

Unresolved Issues for the AHG and Advisors

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The following details of the SWF agreement have not yet been fully resolved. Prior attempts at discussing and resolving them by e-mail have failed. We have therefore decided to summarise them and ask for further input and discussion from AHG members and advisors. Should it prove impossible to reach consensus on one or more of these points, the Arbiter will have to make a ruling.

In addition to describing the various outstanding issues, we have made suggestions about how these issues could be resolved, in keeping with the letter and the spirit of the SWF agreement of 15 December 2007 as we understand it. Other solutions are also possible, and we do not wish to discourage AHG members or linguistic advisors from presenting their own suggestions.

I. Vocalic Alternation

It has been agreed by the AHG that Vocalic Alternation (VA) should be part of the SWF. There are several different ideas about how best to do this. Since it has already been agreed to incorporate VA into the SWF, we do not wish to open a linguistic debate about whether or not MC scribal practice indicates a difference in the quality and quantity of stressed vowels between monosyllables and polysyllables. Because we are concerned with RC users, it makes sense to concentrate on ways VA can be indicated as they relate to current RC usage. There are several models available:

1) The UC model:

VA is lexical and for the most part restricted to stems which in KK have ⟨y⟩. While in KK ⟨y⟩ represents the phoneme /i/, this is not considered a separate phoneme in UC, UCR, or RLC. Notable exceptions are the words KK spells **gwitha**, **hwilas**, **mires**, **skrif**, **tira**, **triga** which seem to be attested with both [i:] and [ɛ] in LC.

Consequences: VA *must* be written because it cannot be predicted. The class of affected stems should be defined by the advisors and if necessary refined by a future dictionary commission. This solution would fit UC practice perfectly, RLC practice rather well and UCR practice partially, but KK practice not at all in the affected class of polysyllables in [-e-]. It would however be representative of a majority of variants (those shown in bold type in the table below). It would also result in a balance of familiar word-forms between all groups.

SWF	KK	UC	UCR	RLC
skrif {c}	[skriif]	[skrif]	[skriif]	[skrif]
skrif {c} {e?}	[skri'fa]	[skrif]	[skrifə]	[skrifə], [skrifə]
gwydh	[gwið]	[gwið]	[gweið]*	[gweið]*
gwedhen	[gwiðən]	[gweiðən]	[gweiðən]	[gweiðən]

*If ⟨y⟩ is established as an umbrella graph for long stressed [i:], [i:] (MC) and [e:] (LC), as suggested under Part IV below, this solution will fit almost all possible variant pronunciations.

2) The UCR/KS model:

VA is phonological and happens in stems which have UCR /i/, a phoneme which can equate to ⟨y⟩ or ⟨i⟩ in KK.

Consequences: VA *may* be written; note, however, that in Welsh (where there is a parallel phenomenon) ⟨y⟩ is used for both [i] and [ə] in affected words.

There are three possible ways of implementing phonological VA:

a) The Welsh model:

e.g. **gwydh ~ gwydhen, skrif ~ skrifa {c}**

In this model, the graph ⟨y⟩ is used in roots which exhibit VA, while words spelled with ⟨i⟩ generally do not show VA.

- Minimal change for KK users. However, this model may require us to respell some stems with KK ⟨i⟩ for which LC attestations show short, lax [ɛ] in polysyllables.
- UC users would learn that stressed ⟨y⟩ represents [i:] in monosyllables and [ɛ] in polysyllables (c.f. the pronunciation rules for Welsh ⟨y⟩).
- UCR and RLC users would learn that stressed ⟨y⟩ represents [e:] in monosyllables and [ɛ] in polysyllables. A class of side forms like **{skrefa, screfa}** could be added to accommodate UCR users.

b) The strict UCR/KS model:

e.g. **gwydh/gwedh ~ gwedhen, skrif ~ skrefa {c}**

- KK users would have to learn that ⟨y⟩, ⟨i⟩ always represent /ɪ/, /i/, respectively, and that stressed ⟨e⟩ in polysyllables may sometimes represent /i/, /i/ as well, since KK speakers pronounce these words as [ˈɡwɪˈðɛn], [ˈskɪrɪˈfɑ].
- No significant change for UCR users (apart from writing ⟨i⟩ instead of ⟨y⟩ in some stems).
- UC and RLC users would learn that stressed ⟨e⟩ sometimes represents [i] or [ɪ] in monosyllables and that ⟨e⟩ is always [e:], [ɛ].

