

ASSIBILATION AND PALATALIZATION IN CORNISH: THE EVIDENCE OF PLACE-NAMES

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Assibilation and palatalization of Old Cornish /d/

Phonetic environment	Cognates				
	<i>MidC</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Breton</i>	<i>Welsh</i>
finally, stressed	<i>tas</i>	[z]	father	<i>tad</i>	<i>tad</i>
finally, unstressed	<i>bagas</i>	[s]	group	<i>bagad</i>	<i>bagad</i>
medially before high front vowels	<i>pysy</i> <i>pygy</i>	[z] [dʒ]	to hold	<i>sentiñ</i>	----
medially otherwise	<i>crysaf</i>	[z]	I believe	<i>kentañ</i>	<i>cyntaf</i>

Assibilation and palatalization of Old Cornish /nt, lt/

Phonetic environment	Cognates				
	<i>MidC</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Breton</i>	<i>Welsh</i>
finally, stressed	<i>sans</i>	[s]	<i>saint</i>	<i>sant</i>	<i>sant</i>
finally, unstressed	<i>olifans</i>	[s]	<i>elephant</i>	<i>olifant</i>	<i>oliffant</i>
medially before high front vowels	<i>synsy</i> <i>syngy</i>	[z] [dʒ]	<i>to hold</i>	<i>sentiñ</i>	----
medially otherwise	<i>kynsa</i>	[z]	<i>first</i>	<i>kentañ</i>	<i>cyntaf</i>

Date of final assibilation

In texts

- *nt* > *ns* earlier than *-d* > *-s*
- a text of c.1153 has the word *ugens*

In place-names

- the earliest cases are c.1175,
- but median dates are as follows:

<i>-nt</i> > <i>-ns</i>	1233	<i>-coyt</i> > <i>-coys</i>	1275
<i>Rid-</i> > <i>Rys-</i>	1250	<i>Cut-</i> > <i>Cos-</i>	1283
<i>Bod-</i> > <i>Bos-</i>	1257		
<i>Nant-</i> > <i>Nans-</i> , <i>Pont-</i> > <i>Pons-</i>	1273		

Date of medial change

In texts

- In Voc.C., /-d-/ remained as <d>, but /t/ in /nt, lt/ was assibilated to <s> in 6/10 cases.

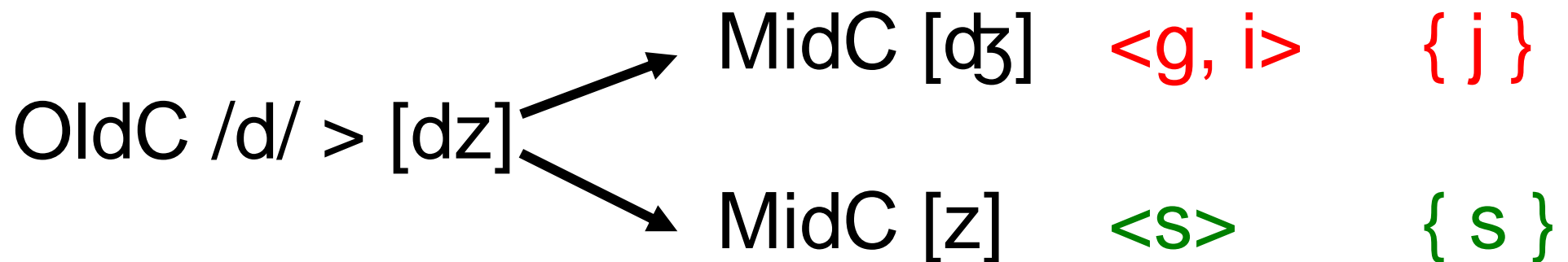
In place-names

- the median date of *-d- > -s- or -j-* is 1334, clearly after the change finally, as is shown by the place-names

<i>Bos</i> kedek	1278	<i>Bos</i> kadek	1302
<i>Coys</i> madoc	1314	<i>Res</i> caradec	1249

Previous work on palatalization

Williams (1990) suggested the development



He also showed that some texts favoured {s}-type spellings, and others favoured {j}-type.

Assibilation and palatalization in the texts: *krysi* 'to believe'

