

DIACHRONIC LAYERING

The lexicon of Cornish has been enriched in a process of accretion over many centuries. We can usefully identify four layers of vocabulary. Each makes its own valuable contribution to the expressiveness of the modern language. Here are a few examples. Bold type indicates Kernowek Standard (KS) spelling. Cornish words in square brackets are proposals (Unified Cornish / Standard Written Form) that have proved controversial.

LAYER ONE
Originates in
Proto-Celtic

chy < *tig-
cf E protect
daras < *dor-
cf E door
ebal < *ek^w-
cf E equestrian
leuv < *lam-
cf E palm
margh < *mark-
cf E mare (Mandarin mǎ)
rag < *rak
cf E for

hun < *sopn-
cf E insomnia

awan < *abon-
hùmbrank (hembrank)
< *sem-bronk-
cf E same and bring

LAYER TWO
Originates in
Brythonic

cùsk < L quiescere

côwsel (kêwsel)
eglos < L ecclesia
fenester < L fenestra
gweder < L vitrum
cader < L cathedra
moos < L mensa
[stevel] *p*/? < L stabellum

LAYER THREE
Originates in
historical Cornish

ryver < E river
lêdya < E lead

talkya < E talk

chair < E chair
bord < E board
rom < E room
cortes < OF corteis
hanaf < OF hanap

LAYER FOUR
Originates in
revived Cornish

[avon] < W afon

kescôwsel (keskêwsel)

[stevel] *s* < W (y)stafell

argraf < W argraff
hebask < B habask

KEY

B	Breton	OF	Old French
<i>cf</i>	compare	<i>pl</i>	plural
E	English	<i>s</i>	singular
L	Latin	W	Welsh
*	Indicates proto-Celtic form reconstructed by techniques of historical linguistics		