Phonological History of Cornish: the vowels

Sources:
- Kenneth J. George, *A Phonological History of Cornish*. Thèse de troisième cycle. Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest 1984 (2nd print, with slight amendments, March 1985). = PHC
- Ken George, *The Pronunciation and Spelling of Revived Cornish* (s.l. 1986). = PSR
- Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson, *A Historical Phonology of Breton* (Dublin 1967) = HPB

(Not used here, but important: Peter Schrijver, *Studies in British Celtic Historical Phonology*. Leiden Studies in Indo-European 5 (Amsterdam/Atlanta 1995); and Nicholas J.A. Williams, 'Middle and Late Cornish' in Elmar Ternes (ed.), *Brythonic Celtic / Britannisches Keltisch. From Medieval British to Modern Breton*. Münchner Forschungen zur historischen Sprachwissenschaft 11 (Bremen 2011) 237-357.)

Until ca. 1050 accent on the last syllable (PHC 7.5.5).
With the accent shift started the reduction of vowels in final syllables.

/i/   < PrimCo. *i   < LateBrit. *ī < Brit. *ī
                                        < Lat. ī
         Pretonic /i:/ is shortened and lowered to /e/ (e.g. Brit. *trī- > MCo.
    tredden)
                  (PHC 7.1.5).
         < ME ī, ĭ

_____   MCo. -i < PrimCo. *-Iγ in some cases   _____
                          MCo. -y < PrimCo. *-Iγ normally (PHC 7.2.5.; HPB 1008)

/y/   < PrimCo. *I   < LateBrit. *ĭ < Brit.*ĭ   (I = /y/)
                                        < Lat. ĭ
         < ME i (PHC 7.2.1: < ME e:

                        cf. PHC 7.3: *myns*: I < PrimCo. ε/I (?) < Brit. *a/_Ci

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/e/   < PrimCo. *ε   < Brit. *e   pretonic ε remained as a full vowel (PHC 7.4.6)
                        < Lat. e   pretonic ε > *schwa* ca. 1600 (PSR 11.3.3(c))
         < PrimCo. *e and */eu/, the results of final i-affection in LateBrit.
         < eu < PrimCo. */o/ and *u
         < PrimCo. *ω in unstressed closed final syllable (ca. 1550: > a; PHC 7.4.4)
                        (e.g. in adjectives ending in <-ek>, PHC 7.8.2)
         < OF e
         < OE æ, ME ĕ, ē
         < OCo. ai, and ai in early loan-words
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                  ca. 1475: /e/ in unstressed absolute final position > /a:/ => not in Revived
                  Cornish (PHC 7.2.6(2), 7.4.5)
                  ca. 1600: [ε:] > [e:] (PHC 7.4.2)

/a/   < PrimCo. *a < Brit. *a
                      < Lat. a
        < OE a
        < ME ā, ă   < OE a
                       < OF a
        < OCo. ɛ, and ME *schwa*, when unaccentuated in absolute final position or when
                between ca. 1050 and ca. 1475 the final consonant was lost (PHC 7.4.5)
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                ca. 1050 /a/ in absolute final position changed into *schwa*, but not in
                                        -*ma*, -*na* + compounds
                                        superlative and comparative forms
                                        bara 'bread'
                                (PSR Table 1141; PHC 7.5.5 for the change into /a/ ca. 1475)
                ca. 1575: /bras/ > /bros/
                mainly after 1650: (-)/war/(-) > (-)/wor/(-)
                                (PHC 7.5.4)

/o/   < PrimCo. /o/< Brit. *o
                      < Brit.-Lat. o
        < PrimCo. *u < Brit. *u
                      < Brit.-Lat. u
                PrimCo. *u in unstressed closed final syllable > MCo. /u/
                        MCo. <u> more often than <o>; hence [u] as allophone of /o/
                                                                (PHC 7.7.4(2))
        < PrimCo. *ui, *oi when unstressed, finally or before /a/
        < ME ŏ, ō, ŭ (<o> for ME ŭ may mean *schwa*; PHC 7.6.5.(2))

        when long: < ME ū/_nd (see PHC 7.6.6)
                       < ME ãn < Norman French ã
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                ca. 1525: > /a/ in unstressed absolute final position (occasionally earlier
                                reduced to schwa before being lowered to /a/ (PHC 7.6.4)
                ca. 1575: > /a/ in unstressed closed final syllables
                In stressed position before nasals and resonant /o/ developed an
                unrounded allophone since ca. 1550, but this development was not
                completed until perhaps ca. 1750 (PHC 7.6.3).