OM.0233 thyso ny vennaf cressy

PC.2963 ny a wra ynno crygy

RD.1423 fettel allaf vy crygy

BM.0971 in crist yma ov cressy

TH01v21 why a res vnderstondia ha cressy

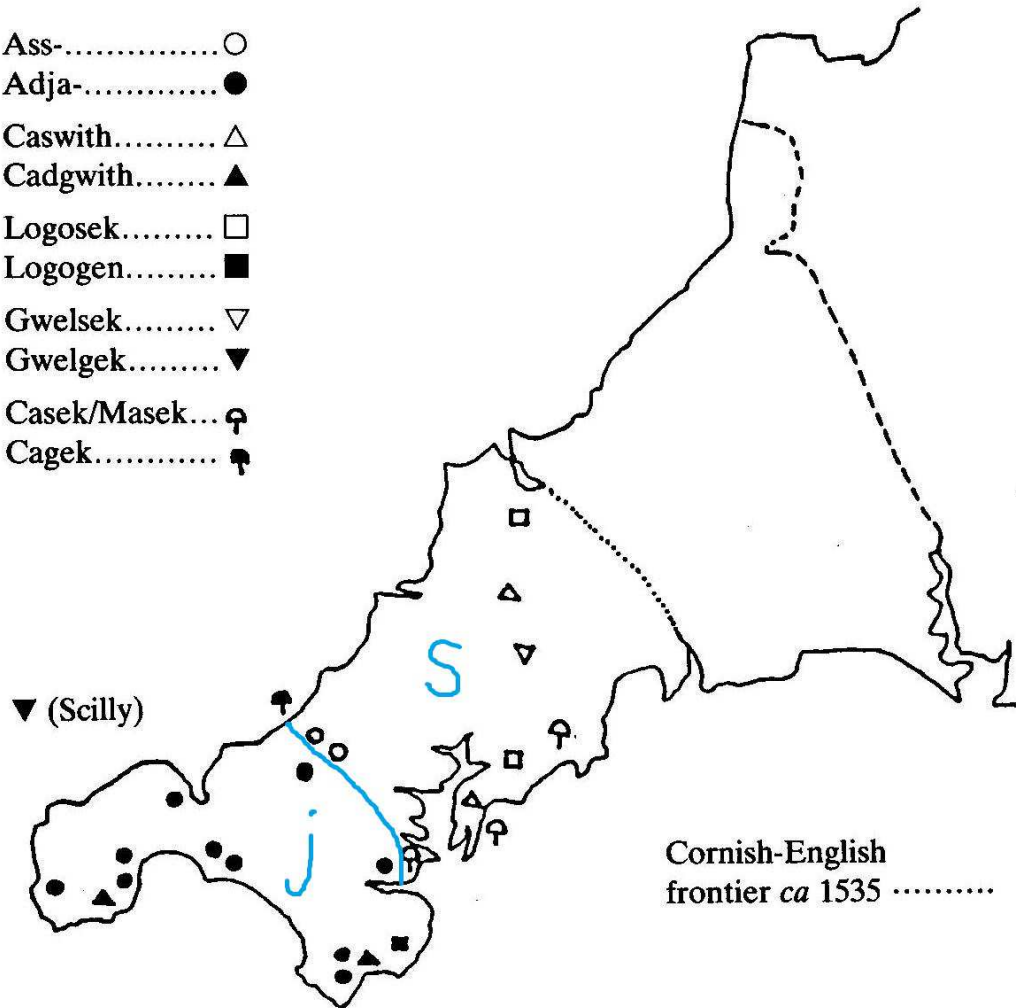
TH19r39 ow crege in crist

SA59r35 rag ne geran cregy

CW.1600 ny allaf cregye henna

Williams' map of {s} and {j}

- Ass-.....○
- Adja-.....●
- Caswith.....△
- Cadgwith.....▲
- Logosek.....□
- Logogen.....■
- Gwelsek.....▽
- Gwelgek.....▼
- Casek/Masek...♁
- Cagek.....♂



In 1990, Williams plotted about 25 places on his map, mixing data from different epochs.

Historical phases - example

Phase	Date	Historical form	Class
1250 - 1400	1327	<i>Penhegerick</i>	{s} &
	1334	<i>Pennanseyreke</i>	{j}
1400 – 1600	1517	<i>Penseryk</i>	{s}
	1524	<i>Pensyrycke</i>	
after 1600	1844	<i>Penjerick</i>	{j}
	1884	<i>Pengerrick</i>	
	map	<i>Penjerrick</i>	

