

BRO NEVEZ

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE BRETON LANGUAGE
NEWSLETTER OF THE U.S. BRANCH

No. 100

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H
AR YEZH VREZHONEG
International Committee for
the Defense of the Breton Language

NEWSLETTER OF THE U.S. BRANCH NUMBER 1 JULY 1981

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The International Committee for
the Defense of the Breton Language
was set up at the beginning of the
1975/76 school year to support the
repeated demands of the teachers
and people of Brittany that their
language be recognized at long last,
taught and accepted as a fact of
daily life by the French authorities.

This Committee, with more than 500
personalities representing 40 different
nationalities, was set up on a
voluntary basis by non-Bretons
who in this way show that, while
the issue does not personally concern
them, they consider it to be
one which merits the disinterested
support of men and women of good
will. The Committee, which is concerned
purely with the defense of the
cultural rights of the individual, is non-political and non-ideological.

Branches of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language
have been established in Canada, France, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands,
Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, England, Wales, Norway, and Austria.
The newest branch of the ICDBL is our own, that of the United States, which is
now in the process of being formed.



KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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Now available via: <http://icdbl.com>

The **U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)** was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981. **Bro Nevez** ("new country" in the Breton language) is the newsletter produced by the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly: February, May, August and November. Contributions, letters to the Editor, and ideas are welcome from all readers and will be printed at the discretion of the Editor.

The U.S. ICDBL provides Bro Nevez on a complimentary basis to a number of language and cultural organizations in Brittany to show our support for their work. Your Membership/Subscription allows

us to do this. Membership (which includes subscription) for one year is \$20. Checks should be in U.S. dollars, made payable to "U.S. ICDBL" and mailed to Lois Kuter at the address above. Dues and contributions can also be sent electronically via the U.S. ICDBL web site.

Ideas expressed within this newsletter are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent ICDBL philosophy or policy.

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An Anniversary and Milestone to Celebrate

Reproduced on the cover are various covers to our newsletter - including Number 1 - to commemorate the edition of the 100th issue of *Bro Nevez*. The fall of 2006 also marks our 25th anniversary as an incorporated not-for-profit organization. In view of this anniversary I have put together a "retrospective" of the work we have done, and I invited friends in Brittany who have followed our progress over the years to send their thoughts. I am particularly pleased to have received notes from individuals active with other branches of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language, including some who were responsible for its founding in Belgium in 1975. All of this is included in a special supplement to this newsletter.

Many people have been key in sustaining the work of the U.S. ICDBL over the past twenty-five years – particularly those who have served as officers and members of our Board of Directors – which I prefer to call a Board of Consultants. The work of this group can be invisible to our membership as a whole, but I would like to thank the current officers of the U.S. ICDBL for the support they have given me in the publication of *Bro Nevez* and the initiatives they have undertaken.

President: **Lenora A. Timm** (Davis, California)
Board of Consultants: **David Brûlé**, (Millers Falls, Massachusetts), **Richard Herr** (Berkeley, California), **Kathi Hochberg** (Harrison, New York), **James W. Kerr** (Easton, Maryland), **Natalie Novik** (Anchorage, Alaska), **David Pugh** (Bannalec, Brittany – formerly, Fairfax, Virginia), and **Gregory T. Stump** (Lexington, Kentucky)

A New School Year in Brittany

The number of children in bilingual programs in the public and Catholic schools and in the Diwan immersion schools continues to grow steadily – not without challenges.

Diwan

Diwan opened two new pre/primary schools this fall in La Chapelle-Neuve and Loannec – both in the Côtes d’Armor. Some important building improvements were also made with new buildings in Lesneven and a move for the middle school in Relecq-Kerhuon to a site in Guissény. Additionally, the Diwan school in Paris succeeded in finding a new site (rue Liancourt in the 14th arrondissement) which will allow it to continue to grow.

Some numbers:

The total number of children in Diwan schools is 2,943 (vs. 2896 in 2005-06) for a 1.6% growth.

Preschool (2-5 year olds)	958
Primary School	<u>1,169</u>
Total	2,125 vs. 2,110 (05-06)
Middle School	
Finistere (3 schools)	415
Côtes d’Armor	118
Morbihan	<u>128</u>
Total	661 vs. 619 (05-06)
High School (Karaez)	157 vs. 167 (05-06)

The new year for “our school” - Skol Diwan Landerne

There are 55 students in the Diwan school of Landerneau this year. They will work with the Diwan school in Plabenneg to record a CD – each class composing two song texts to be set to music by Jean-Luc Roudaut. The release of the CD will be celebrated on July 1 at a festival in Plabenneg. Skol Diwan Landerne will also have a two-day outing in Treglonou to go on hikes in the woods, study nature and ride ponies. During the school year a broadcaster from Radio Arvorig FM will regularly visit the class to record songs and stories in Breton for the radio.

Public School Bilingual Programs

4,264 students, from preschool through high school are enrolled in bilingual programs in the public schools of Brittany. This is a 10% increase from the last school year and includes the creation of 14 new teaching posts and 5 new sites for classes in Briec, Quévan, Daoulas, Milizac and a second site for Landerneau.

This is very positive but problems remain. The expansion of bilingual programs does not meet a growing demand for them, and there is a lack of continuity with students unable to continue Breton in middle schools. Parents in two schools have been very upset this school year when they were unsuccessful in getting new teaching posts (even half-posts) to meet their demand for bilingual schooling. This was the case for Bulat-Pestivén in the Côtes d’Armor and Languidic in the Morbihan. In Languidic parents planned a protest to peacefully spend the night in the school only to be met with a squad of police sent by the sub-prefect to evict them. In the presence of children, police were very menacing and threatened parents with long jail terms. More on this on-going efforts of parents to get bilingual schooling for their children can be found on the following website: <http://ouiaubreton.com>

Catholic School Bilingual Programs

3,659 students are enrolled in bilingual programs in the Catholic schools – with the largest number in the Morbihan department. This represents an 11% increase with an additional 374 students this year. Three new sites have been added in Melrand, Plouvorn and Plouarzel. Challenges remain here as well in finding new teachers to meet the demand, and in battling some ill will on the part of school administrators who are resistant to opening bilingual programs.

Summer Camps

This past summer nearly 400 children enjoyed Breton language summer camp programs where they could practice their Breton in a variety of leisure time activities. This is an area of new growth with plans for camps in Gallo in the coming year. Congratulations to Katell Chantreau for her work in this area with the Union Breton pour l’Animation des Pays Ruraux. For more information check out the website: www.ubapar.org/bretongallo/actu.html

Four New Members of Brittany's Order of the Ermine

Each year the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro) inducts four (and sometimes five) individuals into this honorary order reinstated in 1972 to recognize Bretons (and others) who have offered exceptional service to Brittany. The Order is inspired by the Order of the Ermine that was created in 1381 by Jean IV, one of the oldest honorary orders of Europe which was unique in including common people and women. Today's members of the Order of the Ermine are given a "medallion" designed by Pierre Toulhoat which is very much like that of the middle ages, decorated with "ermine" and including the motto "D'am buhe" - "For my life" – a reminder to those in the Order of the Ermine that they have a life-long responsibility of service to Brittany.

The following information (in Breton and with my translation from the French) about this year's inductees comes from *Sterenn*, the newsletter of Skol Uhel ar Vro (No. 23, 2006). This will briefly introduce you to five very interesting people of Brittany.

Xavier Leclercq

Bet ganet eo d'an 23 a viz Ebrel 1944 e Douarnenez. Goude bezañ graet studioù war ar gwir ha da c'houde war an armerzhouriezh e teu da vezañ bez-sekretour meur Kambr kenwerzh Montroulez hag eñ oadet a 24 bloaz ha Rener-meur ar memes Kambr eus 1977 betek 1990. War un dro e krou ar gompagnunezh kiri-nij Brit Air, renet gantañ eus 1973 betek 2001. Gouestlañ a ra ivez e nerzh e meur a aozadur stag ouzh an dezougen (European Regional Airlines Association, Kuzul Meur ar C'henwerzh dre garr-nij, h.a.) pe stag ouzh Bro Montroulez (kuzulier kêr e Plouezoc'h, bez-kadoriad Kumuniezh kumunioù Bro Montroulez). Bet kadoriad Produit en Bretagne e-pad meur a vloavezh ez eo bet anvet nevez `zo Kadoriad Kuzul bellerezh Ajañs-rannvor an diorren armerzhel (ARDE). Daou vugel a zo gantañ.

