

## *Cornish words in -er, -or, -our, -ar, and -yr*

Michael Everson, 2009-05-30

There are several sets of words which are problematic for the learner in terms of remembering the singular and plural. The biggest classes are those in **-er/-oryon** and **-or/-oryon**. We also have words in **-er/-ers**, in **-or/-ors**, in **-our/-ours**, in **-ar/-ars**, and in **-yr/-yrs**.

The distribution of these forms has plagued all varieties of Cornish. In George's KK *Gerylyver Meur*, we find **brosyer**, pl. **brosyoryon**, f. **brosyores**, **brosyoresow** 'embroiderer'. In Brown's KK *Grammar of Modern Cornish*, we have **brosyor** in the m. sing. In KK and UC we have **skryptor**, **skryptors** and **scryptor**, **scryptors**, respectively, but UCR has **scryptur**, **scrypturs**.

It seems to me that the pronunciation for all of these is [əɪ]. There is a possibility that **-our** isn't; George writes **traytour** ['traɪtʊr]; Prohaska's draft has both ['traɪtʊr], ['trɛ:tʊr]; Gendall writes **traitoar** ['trɛ:tɛɪ] (= ['trɛ:tʊr]?). But I find unstressed [tʊr] and [tʊɪ] to be a bit unconvincing. In the corpus the **-ours** words are **treytours**, **trompours**, **tormentours**, **doctours**, **onours**, **scryptours**, **instructours**, **brybours**, **savyour**. But then we also have **treytor** sg., **tormentors**, **doctors**, **onors**, **brybor** sg. **savyor** sg., as well as **scrypturs**, **savyur**, and **onowr**, **savyowre**. Perhaps these are the o-coloured schwa [ɛɪ], but we have **awaylers** alongside **awaylors** which argues for a more general [əɪ].

The aim of this discussion is to see whether we can simplify spelling rules so that the singular **-er** or **-or** does not leave the learner with a more or less random choice. We have many plurals in **-oryon**—but only two in **-eryon** are attested, **bosteryon** 'boasters' (UC **bosteryon**, KK & UCR **bostoryon**) and **pronteryon** 'priest' (UC, KK, UCR **pronteryon**, though **prontyryon** is more frequently attested). We have a fair number of plurals in **-ers**, somewhat fewer in **-ors**, **-ours**, a few in **-ars**, **-urs**, and **-yrs**. Other **-er** and **-or** singulars have more irregular plurals, and those are not really problematic, because they already have to be learnt as different from the main categories (**-oryon** and **-Vrs**).

The lists on the next pages are not exhaustive, and I have not checked each and every word against the corpus attestation. (Many are not in the corpus at all.) My recommendation is that we do one of two things.

A.1 Normalize all **-oryon** words to **-er**, **-oryon**, f **-ores** pl **-oresow**. Do not use **-or** for these words.

A.2 Normalize all **-ers** words by moving them to the **-or**, **-ors** class or to the **-our** pl **-ours** class.

B.1 Normalize all **-oryon** words to **-or**, pl **-oryon**, f **-ores** pl **-oresow**. Do not use **-er** for these words.

B.2 Normalize all **-ors** words by moving them to the **-er**, pl **-ers** class or to the **-our** pl **-ours** class.

## 1.A Words in **-or**, pl **-oryon**

**arethor, arethoryon** orator, lecturer  
**boxesor, boxesoryon** boxer  
**caderyor, caderyoryon** chairman  
**covathor, covathoryon** recorder (person)  
**creftor, creftoryon** craftsman  
**crior, crioryon** loudspeaker  
**desinor, desinoryon** designer  
**dettor, dettoryon** creditor  
**dydhanor, dydhanoryon** comedian  
**dyscajor (descajor), dyscadoryon (descajors)** teacher.  
**euryor, euryoryon** watch (timepiece)  
**gwyacor, gwyacoryon** dealer, merchant  
**injynor, injynoryon** engineer  
**jynor, jynoryon** mechanic  
**kelghwodhiador, kelghwodhiadoryon** encyclopaedia  
**kevarwedhor, kevarwedhoryon** guide  
**kevrivador, kevrivadoryon** computer  
**menedhor, menedhoryon** mountaineer  
**pyscador (pescador), pyscadoryon (pescadors)** fisherman  
**pystrior, pystrioryon (or pystryor, pystryoryon)** conjurer, magician  
**revador, revadoryon** oarsman  
**sedhor, sedhoryon** diver  
**soudor, soudoryon** soldier  
**stenor, stenoryon** miner (of tin)  
**tollor, tolloryon** tax collector

