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PHILOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

TRADITIONAL RELICS
OF THE
CORNISH LANGUAGE
IN
MOUNTS BAY IN 1875.

BY
HENRY JENNER, ESQ.,
OF THE MS. DEPARTMENT, BRITISH MUSEUM.

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TRADITIONAL RELICS
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THE CORNISH LANGUAGE IN MOUNTS BAY
IN 1875.

BY H. JENNER, Esq.

In this paper I shall not attempt to discuss the question how far Old Cornish words are still used in conversation by the people of West Cornwall. Such words are undoubtedly used; but they are not known to be Cornish by those that use them, and cannot be said to belong to a tradition of a former language, except in the sense of their having been handed down therefrom. The words with which I have now to deal are not used in conversation, but are known, by those who can repeat them, to have formed part of the old language of their ancestors. The words are but few, and almost all of them are known on paper, but they deserve to be put on record as the very last relics of the language that have been handed down by word of mouth without having been incorporated with English.

Some while ago I received information from the Rev. W. S. Lach-Szyrma, Vicar of Newlyn, Penzance, to the effect that he had found in his parish some old people who could repeat the numerals and knew a few other words of Cornish. In July, 1875, I went to West Cornwall, and, in company with Mr. Lach-Szyrma, I visited these old people, and afterwards made an expedition to the little village of Mousehole, in the parish of St. Paul, well known to students of Cornish as the home of the celebrated Mrs. Dolly Pentreath, and, in still earlier days, of John Keigwin. The result of our investigations I have now to put forward. Such as it is, it may be divided into three classes:—A. *The Numerals*. B. *Detached words*. C. *Three complete sentences*.

The names of our informants are as follows:

1. John Kelynack, of Newlyn, fisherman, and his wife, the latter of whom had learnt the words from her father, John Tremethack, who died in 1852, aged 87 (a contemporary, therefore, of Dolly Pentreath, who died in 1778).

2. Mrs. Soady, of Newlyn, a widow of past 80. She had also learnt of her father.

3. Stephen Richards, of Newlyn, Captain in the merchant service, aged about 70.

4. Benjamin Victor, of Mousehole, fisherman, aged about 70.

5. Mrs. Tregarthen, of Newlyn, aged about 60.

A. *The numerals*.—We obtained two sets of numerals, differing in a few slight points, one from the Kelynacks and one from Mrs. Soady. The best way to show these will be to tabulate them with those given by Dr. Norris in his "Sketch of Cornish Grammar," and by Pryce in his "Archæologia Cornu-Britannica," the latter being those in use in the last century.

[I have adopted Mr. A. J. Ellis's system of "Glossic" for the spelling of all the words obtained by me. See Appendix. All other words are spelt as I find them in print in the authorities cited.]

	THE KELYNACKS.	MRS. SOADY.	PRYCE. 18th century.	NORRIS. ¹ 15th century.
1	on	on'un	wonnan	un, onan
2	doo	deu	deau	deu
3	trei	traiy	try	try
4	paj	paj'u	padzher	{peswar, <i>m</i> {pedyr, <i>f</i>
5	pemp	pemp	pemp	{pypm {pym
6	weth	eth	whéh	whé
7	saa'yth	saa'yth	seith	seyth
8	eith	eith	eath	
9	noun	nou	naw	naw
10	deg	deg	deag	dek
11	ig'nak	ig'unak	ednack	
12	dau'dhak	dau'dhak	dowthack	dewthek
13	tau'dhak	tau'dhak	tarthack	
14	bizwau'dhak	bizwau'dhak	puzwarthack	
15	pemp'thak	pemp'thak	pemdhack	pymthek
16	wedh'ak	wedh'ak	huettag	
17	saa'ydhak	saa'ydhak	seitag	
18	ei'dhak	ei'dhak	eatag	
19	noun'jak	noun'jak	nawnzack	{ugens
20	ig'uns	ig'uns	iganz	iganz

¹ In the cases in which numerals are unrepresented in this column, Dr. Norris has borrowed from Pryce, having failed to find the equivalents in the Cornish dramas.

Now this set of numerals is of value in determining the pronunciation of the vowels in the last stage of the language. It would not be difficult to discover from these what Lhwyd, in his "Archæologia Britannica," meant by his elaborate system of Cornish orthography, adopted when the language was actually spoken.