Claudine Mazéas

Bet ganet e Gwengamp d'ar 26 a viz Gwengolo 1926. Desavet eo bet Claudine Mazéas gant he zad Goulven Mazéas, emsaver breizhat, hag he mamm Denise Weill, arzourez yuzev; bleuniet eo enni diwar-se ur gizidigezh binvidik ha digor d'an holl stummoù sevenadur. Goude heskinerezhioù an Eil Brezel Bed e ouestl he amzer, e darempred gant Mirdi Mabden da zastum teñzorioù sevenadur dre gomz Breizh bev mat d'ar mare-se. Dastum a ra meur a ganaouenn ha gwerz e Bro Dreger ha Kerne Uhel. Reiñ a ra tro da veur a soner, sonerien brezhon "klasel" ha "hengounel", d'ober abadennoù

Xavier Leclercq

Born April 23, 1944, in Douarnenez, Xavier Leclercq studied law and then economic sciences. At the age of 24, he became Deputy General Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Morlaix, and he was its General Director from 1977 to 1990. During this time he created the airline company Brit Air which he directed from 1973 to 2001. He has been involved with numerous organizations linked to transport (European Regional Airlines Association, Conseil Supérieur de l'Aviation Marchande, etc.) as well as those centered on the area of Morlaix (Municipal Councilor of Pouezoc'h, Vice-President of the Communauté d'agglomération du Pays de Morlaix). President for a number of years of Produit en Bretagne, he was recently named president of the Conseil d'Analyse Stratégique de l'ARDE (Agnece Régionale de Développement Économique). He has two children.

Claudine Mazéas

Born September 26, 1926 in Guingamp, Claudine Mazéas grew up with her father Goulven Mazéas, a Breton militant, and her mother Denise Weill, a Jewish artist, and thus developed a rich and open appreciation for all forms of culture. After the persecutions of the Second World War she devoted herself to collecting treasures of the Breton oral tradition so accessible at that time, in collaboration with the Musée de l'Homme. She thus collected numerous songs in the Trégor and Haute Cornouaille areas. She also invited a number of artists to her town of Guingamp – "classical" and traditional Breton musicians –

e Gwengamp. He c'hizidigezh a ro tro dezhi da zizoloñ hag ambroug en o red micher arzourien a bep seurt evel Yann-Fañch Kemener, Anne Auffret pe Denez Prigent.

Claude Sterckx

Claude Sterckx a zo bet ganet d'an 3 a viz Gouere 1944 e Uccle (Belgia) en un tiegezh breserien. Dre zegouezh eo e tizolo Breizh: c'hoant gantañ da sevel e vemor mestroniezh istor kozh war an doare da romanekaat ar pobloù estrentre. Goude termal etre an Arabed hag ar Gelted e tibabas ar re ziwezhañ dre ma ouie mat ar saozneg. E-pad e studioù e Roazhon eo a ra anaoudegezh gant Anne-Marie Salaün e bried. D'ar mare-se eo ivez e teu da vezañ mignon gant meur a emsaver breizhek. Ur vech distro e Belgia e kelenn sevenadur ar Gelted e Skol-Veur dieub Brussel hag e kenlabour gant meur a gevredigezh e Belgia (kadoriad Kevredigezh Belgat ar Studioù Keltiek abaoe 1987) hag e Breizh. Gant e vaouez, e labour da skoulmañ darempredoù stankoc'h etre Breizh ha Belgia hag e ro lañs d'ar C'hengor Etrevroadel evit Difenn ar Brezhoneg, lusket gant Henri Lecuyer e-pad meur a vloaz. Kadoriad ar C'hengor eo bremañ.

Jean-Pierre Vincent

Bet ganet e Plélan-Veur et 1936 e tizolo Jean-Pierre Vincent sevenadur Breizh a drugarez da Per Roy, bet kejet gantañ e Kelc'h Keltiek Roazhon. Gouestlañ a ra an amzer vak lezet dezhañ gant e vicher kelenner war ar skiantoù fizik da vuhez ar c'helc'h keltiek a vezo teñzorer anezhañ e-pad 30 vloaz. E 1957, e ra anaoudegezh gant Robert Legrand ha Kendal'ch. Kemer a ra penn Unvaniezh Lechel ar C'hevredigezhioù Kendal'ch (deuet da vezañ da-heul UPRACB ha erfin Skeudenn Bro-Roazhon) kerkent ha m'eo bet krouet e 1965. Da c'houde e ra war dro krouidigezh kreizenn Per Roy e Sant-Visant-an-Oud hag ivez ar gazetenn Breizh. Unan eus krouerien embregerezh Coop Breizh, e gadoriad eo deuet bremañ da vezañ. Teñzorer kevredigezh Breizh-Kembre hag ezel oberiant eus Skol-Uhel ar Vro eo ivez.

and continued to foster fruitful and varied intellectual visits. Her knowledge of music allowed her to discover and support the careers of numerous talents such as Yann-Fañch Kemener, Anne Auffret or Denez Prigent.

Claude Sterckx

Born July 3, 1944 in Uccle (Belgium), Claude Sterckx is from a family of Belgian brewers. He discovered Brittany by accident: as a student he wanted to devote his masters thesis to the Romanization of a very foreign province. Hesitating between a choice of the Arab or Celtic worlds, he chose the latter because of his knowledge of English. It was during his studies in Rennes that he met his wife, Anne-Marie Salaün, and at this time he also made some solid friendships with people in the Breton movement. Once back in Belgium, he taught Celtic civilization at the free university of Brussels and collaborated with various Belgian and Breton historical associations (he has been president of the Belgian Society for Celtic Studies since 1987). With his wife, he worked to link Belgium and Brittany, and in 1975 he launched the idea of an International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (led by Henri Lecuyer for a number of years), an organization he presides today.

Jean-Pierre Vincent

Born in 1936 in Plélan-le-Grand, Jean-Pierre Vincent was 18 years old when he was introduced to the Breton culture by Pierre Roy whom he met through the Celtic Circle of Rennes. He devoted the spare time left from his teaching physical sciences, to working with the Celtic Circle, and served as its Treasurer for 30 years. In 1957 he encountered Kendal'ch and Robert Le Grand. From its creation in 1965, he presided over the Union Locale des Associations Kendal'ch (which later became the UPRACB and then Skeudenn Bro Roazhon) and then put his energy into the creation of the Per Roy Center in Saint-Vincent-sur-Oud and the management of the magazine Breizh. A pioneer in the adventure of Coop Breizh, which he presides today, he is also Treasurer of Breizh-Kembre and an active member of the Cultural Institute of Brittany.

Brittany loses a Giant Voice

Youenn Gwernig

1925-2006

Lois Kuter

Youenn Gwernig was born in Scaër (Finistère) in 1925. As a young man in the 1940s he learned bombarde and then bagpipes – biniou braz – which he played at weddings. During this period he became a friend of (and sometimes played with) Polig Monjarret, and in 1950 Youenn joined the newly formed Bagad Kemper. He earned a living as a woodworker and was a sculptor, but it was not easy.

Youenn Gwernig came to the United States in 1957 at the age of 32. His reasons were no different from many Bretons who preceded him. With a sister already in New York, emigration was a way to earn a better living for his family. But Youenn was also feeling uneasy with the direction Brittany seemed to be headed. Although today Brittany is alive with youth rooted in their heritage and comfortable with their Breton identity, in the 1950s there were many who felt Breton culture was to be abandoned like the horse and plow. Youenn Gwernig felt like a stranger in his own land and decided it would be better to be a stranger in a new land.

Arriving in New York, Youenn Gwernig worked as a dishwasher and waiter, but most of his twelve years there were spent using his wood-working skills in a factory which reproduced Louis XV style furniture – a job of dull assembly line work and a very long subway commute each day. With the supplemental income of his wife Suzig who worked in the coat check room of a bowling alley, the Gwernigs were able to provide a comfortable life for three daughters – Annaïg, Mari-Loeiza and Gwenola. But the money ran out when Suzig's mother – also in the U.S. – needed hospitalization and an operation. Without insurance, the bills piled up. In 1965, mother, daughter and granddaughters returned to Brittany while Youenn stayed behind to pay off debts.

By the time Youenn got back to Brittany in 1969, the debts were paid off and he was as poor as the day he left Brittany, but Youenn Gwernig had become known and respected in Brittany as a Breton language poet during his exile. If the United States held memories for Youenn of long and hard work hours, it also held memories as a place where he really started to write in Breton. During the years in New York he combed the Breton collection at the New York public library and sent for books from Brittany. The return mail carried Youenn's poems and stories to the publishing house Al Liamm.