### 1.A.f Words in **-ores**, pl **-oresow** which have a masculine in **-or**

**desinores, desinoresow** designer  
**dydhanores, dydhanoresow** comedienne  
**dyscajores (descajores), dyscajoresow (descajoresow)** female teacher

## 1.B Words in **-er**, pl **-oryon**

**arbeniger, arbenigoryon** expert  
**begyer, begyoryon** beggar  
**caner, canoryon** singer  
**carpenter, carpentoryon** carpenter  
**clâvjier, clâvjiorion** (male) nurse  
**copier, copioryon** copier  
**corfassayer, corfassayoryon** gymnast  
**corrdonner (corrdoedner), corrdonoryon,** microwave oven  
**corrweler, corrweloryon** microscope  
**crasyer, crasyoryon** toaster  
**crowder, crowdoryon (crowders)** fiddler, violinist  
**cudhvreseler, cudhvreseloryon** guerilla  
**cùnteller, cùntelloryon** collector  
**defendyer, defendyoryon** eraser, rubber  
**deger, degoryon** bearer, porter  
**dover, dovoryon** tamer  
**dowrskier, dowrskioryon** water skier  
**dyvisyer, dyvisyoryon** screwdriver  
**dyvommer (dyvobmer), dyvomoryon** buffer (of train)  
**dywrosyer, dywrosyoryon** cyclist  
**eskyner (eskydner), eskynnoryon (eskydnoryon)** lift, elevator  
**gedyer, gedyoryon** conductor (orchestra)  
**gwarier, gwarioryon** actor  
**huder, hudoryon** magician, wizard  
**imajer, imajoryon** sculptor  
**kegyner, kegynoryon** cook  
**kendonner, kendonoryon** debtor  
**kerdher, kerdhoryon** walker  
**kiger, kigoryon** butcher  
**lappyer, lappyoryon** acrobat  
**lemmer (lebmer), lemmoryon (lebmaryon)** sharpener  
**lewyer lewyoryon** chauffeur  
**linenner (linedner), linennoryon (linednoryon)** ruler  
**lowarther, lowarthoryon (lowarthers)** gardener  
**lymner, lymnoryon** painter

**menystrer, menystroryon** manager  
**omdowler, omdowloryon** wrestler  
**peber, peboryon** baker  
**pellgowser, pellgowsoryon** telephone  
**porther, porthoryon** porter, doorkeeper  
**redyer, redyoryon** reader  
**rewler, rewloryon** manager  
**scrifer (screfer), scriforyon (screfers)**  
 writer  
**scuber, scuboryon** brush  
**scùllyer dowr, scùllyoryon dowr** sprinkler  
**senser lywyans, sensoryon lywans** easel  
**senyer, senyoryon** player  
**studhyer, studhyoryon** student  
**tendyer, tendyoryon** waiter  
**tommer (tobmer), tomoryon** radiator  
**towlenner (towledner), towlennoryon**  
**(towlednoryon)** (computer) programmer

**1.B.f** Words in **-ores**, pl **-oresow** which  
 have a masculine in **-er**

**clâvjiores, clâvjioresow** (female) nurse  
**corfassayores, corfassayoresow** (female)  
 gymnast  
**gwariores, gwarioresow** actress  
**redyores, redyoresow** reader

**1.C** Words in **-er**, pl **-yryon**

**pronter, prontyryon** priest, vicar (**prontyr**  
 and **prontereyon** are also attested Note  
**prontereth** clergy, arguing that **prontereyon**  
 is the better plural.)

*If Normalization B above is chosen, change to attested  
**prontyr, prontereyon.***

**1.C.f** Words in **-eres**, pl **-eresow**  
 (neologism!)

**pronteres, pronteresow** priest, vicar

## 2.A Words in **-or**, pl **-ors**

**auctor, auctors** author, writer  
**awaylor, awaylors** evangelist  
**color, colors** (*colorys*) colour  
**confessor, confessors** confessor  
**gwerror (gwerryor), gwerrors** warrior  
**jardenor, jardenors** gardener  
**motor, motors** motor

