

Cornish Identity

This resource, designed by Cornwall Record Office (CRO) and funded by Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Enys Project, touches on issues of identity in Cornwall. Based on manuscript sources held at the Office, the resource is designed as a pick and mix series of activities suitable for any ages (although aimed at Key Stages 2 and 3) to aid exploration of what it means to be Cornish today, and what it meant to be Cornish in the past.

The pack is designed to support the SACRE Agreed Syllabus for RE, as well as PSHE/citizenship and SEAL themes, by encouraging reflection and helping pupils in Cornwall make sense of their own life story, culture and experiences, while encouraging tolerance and celebration of diversity and a chance to reflect on others' values. It should be a versatile and flexible resource and contains photocopiable worksheets, a DVD film, PowerPoint presentations and replicas of original documents printed on canvas.

The five activities are:

- 1) Name that place! Cornish place names and their meanings: an activity using Ordnance Survey maps and original documents to look at how the Cornish language embedded in our landscape.
- 2) The Scawen manuscript: a film tells the story of this historic manuscript. Reproduction documents help to uncover the story behind the document and pose a key question: what would you preserve today?
- 3) Cornish heraldry. For centuries – and up to the present day – people have used symbols and colours to project their identity. This activity is illustrated by Cornish coats of arms and mottos and involves students designing their own.
- 4) Flying the flag: National flags are designed with symbols and colours to represent different meanings. This module uses a suggested re-design of Cornwall's flag (held at CRO) and invites children to create their own.
- 5) Design a Language! This activity highlights how languages evolve and develop and reveals a little about the reconstruction of the Cornish language. Children are encouraged to create a word and include it in their daily communication.



**This pack was designed in association with the Cornish Language Partnership
(Keskowethyans an Taves Kernewek).**

Resource contents

All activities are colour coded for ease of use

- One DVD containing digital copies of all activities, PowerPoint presentations, templates, etc.
- Ordnance Survey maps covering Cornwall (8)
- Copies of Oliver Padel's *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place Names* (8)
- Extracts from William Borlase's *Memorandums of the Cornish Tongue* printed on canvas (8)
- Envelopes containing matching labels (8)
- DVD of film *The Scawen Manuscript*
- Extracts from William Scawen's *Antiquities Cornubrittanica* printed on canvas (4)
- Laminated copies of *Design for a New Cornish Flag* (6)
- Hard copies of worksheets

1) Name that place!

Activity contents:

- PowerPoint presentation designed to accompany the activity.
- Hard copy of the PowerPoint presentation with additional notes.
- Eight Ordnance Survey maps covering the whole of Cornwall
- Eight copies of Oliver Padel's *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place Names*
- Eight extracts from William Borlase's c1750 *Memorandums of the Cornish Tongue* (CRO reference: EN/2000) printed on canvas
- Eight worksheets (one to match each map)
- Eight place name matching tasks

* It is suggested that children work in eight groups to complete this activity.

This activity is designed to increase awareness that, in Cornwall, the Cornish language is still all around us and, even if we are not aware of it, we probably all speak it on a daily basis through the use of place names.

This activity is good for palaeography skills, map reading, research skills, group working and understanding components of languages.

Children are asked to look for and at Cornish place names and their meanings. They use the work of two different men: 18th century antiquary William Borlase, and 20-21st century historian Oliver Padel to explore the meanings of the names. Accessing the original sources introduces them to experience genuine archival research, and using modern books teaches them to cross-reference their findings. The activity also touches on the influence of English on Cornish place names and could lead to wider exploration of Cornwall's history and identity, as well as the county's relationship with England.

2) The Scawen Manuscript

Activity contents:

PowerPoint presentation to accompany the activity

Hard copy of PowerPoint with notes

5 minute film about document F/2/39, William Scawen's *Antiquities Cornubrittanica*

4 copies of different pages from the manuscript printed onto canvas

Digital scans of the manuscript which can be printed

William Scawen (pronounced "Scorn", 1600-1689) wrote this fascinating manuscript in the years leading up to his death. He lived in St Germans and was passionate about that area of the county. From a gentry family, he held key posts in the area and was instrumental in defending East Cornwall in the civil war. Although he could not speak Cornish, Scawen was determined to try and preserve the language (which had died out in the East of Cornwall by this point). Professor Mark Stoye explains some of the reasons for this in the film.