Residence on Ryer Avenue in the Bronx introduced Youenn Gwernig to the unmelted pot of urban American cultures. Those who read his poems and stores and heard his songs met these people. But, one of Youenn's best known acquaintances in the U.S. was another Breton, Jack Kerouac, whose family (Le Bris de Kerouac) traces back to the Côtes d'Armor before its arrival in the "New World" in the 18th century. Born in Lowell, Massachusetts, Jack Kerouac was proud of both his Breton and Native American roots (see his book *Satori in Paris* for a description of his search for his Breton roots).

Youenn Gwernig became well known in Brittany, not because he befriended a famous writer like Kerouac, but because of his own talent as a singer, poet, novelist and wood sculptor, as well as defender of Breton freedom to be Breton. It was the desire to be Breton in Brittany as well as the desire to rejoin his family that took him back in 1969 to stay. A sense of freedom was immediate. In an article written in 1980 about Youenn Gwernig, Yvon Le Vaillant recounts how at 6 a.m. on Youenn's first morning back in the town of Huelgoat in the Arrez Mountains of central western Brittany, Youenn ran down to the lake bordering the town and yelled "no subway today!" Reassured by the echo of the lake he went back to bed.

After retuning to Brittany Youenn lived in a small village just outside Huelgoat – Locmaria Berrien. This was not a quiet retirement in the countryside – although Youenn loved long walks in the fields and woods of the area. Youenn pursued his talents as a writer, musician

and sculptor. The early 1970s was a period when "chanteurs engagés" – activist singers – spoke out. Gwernig raised his voice along side Glenmor, Gilles Servat, and Alan Stivell – among others - with texts that often included a call for social justice. The freedom to be a Celt is an important theme in Youenn Gwernig's songs and poetry.

In the 1970s Youenn used action as well as words to protest the meager place the Breton language was allowed on radio and television. He founded the association Radio-Télévision Bretagne (RTB) to support those who refused to pay television taxes. Youenn himself boycotted this tax and nearly had his belonging seized in court – a case he eventually won. From 1983 to 1990 Youenn served as the director of Breton language programming for France 3TV. He was not able to work miracles in expanding the presence of the Breton language on television, but no one would doubt he would try.

But it was in the role of bard that Youenn Gwernig was most comfortable and skilled. His song texts were often tri-lingual – Breton, English and French – as were his poems. He often included a tune or song from the American folk tradition ("Foggy Dew," "Bright Morning Stars are Shining"), and the music to many of his songs had a certain feel of American folk songs. Youenn loved the American people, for our wealth of heritages and traditions. But it was in the anonymity of American crowds and the grayness of New York that he came to write down many of his thoughts about his own identity, his feelings for his native Brittany, and the experience of emigration. He was awarded the prestigious Prix Xavier de Langlais in 1996 for the body of his work.

For his eloquence as a poet, songwriter, and novelist, and for his determination to speak up to defend Brittany and the Breton language, Youenn Gwernig is loved and respected.

To learn more:

While some of these thoughts come from my own very limited acquaintance with Youenn Gwernig and his family, much of the information about Youenn's life comes from the following sources.

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Yvon Le Vaillant, "Le barde des Monts d'Arrée" *Le Nouvel Observateur* 825, August 30-September 5, 1980).

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Discography

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An toull en nor / Le Trou dans le porte. Ar Majenn Editions 1972 (bilingual Breton-French poetry)

An diri dir / Stairs of steel / Des escaliers d'acier. Ar Majenn Editions 1976 (trilingual Breton-French-English poetry).

La Grand tribu. Grasset. 1982. (Novel originally published in Breton in *Al Liamm* as a series of short stories – the often humorous tale of a Breton who emigrates to New York and discovers he's a Celt).

Un dornad plu. Al Liamm 1997. (Bilingual Breton-English poetry)

Appelez-moi Ange. Blanc Silex. 2002. (a sequel of sorts to *La Grande tribu*.)

Breton lesson 7 / Kentel 7

From Natalie Novik

Numbers / An niveri

- 1 unan
- 2 daou
- 3 tri
- 4 pevar
- 5 pemp
- 6 c'hweh
- 7 seiz
- 8 eiz
- 9 nao
- 10 deg

That should not be too hard. *Unan* is like one, *daou* like two, *tri* like three, *nao* like nine. Then there are the middle ones, where you think you are going to toil forever: but *pemp* is like the Pentagon, *seiz* is like seven. So try repeating the whole series up and down until you know it.

What if we try further? It's not very difficult:

- 11 unneg (unan +deg)
- 12 daouzeg (unan + deg)
- 13 trizeg
- 14 pevarzeg
- 15 pemzeg
- 16 c'hwezeg
- 17 seiteg (be careful, you were beginning to get carried away!)
- 18 triwech (the old Celtic way of counting: 3 x 6)
- 19 naonteg
- 20 ugent (that's a tough one)

And after that, what do we do?

If you go up in tens, it's 30 = *tregont*, 40 = *daou-ugent* (2 x 20, the old Celtic way), 50 = *hanterkant* (1/2 of 100), 60 = *tri-ugent* (see how it works!), 70 is *deg ha tri-ugent*, 80 = *pevar-ugent* (even the French have retained this one from their Celtic past), and 90 is *deg ha pevar-ugent*.

Then 100 is *kant* (think centenary), 1000 is *mil*, 1000 000 *milion*, etc.

But what do we have between twenty and thirty?

It's easy: you are going to use *ugent* preceded by the word **warn** (over), preceded by the number you are looking for. For instance: 25 (25th anniversary of ICDBL, worth learning to say it in Breton, right?): **Pemp warn-ugent vloaz ICDBL**. *Vloaz* means years, *pemp* is five, *warn-ugent* is over twenty. After 30, the formula becomes even easier: for *tregont*, *daou-ugent*, you put **ha** (and) between the two numbers. 31 = *unan ha tregont*, 45 = *pemp ha daou-ugent*, etc.

Vocabulary / Geriadurig

Greetings: traditionally, there is no equivalent to "good morning" in Breton. In a rural society, it was much more important to greet each other with news about the weather. So in older times, a traditional greeting would have been: "**Brao eo an amzer**" (that's fine weather), or perhaps even more frequently "**Fall eo an amzer**" (that's bad weather we are having).

However, with urbanization and French influence and everything else considered, a normal greeting today would be "**Demad deoc'h**" (good day to you - plural or polite) or "**Demad dit**" (good day to thee). Note the pronunciation: *démat*, with the stress on the first syllable (the complete word would be *deizh*, day followed by *mad*, good) and the *d* changing into a *t* at the end of the word, something we will see is a rule in Breton.

To say good night: "**Noz vad deoh (dit)**" where again, the word *vad* (good) is pronounced *vat*.

In both cases, you can say simply "**Demad**" or **Noz vad**", you don't need to personify the greeting, particularly if you are talking to a group of people.

And to say goodbye, the Bretons usually use the shortened formula: **Kenavo!** This is the short for "ken a vo eur wec'h all" (until there is a next time), which might be heard in more formal contexts.

I was in the subway in Paris once with a bunch of Breton friends, and the French sitting next to us were trying to guess what language we were speaking, without much success. Then one of us left, saying "Kenavo!" and the French immediately recognized the word: "Kenavo, they said, kenavo... that's Breton, they must be Bretons!" Not that they warmed up to us, but at least they knew...

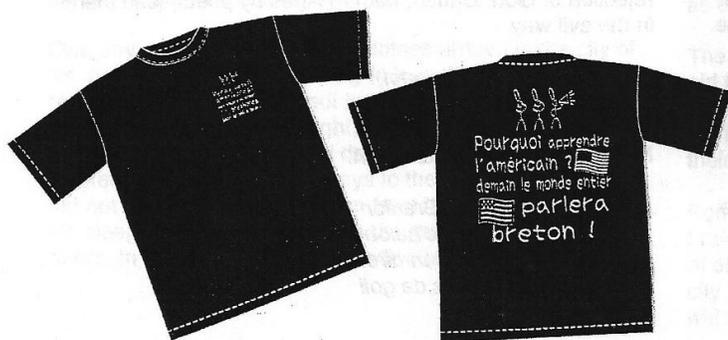


A T-Shirt with a Message!!!

Lois Kuter

When I first saw this T-Shirt in the catalog of Coop-Breizh I had some mixed feelings. Is this another anti-American smear that we get so frequently from France? Mais, non! This is simply a call to Breton speakers and learners to stop thinking of Breton as a "little language" and to look at it as a world language. "Who needs to learn [American] English? Tomorrow the entire world will speak Breton!"

The Breton version is on the front side of the T-shirt (over one's heart - approximately). The French version is in big bold letters filling the back of the T-shirt.



