

## THE SOUNDS OF CORNISH (base 1350-1800)

We have evidence<sup>1</sup> for 69<sup>2</sup> distinguishable sounds.

*Symbols according to the International Phonetic Alphabet*

### Pure vowel sounds (24)

| DKSG <sup>3</sup> | Symbol            | IPA No. | Unicode | Descriptive Name                      | KS Spelling                  | Example                               |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1                 | [i:]              | 301     | U+0069  | Long close front unrounded vowel      | <b>i, î, u, y, ÿ</b>         | mis, cîder, tus, chy, prÿs            |
| 2                 | [i]               | 301     | U+0069  | Short close front unrounded vowel     | <b>i, î</b>                  | lies, lînednor                        |
| 3                 | [e:] <sup>4</sup> | 302     | U+0065  | Long close-mid front unrounded vowel  | <b>a, â, ai, e, ê, ë, eu</b> | pras, prais, ker, les, êsy, bës, leur |
| 4                 | [e]               | 302     | U+0065  | Short close-mid front unrounded vowel | <b>e</b>                     | eos, cudhlen                          |
| 5                 | [ɛ]               | 303     | U+025B  | Short open-mid front unrounded vowel  | <b>e, è, ê, eu</b>           | pell, yêhes, deuthons                 |
| 6                 | [ɔ] <sup>5</sup>  | 306     | U+0254  | Short open-mid back rounded vowel     | <b>o, ò</b>                  | cot, gròn                             |
| 7                 | [o:] <sup>6</sup> | 307     | U+006F  | Long close-mid back rounded vowel     | <b>o, ô, oo</b>              | noth, hôk, gôy, coos                  |
| 8                 | [o]               | 307     | U+006F  | Short close-mid back rounded vowel    | <b>o</b>                     | loas, minfron                         |
| 9                 | [u:]              | 308     | U+0075  | Long close back rounded vowel         | <b>oo, ou, u, û</b>          | coos, toul, a-ugh, gûn                |
| 10                | [u]               | 308     | U+0075  | Short close back rounded vowel        | <b>ow, ù</b>                 | Kernowek, perpetual                   |
| 11                | [y:]              | 309     | U+0079  | Long close front rounded vowel        | <b>u</b>                     | lus                                   |

|    |                  |     |        |                                                                                                                 |                         |                                                       |
|----|------------------|-----|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 12 | [y]              | 309 | U+0079 | Short close front rounded vowel                                                                                 | <b>u</b>                | truan                                                 |
| 13 | [ø:]             | 310 | U+00F8 | Long close-mid front rounded vowel<br><i>This vowel is often realized as intermediate between [ø:] and [e:]</i> | <b>eu</b>               | leur                                                  |
| 14 | [œ]              | 311 | U+0153 | Short open-mid front rounded vowel<br><i>This vowel is often realized as intermediate between [œ] and [ɛ]</i>   | <b>eu</b>               | deuthons                                              |
| 15 | [ɔ:]             | 313 | U+0252 | Long open back rounded vowel                                                                                    | <b>â or au</b>          | brâs, dauns                                           |
| 16 | [ɒ]              | 313 | U+0252 | Short open back rounded vowel                                                                                   | <b>au</b>               | dauncya                                               |
| 17 | [ɪ]              | 317 | U+0268 | Short close central unrounded vowel                                                                             | <b>i, y</b>             | isella, gwelys                                        |
| 18 | [ʊ]              | 318 | U+0289 | Short close central rounded vowel                                                                               | <b>ou, u, ù</b>         | auctour, uhella, pùb                                  |
| 19 | [ɪ]              | 319 | U+026A | Short near-close front unrounded vowel                                                                          | <b>i, u, y</b>          | isel, usons, warbydn                                  |
| 20 | [ʏ]              | 320 | U+028F | Short near-close near-front rounded vowel                                                                       | <b>u</b>                | ancombrus, usons                                      |
| 21 | [ʊ]              | 321 | U+028A | Short near-close back rounded vowel                                                                             | <b>ou, u, ù</b>         | auctour, uhel, tùchya                                 |
| 22 | [ə] <sup>7</sup> | 322 | U+0259 | Short mid central vowel (schwa)                                                                                 | <b>a, à, e, è, o, y</b> | an, pàn, on <u>e</u> n, berr, mès, es <u>o</u> n, yma |
| 23 | [æ:]             | 325 | U+00E6 | Long near-open front unrounded vowel                                                                            | <b>a, â</b>             | pras, dâ, brâssa                                      |
| 24 | [æ]              | 325 | U+00E6 | Short near-open front unrounded vowel                                                                           | <b>a, à</b>             | <u>a</u> val, màn                                     |

