

The Kentish Dialect finds its expression in peculiarities of phrase and pronunciation rather than in any great number of distinctly dialectical words. In many respects it closely resembles the dialect of Sussex, though it retains a distinctive character, and includes a considerable number of words which are unknown in the neighbouring County.

The Kentish pronunciation is so much coarser and broad than that of Sussex, that many words which are common to both dialects can scarcely be recognised a few miles away from the border; and many words of ordinary use become strangely altered. As an instance, the word "elbow" may be taken, which first has the termination altered by the substitution of "ber" (ber) for "bow" (boa) and becomes "elber" (el-ber). The e is next altered to a, and in Sussex the word would be generally pronounced "alber" (al-ber) in which form it is still recognisable; but the Kentish man alters the "al" into "ar" (aa), and knocking out the medial consonant altogether, pronounces the word "arber" (aa-ber), and thus actually retains only one letter out of the original five. The chief peculiarities of pronunciation are these:-

Such words as "barrow" and "carry" become "bar" and "car" (baa, kaa).

a (a) before double d is pronounced aa; as "laader" (laa-der) for ladder.

a (a) before double l becomes o; as "foller" (fol-er) for fallow.

a (ai) before t is lengthened into äa; as "pleät" (plee-h't) for plate

Double e, or the equivalent of it, becomes i; as "ship in the fil" (ship in dhu' fil) for "sheep in the field".

Then, by way of compensation, i is occasionally pronounced like double e; as "The meece got into the heeve" (Dhu' mee-s got in tu' dhu' heev) for "The mice got onto the hive".

i appears as e in such words as "pet" (pet) for pit.

o before n is broadened into two syllables by the addition of an obscure vowel; as "Doänt ye see the old poäny be all skins and boäns" (doa-h'nt ye see dhu' oald poa-h'ny bee aul skin un boa-h'ns)

ou is lengthened by prefixing a (a); the resulting sound being (aew). "The haöunds were raöund our haöuse yesterday". (dhu' haewnds wer raewnd our haews yest-erdai).

The voiced th (dh) is invariably pronounced d; so "that", "this", "then", "though" became "dat", "dis", "den", "dough" (dat, dis, den, doa).

In such words as "fodder" (A.S. fódor), where the old d comes between two vowels, the dialect has th (dh), as (fodh-er).

The final letters are transposed in "wasp", "hasp", and many words of similar termination. Hence these become (wops, haps).

w and v change places invariably when they are initial; as "wery vell" for "very well".

Peculiarities of construction appear in the case of a large class of words, whereof "upgrown", "outstand", "no-ought", "over-run" and others may be taken as types.

Almost every East Kent man has one or two special words of his own, which he has invented, and these become very puzzling to those who do not know the secret of their origin; and as he dislikes the intrusion of any words beyond the range of his own vocabulary, he is apt to show his resentment by taking so little trouble to pronounce them correctly, that they generally become distorted beyond all recognition, "Broad titus", for instance, would not easily be understood to mean bronchitis.