Numbers of cases

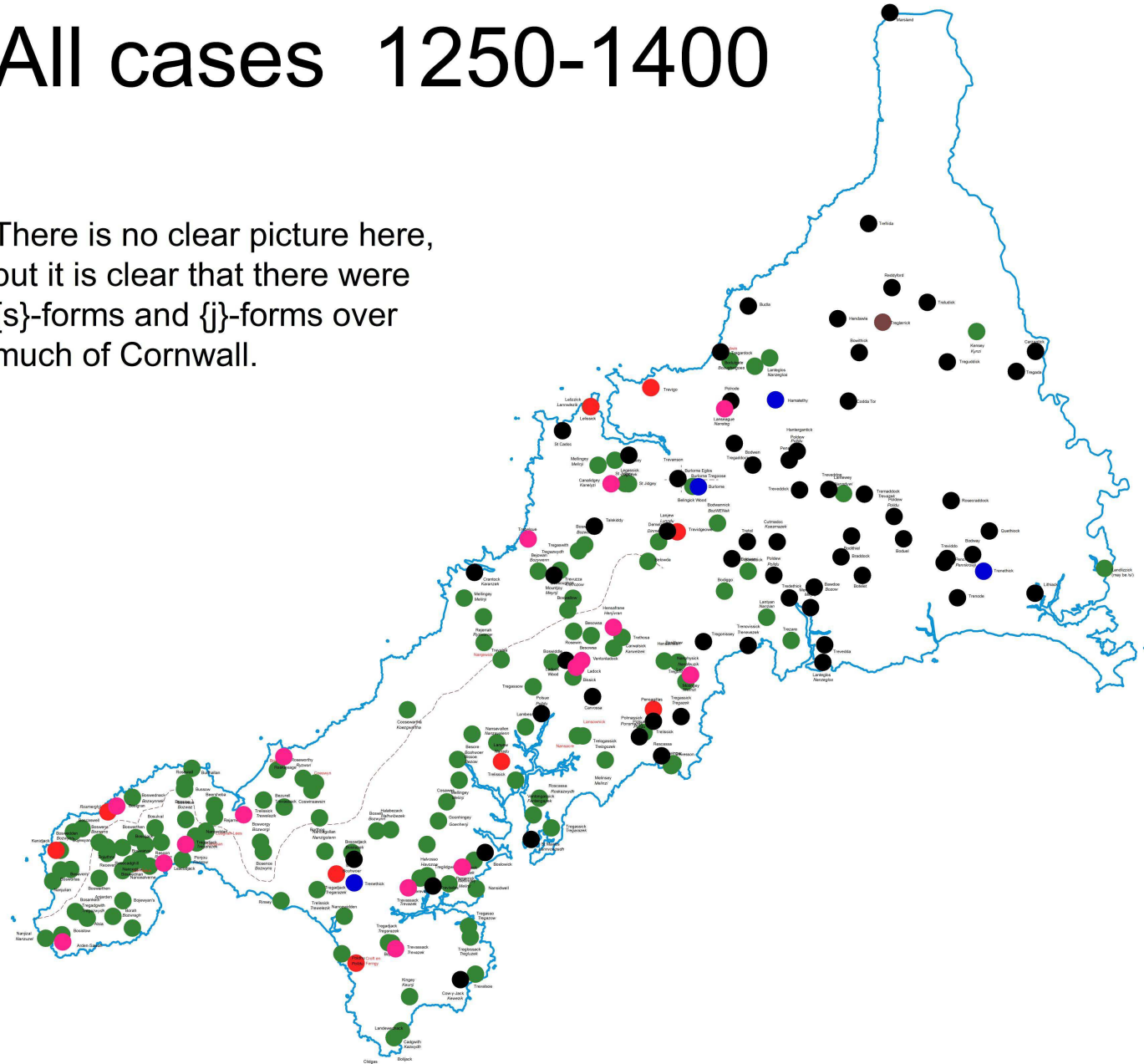
Class →	{s}	{j}	{s}&{j}	{d}	Other
Phase					
1250 – 1400	123 84%	12 8%	14 10%	56	0
1400 – 1600	118 93%	6 5%	3 2%	50	2
after 1600	113 43%	127 48%	22 8%	63	18

Colours used on maps

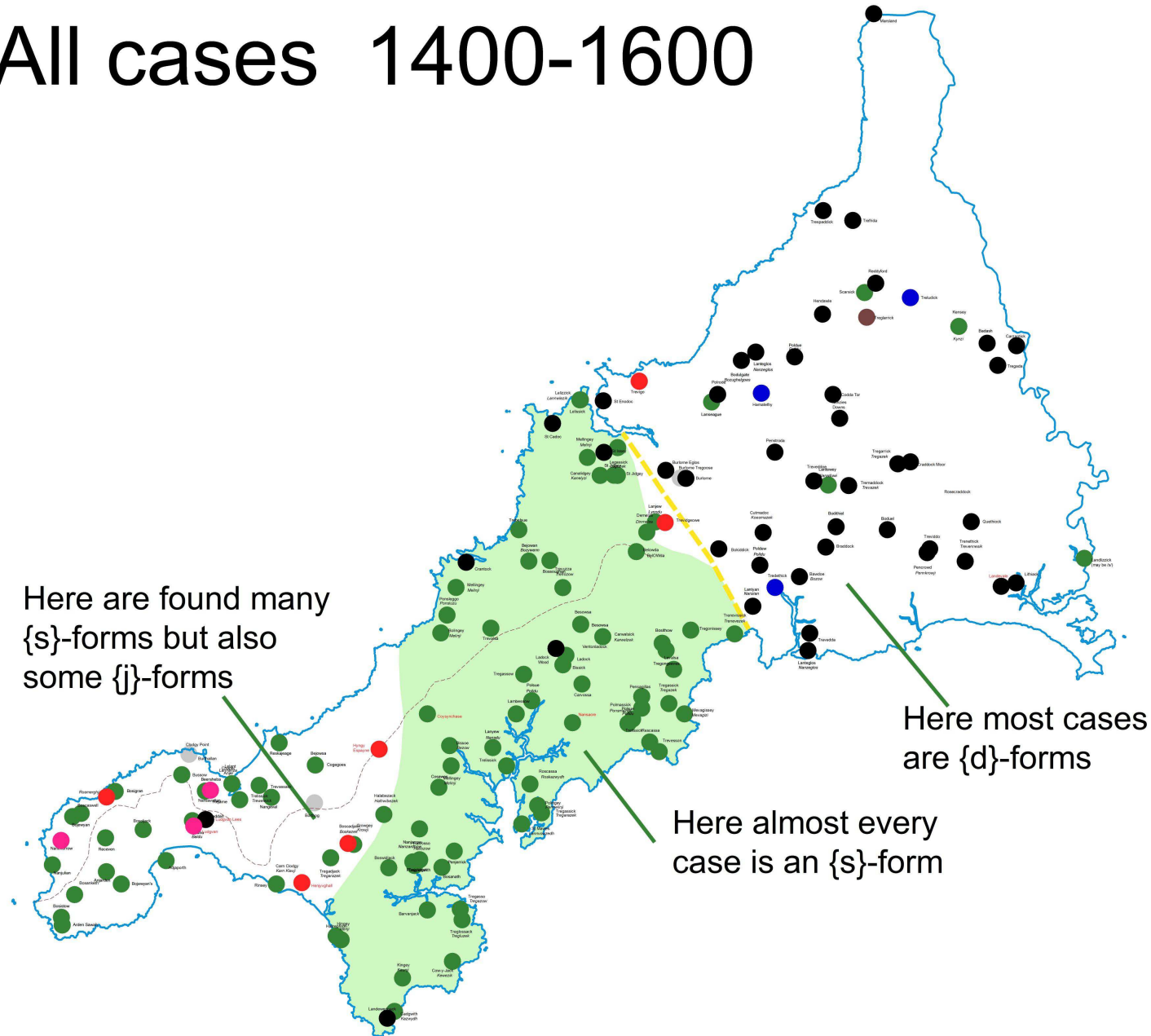
- black <d, t>
- grey <th> change in English
- green <s> assibilation
- red { j } palatalization
- orange <sh, ch>
- brown <r>
- purple mixture of { s } and { j }