If this model is chosen, it will fit UCR practice perfectly, UC and RLC practice partially, and KK practice not at all. This does not seem to be a satisfactory solution because there is no way of accounting for KK pronunciation, especially since the SWF may not make use of diacritical marks.

c) An ‘umbrella graph’ solution:

e.g. **gweidh ~ gweidhen, skrif ~ skreiffa**

The umbrella graph ⟨ei⟩ could be used in closed syllables to mean:

- [ɪ:], [i:] for KK users
- [i:] ~ [ɛ] for UC users
- [e:] ~ [ɛ] for RLC and UCR users

While this solution would provide regular pronunciation guidelines for most speakers, it would require users of *all* systems to make great changes to their spelling habits. It would also clash with the use of ⟨-ei⟩ to represent LC [əɪ], which is part of the existing SWF agreement.

*AB and BB personally recommend the Welsh model (2a) because it seems the most simple and the most inclusive of present-day variants. If that is unacceptable to the AHG (since it implies the acceptance of a number of ‘inauthentic’ spellings like **blydhen**, and since VA would not be immediately apparent from the written representation of a word), the UC model (1) is our preferred choice, as it closely resembles what was discussed during the AHG meetings.*

II. The Digraph ⟨uw⟩

The introduction of this digraph has been discussed, and two different lists of affected roots have been suggested by Keith Bailey and the KS group, respectively.

<i>Keith Bailey</i>		<i>KS</i>	
Duw	‘God’	Duw	‘God’
duwon	‘grief’	duwon	‘grief’
-		buwgh	‘cow’
guw	‘spear’	-	
guw	‘woe’	-	
pluw	‘parish’	-	
Gwennuwer	‘Guinevere’	-	
ruw	‘king’	ruw ~ ruyv ~ ruy’	‘king’

*AB and BB suggest introducing ⟨uw⟩ where the two lists are in agreement, i.e. in **Duw**, **duwon**, **ruw** and their compounds. The other cases should be considered by a future dictionary commission.*

III. The Graph ⟨z⟩

It has been agreed by the AHG that recent loans like **zebra**, **Zanzibar**, **Zimbabwe** will be spelt with initial ⟨z⟩ in the SWF. However, the SWF agreement also calls for ‘consideration of ⟨z⟩ for ⟨s⟩ in final position.’ A majority of AHG members have expressed a strong preference for conducting additional research before proceeding further, with a possibility of introducing ⟨z⟩ when the SWF and its role in education are evaluated in a few years’ time. There are many potential problems with introducing ⟨z⟩ at the present time. For example, when linguistic advisors were questioned about how ⟨z⟩ might be incorporated into the orthography of Revived Cornish, none of them responded in a way consistent with the wording of the agreement, and each presented a different proposal about where to introduce ⟨z⟩.

If the AHG decides to include ⟨z⟩ in the SWF at the present time, we recommend choosing one of the following possibilities:

1) **Revise the SWF agreement** and reserve ⟨z⟩ for the LC variants of those words which have ⟨z⟩ in *initial* position, e.g. MC **Sul** ~ LC **Zul**.

