

Isle of Wight Recording Notes

Recording of Isle of Wight Dialect made in 1962. Stanley Cotton, a native of Whitwell, reads tales from WH Long's Dictionary of the Isle of Wight Dialect and a rhyme from Percy Stone's 'Songs of the Soil'. The recording was made by Daphne Griggs, a student at Edinburgh University, as part of her master's degree project.

The Isle of Wight dialect is considered the richest of dialects with a magical appeal that sets the island apart.

P.G. Stones introduction to his book "Legends and Lays of the Wight" gives an insight into the dialect.

"In the dialect it is a somewhat difficult matter to render correctly the fast-dying vernacular of the Isle of Wight, as it so often varies. For instance:

'of' is represented by *uv*, *o* and *by* (*Eny uv'e zid my hriphook; top o' down; I kent git hold by it.*)

'the' is not only shortened to *th'* and *t'* but is often dropped entirely (*Harses be in ztable.*)

'him' becomes *'en*, and more often *'n* (*I tell'd 'en. I zid 'n.*)

'she' and 'her' are invariably transposed (*A caal'd zhe but her wudn't ztop.*)

An *n* is tacked on to the possessive pronoun (*Be this yourn? noa, tis his'n.*)

And the last syllable of verbs ending in *en* is dropped (*Sharp* for sharpen; *fat* for fatten.)

The substitution of *z* for *s*, *v* for *f*, *a* for *o* and *e* for *a* is universal. (*Zun, vire, harse, thetch.*)

An islander never 'leaves out his *h's*' though he puts them in before words beginning with *r*, (*Hrabbit, hrough.*) and has a curious habit of replying to a statement of fact by an assertion with interrogative inflection. (You have? It is?)

Though many similar words and idioms are to be found throughout Wessex, on the other hand, many are peculiar to the Isle of Wight. What modern English can so well express the verbs to shuffle, to startle, to scratch, as our local *scuff*, *scart* and *firk*, or the pangs of hunger as *leer*? Who has met a farm-hand on a dull overcast day has not been struck by his assertion;

"*Oi, a zcrow daay vor zure*" or in drizzling rain, "*tes ter'ble zluttish weather zure'nuf*"?

Again, what better describes the appearance of a sickly child or a weakly plant than the adjectives *tewly* and *miffy*, or the outspokenness of an honest man than *jo an'blunt*?

The pity of it is, the spread of education must ever be the death of the vernacular. Children are taught to speak as never their forbears did, and are rapidly picking up a most detestable urban twang, which in a few years will have entirely displaced the homely and expressive Saxon speech of rural England - a matter greatly regretted. Though local words and idioms are duly noted in the glossary edited by Mr. C Roach Smith, F.S.A. for the English Dialect Society in 1881, and the dictionary compiled by Mr. W.H.Long in 1886, I fear me much my homely verses may prove to be the swan-song of the Isle of Wight dialect."

Percy G Stone. Merstone, Isle of Wight, April 1912

References

A Glossary of Words in use in The Isle of Wight compiled by Major Henry Smith 1881

WH Long's Dictionary of the Isle of Wight Dialect, published 1886

P.G. Stones "Legends and Lays of the Wight" 1912

Whitwell. Isle of Wight Survey of English Dialects. British Library

Celtic Influence on the Isle of Wight Dialect. James Rayner

IOW Dialect recordings in the 1980s. Colin Fairweather and Alan Stroud

The Dictionary of Isle of Wight Dialect by Jack Lavers, pub 1988.

Cock & Bull Stories: Animals in Folklore, Dialect and Cultural History (2008) by Alan R Phillips.

Colds' marnin you - a lesson in Isle of Wight Dialect. County Press Article.