All cases 1250-1400

There is no clear picture here, but it is clear that there were {s}-forms and {j}-forms over much of Cornwall.



All cases 1400-1600



All cases post 1600

There are about 350 cases plotted here

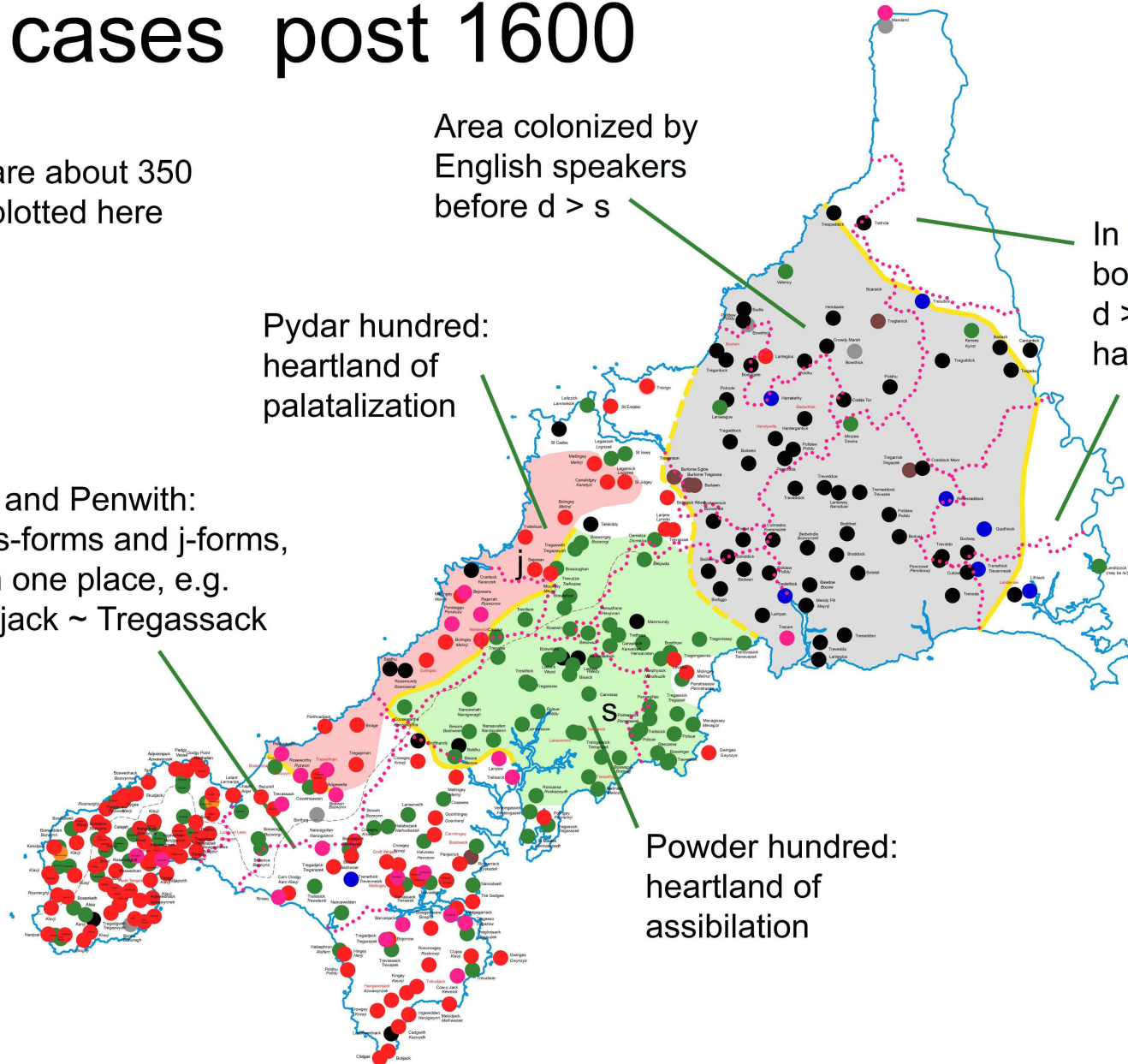
Area colonized by English speakers before $d > s$

In the eastern borderlands, $d > s$ never happened

Pydar hundred: heartland of palatalization

Kerrier and Penwith: mixed s-forms and j-forms, even in one place, e.g. Tregadjack ~ Tregassack