2) **Follow the letter of the SWF agreement** and introduce final ⟨z⟩ in monosyllables and their compounds, but otherwise not medially nor at the end of polysyllables. There are two ways of distributing this graph:

a) **Etymologically**, to represent the reflex of OC /-d/. Although useful from a historical linguistic perspective, this may be confusing to learners because they would learn to write **taz** ‘father’ but **nos** ‘night’, even though both words are pronounced with [-z] by many speakers Revived Cornish. To determine which words should contain ⟨z⟩ and which ⟨s⟩, users would need to know the Breton or Welsh cognates.

e.g.	taz	‘father’	plas	‘place’	from French <i>place</i>
	tazow	‘fathers’	gweles	‘see’	polysyllable
	kooz	‘wood’	poos	‘heavy’	from etymological [s]
	byz (~ bez?)	‘world’	hwans	‘wish’	from etymological [nt]
	roz	‘wheel’	nos	‘night’	from etymological [s]

b) **Phonetically**, i.e. in places where RMC has [-z]. This would affect almost all monosyllables which contain a long vowel and are currently spelt with ⟨-s⟩, with the notable exception of loanwords like **plas** and **spas**. As in the case of **cita**, etc., these contain voiceless [s] (< [ts], [tθ]) in both MC and LC. Although this [s] sound will be spelled ⟨c⟩ in the SWF when it appears in initial or medial position, we do not recommend using ⟨c⟩ in final position because **plac**, **spac** suggest [plak], [spak] instead of [plais], [spais]. We suggest keeping ⟨-s⟩ in this group of words.

e.g.	taz	‘father’	plas	‘place’	from French <i>place</i>
	tazow	‘fathers’	gweles	‘see’	polysyllable
	kooz	‘wood’	pooz	‘heavy’	
	byz (~ bez?)	‘world’	hwans	‘wish’	from etymological [nt]
	roz	‘wheel’	noz	‘night’	

Solution (1) would mean the smallest possible change for a maximal number of speakers. If it does not find universal approval among AHG members, solution (2b) would probably be easier for learners and current Cornish speakers alike, because it is in line with the practice of spoken Revived Cornish. However, more linguistically-minded users may complain that it will obscure the etymology (as, of course, does the current practice of using universal ⟨s⟩ in UC, UCR, and KK). It would also break the rules for sandhi in KK, although a majority of speakers do not follow them.

Under the circumstances, AB and BB recommend solution (1).

IV. The Distribution of ⟨i y e⟩

In order to arrive at the model of front vowel representation in stressed syllables which was discussed during the meetings, namely

- ⟨i⟩ for MC and LC [i:], [i(:)],
- ⟨e⟩ for MC and LC [e:], [ε(:)], and
- ⟨y⟩ for MC [i:], [i(:)]* ~ LC [e:], [ε(:)],

* ⟨y⟩ could also represent [ε] if the ‘Welsh model’ for VA is accepted, as discussed in Part I (2a).

it would be necessary to respell a small number of words which contain ⟨y⟩ in UC, and UCR, as well as words in KK where ⟨y⟩ represents an etymological spelling rather than an [i] that became [ε] in LC:

gwynn > **gwinn** ~ **gwidn** ‘white’; **lynn** > **linn** ~ **lidn** ‘lake’, etc.

Pro: This system would establish ⟨y⟩ as an umbrella graph in stressed syllables, and would involve only minimal change to the spelling habits of KK users. RLC users would retain the familiar graph ⟨i⟩ in a number of common words like **gwidn**. There is no risk of confusion to KK users because short ⟨i⟩ and ⟨y⟩ are pronounced identically in this environment, c.f. **dillas** ‘clothing’.

Con: Using ⟨i⟩ instead of ⟨y⟩ in these words runs contrary to the well-established practice in UC, KK, and UCR of spelling e.g. ‘white’ as **gwyn** or **gwynn**.

*AB and BB hope that this suggestion is accepted by the AHG. If not, the SWF would have to include a number of exceptions to the clear, consistent rules for ⟨i y e⟩ discussed above, since a class of words like **gwynn**, **lynn** with intrinsically short [i] would be written with ⟨y⟩ even though this [i] is not lowered to [ε] in LC. This would make the SWF somewhat unsystematic but would preserve a number of familiar*

*word-forms for MC speakers: gwynn, lynn... If both suggestions are thought unacceptable, a complete redistribution of ⟨i⟩ and ⟨y⟩ (as proposed by the designers of KS) would have to be considered, which would also necessitate the establishment of parallel forms in ⟨y⟩ and ⟨e⟩ in words like *bys* ~ *bes* ‘world’, or the introduction of more umbrella graphs like ⟨ei⟩ as discussed in Part I (2c).*