The document consists of an old Cornish language poem written in the original Cornish, in English translation and in English rhyme. However, perhaps the more interesting parts of the document are Scawen's extensive notes on the history of the Cornish language and his reasons for its decline.

In this activity students are able to have a look at high quality copies of some of his notes –they should be encouraged to read them where possible. They then watch the film and answer the questions. The key issue is what would they preserve? What do students fear dying out? Bound into this are questions of values and cultural importance, as well as issues around accepting others' views and opinions.

This activity is good for palaeography skills, an introduction to archives, introducing some of the history of the Cornish language, group discussion and debate, the opportunity to examine and make sense of their own values and accept those of others.

Suggestions

- Children could present their ideas in a visual format to make a display.
- This activity could be done in year 7 and revisited in year 11.
- A more in depth exploration could pose the question of why Scawen preserving the language was important: do they agree that it was?

3) Cornish Heraldry

Activity contents:

PowerPoint presentation to accompany the activity

Hard copy of PowerPoint presentation with notes

Photocopiable worksheets and templates

Audio files of Cornish language slogans

For centuries people have displayed their identity through signs and symbols. This activity explores the art of heraldry and how it has been used by Cornish people, as well as people in the rest of Britain.

Students have the opportunity to devise their own coat of arms, picking patterns and colours, animals and symbols that they feel represent them and their culture. They can also create a Cornish language motto which the Cornish Language Partnership will translate (if required).

Through the vocabulary used, Cornish language is embedded in the activity; however, this does not need to dominate students' final outputs.

This activity is designed, by making students aware of expressions of identity, to support them in making sense of their own life story, culture and experiences as well as tolerating and celebrating the differences in others' cultures and values, and promoting self awareness. It could also tie into a study of medieval kingship.

4) Flying the Flag

Activity contents:

PowerPoint presentation to accompany activity

Hard copy of PowerPoint presentation with notes

Photocopiable templates

Six laminated copies of document

This activity, like the Cornish heraldry one, asks students to look at national flags and their significance, including the Cornish flag.

Using a document held at CRO from Mebyon Kernow's (a Cornish political party who campaign for greater self government in Cornwall) collection, students are encouraged to question and challenge the meanings of these accepted symbols.

Students can consider whether they feel national flags are representative, and to create their own versions of their national flag.

This activity supports the SEAL requirements to help students make sense of their own life story, culture and experiences. It encourages them to be able to challenge accepted ideas and representations as well as to accept and tolerate those of other people.

5) Design A Language

Activity contents:

PowerPoint presentation

Hard copy of PowerPoint presentation with notes

This light hearted activity is designed to introduce students to concepts around the creation, development and evolution of language. Using the Cornish language and its revival as an example, the activity focuses on the influence other languages have on each other.

Students are encouraged to create their own word, either based on another language or a composite word from English (or their native tongue) and to encourage it to be spoken in their class, school or home for the next month. Do any of the words catch on?

This activity supports group working and sharing skills as well as introducing students to complex concepts around language construction. It emphasises the influence languages have on each other which is mirrored in cultural influences too. In this way it is a route to examining diversity, as well as other cultural influences on Britain. Is speaking English an essential part of being English? What does that mean if over 75% of English derives from other languages?

A Short History of the Cornish Language

Celtic Roots

Cornish is one of six Celtic languages, the others being Breton, Welsh, Manx, Irish Gaelic and Scots Gaelic. It is thought that the Celts migrated across to Britain and Ireland from mainland Europe bringing their languages. After the fifth century AD the Saxon settlement also resulted in large numbers of Celts migrating across the sea to the peninsula of Armorica, already a known trading route, founding Brittany. As a result of their geographical separation the languages began to diverge and grow independently from each other, and became the six Celtic languages that we are familiar with today.