Powder hundred: heartland of assibilation

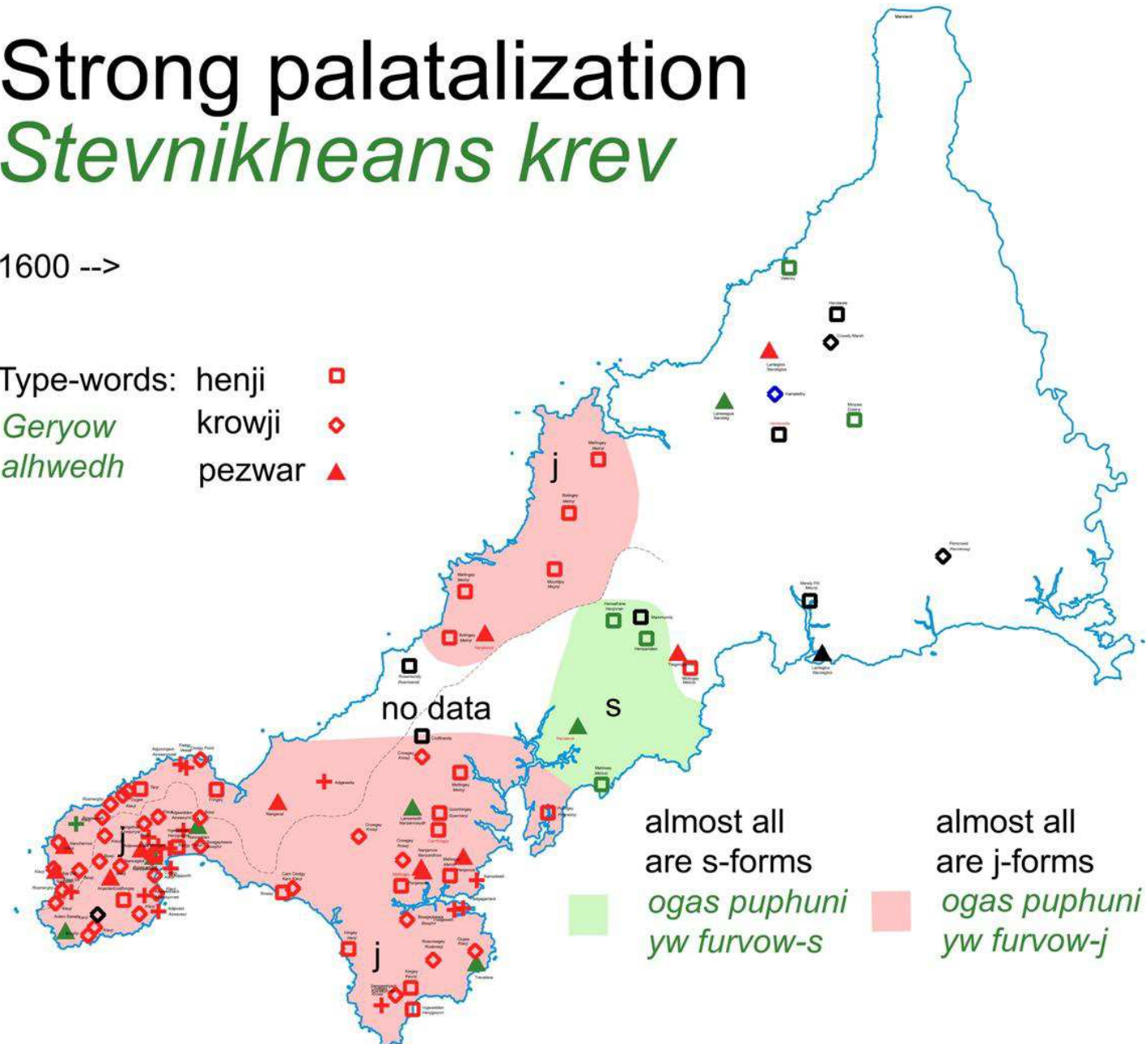


Strong palatalization

Stevnikheans krev

1600 -->

Type-words: henji ◻
Geryow krowji ◊
alhwedh pezwar ▲



almost all
are s-forms
ogas puphuni
yw furvow-s

almost all
are j-forms
