upon the extant records of Old, Middle and Late Cornish and employ the methods of comparative historical phonology to reconstruct the most likely sequence of sound changes based upon the variant orthography of the various documents and other remnants of the language. The comparative element of the work relies upon the reconstruction of the phonological system of the language with reference to the attested languages most closely related to it. In this study, this necessarily focuses most closely upon the other extant Brythonic languages (Welsh and Breton), with occasional reference to the Goidelic languages. This process also includes non-Celtic languages where relevant: notably Latin, English and French, from which a great number of words were borrowed into Cornish.

Specifically, the thesis comprises the following principal areas of study: (1) pre-occlusion in Middle and Late Cornish, the phenomenon by which *n*, *nn* became *dn* and by which *m*, *mm* became *bm* in certain phonetic environments; (2) the confusion of initial *b* and *m* in certain words in Middle and Late Cornish; (3) rare confusions of *s* and *th* in medial and final positions, principally in late Middle Cornish; and (4) an analysis of the progression of sound changes by which Old Cornish *d*, *t* became represented as Middle Cornish *s*, *g* and other spellings.

DECLARATION

This work has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed (candidate)

Date

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed (candidate)

Date

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give my consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed (candidate)

Date