V. Further side forms which were not in the original SWF document of 15 December

A few side forms which were not in the original document agreed by the AHG at our meeting on 15 December have subsequently been suggested by AHG members, and have been added to more recent versions of that document. There has been a bit of confusion because some AHG members thought that these points (which had been discussed during the first three and a half days of the AHG meetings, before the presentation and adoption of Bernard’s compromise proposal) were implicitly subsumed under the terms of the agreement, while others thought the reverse. The additions requested were:

- ⟨-y⟩ for final unstressed ⟨-i⟩ (Andrew)
- ⟨-ell⟩ in nouns designating tools (Polin)
- optional diacritical marks to indicate unusual or unpredictable vowel quantity and quality (the KS advisors via Andrew)

Any or all of these points *can* be added to the SWF if the AHG so desires. However, we (AB and BB) would like to advise against these additions, on the following grounds:

- In Norwegian (the language from which the AHG drew the idea of ‘side forms’ in the first place), side forms are used to reflect dialectal variation, rather than aesthetic preferences or historical spellings. Adding a large number of side forms which do not correspond to a meaningful difference in pronunciation is not a linguistically desirable idea. Allowing ⟨wh⟩ in place of ⟨hw⟩ and ⟨c/k/q⟩ allography alongside universal ⟨k⟩ is just about manageable, but extending this principle further raises the spectre of a scenario where there exist several vastly different co-official forms, and perpetuating the very problem which the establishment of a SWF was meant to alleviate. Hundreds of lexical items are affected by the ⟨c/k/q/wh⟩ alternation, and we feel that adding further side forms would put too great a strain on the teachers who would be required to learn and remember all potential side-form spellings.

We therefore advise strongly against adding either ⟨-y⟩ or ⟨-ell⟩ as side forms. In our opinion, the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages, especially in the case of ⟨-ell⟩, whose introduction would effectively destroy the link between spelling and pronunciation set down in the basic rules of the SWF (specifically, the principle that double consonants should only be written in stressed syllables, since in unstressed syllables all consonants are pronounced short).

- The situation with respect to ⟨-y⟩ is somewhat different, but while it could be argued that unstressed final ⟨-y⟩ (representing [-i]) might make a good choice for the main form, the SWF agreement calls for ⟨-i⟩ to be used instead, following KK and RLC practice. We would prefer not to have to add hundreds of new side forms in ⟨-y⟩ (including the 3s. fem. of all prepositions and the 2s. pr. subj. of all verbs) to the lexicon. AB and BB therefore suggest that if the AHG decide to allow a side form in ⟨-y⟩ that this usage be limited to open unstressed final syllables, since otherwise the relationship between main forms and side forms will not be predictable, as is the case with ⟨c/k/q/wh⟩.

- There may be a case for introducing optional diacritical marks, especially in materials aimed at learners, for the small class of lexical items which do not adhere to the normal vowel quantity rules. We do not consider it desirable to use diacritics to mark vowel *quality*, however, even as a side form (e.g. by using ⟨û⟩ for [u:], as some KS advisors have suggested, since the SWF already has the graph ⟨ou⟩ to represent this sound).

Above all, we are concerned about limiting the amount of variation within the SWF to the point where it can still be considered a *single* orthographic system. The SWF already requires a number of variant forms just to accommodate the differences in grammar and lexicon which exist between speakers of UC, KK, UCR, and RLC. Any further variants should only be added for a very good (and linguistically sound) reason. Already there is a perception among some Cornish speakers that the SWF is a kind of ‘multiple choice’ Cornish which has no underlying system, and which is really three or four separate orthographies masquerading as one. We therefore feel that for the sake of the teachers, students, and writers who will work with the SWE, variation should be kept to a minimum, and that additional side forms should only be introduced where they are absolutely necessary and reflect a genuine linguistic difference between the different varieties of Revived Cornish.