ogas puphuni
yw furvow-j

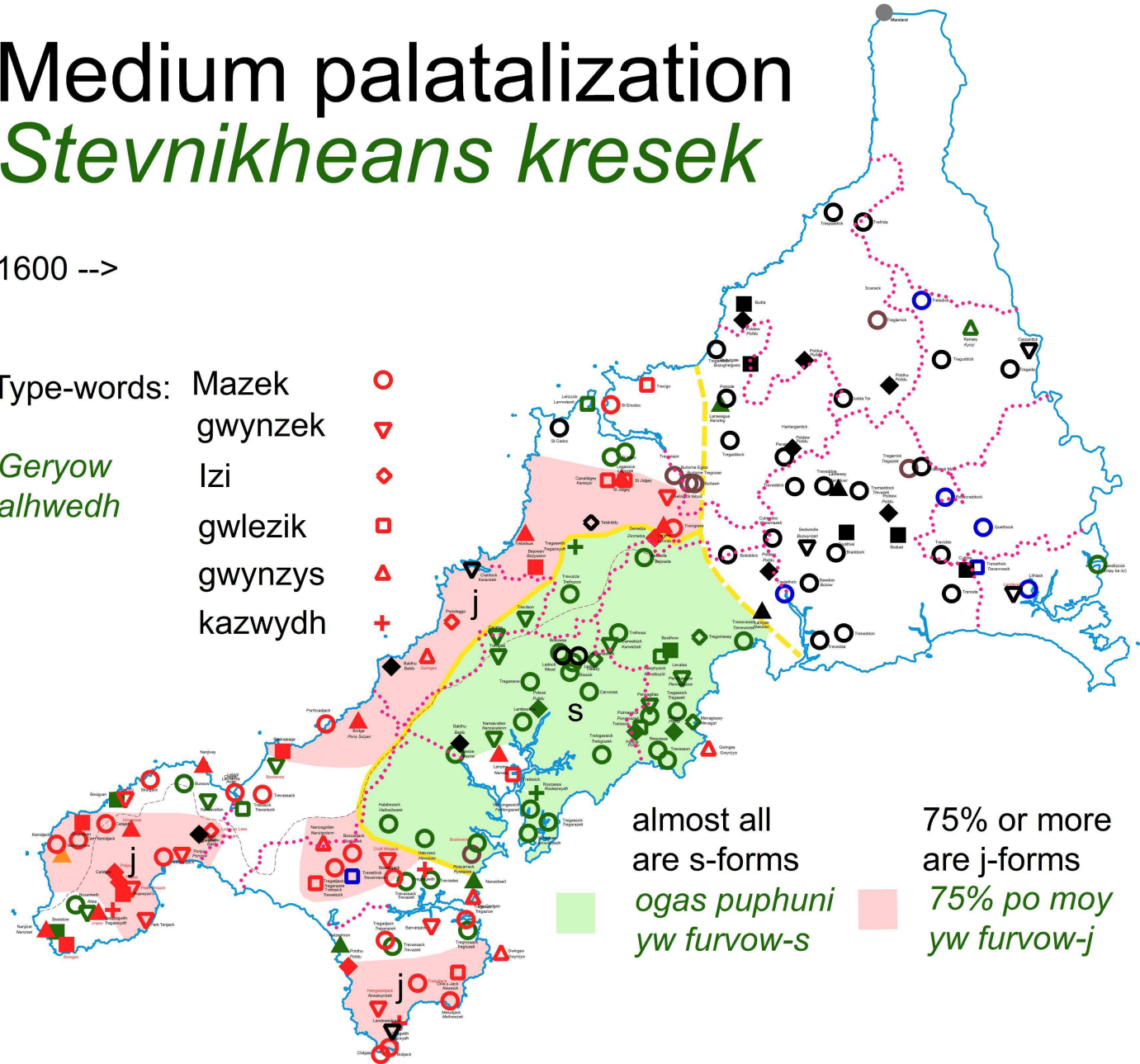
Medium palatalization

Stevnikheans kresek

1600 -->

Type-words: Mazek
 gwynzek
 Izi
 gwlezik
 gwynzys
 kazwydh

*Geryow
 alhwedh*

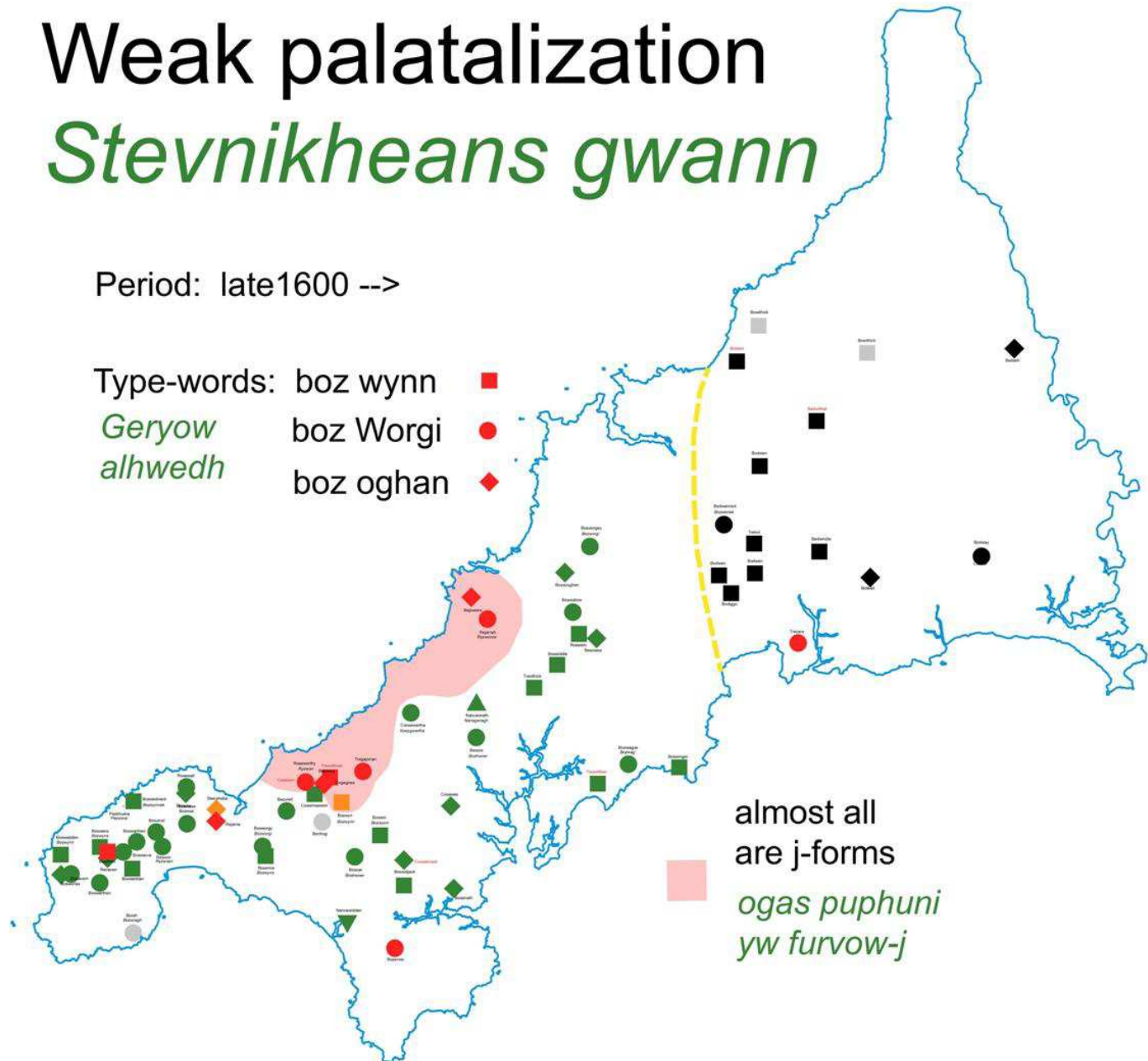


Weak palatalization