This T-shirt was the idea of Yoran (of the Yoran Embanner publishing house). Yoran happens to be a good buddy of mine, so I know he despises the invasion and aggressive marketing of the worst of American culture in Europe, but appreciates the diversity of world cultures (and that includes the U.S.A.). After all, where did the T-shirt first become "hip"?



Deep Inside a Breton Skull 12 - Investigation on Ker Ys

Jean Pierre Le Mat

*Petra 'zo nevez e Ker-Ys ?
Ma z'eo ken foll e yaouankiz
Mar glevan me ar biniou
Ar vombard hag an telennoù ?*

*E Ker-Ys n'eus netra nevez
Met ebatoù a vez bemdez
E Ker-Ys n'eus nemet traoù koz
Met ebatoù a vez bep noz.*

*What is new in the city of Ys ?
Where young people are so foolish
Where I hear the sound of biniou
bombard and harps ?*

*In the city of Ys, there is nothing new
But love affairs everyday
In the city of Ys, everything is old
But love affairs every night.*

The story of Ys is not a mere legend. It is printed so deeply in every Breton brain that we can be sure a forgotten belief, or a mysterious entity, is still alive behind this tale. Ker Ys carries with it an archetypal nightmare that we have kept and transmitted through dark nights and centuries until nowadays.

We keep the memory of a city of gold and marble, facing the ocean. The city is now under the sea, but nobody can think that it is ruined or fallen into dust. That is impossible. One day, Ys will emerge. "*Pa vo beuzet Paris, ec'h adsavo Ker-Ys*" muttered our ancestors. "*When Paris sinks, then the city of Ys will emerge again*".

The story begins like a Viking saga. Gradlon, king of the Breton realm of Cornwall, the south-west part of the Armorican peninsula, sailed with his warriors toward the North. After months and months of sea adventures, he besieged an old castle surrounded with the sea, lost in the mists of the northern islands. Gradlon killed the lord of the place, fell in love with his wife Malgven, and put his hands on his treasure. He escaped with Malgven and rode back to his ship on the back of Morvarc'h, a supernatural horse which can run on the waves of the sea.

The travel back to Kemper, the main city of Cornwall, lasted one year. During a terrible storm, Malgwen gave birth to a girl, who was named Dahud. Was Dahud the child of the mysterious dead lord, or of Gradlon? In any case, the mother died soon after the childbirth and, covered with her armour, she was buried in the sea.

The story says that Gradlon was a loving father for the baby, who had the beauty of her mother. Dahud grew up in Kemper, at the court of his father. But when she could, during nights lighted by the moon, she went to bathe naked in the sea nearby. A strange collusion was born between the girl among the waves and the immense ocean. One night, from a cliff, she threw her gold ring into the sea. A wave went up the rock and surrounded her. A traveller saw the kiss of the sea and heard the light laughter of the girl. He told the story in the Kemper market place, but the young people smiled because Dahud, now a young lady, inspired love in all of them.

At the height of her beauty, adorned with jewels and wearing a red silk dress, she asked her father Gradlon for a fantastic gift: a city surrounded by the sea. Gradlon could not deny anything to his daughter. Secretly, he asked architects, builders, carpenters, goldsmiths and the best craftsmen of the kingdom to build a town on a deserted beach. And the city of Ys rose, protected by high walls, challenging the sea.

Dahud had inherited the mysterious powers of her mother. She brought wealth and luck to the inhabitants of her city. According to some storytellers, she also got the help and support of the virgins of the Isle of Sein, priestesses of the old cult and heiresses of the ancient knowledge. By sorcery, tide gates were built in the wall surrounding the city, locked with bronze doors. The keys of the gates were given to the king. Gradlon kept them around his neck, and he supervised the opening of the waterworks every day.

Gradlon lived now in Ys. He had abandoned the government of Kemper city to the hermit Corentin, whom he made a bishop. And to another holy man, Gwenolé, he gave the land of Landevennec to build a monastery.

To the harbour of Ys came traders from every part of the world. The dragoons of the sea were put under the obedience of the Ys captains. Dahud supported their business of plundering and wrecking the rich ships cruising beyond the Isle of Sein.

The people of Ys lived for pleasures, lust, and the rejection of God. Dahud, named Ahès by poets, lead them in the evil way.

*Bodennoù drez zo diwanet,
Dor an ilizoù a zo serret,
War ar baourien o ouelañ,
E laosker ar chas d'o drailhañ.*

Ahès merc'h ar roue Gradlon

*Tan an ifern 'barzh e c'halon
Er penn kentañ deus an diroll
Ez a d'he heul Ker Ys da goll*

*Bushes of brambles grow
At the closed doors of the churches
On the poor crying people
The dogs are released*

*Ahès, daughter of king Gradlon
The fire of hell in her heart
First among the people
She pushes Ys to damnation*

The link between Dahud and the ocean had always been very close. She bathed naked during the moony nights. Were her lovers chosen by the ocean? Was it the ocean which make them bold enough to meet with the princess? But woe betide them! After a night of delights, Dahud brought them back to the door of her castle. To keep them unknown from the neighbourhood, she put a silk mask on their face which strangled them before the morning light. Then a black man appeared and took away the corpse far from Ys. Some fishermen saw him throwing the unfortunate lover in the sea pit of Plogoff. But nobody would dare to come close to the black man. It was told that his glance could kill.

*Sant Gwenole, gant kalonad
'Zo meur a wech kavet e zad
Ha gant glac'har an den Doue
En deus lavaret d'ar Roue*

*„Gradlon, Gradlon, taol mat evezh
,Barzh an dizurziou a ren Ahes
Rak tremenet, vo an amzer
Pa skuilho Doue e goler“*

*Saint Gwenole the brave
Often met with her father
And with the sadness of God made man
He said to the king*

*“Gradlon, Gradlon, be aware
About the disorders led by Ahes
The time will come
When God shows his anger”*

Gwenole tried to bring the city back to religious feelings, and cursed the princess who brought the people of Ys to perdition. But he could do nothing.

One day, a prince wearing red clothes arrived in the city of Ys, and Dahud fell immediately in love. But the prince repelled her, and she did not know how to charm and seduce him. One stormy night, Dahud promised to give to the prince anything he could desire. The demand of the mysterious lord was for the keys to the tide gates.

Dahud did not hesitate, and stole them from the old king during his sleep. The evil prince ran to the gates and opened the doors. In an instant, the city was flooded.

Gradlon awoke and rode on Morvarc'h toward the mainland. Dahud jumped behind him. Then Saint Gwenole appeared and asked the king to get rid of the girl. Gradlon could not abandon his beloved daughter and Saint Gwenole, with his crosier, struck Dahud who was swallowed in the waters.

Dahud became a mermaid, and it is said she still can be seen sometimes, leaning on a rock, combing her golden hair in the clearness of the moon.



The legend of Ys is usually considered a Christian tale. The sinners had been punished. But let us look more carefully.

Morvarc'h, the sea-horse, does not exist among the Christian symbols. But in Greek mythology, Poseidon, the god of the waters, was also the master of the horses. Is there a link between the Celts and the Greeks, or a common origin of their myths?

What puzzles me is that it was not God who destroyed Ys, as he destroyed Sodom and Gomor'rah. It was a mysterious prince, usually seen as the Devil. Why this inversion? Who was this supernatural being, if neither God nor Devil? Poseidon also loved human women. And the city of Ys was under his jurisdiction. Maybe Dahud was his daughter, and not Gradlon's. Maybe our story is older than Christianity, far older than Corentin and Gwenole... A story as old as the Flood, as old as the Atlantis...

The city disappeared, but was not destroyed. Dahud, the girl born on the ocean, was not damned, but she got a reward. She was transformed into a mermaid. And other stories tell that the inhabitants of Ys are still living there, in their hidden city.

Perhaps one day the scientists will find that, in the reptilian brain of the Bretons, there are traces of the oceanic origin of all life. They will also find in it the forgotten colors of a city of gold and marble, and fragrances of a wonderful girl with golden hair.

NEW MUSIC FROM BRITTANY

A Book Review and Introduction to Breton Composer Joseph-Guy Ropartz

Mathieu Férey et Benoît Menut. *Joseph-Guy ROPARTZ ou Le pays inaccessible*. Genève, Suisse: Mélophiles, Editions Papillon, 2005. 166 pages (in French).