## Diphthongs (8)

| DKSG | Symbol            | First element                        | Second element                         | KS Spelling          | Example                   |
|------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 25   | [iʊ]              | Short close front unrounded vowel    | Short near-close back rounded vowel    | <b>u, ew, uw, yw</b> | tu, dew, pluw, dyw        |
| 26   | [ɛʊ]              | Short open-mid front unrounded vowel | Short near-close back rounded vowel    | <b>ew, êw, ôw</b>    | bew, bêwnans, dôwys       |
| 27   | [aɪ] <sup>8</sup> | Short open front unrounded vowel     | Short near-close front unrounded vowel | <b>ay</b>            | may                       |
| 28   | [aʊ] <sup>8</sup> | Short open front unrounded vowel     | Short near-close back rounded vowel    | <b>aw, ow</b>        | maw, Sowsnek <sup>9</sup> |
| 29   | [oʊ]              | Short open-mid back rounded vowel    | Short near-close back rounded vowel    | <b>ow, êw, ôw</b>    | pow, bêwnans, dôwys       |
| 30   | [oɪ]              | Short close-mid back rounded vowel   | Short near-close front unrounded vowel | <b>oy</b>            | moy                       |
| 31   | [uɪ]              | Short close back rounded vowel       | Short near-close front unrounded vowel | <b>oy, ùy</b>        | moy / mùy <sup>10</sup>   |
| 32   | [əɪ]              | Short mid central vowel (schwa)      | Short near-close front unrounded vowel | <b>y, ey</b>         | chy, seyth                |

## Single consonant sounds (34)

| DKSG | Symbol            | IPA No. | Unicode | Descriptive Name                      | KS Spelling            | Example                                       |
|------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 33   | [p]               | 101     | U+0070  | Voiceless bilabial stop               | <b>p, pp</b>           | aspia, cappa                                  |
| 34   | [b]               | 102     | U+0062  | Voiced bilabial stop                  | <b>b, bb</b>           | bobba                                         |
| 35   | [t]               | 103     | U+0074  | Voiceless alveolar stop               | <b>t, tt</b>           | stordy, otta                                  |
| 36   | [d]               | 104     | U+0064  | Voiced alveolar stop                  | <b>d, dd</b>           | adran, addya                                  |
| 37   | [k]               | 109     | U+006B  | Voiceless velar stop                  | <b>c, ck, k, q, qw</b> | olcan, lacka, park, qweth, qwra <sup>11</sup> |
| 38   | [m]               | 114     | U+006D  | Voiced bilabial nasal                 | <b>bm, m, mm</b>       | mabm, mos, lamm                               |
| 39   | [ <sup>b</sup> m] | 114     | U+006D  | Pre-occluded voiced bilabial nasal    | <b>bm, mm</b>          | mabm, lamm                                    |
| 40   | [g]               | 110     | U+0261  | Voiced velar stop                     | <b>g, gg, gw</b>       | golow, braggya, gwra <sup>12</sup>            |
| 41   | [n]               | 116     | U+006E  | Voiced alveolar nasal                 | <b>dn, n, nn</b>       | pedn, nos, splann                             |
| 42   | [ <sup>d</sup> n] | 116     | U+006E  | Pre-occluded voiced alveolar nasal    | <b>dn, nn</b>          | pedn, splann                                  |
| 43   | [ŋ]               | 116     | U+006E  | Voiceless alveolar nasal              | <b>n, nh</b>           | scona, canhasow                               |
| 44   | [ <sup>d</sup> ŋ] | 116     | U+006E  | Pre-occluded voiceless alveolar nasal | <b>dn, dnh, nn</b>     | gwednal, byhadnha, splanna                    |
| 45   | [ŋ]               | 119     | U+014B  | Voiced velar nasal                    | <b>n, ng</b>           | angùs, mong                                   |
| 46   | [f]               | 128     | U+0066  | Voiceless labiodental fricative       | <b>f, ff</b>           | flour, daffar                                 |
| 47   | [v]               | 129     | U+0076  | Voiced labiodental fricative          | <b>f, v, vv</b>        | an fos, cov, scovva                           |