## 2.B Words in **-er**, pl **-ers**

**balùster, balùsters** bannister  
**befer, befers** beaver  
**consler, conslers** councillor  
**folyer, folyers** follower, successor  
**jailer, jailers** jailer  
**leder, leders** leader, guide  
**maner, maners** (*manerow*) custom, way,  
manner  
**marnar, marnars** sailor, mariner  
**mater, maters** matter, business  
**nùnumber, numbers** number  
**pômster, pômsters** quack, quack doctor  
**rewler, rewers** (*rewlysy*) ruler, regulator  
**ryver, ryvers** river  
**scouter, scouters** scooter  
**scrifer (screfer), scriforyon (screfers)**  
writer  
**spencer, spencers** dispenser  
**spicer, spicers** grocer  
**stranjer, stranjers** strangers

## 2.C Words in **-our**, pl **-ours**

**chambour, chambours** bedroom, chamber  
**errour, errors** error  
**governour, governours** governor  
**jùglour, jùglours** juggler  
**lycour, lycours** liqueur  
**myrrour, myrrours** mirror  
**servyour, servyours** tray  
**tabour, tabours** drum

**vysour, vysours** mask

## 2.D Words in **-ar**, pl **-ars**

**beggar, beggars** beggar

## 2.E Words in **-yr**, pl **-yrs**

**ordyr, ordrys (ordyrs)** holy orders uses the pl  
**ordyrs**

*At the end of this document, the words in 2.A and the words in 2.B are given again with respect to Normalization A or Normalization B is chosen.*

### 3.A Words in **-or**, pl **-orys**

**color**, (*colors*) **colorys** colour

**odor**, **odorys** odour, smell

*Where is this plural attested?*

### 3.B Words in **-our**, pl **-ourys**

**plesour**, **plesourys** pleasure

*Where is this plural attested?*

### 3.C Words in **-Cer**, pl **-Crys**

**londer**, **londrys** gutter (on roof)

**qwarter**, **qwartrys** quarter

### 3.D Words in **-Cyr**, pl **-Cryys**

**ordyr**, **ordrys** (**ordrys**) order

### 4.A Words in **-er**, pl **-eryow**

**baner**, **baneryow**, flag, banner

**bownder**, **bownderyow**, lane

**coger**, **cogeryow**, cooker (appliance)

**gorher**, **gorheryow** cover, lid

**paper**, **paperyow** paper

**rewer**, **reweryow** freezer

**skyber**, **skyberyow** barn, large room

### 4.B Words in **-ar**, pl **-eryow**

**cadar**, **caderyow**, chair, seat

*Normalization to **cadar** needed here!*

### 5.A Words in **-Cer**, pl **-Cerow**

**gover**, **goverow** stream

**lyther**, **lytherow** letter

**nyver**, **nyverow** number

**maner**, **manerow** (**maners**) custom, way,  
manner

**soper**, **soperow** supper

### 5.B Words in **-Cer**, pl **-Crow**

**croder**, **crodraw**, sieve

**dyber**, **dybrow**, saddle

**gwyver**, **gwyvrow** wire

**meter**, **metrow** metre

### 5.C Words in **-ar**, pl **-arow**

**galar**, **galarow** grief

### 5.D Words in **-Cyr**, pl **-Crow**

**cofyr**, **cofrow**, strong box

### 6.A Words in **-er**, pl **-eras**

**gwyver**, **gwyveras** squirrel

### 6.B, Words in **-Cer**, pl **-Cras**

**canker**, **kencras**, crab; cancer

**ownter**, **owntras** uncle

**tiger**, **tigras** tiger

### 6.C Words in **-Cer**, pl **-Crysy**

**mêster**, **mêstrysy** (**mêstryjy**), master

**rewler**, (**rewlers**) **rewlysy** ruler, regulator (sg  
**rewlar** also attested)

## Normalization A

A.1 Normalize all **-oryon** words to **-er**, **-oryon**, f **-ores** pl **-oresow**. Do not use **-or** for these words.

A.2 Normalize all **-ers** words by moving them to the **-or**, **-ors** class or to the **-our** pl **-ours** class.

### 2.B Words in **-er**, pl **-ers**

**balûster**, **balûsters**, bannister  
**befer**, **befers**, beaver  
**consler**, **conslers**, councillor  
**folyer**, **folyers** follower, successor  
**jailer**, **jailers** jailer  
**leder**, **leders** leader, guide  
**maner**, **maners** (*manerow*) custom, way, manner  
**marnar**, **marnars** sailor, mariner  
**mater**, **maters** matter, business  
**nûmber**, **numbers** number  
**pômster**, **pômsters** quack, quack doctor  
**rewler**, **rewlers** (*rewlysy*) ruler, regulator  
**ryver**, **ryvers** river  
**scouter**, **scouters** scooter  
**scrifer** (*screfer*), *scriforyon* (*screfers*) writer  
**spencer**, **spencers** dispenser  
**spicer**, **spicers** grocer  
**stranjer**, **stranjers** strangers

*I don't believe that changing these words to **-or** or **-our** is going to be acceptable.*

*For this reason, I believe Normalization B should apply.*

## Normalization B

B.1 Normalize all **-oryon** words to **-or**, pl **-oryon**, f **-ores** pl **-oresow**. Do not use **-er** for these words.