/oe/   = long or half-long [o]
                        orthographic <o>, <oy>
        < PrimCo. *oi and *ui (= OCo. <ui>) (PHC 8.3.2)
                first half 14th c. / ca. 1350: > /oe/ in closed, stressed final syllables
                                                                (PHC 8.3.3-5)
                                        > /o/ in unstressed open syllables (=> /oe/
                                                does not occur finally) (PHC 8.3.6-7)
        < OCo. œ
        < (?) ME ō
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when short (unstressed): unrounded (PHC 8.3.5) = orthographic <u>

/ou/   < ME ū, ŭ (nearly all with ME -ūt) (PHC 7.7.3, 7.12.2)
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              ca. 1525: shared in (English) Great Vowel Shift => unrounding and
              diphthongisation (PHC 10.3.1(3)); cf. ME *mūs* > ModE *mouse*

       PrimCo. *u > MCo. /o/ (see above),
                                       with the exception of MCo. *gour* 'man' (but *gor-*)

/eu/   PrimCo. *ω   < Brit. *ā   (cf. B *eu*, W *aw*)
              > OCo. <o> = [œ]
              ca. 1075 in unstressed syllables > ε   => /eu/ in MCo. in stressed
syllables only
       ----
              ca. 1525 /eu/ > /e/ in all positions

       N.B. In 'Unified Spelling' this sound was not recognised and was written either
       with *u* or *e*. Variants of the same word do occur.

/u/   < PrimCo. *ü < Brit. *ū < *ō
                     < Lat. ō and ū
       < ME ü in a few words, notably *sur* 'sure'
       ----
              ca. 1425: onrounding in unstressed position > /y/
                                            => /u/ occurs only as a stressed vowel

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schwa (PHC 7.11)
       < front vowels in absolute final position (/y/, /e/, /a/)
       < ME *schwa*
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       ca. 1425: lowering to /a/

/ey/   < PrimCo. *ei (HPB 227.8)
       < PrimCo. *I (PHC 7.2.3)

       In LateCo. <i>. In 'Unified Spelling' mainly <ey>, but <ŷ>, <ē> when not
recognised.

/ay/   = MCo. [æi] (<ay>, <ey> indiscriminately)
       < ME ai (ca. 1300 < ɛi, ai

       N.B. Mind the contractions *ay* /a'y/ 'of his/her', and *hay* /ha'y/ 'and his/her'
       (with different etymology).

/oy/   < PrimCo. *ωi (HPB 329)
       < ME ŏi (< OF oi)

/iw/   < PrimCo. *iw < Brit. *īw
       < possible metathesis of PrimCo. ui
       < OF iu

       MCo. orthography <yw>, <ew>. In 'Unified Spelling' sometimes wrongly <ew>.

/yw/   < PrimCo. *Iw < Brit. *iw, *uw
       < PrimCo. *-iw in unstressed final syllables

       MCo. orthography <ew>, <yw>. Not recognised in 'Unified Spelling'.

/ew/   < OCo. *ɛw   < PrimCo. *ɛw   < Brit. *ew(o)
                                           < Lat. eo
                      < PrimCo. *ɛγu   < Brit. *eg(u)
                                           < Lat. eg(u)
                      < PrimCo. *ew
                      < PrimCo. *eβ
       < ME, OF absolute final eu

       by analogical i-affection in /kewsel/ 'to talk' < OF *causer*
       in the 2sg. ending /-ewgh/ < *eχ (PHC 7.4.4.(1)) (Unified Spelling <-eugh>)
       /dew/ 'two' (masc.) << PrimCo. /dow/   (Unified Spelling <deu>)

/aw/   < PrimCo. *-aw < Brit. and Brit.-Lat. *-aw-, *-agu-
       < PrimCo. *aμ in a few words (otherwise > /ow/)

/ow/   when stressed:
       < PrimCo. */ow/   < Brit. *ou
                            < Lat. au
       < early MCo. /ow/   < OCo. */ov/ < PrimCo. *oμ
                            < OCo. */oev/< PrimCo. *uβ
                                                   < PrimCo. *uμ
                            < OCo. */ew/ < PrimCo. *ɛu
                                                   < PrimCo. *ωu

	< OCo. */ow/ < PrimCo. *ui irregularly in /krows/ 'cross'
< early MCo. /aw/	< OCo. */aw/ < PrimCo. *au
	< OCo. */av < PrimCo. *aβ
	< NorF au < OF au

when unstressed:
< PrimCo. */ow/
< -Cow << (svarabhakti) *-Cw
< early MCo. /ow/   < OCo. *εw   < PrimCo. *εw
                                     < PrimCo. *œw
                      < OCo. *aw   < PrimCo. *aw

In 'Unified Spelling' the orthography is <ow>, except in the 2pl. ending <-ough>.