Early Cornish

Cornish was spoken throughout Cornwall, The Isles of Scilly and to some extent in West Devon and Exeter until, following the battle of Hingston Down in 936, the Saxon king Athelstan drove the Cornish out of Exeter and declared the east bank of the river Tamar to be the border of his kingdom - a border which is still current today. No Cornish language texts survive from this period. It is not until around the time of the Norman conquest that a small number of documents start to appear, including the Bodmin Manumissions of the ninth/tenth century, giving the Cornish names of freed slaves, a Cornish-Latin vocabulary list called the *Vocabulum Cornicum*, and a short piece of advice about marriage dating from about 1200, which was found on the back of a charter.

Middle Cornish

The period from 1200 to 1600 is generally referred to as Middle Cornish, and during this time numerous religious plays were written at Glasney College (Penryn). These plays were intended to educate the Cornish people about the stories of the Bible and the saints' lives in an accessible way. They were performed in open air rounds known as *plen-an-gwari* (*playing places*), some of which can still be found in locations around Cornwall, the best examples being St Just in Penwith and Perran Round near Perranporth. Of the surviving plays, the largest is a trilogy dating from the mid fourteenth century called the *Ordinalia*, which comprises *Origo Mundi*, (the Origin of the World), *Passio Christi* (the Passion of Christ) and *Resurrexio Domini* (the Resurrection of Our Lord).

Reformation and Rebellion

The Reformation of the English church was a major event that shaped the future of the Cornish language. The Cornish sent a letter to King Edward VI, declaring that "We, the Cornyshe men, whereof certain of us understande no Englyshe, utterly refuse thy newe Service." They were dissatisfied with the response they received and so in 1549 a rising of 6,000 people marched on Exeter. A number of battles ensued across Devon, in which an estimated 5,000 Cornish were killed. This was a devastating blow to the Cornish language, given the consequent depletion of the population of Cornwall. Before this Prayer Book Rebellion, it is thought that Cornwall had been largely Cornish speaking up as far as Bodmin, with a few

bilingual pockets further east. Less than half a century later, at the start of the seventeenth century, writers such as Richard Carew and John Norden attested that Cornish was spoken only west of Truro, and that even those speakers knew English as well as their native Cornish.

Late Cornish

During the next two centuries, Cornish developed into the phase known as Late Cornish. Cheston Marchant of Gwithian, reputed to be the last monoglot Cornish speaker, died in 1665; meanwhile a group of bilingual scholars in the Penzance area, led by John Keigwin of Mousehole, gathered together to try to preserve their language. They did this mainly by translating parts of the Bible, hoping to revive popular interest in the language through religion. Secular prose appears in this period too, and perhaps the most famous Cornish language folk tale, *Jooan Chei a Horr*, was written circa 1667 by Nicholas Boson of Newlyn. At the start of the eighteenth century the eminent Welsh scholar, Edward Lhuyd, came to Cornwall to conduct research on the language, and as a result we have a valuable account of Cornish as it was actually spoken by a contemporary observer. The final written piece of from this period is a letter by William Bodiner, dated 1776.

Revival

By the nineteenth century, Cornish had died as a spoken community language. During this century there was a resurgence of interest in Celtic culture which meant that Cornish attracted academic attention. The plays of the middle Cornish period were re-visited, and academics published them with commentaries and translations. It was not until early in the twentieth century, however, that an attempt was made to revive the language.

In 1904 Henry Jenner published his *Handbook of the Cornish Language*, based on the texts available to him at the British Museum. This kick-started the revival of Cornish as a living, spoken language, and Jenner's work was picked up and continued by, among others, Robert Morton Nance, who researched and gathered together more fragments of the language, finally developing a regularised spelling system based on the medieval texts, known as Unified Cornish. The revival continued to grow throughout the early twentieth century. The 1980s and early 1990s saw a time of review and reconsideration about the theory of reviving a language, plus additional research on the texts. This resulted in the proposal of different approaches using different sources.

The Future

Despite the differences in focus and academic approach all were all mutually intelligible. It was decided, however, that in order to progress the language to its fullest potential, a standard written form should be agreed upon for use in public life and schools. The process for deciding upon the standard written form drew upon the knowledge of a wide range of Cornish users as well as the experience and advice of a Commission composed of eminent language experts with knowledge of similar situations elsewhere. The process resulted in the adoption of a Standard Written Form which draws from all of the systems used by speakers and is now in use in formal education and public life.