Stevnikheans gwann

Period: late1600 -->

Type-words: boz wynn ■
Geryow boz Worgi ●
alhwedh boz oghan ◆

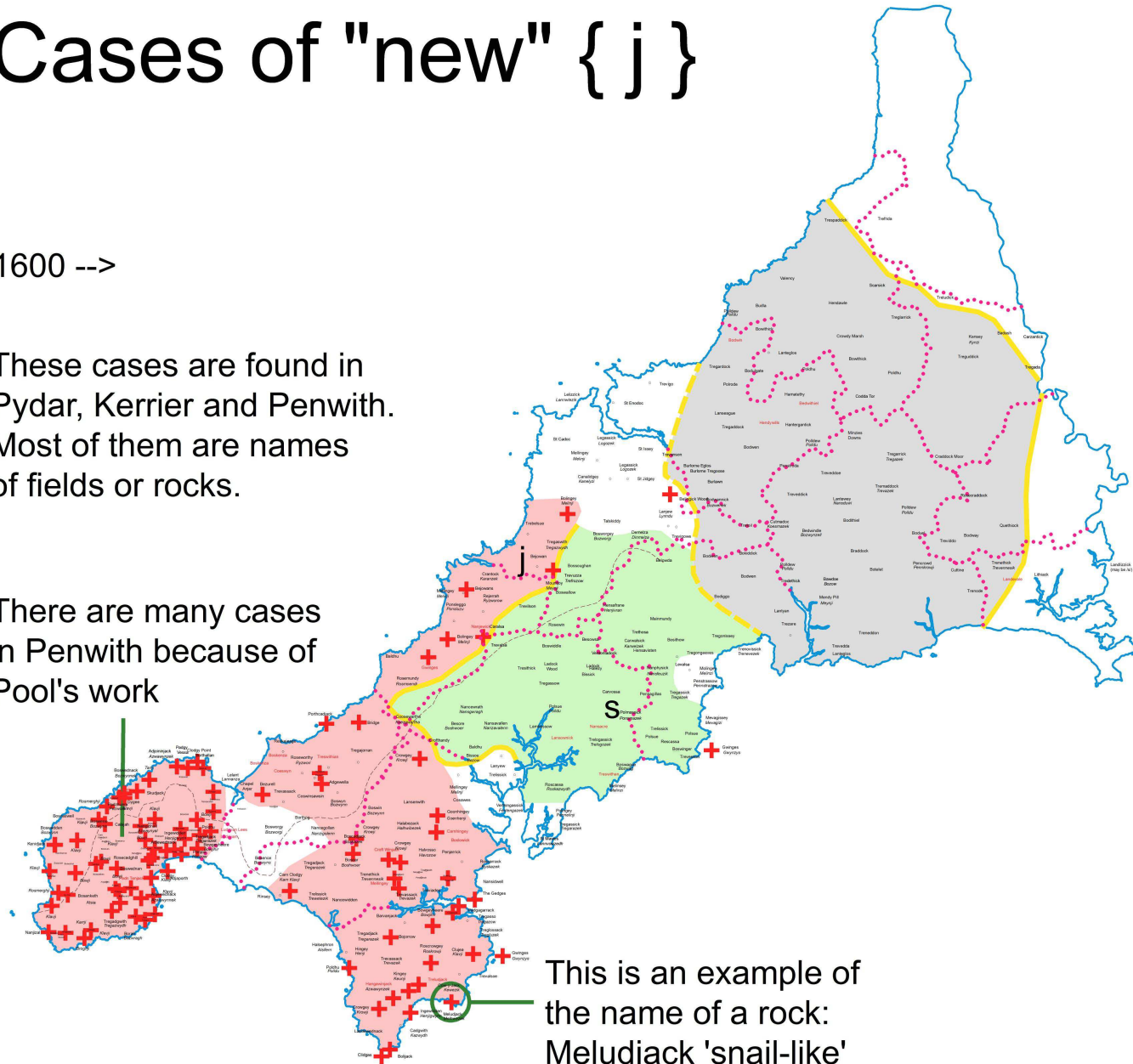


Cases of "new" { j }

1600 -->

These cases are found in
Pydar, Kerrier and Penwith.
Most of them are names
of fields or rocks.

