

## DIACRITICAL MARKS IN STANDARD CORNISH (KS) SPELLING

### Cornish **merkys diacrytycal**

#### Grave (Cornish **aken dhieskynus**)

The grave <`> is used:-

- (1) On the letter <u> to indicate that the sound is [u].
- (2) On the letters <a> <e> <o> to indicate that the vowel is short when it would be taken as long if unmarked – that is, the grave marks short vowels in monosyllabic words that are either open syllables or closed syllables ending (according to their spelling) in a voiced consonant.

The short vowel will usually be reduced to schwa by the operation of the Prosodic Shift: e.g. **dùrda dhe why, ès, gwàn, màn, pàn, pòr, wàr, wòn**. The grave is employed *economically* for proclitics – that is, a proclitic is only marked with a grave when it belongs to a homonym pair: hence e.g. unmarked **heb, rag**.

Specific KS spelling rules govern the choice in different environments of the letters <i> and <y> for long and short vowels, so these are never marked with the grave.

#### Circumflex (Cornish **aken grobm** or colloquially **to bian**)

The circumflex <^> is used:-

- (1) On the letter <u> to indicate that the sound is [u:] or [ju:] (the latter only in loan-words from English that have this sound).
- (2) On the letters <a> <e> <i> <o> <u> to indicate that a vowel is long when it would be taken as short if unmarked – that is, the circumflex marks long vowels in words of more than one syllable, save where length is already marked by the dieresis.  
*Note 1* A specific KS spelling rule governs the use of the letter <y> for long vowels, so this letter is never marked with the circumflex.
- (3) On the letter <a> in a closed monosyllable ending in a fricative, sibilant or nasal where some pronounce as [ɒ]: e.g. **clâv** ‘sick’, **brâs** ‘big’, **cân** ‘song’.
- (4) On the vowel of a monosyllabic word which resists the Prosodic Shift, in order to distinguish it from a homonym that submits: e.g. **dâ** ‘good’ distinguished from **da** ‘to’ and **da** ‘your’, **ês** ‘ease’ distinguished from **es** ‘you were’, **pê** ‘pay’ distinguished from **pe** ‘might be’.
- (5) To mark the interchangeable pair **êw** and **ôw** – thus, **ew** and **ow** without the circumflex are also (implicitly) marked as *not* interchangeable.
- (6) In the digraph **yê** at the beginning of a word in those cases where the y is often omitted in colloquial speech.

From the above you can see that it would be misleading to consider the circumflex as *only* a marker of vowel length. In the instances described at (5) and (6) the marked vowel is short.

#### Dieresis (Cornish **aken dhewboynt**)

The dieresis <¨> is used to mark the interchangeable pair **ÿs** and **ës**. It is *not* used on the vowel <u> to indicate that the sound is [y:] or [y].

## Hyphen (Cornish **nos jùnya**)

The hyphen <-> is used:

- (1) To attach the deictic particles **ma** and **na** to the last item of a nominal string: e.g. **an den-ma** 'this man', **an venyn deg-na** 'that beautiful woman'.
- (2) To separate two elements of a compound word when the first element is an adjective of more than one syllable: e.g. **hager-gowas** 'downpour', **tebel-el** 'devil'.
- (3) *Optionally* to separate two elements of a compound word when the first element is a monosyllabic adjective: e.g. **drogober** or **drog-ober** 'crime' – note that a few adjectives precede their noun as separate words *without* forming a compound (e.g. **ewn**, **lel**).
- (4) *Optionally and always very sparingly* to demarcate a prefix: e.g. **dasseny** or **das-seny** 'echo'.
- (5) *Optionally and always very sparingly* for fixed phrases: e.g. **igam ogam** or **igam-ogam** 'zigzag'.

The hyphen may also be used in handwriting or old-style typewriting, printing etc to break any long word when there is insufficient space to write the whole of it at the end of a line.

## Apostrophe (Cornish **collverk**)

The apostrophe <'> is used:

- (1) To indicate that two adjacent letters are to be read not as a digraph but individually, especially in the case of an ending or suffix: e.g. **bold'ha** 'bolder', **cot'he** 'shorten'.
- (2) To link an infixed pronoun to the preceding particle.
- (3) To link either the clipped form of the definite article (**n**) or the appropriate form of a possessive pronoun to any of preceding **a** 'from, of', **dhe** 'to', **ha** 'with, and', **i** (for **in**) 'in', **na** 'nor', **re** 'by' (note **dh'agan** etc but **re'gan** etc by convention).
- (4) To link the optionally clipped form of the definite article (**n**) to **yma**.
- (5) *Optionally* to indicate the loss of a sound (vowel or consonant) in colloquial style, especially the loss of a particle: e.g. **me 'yll** 'I can' (but also **me yll**), **'ma** 'there is' (but also **ma**) – and no apostrophe is used when the loss has become standardized, so **mytern**.

## Acute (Cornish **aken eskynus**)

The acute <'> is not used as a regular part of KS spelling. It therefore remains available for special purposes: e.g. to mark ictus or stress when commenting on poetry.