|    |                   |     |        |                                                   |                                   |                                                                                                                           |
|----|-------------------|-----|--------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 48 | [θ]               | 130 | U+03B8 | Voiceless dental non-sibilant fricative           | <b>th</b>                         | yth                                                                                                                       |
| 49 | [ð]               | 131 | U+00F0 | Voiced dental non-sibilant fricative              | <b>dh</b>                         | codha                                                                                                                     |
| 50 | [s]               | 132 | U+0073 | Voiceless alveolar sibilant fricative             | <b>c, s, sc,<br/>ss</b>           | ac <u>c</u> ceptya, sawya, ascendya,<br>fâss                                                                              |
| 51 | [z]               | 133 | U+007A | Voiced alveolar sibilant fricative                | <b>s, z</b>                       | esof, syp, zyp <sup>12</sup>                                                                                              |
| 52 | [ʒ]               | 133 | U+007A | Partially devoiced alveolar sibilant fricative    | <b>s</b>                          | gweres <sup>13</sup>                                                                                                      |
| 53 | [ʃ]               | 134 | U+0283 | Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative               | <b>cy, scy, sh,<br/>ssy, sy</b>   | tradycyon, conscyans, shâp,<br>passyon, fycsyon, sy                                                                       |
| 54 | [x]               | 140 | U+0078 | Voiceless velar fricative                         | <b>gh</b>                         | dyghtya                                                                                                                   |
| 55 | [h]               | 146 | U+0068 | Voiceless glottal fricative                       | <b>gh, h, th</b>                  | margh, marhogeth, marth                                                                                                   |
| 56 | [ʰ]               | 146 | U+0068 | Voiceless glottal fricative<br>(added aspiration) | <b>h, -</b>                       | <u>p</u> elha, s <u>o</u> nha, <u>k</u> erha, why,<br><u>c</u> lock, <u>t</u> ap, co <u>t</u> , <u>u</u> hel, <u>r</u> ag |
| 57 | [ɭ]               | 152 | U+027B | Voiced retroflex approximant                      | <b>r, rr, rdh, s<sup>14</sup></b> | clor, carr, esof (erof), kerdhes                                                                                          |
| 58 | [ɻ]               | 152 | U+027B | Voiceless retroflex approximant                   | <b>r, rgh, rth</b>                | kefrës, margh, marth                                                                                                      |
| 59 | [j]               | 153 | U+006A | Voiced palatal approximant                        | <b>y</b>                          | yagh                                                                                                                      |
| 60 | [ɨ]               | 153 | U+006A | Voiced palatal approximant (reduced)              | <b>y, -</b>                       | ponya, <u>û</u> sy, <u>u</u> hel                                                                                          |
| 61 | [l] <sup>15</sup> | 155 | U+006C | Voiced alveolar lateral approximant               | <b>l, ll</b>                      | lo, dell                                                                                                                  |
| 62 | [ɭ] <sup>15</sup> | 156 | U+026D | Voiceless alveolar lateral approximant            | <b>l, ll</b>                      | dyflas, pelha, gwella                                                                                                     |
| 63 | [ʍ]               | 169 | U+028D | Voiceless labialized velar approximant            | <b>wh</b>                         | whe                                                                                                                       |

|    |      |     |        |                                                     |           |            |
|----|------|-----|--------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 64 | [ʍ]  | 169 | U+028D | Voiceless labialized velar approximant<br>(reduced) | <b>wh</b> | whra       |
| 65 | [w]  | 170 | U+0077 | Voiced labialized velar approximant                 | <b>w</b>  | wosa       |
| 66 | [w̥] | 170 | U+0077 | Voiced labialized velar approximant<br>(reduced)    | <b>w</b>  | gwil, gwra |

### Double sounds that are treated as single consonants (3)

67 [dʒ]<sup>16</sup>

68 [tʃ]

69 [ks]

**j, s**

neyja, usons<sup>17</sup>

**ch, t**

chauns, te<sup>18</sup>

**x**

box

## Notes

- 1 Specifically Cornish evidence. Revived traditional Cornish does not rely on purely comparative evidence from Breton or Welsh.
- 2 In terms of phonetics. Not all of these sounds are phonemes. And it is likely that any single speaker employed only a partial set. Nonetheless we must acknowledge that the sound inventory of Cornish is a large one, attributable to suppletive uptake of sounds from English.
- 3 These numbers have no official status: they are purely for teaching convenience.
- 4 Evidence for [ɛ:] instead of [e:] is weak.
- 5 The [ɔ] has very little rounding.
- 6 Evidence for [ɔ:] instead of [o:] is weak.
- 7 Some speakers may substitute [ʌ], but there is no consistent distribution.
- 8 The first element [a] is IPA symbol 304, Unicode U+0061.
- 9 This is an exclusively late pronunciation.
- 10 These are alternative spellings.
- 11 When w is treated as silent.
- 12 **z** is written as an alternative to **s** only at the beginning of a word (including a compound element).
- 13 This sound originates in the plural endings -s, -ys under English influence. Its application to final s of other unstressed syllables is by levelling.
- 14 Where [z] is rhotacized, **s** may alternatively be written **r**.
- 15 [ɪ] and [ɪ̞] are 'dark' in the same environments that velarize [ɪ] in standard British English.
- 16 The second element [ʒ] is IPA symbol 135, Unicode U+0292, the voiced palato-alveolar fricative.
- 17 Speakers who pronounce [dʒ] often write **j** rather than **s** in relevant words.
- 18 When [tʰ] is palatalized in this pronoun, **t** may alternatively be written **ch**.