I account for the survival of the numerals on this wise. Pilchards, the great branch of trade in Mounts Bay, are counted in the following manner. Take three in each hand, and say "one," another three and say "two," and so on up to twenty, by which means the "long hundred" (or one hundred and twenty) is arrived at, after which begin again. Now it is easy to see that those who learned English as a new language would find it easier to count in Cornish, and would count their fish in that tongue, and their children would hear them do so, and would do so themselves, and so for that purpose the numerals as far as twenty would survive long after the death of the rest of the language. This, of course, is merely conjectural, for I have no evidence of fish having been counted in Cornish, but the analogies of the mutilated Welsh numerals used in the Yorkshire "sheep scoring," and of the present use of Manx numerals for counting herrings in the Isle of Man by even the English-speaking Manx-men, as well as the coincidence of twenty being the limit, give an air of probability to the notion.

B. *Detached words.*—Some of these were obtained from more than one of our informants. In many of them the rules of changes mentioned at the beginning of my paper on the Cornish Language (*Transactions of the Philological Society, 1873-4, p. 165*), are noticeably carried out. I have arranged them in alphabetical order, giving to each the name of our informant.

Aaree'u (Mrs. Tregarthen).—An expression of surprise. This is the present form of the old expletive *re-varia* (by St. Mary) mentioned by Scawen (*circ. 1670*), and by Lhwyd. It is still used occasionally.

Baa'gus (Capt. Richards).—A kite or hawk. *Baa'gus*

vee'un a little kite, *baargus brou* a great kite. This word is found in the play of "Origo Mundi" under the form of *bargos*, in the account of the naming of the animals by Adam. Welsh, *barcud*, Breton, *barced* or *barged*.

Boorbun (Richards).—A wick for a lamp. The nearest analogy is the Breton *poule'hen* (*mèche*). As Cornish it is a new word.

Chil (Richards).—A lamp.

Chib'ls (Richards).—Young onions. Welsh, *sibwl*, Breton, *sibolez*, French *ciboule*, Italian, *cipolla*, Latin, *cepulla*. Not found otherwise in Cornish.

Chei (Richards).—A house. Originally *ti* or *ty*, under which form it appears in the Cottonian vocabulary and in the earlier plays. As a prefix in names of places West of Truro this word (spelt *chy*) is very common, but in the only instance in which I know of its occurring in East Cornwall (Chytan, near St. Columb), it is sounded *chee*; but the older form *ty*, which is occasionally found, is sounded (Glossic) *tu* (as in the name *Tywardreath*). Welsh, *ty*, Breton, *ti*, Irish and Scotch Gaelic, *tigh*, Manx, *thie*.

Deu (Richards, Kelynaek and Victor).—Black. Cornish vocabulary (13th century) "*duw niger*," Welsh, *du*, Breton, *du*, Irish and Scotch, *dubh*, Manx, *doo*.

Dow'u or *dowr* (Richards).—Water. This was given with *chei* as the meaning of the name *Chy-an-dowr* (a place adjoining Penzance). The vocabulary gives it *douer* and *dofer*, Welsh, *dŵr*, *dwfr*, Breton, *dour*, Old Irish, *dobhar*,¹ Old Scotch, *dobhar* (preserved in the word *dobhran*, an otter), Manx, *dubbyr* (a pond).

Frag'un (Richards).—Dirt. This was given as the meaning of the name of a field near Newlyn. The Breton *frigas*, mud, appears to be an analogous word.

Gijow'tlu (Kelynaek and Richards).—A spar used to push out the sail of a fishing boat. Also called a *vaaw'goo'ud*. A

¹ "*Bior is An agus Dobhar
Tri hamann d'uise an domhain.*"
Bior and An and Dobhar
Three names for water in the world.

The "Forus Focail" of John O'Dugan.

notched board to keep this in its place was called a *timunog'i* or *trimunog'i*. These words are not used now, and are unknown to fishermen from other coasts, but I can find no derivations for them, though my informants believed them to be Cornish words.

Krog'un (Richards).—A limpet. In the vocabulary this is found as "*crogen concha*," in which form it also occurs in the Ordinalia and in the Poem of the Passion. Lhwyd writes it *crogan*. Welsh, *cragen*, Breton, *crogan*.

Krou (Richards).—A pigsty. Lhwyd gives this as a hovel, and *crow moh* a pigsty. The word is still used in West Cornwall, usually in the form "a pig's crow," but is known to those who use it as a peculiar word. Welsh, *craw*, Breton, *craou*, Irish and Scotch, *cro*, Manx, *croe*.

Meenol'as (Kelynack).—A hearth-stone. (Richards and Victor).—A caboose. From *men*, a stone (Welsh, *maen*, Breton, *men* or *maen*), and *ollas*, hearth (Welsh, *aelwyd*, Breton, *aoled*). This word has a curious history. Kelynack gave it to us as a Cornish word that he had been told of in his youth, and gave its literal meaning; but Victor said that he remembered when a *meenol'as* was used on the fishing boats. It was, he said, a sort of box with stone and clay in the bottom, in which fishermen cooked their food before the invention or introduction of iron stoves. This accounts for the survival of the word. When first used, it was called by the name of the nearest thing to it—a hearth-stone; but since the namers spoke Cornish, they called it *meenol'as*, and, there being no English word for this ingenious makeshift, the original name stuck to it till the thing itself went out of use.¹

Min'us (Richards).—A small stone used to drive the fish, otherwise known as a *kubooli-stone*. I would conjecture that the original word was *men minys*, a little stone, and that the word *men* was dropped.