B.2 Normalize all **-ors** words by moving them to the **-er**, pl **-ers** class or to the **-our** pl **-ours** class.

### 2.A Words in **-or**, pl **-ors**

**auctor**, **auctors**, author, writer  
**awaylor**, **awaylors**, evangelist  
**color**, **colors** (*colorys*) colour  
**confessor**, **confessors**, confessor  
**gwerror** (*gwerryor*), **gwerrors** warrior  
**jardenor**, **jardenors** gardener  
**motor**, **motors** motor

*Move to:*

### 2.B Words in **-er**, pl **-ers**

**awayler**, **awaylers**, evangelist (attested)  
**jardener**, **jardeners** gardener (Middle English forms all in *-(i)er*)

### 2.C Words in **-our**, pl **-ours**

**auctour**, **auctours**, author, writer  
**colour**, **colours** (*colorys*) colour  
**confessour**, **confessours**, confessor (Middle English *confessour*)  
**gwerrour** (*gwerryour*), **gwerrours** warrior (Anglo-French *guerreur*, *guerroure*, *werrur*)  
**motour**, **motours** motor (Middle English *motour*)

*And make the following changes:*

## 1.B Words in **-er**, pl **-oryon**

*Move to:*

## 1.A Words in **-or**, pl **-oryon**

**arbenigor, arbenigoryon** expert  
**begyor, begyoryon** beggar  
**canor, canoryon** singer  
**carpenter, carpentoryon (carpentors)**  
carpenter  
**clâvjior, clâvjiororyon** (male) nurse  
**copior, copiororyon** copier  
**corfassayor, corfassayoryon** gymnast  
**corrdonnor (corrddodnor), corrdonoryon**  
microwave oven  
**corrwelor, corrweloryon** microscope  
**crasyor, crasyoryon** toaster  
**crowdor, crowdoryon (crowdors)** fiddler,  
violinist  
**cudhvreselor, cudhvreseloryon** guerilla  
**cùntellor, cùntelloryon** collector  
**defendyor, defendyoryon** eraser, rubber  
**degor, degoryon** bearer, porter  
**dovor, dovoryon** tamer  
**dowrskior, dowrskioryon** water skier  
**dyvisyor, dyvisyoryon** screwdriver  
**dyvommor (dyvobmor), dyvomoryon**  
buffer (of train)  
**dywrosyor, dywrosyoryon** cyclist  
**eskyynnor (eskydnor), eskyynnoryon**  
(eskydnoryon) lift, elevator  
**gedyor, gedyoryon** conductor (orchestra)  
**gwarior, gwarioryon** actor  
**hudor, hudoryon** magician, wizard  
**imajor, imajoryon** sculptor  
**kegynor, kegynoryon** cook  
**kendonor, kendonoryon** debtor  
**kerdhor, kerdhoryon** walker  
**kigor, kigoryon** butcher  
**lappyor, lappyoryon** acrobat  
**lemmor (lebmor), lemmoryon**  
(lebmoryon) sharpener  
**lewyor, lewyoryon** chauffeur

**linennor (linednor), linennoryon**  
(linednoryon) ruler  
**lowarthor, lowarthoryon (lowarthors)**  
gardener  
**lymnor, lymnoryon** painter  
**menystror, menystroryon** manager  
**omdowlor, omdowloryon** wrestler  
**pebor, peboryon** baker  
**pellgowsor, pellgowsoryon** telephone  
**porthor, porthoryon** porter, doorkeeper  
**redyor, redyoryon** reader  
**rewlor, rewloryon** manager  
**scrifor (screfor), scriforyon (screfors)**  
writer  
**scubor, scuboryon** brush  
**scùllyor dowr, scùllyoryon dowr** sprinkler  
**sensor lywyans, sensoryon lywans** easel  
**senyor, senyoryon** player  
**studhyor, studhyoryon** student  
**tendyor, tendyoryon** waiter  
**tommor (tobmor), tomoryon** radiator  
**towlennor (towlednor), towlennoryon**  
(towlednoryon) (computer) programmer