Reviewed by Keith Davies Jones

Joseph-Guy Ropartz (Roparz) was born in Guingamp (Gwengamp), Côtes du Nord (now Côtes d'Armor) in 1864. His family roots were in Finistère, and his father, Sigismond Ropartz, a lawyer, was a keen student of Breton language and folklore, whose historical work – *Guingamp – études pour servir à l'histoire du tiers-état en Bretagne* is still available. Joseph, at first following in his father's footsteps, graduated with a law degree from the University of Angers, but once articulated in Paris, music became an irresistible force; he abandoned his legal career and began studies at the Paris Conservatoire with Théodore Dubois and Massenet, and subsequently with César Franck, who became a powerful influence in his creative life. In 1894 Ropartz was appointed as director of the Conservatoire de Nancy, where he remained for 25 years, galvanizing the musical life of the city, and writing many of his greatest works. In 1919 he was appointed as director of the newly repatriated Conservatoire de Strasbourg. In 1929 he retired to his family home in Lanloup, Côtes du Nord, where he died in 1955 at the age of 91.

It is interesting that anyone who has written in English about this composer sees him pretty much in the French tradition – and more especially as a disciple of César Franck. Writers in French however stress the strong Breton flavour of his work - "l'influence bretonne leur donne une saveur originale et un charme délicieux". The composer's own writings are full of poetic descriptions of the landscape of Brittany, and its inspirational effects on his music - "en Bretagne, pays de landes immenses où se dresse parfois le squelette d'un chêne émondé, pays de silencieuses forêts"..... Ropartz was in fact an accomplished poet; he published two volumes of his own verse, and translated Heine into French.

Many of his early orchestral works, such as 'La Cloche des morts' (1887), 'Les Landes' (1888) and 'Dimanche breton' (1893), were overtly inspired by the culture and landscape of Brittany; later, these influences would

become more subtle. Many of his most evocative scores were written between 1905 and 1914. They include 'La Chasse du Prince Arthur', inspired by Celtic history and legend, and the 3rd and 4th Symphonies. Between these two powerful symphonic works he composed his opera 'Le Pays', generally considered to be his masterpiece. This intense, passionate and beautiful work is perhaps the greatest story of 'hiraezh' in music. Tual, a Breton sailor is shipwrecked in Iceland, and finds himself conflicted between his love for the Icelandic girl he has married, and the land he has left behind, and his indecision eventually destroys him. The libretto, by Ropartz himself, is based on L'Islandaise, a short story written by his friend, Charles Le Goffic (1863-1932), which struck within the composer a very deep resonance. At the beginning of Act 2, Tual sings of his longing for his homeland:

Le pays seul est fidèle à l'absent.
Sans se lasser de l'attendre, il l'attend:
Mais l'absent reviendra-t-il?
(Only a homeland is faithful to an absent man.
Patiently it waits:
But will the absent man come back?)

Burdened as he was by difficult administrative duties in Strasbourg, the post-war years were less productive, but in 1928, as a 'prelude' to his retirement to Brittany, where he would devote himself full-time to composition, he wrote one of his best known and loveliest pieces, 'Prélude, Marine et Chansons', for flute, violin, viola, 'cello and harp. 'Chansons' is based on the Breton carol *Peh trouz zo ar en douar*, roughly translated as 'Joy to the World'.

'Thèmes populaires breton' appear increasingly often in Ropartz's work after 1929, and he was one of the first composers to set a Breton language text, *Son ar Miziou* (1936) for SATB. Altogether his compositions number more than 200, including 6 symphonies, orchestral and choral works, chamber music and songs. In the last decade of his life he received many honours, including the Légion d'honneur from the French government, and an honorary doctorate from the Conservatoire de St Brieuc. In Rennes (Roazhon), the modern capital of Brittany, the main boulevard has been named after him, as have streets in 18 other towns and cities throughout Brittany. Both his birthplace in Guingamp and his family home in Lanloup have been preserved and are open to the public.

From this book, I have learned much about the life and work of Joseph-Guy Ropartz, whose birthplace in Gwengamp I visited many years ago. He was a prolific letter writer, and the authors have had access to what is apparently a voluminous archive of surviving correspondence. The picture that emerges is one of a conscientious, sensitive, generous, courageous, forgiving and warm-hearted composer, dedicated to his art and to his breton homeland. One of his last songs, *Prière du combattant*, written during the Second World War and remaining unpublished, includes the lines “*Seigneur, ce que nous demandons, ce n’est pas la mort de nos ennemis...*” Nowhere is there any trace of the anti-semitic virus that infected some of his contemporaries (most notoriously Vincent d’Indy). We learn of his apparently unhappy marriage, but little of his termagant wife, who had no interest in music and was seldom seen with him in public. Who was she, and how did they meet? This is one of a number of ends that the authors leave frustratingly loose. They tell us that the couple had 3 sons who joined the army in 1914 and went to the front, but not what might have happened to them. Above all, this is a book written by musicians for musicians. There are succinct analyses and musical examples of all his major works, from which emerge a clear image of his personal stylistic fingerprints; a complete list of compositions and a selected discography. For many years Ropartz has been largely overlooked, now it seems that that the dictates of fashion have changed and his time has come. Though much of his music remains unpublished or out of print, there is already an extensive discography, much of it on the French *Timpani* label. His art is personal, subtle and complex, its heart and soul is Breton. Férey and Menut (a native of Brest) have taken us on a journey of discovery that reveals some of its inner secrets, and will surely help to make this music accessible to a wider audience now and in the future.

Some Resources:

Association Joseph-Guy Ropartz:
<http://guyropartz.chez-alice.fr/index.html>

Editions Papillon:
<http://www.editions-papillon.ch/>

Timpani Records:
<http://www.timpani-records.com/>

Keith Davies Jones.
Composers of Brittany
Welsh Music/Cerddoriaeth Cymru
Cyf.X Rhif. 9/10 Hâf 2006 p 31-36

New Recordings from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

**Dastum. Pays Bigouden / Ar Vro Vigoudenn –
Sonneurs et Chanteurs Traditionnels.** La Bretagne
des Pays 2. Dastum. DAS 150. 2 CDs 54’45 & 63’54.

As one can always expect from Dastum this is a beautifully documented and carefully prepared CD – in this case the work primarily of members of Dastum Bro Gerne. As Dominig Bouchaud - President of this branch of Dastum in the Cornouaille - points out, despite a healthy oral tradition, the songs and dances of the Bigouden country are not as well known as the gwerziou and kan ha diskan of central western Brittany. This double CD includes 39 selections from recordings dating from 1900 to 1993 to show that the Bigouden country is indeed alive with song and dance, and that this is definitely worth a close listen.

The introductory section of the notes which present the Bigouden area point out that this region of southwestern Brittany (found to the west of the city of Quimper) includes 20 communes and a population of some 50,000 people with Pont l’Abbé as its capital. All tourist books include pictures of women wearing the high tubular coiffe unique to this area, but it is interesting to learn that it was a coiffe from an earlier period which ended in a spiral that gave the name bigouden to this region. That coiffe suggested the shape of a snail – “bigourneau” in French, and “bigouden” in Breton. Tourist books often show also the beautiful yellow and orange embroidery found on both women’s and men’s costumes of this region.

The introductory notes of the CD also briefly present the history, economic and social identity of the Bigouden region – and a cultural identity today supported by the presence of the Breton language spoken by older residents and young learners. From the Bigouden country came two great Breton language writers – Pierre-Jakez Hélias (known for *The Horse of Pride*) and Youenn Drezen who based much of his writing in the mid 20th century on the everyday life of the region.

Once this groundwork is laid, the notes present the music. The paired biniou and bombard have always had a stronghold in this region of Brittany and sonneurs included all sorts of music in their repertoire and experimented in the construction of instruments well

before other regions of Brittany. This was a region where innovation was encouraged in piping as well as dance.

For linguists and those with an interest in regional variations of the Breton language, the introductory notes about the language of the songs – all in Breton – will be of interest. While songs reflect the uniqueness of Breton spoken in the Bigouden area, they also reflect a desire to use the “best” or “most proper” Breton – often viewed as that of the Léon.

In just some 20 pages the jacket notes by a variety of authors do an excellent job to present the Bigouden region and its instrumental, vocal, and dance traditions. But, the bulk of the 78 pages of the CD notes are devoted to presenting the song texts – in Breton with a French translation, and the *sonneurs* and their music found on the CDs. Although there is good biographical information about the bombard and biniou players, and a profile of two collectors of music, the introductions to the singers are much briefer. Two dozen photographs show Bigoudens from the past in dance and performance, as well as a visual introduction to some musicians on the CD.

This is a CD that might have several different listening audiences. Those interested in the bombard and biniou will forgive the often poor sound quality of the recordings given the virtuosity of the performances and the brilliant style of bombard playing in this part of Brittany. A recording of Alan-Pierre Guéguen made in 1900 on wax cylinder at the Paris Universal Exposition is remarkable in the quality of sound and in presenting a true virtuoso of the bombard. Another early recording features Louis Guéguen (1892-1962) on bombard in pair with Marcel Lebouc with a suite of *gavotte*, *bal à deux*, and *jabadao*. This is also a show piece for bombard. A biographical note about Guéguen mentions that he also tended a *café-épicerie* called “Au biniou Breton” where holding dances on Sundays met with great disapproval from the local clergy, earning him and his family excommunication.