Peerth (Richards).—A well. This is a new word in Cornish, doubtless from the Latin *puteus*; Welsh, *pydew*, Breton, *puñs*, French, *puits*.

¹ This word, in the form *myn olla*, is mentioned in a paper by J. H. Nankivell, of Penzance, in the Gentleman's Magazine of September, 1865.

Pedn (Richards).—A head. Given with names of places. This is the common later form of *pen*, which is too well known a Celtic word to need discussion.

Vee'un or *vee'n* (Richards).—Little. This is a common late form of *bechan* or *bihan* (with the first mutation). The vocabulary gives it as “*bochan parvus*,” Welsh, *bach*, and *bychan*, Breton, *bihan*, Irish, Scotch and Manx, *beg*. It is still used in the expression *cheeld vee'n* or *vaiyn* = little child (a common vocative), and Mrs. Kelynack remembered a girl who used in her younger days to be called “Jenny *vee'un*.”

The following additional words were supplied by W. J. Rawlings, Esq., of Hayle, who remembered their use many years ago. They are undoubtedly Cornish, and, with the exception of the first, are quite obsolete.

Skou or *skeu*.—An elder-tree. This I have heard used myself, though the impression of the users was clearly that the tree was called a *skew*-tree because it was *crooked*. Welsh, *ysgawen*, Breton, *skaw* and *scawen*, Latin, *scobies*.

Pun'yun.—A gable. Latin, *pinnium*, (see Ducange), French, *pignon*, Welsh, *pinien*, Breton, *piñoun*.

Guldaa'yz and *diguldaa'yz*.—A harvest feast. Lhwyd gives *degl* as meaning a holiday, and derives it from *dedh goil*, the day of feast. Welsh, *dydd gwyil*, Breton, *de gouil*. The *daa'yz* is perhaps the English word “tide,” with the first initial mutation of *t* to *d*, and the usual corruption of *d* to *z*.

C. *The Sentences*.—1. (Supplied by Kelynack and Richards). *Breeul meeüt* (Kelynack *met'u*) *troo'ja bizwau'dhu pem'pez* (Kelynack *tem'pez*) *wheth'ez* (the rest is English) *all ascrowd all along the line oh*.—This used to be sung out by fishermen in hauling in the mackerel nets. My informants could not translate it, but Kelynack knew that when they came to the words “all ascrowd,” the fish were coming in too thick to count. The translation is this. *Bree'ul* is a late form of *brithel*, or as the vocabulary gives it, “*breithel mugil*,” mackerel, from *brith*, streaked or variegated (Welsh *brith*, Breton *briz*). The Welsh equivalent is *brithyll*, a trout, and the Breton *brezel*, mackerel. *Mee'ut* or *met'u* is simply the

English word *mate*. *Troo'ja*, *bizwau'dhu*, *pem'pez*, *weth'ez*, are *third*, *fourth*, *fifth*, and *sixth*. I will just tabulate these with Norris's and Pryce's Cornish, and with the Welsh and Breton.

1875.	NORRIS.	PRYCE.	WELSH.	BRETON.
<i>troo'ja</i>	{ tressa } { trega } { tryge }	trega (g soft)	trydydd	{ trived } { trede }
<i>bizwau'dhu</i>	{ peswere } { pyswere }	peswarra	pedwerydd	{ pevarved } { pevara }
<i>pem'pez</i>	pympes	pempaz	pumped	pemved
<i>weth'ez</i>	whefes	wheythas	{ chweched } { chwechfed }	c'houe'hved

Kelynack's *tem'pez* is of course a mistake. The presence of the *dh* in *bizwau'dhu* is curious. Possibly a form *peswarva* or *peswarves* once existed, and the *v* (as the *f* in the case of *weth'ez* changed into *th*) became *dh*.¹

2. *Lagen en dou'u* (Richards).—This was explained as meaning splashing backwards and forwards in the water (speaking of fish). *Lagen* is probably the same as *logan* in the name of the Logan (or rocking) stone. It is not Celtic, but seems to have been adopted into Cornish. *En* is *in*. *Dou'u* is *water* (see above).

3. *Paj'i kulaa' tuvee'unpolee'un dumoi'jonaay*.—This sentence was supplied by Benjamin Victor. His account of it was that it used to be said to an old man called Tom Becaleck, and that it meant "Tom Becaleck, lend me your stick to go to Penzance." The general meaning of this translation is probably right. I think the sentence may be divided in the following way, though two of the words are as yet unintelligible to me.