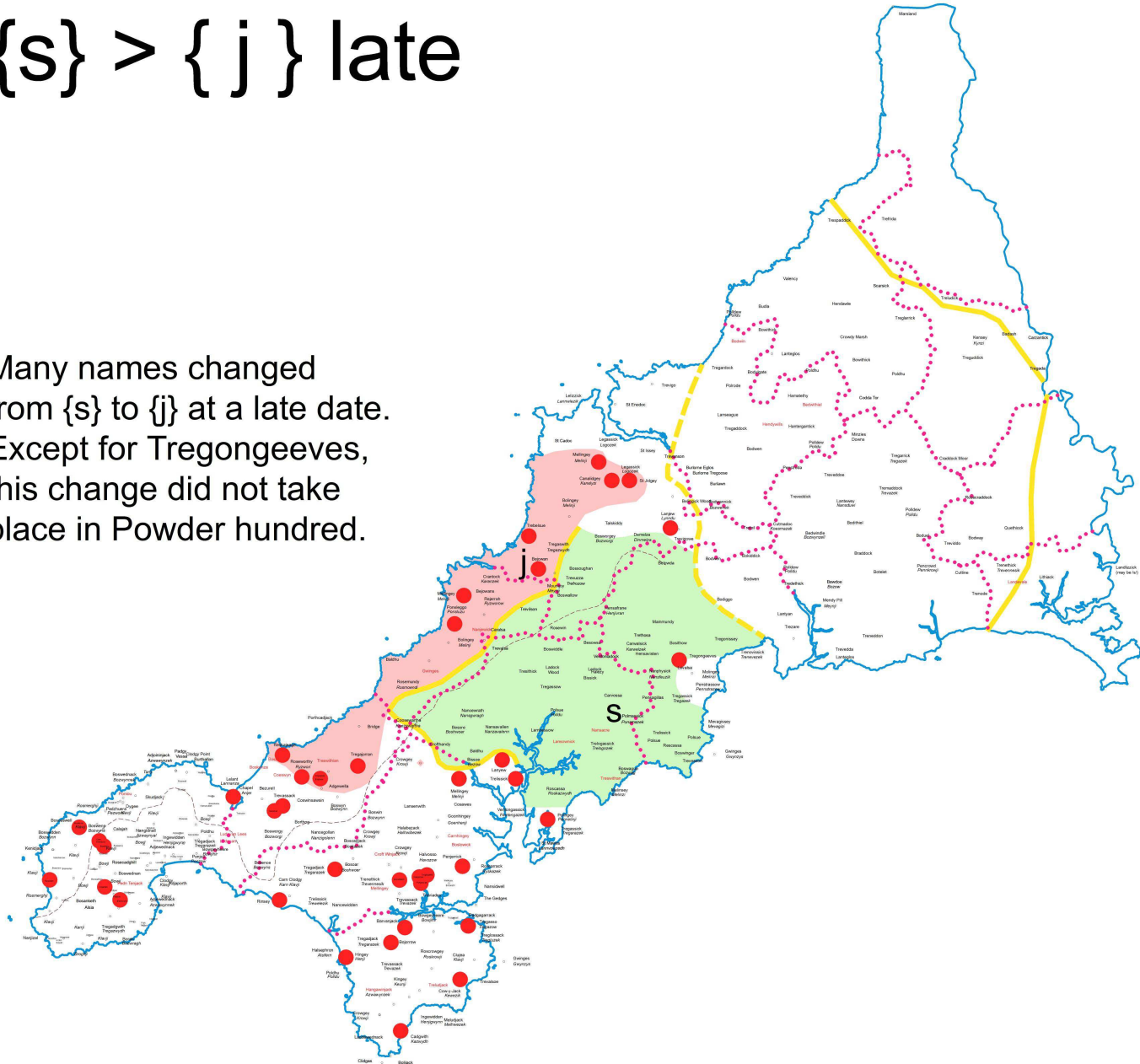
There are many cases
in Penwith because of
Pool's work



This is an example of
the name of a rock:
Meludjack 'snail-like'

{s} > {j} late

Many names changed from {s} to {j} at a late date. Except for Tregongeeves, this change did not take place in Powder hundred.



Conclusions (1)

- {s}- and {j}-forms co-existed from c.1300, but the {s}-form had a **higher social status** than the {j}-form, and was taken up by English speakers.
- Although the {s}-form had a higher status, many Cornish speakers (common people, and also some scribes) used the {j}-form.

Conclusions (2)

- After 1549, the {s}-form fell into disuse among Cornish speakers, and the {j}-form appeared in the **names of rocks and fields**, places not frequented by English speakers.
- This did not happen in **Powder hundred**, which remained as the heartland of the {s}-form.