Other paired *sonneurs* from the Bigouden area included on the CDs are Bernez Le Breton and Hervé Villieu (who play the one slower air on these instruments) and Pierre Diquéliou and Pierre Péron. Five selections are included of the pairing of Yann-Kaourintin Ar Gall and Bernez Le Breton and one of Y-K Ar Gall with Danny Tanneau. These not only show off very well the style of playing for dances and some tunes one would find as part of weddings, but also feature a bombard player - Ar Gall - who played a very key role in the transmission of music

from an older generation to the current one. Born in 1945, Ar Gall started to learn the bombard as a teen. Sadly he died at the early age of 50 in 1995. While those who are not fans of the very high pitched biniou and strident bombard may find the quality of sound all the more abrasive, those who love these instruments will enjoy and appreciate performances by the masters found on these recordings.

There is one lone accordion player on the CDs, Pierre Raphalen (1917-1987), who was one of the first to play the piano accordion in this region. Although this is a short solo recording made in 1939, he often played in pair with a bombard as well as with jazz bands when they were in style. The strength of the bombard-biniou couple in the Bigouden area meant that accordion never became as prominent an instrument as it did in other areas of Brittany.

While *sonneurs* were certainly prominent in music making in the Bigouden area, this double CD places a big emphasis on the song tradition. Interestingly, just two men can be found among the fifteen singers on the CDs. While the majority of the voices seem to be from singers who have a certain seniority – even one 92 year old - the voices are all strong and melodious, and in contrast to the recordings of the *sonneurs*, the sound quality of even the earlier recordings from the 1950s are excellent.

The themes for the songs are not unique to the Bigouden area even if they have been chosen because the melodies and rhythms are characteristically Bigouden. You hear tales of women being carried off to sea by the English or other sailors (in many versions), murder, bad marriage choices, jilted brides and the loss of a young lady’s honor, and disappointed suitors. I particularly enjoyed the beautiful voice of Nicole Pochic with a 6-minute song recounting the life of Joan of Arc. Two singers were included for more than one selection. Marie-Jeanne Le Lay sings five different songs, including “Tri Martolod Yaouank” which has become famous through its adaptation by Alan Stivell. Four songs recorded in 1956 of Marie Le Dréau are included, including a “counting song” of days of the week where each verse adds an increasing number of animal sounds to the chorus. This singer is perhaps my favorite for her very strong and spirited voice. But there are no “stars” here and all the songs are a joy to listen to.

The recording ends with 4 versions of a very well known song of the Bigouden region, “Al labousig er c’hoad,” all recorded by Joël Montfort in the 1970s. This is a song noted by Pierre-Jakez Hélias in his book *The Horse of*

Pride as one he loved to hear his mother sing. Each one of the versions to close the second CD as well as a version found on the first CD have a different melody and varied text – showing how innovation is part of the oral tradition.

The transmission of song and instrumental tunes is fortified in Brittany by the work of collectors such as Joël Montfort cited above. This CD also pays homage to René Hénaff (1927-2006) who was a pioneer of collecting in the 1950s. From the famous Hénaff family of pâté canneries, he was a piper and was active in stimulating musical activities of the Bigouden area. With the encouragement of his brother-in law, Loeiz Ropars – another pioneer in collecting and a key figure in the revival of traditional music in the “mountains” of central western Brittany – René Hénaff began to collect from Breton language singers and storytellers of the Bigouden. His recordings are a precious gift.

Thank you, Dastum, for presenting the rich traditions of the Bigouden region. As one who loves the traditional unaccompanied songs of Brittany and the paired playing of bombard and biniou, this is a very welcome addition to my library of Breton music.

Dastum. 44. *Chants et Musiques à Danser.* En Loire-Atlantique 2. Dastum 44 D44 002. 64’03.

This is the second CD produced by this branch of Dastum based since 1992 in the department of Loire-Atlantique. The first CD focused on songs for “marches” – which in Brittany are a slower amble with the swing of a dance. This new CD features 30 selections of vocal and instrumental music for a variety of traditional dances found in the Loire-Atlantique – avant-deux (of several sorts), scottish, trompeuse, polka piquée, maraichine, aéroplane, mazurka – Breton style, rond and bal paludier, and quadrilles à la français, anglais, and américain. These are couple dances, contra dances, and “square dances” with origins dating to the 16th century to the late 19th century.

In featuring different “pays” of the Loire-Atlantique as well as different voices and instruments, the CD accomplishes well its goal of giving listeners a sample of the diversity of styles and rhythms to be found in this area of southeastern Brittany.

As is the case with all Dastum productions the introductory material and notes for each selection which accompany the CD provide a wealth of information. The variety and origins of dances are discussed and a history

of the study of dance traditions of this area and the collection of music is also outlined, noting the challenge of getting a complete documentation in cases where dances and dancing have been abandoned.

Notes also point out that song was the most widespread accompaniment for dancing in Loire-Atlantique. And this underlines what many of us consider a wonderful and unique element of Breton dance music. Although fest-noz bands are hot today, and sonneurs, fiddlers and accordion players have been prized for big events like weddings, the voice – all on its own - is used throughout Brittany to empower dance. The notes to this CD describe two different styles of vocal accompaniment that you hear on the CD. There are “response” styles songs where a leader sings a verse to have a group repeat it – common for the older dances done in a circle. Often singers would be dancing as they sang. And, there is a solo vocal style called “gavottage” where a singer is separated from the dancers like an instrument player would be. Here many simple syllables may replace or be interspersed with words to keep the rhythm – a style similar to liltin in Scotland and Ireland or the *turlutte* of Quebec.

While I am very familiar with the response style of singing from the songs for dance in the Pays d’Oust et Vilaine, this is the first time I have heard “gavotting.” Both the short archival examples and the long (4 and 8 minute) sequences sung by Marc Clérvet for the dance tunes for avant-deux and quadrilles français are impressive in their vocal virtuosity. And then there’s a series of short songs – with words and not just syllables – for the polka piquée “gavotted” by Barberine Blaise. Don’t bother to tune the fiddle! No offense attended to the fine *violon* you will hear on this CD.

This CD includes a few short archival recordings, but most selections are more recent reinterpretations of older material collected by the musicians and singers on the CD. This results in a nice mix of strong young voices and instrumentalists who are on top of their game. Patrick Bardoul sings and plays button accordion, Jean-Luc Revault plays *violon*, François Robin plays veuze, and Gérard Zaorski-Bordais plays accordion. You also find a very nice duet of violon (Frédéric Bouley) and trumpet (Bertrand Coudrais) for the “quadrille américain” – a popular dance of the second half of the 19th century that might have resembled an American square dance in formation, but not at all in its music heard here. Singers include Marc Clérvet, Patrick Bardoul, and Barberine Blaise – already mentioned – but also Sylvain Janig Juteau and Janick Pénigvel who do a bit of “gavotting.” Roland Guillou and Roland Brou lead a chorus of nine

other singer in two response style songs for the rond and bal paludier. These are impeccably performed but the absolute unity of the nine responding voices seemed a bit too “smooth” for me. The lack of a certain slight disunity in the responding voices made these particular performances seem a bit “rehearsed.”

The notes for each selection on this CD include words to songs (which are sung in French) as well as an interesting description of the dances and their geographic spread in Loire-Atlantique (and sometimes beyond). For each selection the performers are noted as well as who collected the song or tune and from whom and when. A dozen photos bring performers to life.

I like the fact that this CD made me want to get up and dance – even though I have never learned any of these dances. And from the footsteps audible in the background, these musicians were definitely not recording in a sterile studio setting. While the notes provide a learning opportunity for those who want to delve into the dances and music of the Loire-Atlantique, this recording is just great listening.



HEARD OF, BUT NOT HEARD

The following short notes are based on reviews and notes found in the following magazines from Brittany: *Ar Men* 154 (Sept.-Oct. 2006), *Armor* 440 (Sept. 2006), *Musique Bretonne* 197 (Jul-Aug. 2006) and 198 (Sept.-Oct. 2006)

Arz Nevez and Bijaya Vaidya. *So Close So Far*. An Eost Productions.

The Breton string quartet Arz Nevez collaborates with Nepalese musician Bijaya Vaidya in a composition done originally for the Théâtre de Cornouaille in 2005 and a tour which included a stop at the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient.

