Skians 2026

Microsoft Teams
Saturday 7 November 2026

Programme

10.00 **Room open**

10.10–10.15 **Welcome**

10.15–10.40 **Rev. Colin Short**

Marianism in five major Middle Cornish texts.

10.40–11.05 **Dr Ken George**

The development of final unstressed /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ in Cornish.

11.05–11.20 **Break**

11.20–11.45 **Dr Andrew Breeze**

Cornwall's Place-names: Language, History, Archaeology.

11.45–12.10 **Dr Ffion Mair Jones**

Cornish Language Manuscripts in the National Library of Wales and during the 1777–1904 period.

12.10–12.20 **Peter Jenkin**

Periphrastic verb use in Cornish.

12.20–12.30 **Plenary session**

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Abstracts

Rev. Colin Short, BSc (Wales), BD (Manchester), an Bibel Kristyon

Marianism in five major Middle Cornish texts

This paper is a first step in identifying in the Cornish sources a form of spiritual devotion popular in the religion of ordinary people in the pre-Reformation era. Marianism in the pre-Reformation era is considered as characterised in Nicholas Orme's Going to Church in Medieval England (2021). The study has developed from first having noted Marianism in Bewnans Meryasek. Thus he considers its occurrence in the plays of the Ordinalia, in Passhyon agan Arloedh and in Bewnans Meryasek.

Its presence in each of the texts is outlined and then characterised in three ways in which it appears.

Then he speculates on what these patterns might imply in Cornish pre-Reformation theology and devotion.

Dr Ken George, Cornish Language Board

The development of final unstressed /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ in Cornish

In early Middle Cornish, final unstressed /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ were usually spelled and respectively. They were frequently rhymed with words containing stressed /ɛ/ and /ɔ/, suggesting that their pronunciations were [ɛ] and [ɔ]. In later Middle Cornish, they were spelled , as was unstressed /a/. They were then often rhymed with each other and with stressed /a/. All of this suggests that final unstressed /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ fell together with /a/; that there were two sound-changes, [-ɛ] > [-a] and [-ɔ] > [a]. The first change took place before the second. Evidence is presented from rhymes in Middle Cornish verse, and from spellings in Late Cornish, which supports this view, and contradicts Bruch's idea that the change in spelling e > a was purely orthographic and represented schwa. The implications for dealing with revived Late Cornish are examined.

Andrew Breeze, University of Navarre, Pamplona

CORNWALL'S PLACE-NAMES: LANGUAGE, HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY

Publications in *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* on Cornwall's toponyms continue to break ground both for the region's history and for Old and Middle Cornish. That can be shown from such forms as BOJEWYAN, DIN DRAITHOU (= Trevelgue), DOWNDERRY, FAL, GOLBERDON, KERRIS, HOT POINT, LANHERNE, LANISLEY, LANSALLOS, LYNHER, MORVAL, RELUBBUS, SCILLY, SEATON, SMITH SOUND, or VOLIBA (= Warbstow Bury). Although described in *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* and elsewhere as 'obscure', all can yet be given clear derivations, whether from Cornish, British, Middle English, Latin, or even Greek.

Dr Ffion Mair Jones, Research Fellow, University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies.

In 1939, William Llewellyn Davies, chief librarian, prepared an account of the National Library of Wales [NLW]'s Cornish Manuscripts for a Celtic Congress at Truro (cancelled at the outbreak of war). Davies's sixteen items numbered plays, poems and stories, vocabularies and dictionaries, translations, and testimony on spoken Cornish. 1939 was also the anniversary of the death of Cornish antiquary Henry Jenner, whose Handbook of the Cornish Language (1904) has been considered as the beginning of the Cornish revival. Expansions to NLW's Cornish manuscripts corroborate Kensa Broadhurst's findings (2023), providing evidence that, although critically endangered at the death of its supposed last speaker (1777), Cornish survived until the appearance of Jenner's Handbook, displaying a vitality through 18C–19C Welsh and Cornish writers' correspondence, poetry and comparative word lists. This was sustained into the 20C and beyond, with original works (new and rediscovered) complementing learned interest in the language. The paper gives an overview of the NLW material before focusing on the 1777–1904 period, where the manuscripts display lexicographical and other interests held by figures including Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg), Robert Williams, and Frederick Jago.

Peter Jenkin

Periphrastic verb use in Cornish

Auxiliary verbs were and are a noted fundamental of Cornish language. Further, although the use of certain verbs to construct a periphrastic predicate is well known, quantification of this, in the middle Cornish corpus, has apparently not hitherto been published. This will be done, and some sociolinguistic and morphosyntactic environments of verbs thus used (gul, bos and dos) are also to be briefly explored. The results may help shed light on a feature of Cornish, attested from the medieval Charter Fragment to William Bodinar's 1776 letter, and perhaps both before and after.