Paj'i kulaa' tu vee un (or *tu vee'un*) *polee'un du moi'j onaa'y*.

Paj'i is *pigy* or *pesy*, meaning *pray* or *please*.

kulaa I cannot translate—perhaps it means *lend*.

tu vee is *dho vy*, to me.

¹ In Mr. Nankivell's paper, before alluded to, this sentence is given, but with the cardinal numbers from one to six, instead of these ordinals.

un is *an*, the.

(or *tu vee'un* is *do vean*, thy little.)

polee'un is similar to the Welsh *polyn*, a pole or stick.

du moi:j is *dho mos*, to go; the *s* being corrupted into *j* according to the common rule.

onaay I cannot translate.

Thus the English of the sentence would be,

Please lend (?) to me the } *stick to go (onaay).*
or *Please lend thy little*

This then is the result of our investigations. It is not much, but I believe that there is more to be found. The great district of the Lizard or Meneage peninsula has not been searched yet, but there are several workers in the field, and before long we shall perhaps know for certain exactly how much tradition remains. The outlying districts of Zennor, Morvah and Towednack, in the Land's End peninsula, seem to contain no memories whatever of the old language; but that may be owing to the scattered nature of these parishes, which would have made it difficult for old people to have kept up their knowledge of Cornish by conversing with others of their own age.

Perhaps it may not be out of place here to give a short account of what now remains to be done with regard to the Cornish language before every remaining fragment of it is carefully put into print.

1. There are several proverbs, songs and sentences of late Cornish to be found in the Gwavas MSS. (Add. 28,554) in the British Museum, and in the MSS. of Dr. Borlase at Castle Hornick, Penzance. These should be printed and annotated, and such of them as have been already printed by Pryce and Davies Gilbert should be done over again, as those editions, especially the latter, are almost worthless.

2. Then a supplement should be made to the excellent Cornish Lexicon of the Rev. Robert Williams, which should contain every word or form of a word (not already recorded therein) that is to be found in the aforesaid MSS., in Andrew Borde's Cornish dialogues in his "Boke of the Introduction

to Knowledge," in Symonds' diary of the Civil War, in Richard Carew's "Survey of Cornwall," in the Drama of St. Meriasek, and even (with judicious selection) in Hals' History of Cornwall. No one could do this better than Canon Williams himself, if his valuable work in the way of editing Welsh Romances should leave him time to undertake it.

3. Lastly, perhaps a grammar should be made, based upon Dr. Norris's "Sketch of Cornish Grammar," and that in Lhwyd's "Archæologia Britannica," only bringing in *every* period of the language.

When these things are done, one at least of the world's languages will have been thoroughly worked out.

APPENDIX.

TABLE OF GLOSSIC LETTERS USED IN THE FOREGOING PAPER.

VOWELS.

A	As <i>a</i> in <i>bat</i> .
AA	As <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .
AA·Y	As the word <i>aye</i> (meaning <i>yes</i>), broadly sounded.
AI·Y	As <i>ay</i> in <i>tray</i> .
AU	As <i>aw</i> in <i>law</i> .
E	The ordinary short <i>e</i> , as in <i>men</i> .
EE	The ordinary long <i>e</i> , as <i>ee</i> in <i>seen</i> .
EE-ŭ	A fracture of the preceding, as in the word <i>ear</i> with the <i>r</i> perfectly untrilled.
EI	As <i>y</i> in <i>my</i> .
EU	As <i>ew</i> in <i>dew</i> .
I	As <i>i</i> in <i>tin</i> .
O	As <i>o</i> in <i>not</i> .
OA	As <i>o</i> in <i>smoke</i> .
OI	As <i>oy</i> in <i>boy</i> .
OO	As <i>oo</i> in <i>pool</i> .
OO-ŭ	A fracture of the preceding, as <i>oor</i> in <i>moor</i> with the <i>r</i> untrilled.
OU	As <i>ow</i> in <i>now</i> .
U	Common short <i>u</i> as in <i>until</i> , or like the second <i>e</i> in the German <i>meine</i> .

The consonants have their usual English value. The

following only call for any remark. *Ch* is always soft, as in *church*. *G* always hard, as in *go*, *get*. *J* always sounded, as in *James*. *Dh* represents *th* as in *thy*, *th* being always sounded as in *thin*.

For more minute description of the value of Glossic letters, and for their comparison with Palæotype and with Mr. Melville Bell's Visible Speech letters, see the Appendix to Mr. Elworthy's paper on the West Somerset Dialect in the *Transactions* of the Philological Society for 1875-6, Part I. pp. 218—272.

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