Dan ar Bras. *Acoustic*. Keltia Musique KMCD 177. This is a welcome re-edition of an Lp which came out in 1984 and was released on the Green Linnet label in 1985. As the title hints, it features the acoustic guitar. Added are four pieces from an Lp of various guitarists performing Irish music.

Michel Aumont. *Souffle de lune*. An Naer Produktion. NAER 901.

This is the second solo recording by clarinet master Michel Aumont who uses various ranges of clarinets in a variety of styles of music.

Black Label Zone. *Kilt ou double*. Self-produced. This is the third recording by this bagpipe group with rock beat and a Scottish and Breton swing. Jean Cras. *Oeuvres pour piano, melodies, l'oeuvre pour orchestre*. Timpani 1c1033, 1c1085, 2c2037. This is a reissue of three recordings of this Breton composer performed by the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg with pianist Alain Jacquon and cellist Henri Demarquette.

Dastum Bro Dreger. *Laer evel al lin*. Encyclopédie Sonore du Trégor-Goëlo No. 8. CD and DVD. This new CD in a series focusing on the spoken word focuses on the linen industry and sail-making that were once so important to the economy of the Tregor region of northern Brittany. It includes memories of farmers and weavers from this region collected by Ifig Troadeg, and transcriptions and more documentation can be accessed via a PDF file. The DVD “Mémoire du lin” produced by Loïc Chapron and Ifig Troadeg is also part of the package.

36e Festival Interceltique de Lorient. Keltia Musique KMCD 175.

This is a compilation of various performers at the 2006 Inter-Celtic Festival held in Lorient. Australia was the featured country in 2006.

Eric Gorce and Richard Bévillon. *Apprenez les danses bretonnes No. 9 – Kerne Izel*. Du-mañ ha Duhont. DMDH 01.

Eric Gorce on bombard and Richard Bévillon with biniou koz provide the music for this ninth in a series of CDs presenting and teaching dances of various regions of Brittany. They are masters of the music of Lower Cornouaille and this CD shows off the subtle differences to be found in gavottes of Fouesnant, Pont l'Abbé or Pont-Aven. This is a great showcase for these excellent sonneurs as well as a welcome addition to a series of CDs for dancers.

Kreiz Breizh Akademi. *Norkst*. Innacor INNA 21055. This features compositions and arrangements by Erik Marchand, Keyvan Chemironi, Thierry Robin, Ross Daly, Hasan Yarimdünya, and Norkst. It is the result of two years of work by 16 young musicians and singers in classes with masters of oriental, Balkan and Breton traditions.

Tristan Le Govic. *Dasson ar gallon*. Self-produced. TCD 01. This is Le Govic's first CD and features solo harp with traditional Breton tunes, Irish melodies and some of his

own compositions. Le Govic studied under Mariannig Larc’hantec as well as Annie Chaylade and spent time in Ireland. He’s off to Scotland to learn more.

Audrey Le Jossec and Nicolas Quémener. *Accordéon-Guitar – Coup de Coeur*. Rikou Soner / L’Asso 6 de Guéméné RSCD 267.

This is a duo made up of accordion player Audrey Le Jossec and acoustic guitarist Nicolas Quémener – both excellent musicians in an unusual duet of instruments.

André Le Meut and Philippe Bataille. *Bombarde et orgue – Sonamb Ihuel*. Coop Breizh CD 985.

This pairing of bombard with massive church organ follows in the footsteps of the pioneers of this combination, Jean-Claude Jégat and Louis Ihuel. Dances are included as well as cantiques – hymns that are particularly well expressed through this duo.

Gerry O’Connor and Gilles Le Bigot. *In Concert*. Lughnasa Music LUG CD 963. Keltia Musique.

This is a live recording of a concert given in Douarnenez by Irish fiddler Gerry O’Connor and Breton guitarist Gilles Le Bigot. Each is a master of his instrument, well known in the world of Celtic music. They have been friends and collaborators for some 15 years.

Potes Flor’ Roc’h vran, *musiques et danses de Léon*.

This is the second CD by Florence Pinvidic (button accordion) and Florence Glorion (piano accordion) with songs in French and Breton and some harmonica and recorder included in the mix. The repertoire is largely drawn from the Léon region of northwestern Brittany.

Yann Raoul. *Les Figurants*. L’OZ Produccion L’OZ 48.

Yann Raoul was a member of the groups Arvest and Anjel IK. This new solo CD features his compositions of song texts and music. Most song texts are in Breton and speak to ecological and social issues – destruction of the environment, greed of the powerful, etc.

Joseph-Guy Ropartz. *Pêcheur d’Islande, Rhapsodie pour violoncello, Oedipe à Colone*. Timpani 1c1095.

This is a new recording of three pieces by Breton composer Joseph-Guy Ropartz performed by the Orchestre de Bretagne, conducted by Kirill Karabits. “Pêcheur d’Islande” is a composition inspired by Pierre Loti’s book of the same name. “Rhapsodie pour violoncello” was composed in 1928 on a Breton theme and is performed here by cellist Henri Demarquette. The third piece, “Oedipe à Colone” was composed in 1914 for a theatrical presentation of a play by Sophocles.

Soldat Louis. *Sales gosses*. Atlantik-Artec Musiques. CD 2113.

The ever popular rock group Soldat Louis with a new CD where they speak their mind and show indifference to the need to be politically correct.

Sonerien Du. *Be ... new!* EOG Production.

Like the Rolling Stones, this fest-noz band just keeps going, and this is their 17th recording.

Strollad. *Le Temps du télégramme*. BAba Music/Strollad. BA/0013.

This group is described in a brief note on their CD as “ska celtique.” A bit hard for me to imagine, but you “ska” fans out there should be interested.



Celebrate Saint-Patrick’s Day with a Breton Bagad

The Kevrenn-Alre, one of the top bagads of Brittany, will be participating in the New York City Saint-Patrick Day Parade on March 17, 2007.

This long-running and massive parade starts at the Cathedral of Saint Patrick and runs down 5th Avenue, including over 250,000 participants and 200 musical/performing groups. This is not the first time a bagad from Brittany has been a part of it, but the Bagad Alre is worth a trip to New York.

If catching a glimpse of them during the parade seems like just too little exposure for you, they will also be performing on March 19th.

This is an initiative which links Bretons in New York, the bagad, and Bretons in Brittany with a particular aim to prepare some business links between Bretons at home and in New York.

For more information, check out the following websites:

<http://kevrenn-alre.com>

<http://www.saintpatricksdaysparade.com>

<http://bzhnetwork.com>

<http://institut-locarn.com>

The contact person in New York is Olivier Balavoine and his e-mail address is obalavoine@yahoo.fr

Central Brittany Journal – An English-Language Magazine from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

There is no better introduction to this magazine than that given on the website: www.thecbj.com by the Editor, Gareth Lewis

We - myself, my wife Lin, and our three children, Bethan, Wendy and Samuel - moved to Central Brittany a little over ten years ago, drawn by its exceptional natural beauty, the richness of its wild life and the warmth of its people. Over the years we have realised that, like many other rural areas, Central Brittany is faced with an apparently intractable economic problem: the heavy reliance of modern agricultural techniques is leading to a steady reduction in the number of jobs with the result that more and more local people move away from the region, which in turn leads to shops and businesses having to close, giving rise to further loss of work, and a continuing cycle of economic decline. One factor which is helping to reverse this trend is that people are moving to the area from other countries and other regions of France, bringing with them new ideas, fresh initiative, and contacts with the wider world which could potentially be of benefit to everyone living in the region. We decided that we could contribute to this process by creating a local, English-language journal which would help to welcome people to the area, provide information about services and businesses, and be a forum for the exchange of ideas. The first issue appeared in April 2004 and sold almost 600 copies. Circulation has now increased to 2 500 per month and the magazine is now sold in shops and supermarkets across the region.

For just 1 euro the Central Brittany Journal provides 38 to 48 pages published 10 times a year. While the magazine continues a focus on the area of Carhaix, Callac, Huelgoat and Goarec where it started, it covers a wide geographical and topical range and is sold throughout Brittany and is available through subscription.

The magazine is the work of the Lewis family who moved to Callac from Yorkshire, England in 1994. It is clearly a labor of love. Gareth Lewis is the editor, his wife Lin handles advertising and daughter Wendy provides ample illustrations – color and line drawings. The magazine includes a great deal of photography of landscapes, houses and streets, plants and flowers. (While I could find no credits for the photography, they are no doubt a product of Lewis family talent).

Gardening, flowers and stories are the editor's passion, and these figure strongly in the pages of the magazine. There is a certain "quaintness" imbued through the drawings (which reminded me greatly of ones I have seen in the 19th century travel books by American and English writers I have read). The figures from Breton history and folk tales are charming, and it is easy to enjoy the bucolic beauty of small farms and country life portrayed in the magazine. But, there is definitely a very practical side to this magazine, and the overall impression I got after enjoying 10 issues – reading cover to cover – is of a magazine that would be invaluable to new British arrivals to Brittany – whether for a short holiday stay or as more permanent residents.

One-third to one-half of the magazine pages are devoted to advertising. In many cases these allow British newcomers to find all the comforts of home – restaurants or tea shops where you can find tea bags, bacon, sausages, and any number of British products. Bed and Breakfast places, restaurants and pubs are advertised, but one can also find books, second hand or new furniture, crafts, art, antiques, bike and car repair, insurance, computers, pet care, travel services, and cars for sale. There are plenty of resources for plants, gardening services, agricultural equipment, and a big space is allotted to building equipment and services – from septic tank diggers to plumbing, windows, bull dozer rentals and painting – reflecting the fact that many new arrivals are restoring old homes. Space is also devoted to real estate for sale or rent. Last but not least one can also find French language services – translators and teachers and people prepared to help with administrative and business forms.

For those not in need of a service, regular features of the magazine include fairy tales, an Aesop's fable comic strip format, gardening tips, and notes on herbs, as well as recipes. Each issue features a local plant and/or animal from wood pigeons and robins to toads, hoverflies, and hares, and from bracken, yew, and mushrooms to penny wort and yarrow. Regular features also include short notes to introduce new businesses or events in central Brittany. Letters to the editor add to this news, and there's a "what's on" local events column. Not to be missed is the tea shop review, and there is often a little guide to a local town or village and its attractions. There's a regular technology column on computers and a website workshop as well as a more recent feature called "Mr. Biznuz" giving tips on starting up a business. Book

reviews (English language books on Brittany) and word games add yet more diversity to the content.

While not always in every issue, a profile and biographical sketch is often included of people who have moved to Brittany. Short notes often provide tips on the workings of French government, travel to the UK, and the ins and outs of taxes or getting a driving license. You will also find notes on how to find cricket on the radio or British programs on TV. Short notes have also introduced the Brittany spaniel, etiquette for playing “boules” and numerous figures from Breton history: Saint Ronan, King Gradlon, or Paul Aurilein. The June 2006 issue (no. 25) also introduced the idea of France as a “hexagon,” pointing out how Brittany doesn’t fit very neatly into this design. And that issue also clarified that there are in fact five departments of Brittany, and that people in Brittany are unhappy that the Loire-Atlantique was not returned to Brittany after World War II.

Each issue contains one or two longer articles and these have included memories of a Breton wedding in 1937, a history of Brittany’s storytelling tradition, a feature on springtime and its plants, birds and customs, as well as a portrait of some of the towns and village of central Brittany and the history of their development. Other features have given a good lesson on history, including megaliths, Jacques Cartier, Anne of Brittany, the history of the textile industry and linen production, and a history of Brittany’s relationship with Britain. All of these are short, but very well done, with maps and illustrations. In perusing the website for the journal I found a very interesting article in the February 2006 issue (one I did not receive from the editor) on “Brittany: The Argument for Independence.” While most of this article looks at Breton history it closes with a strong statement on “the future”:

The arguments in favour of Breton devolution are so overwhelming that it is almost inevitable that the region will acquire a greater level of control over its own affairs at some point in the future. The question is when and in what form? Many people are fearful of the phrase ‘Breton independence’ because it conjures up an image of militancy, but, if it is true that Brittany does need a greater degree of autonomy before it can move forward, then it would be those people who defend the status quo that posed the greatest threat to its future.

While I was struck by the amount of information directed to people seeking all the comforts of “home” – the British Isles – in the 10 issues I reviewed, the magazine does a nice job of gradually introducing English speakers to Brittany. There is a presence for the Breton language in the magazine. Almost every

issue contains two or more Breton language proverbs, and there is an occasional word game to match English and Breton vocabulary (with words drawn from Yoran Embanner’s Mini Breton-English/English-Breton dictionary which is introduced to potential learners). The features on local plants and animals include the Breton name as well as French name, and in these small ways the presence of the Breton language in central western Brittany is noted.

In a larger way, Central Brittany Journal No. 10 (April 2005) featured the Breton language as its main article, comparing its situation with that of Welsh, and gently urging readers to consider learning Breton:

What is the point of learning Breton? Whatever the future might hold for the Breton language, it is still the language of Brittany: place names are derived from the Breton language; it is the language best suited to describe the Breton countryside; Breton proverbs illustrate Breton life; and it is the original language of a rich wealth of local stories and folklore. It makes sense for anyone who has decided to move to Brittany or who has bought a house here and who wants to feel at home in their new country to learn at least a little of its language. (p. 12)

In issue No. 18 (December 2005) the editor devotes the two-page centerfold of the magazine to a map with the names of towns in Breton (and a listing of Breton-French equivalents). Also noted is the availability of a Breton language road map from Ofis ar Brezhoneg. In the editorial to that issue, Gareth Lewis takes a more militant stance on the Breton language:

When I first came to Brittany, I knew nothing about this subject [Breton place names] beyond the fact that I often lost my way when driving, due to people daubing black paint over the place names on sign posts. Now I realize that the Breton spellings are much closer to the names that people have always called the places where they live than the new, official spelling; and that the old names have been subjected to a systematic campaign of eradication – for a while the post office would not deliver letters if the address contained a Breton spelling. English speakers often find the Breton spelling easier to pronounce than the new spelling, and I therefore thought it appropriate for the Journal to lend a little support to the cause of Breton place names. (p. 7)

And this journal certainly supports the cause of helping British arrivals settle in to a new home in Brittany and better understand and appreciate the history and culture of their new home.

For more information about this journal and to subscribe, consult the website: www.theobj.com. A year's subscription for the U.S. is \$45 which can be paid via PenPal (info@nezertbooks.net).

The British "Invasion" of Brittany

While it is clear that the influx of new residents to regions of central Brittany has been beneficial in the creation of new businesses, an influx of children in local schools and the renovation of old houses that might otherwise become ruins, the numbers of foreigners moving in can be intimidating to Breton residents of a small town or village. "Integration" is a key word in discussions of arriving British homeowners. While I have not seen a lot on this topic, and the impact of British (and other new arrivals) on Breton life is yet to be seen, the following statistics drawn from an article in the September 2005 issue of *Armor Magazine* ("6,000 familles britanniques en Côtes d'Armor") gives pause for thought. These are drawn from a study done by the General Council of the department of Côtes d'Armor to help them plan in incorporating a sizable and growing population from the British Isles.

The article notes that in the past 15 years more than 6,000 families have bought residences in the Côtes d'Armor department: of these 384 in 2000, 518 in 2001, 692 in 2002, and 917 in 2003. An additional 4,000 settlers split time between a home in Côtes d'Armor and Britain and an additional 1,900 have a second residence for vacationing in Brittany. The cost for houses has risen 67% in the past four years. In looking at demography, 51% of British arrivals in the Côtes d'Armor are retirees or non-working people, 15% are looking for work, 20% are salaried workers, and 14% have an independent business. 197 new businesses have been created since 1999 of which 60 were created in 2002 and 67 in 2003. 50% of British residents in the Côtes d'Armor have only a rudimentary grasp of French; just 11% speak it fluently.

With such high numbers for just the department of Côtes d'Armor, one must wonder what the economic impact is for other departments of Brittany where relatively low housing costs in past years have drawn a large number of British (and other non-Breton) home buyers. And what impact on the culture will this large influx have. Are these "British" arrivals all "English" or do they include a large number of Celts from Wales, Cornwall, Scotland, the Isle of Man or Northern

Ireland. What contributions will these new residents make to the future of the Breton language and culture.

Intégration Kreizh Breizh

It is clear in looking at the information on the website of this organization that the people of Brittany are not building walls to keep out new residents or summer residents from other countries. On the contrary, it appears that Bretons are working to make life as easy as possible for newcomers and to help them learn about the new country they have adopted.

One organization active in this role is the "Kreiz Breizh (Central Brittany) Integration Association." Their work is well described on their website www.AIKB.fr, and the following is from that website.

The Association Intégration Kreizh Breizh was set up in 2003 with the aim of helping 'newcomers' to the area to settle into their new life in Brittany.

A non-profit making organisation is the only Association of its kind and deemed a real necessity by various French authorities. AIKB was created with the help of European funding from Leader +, the Conseil General 22 and the CCKB i.e. Community of Communes Kreiz Breizh, specifically to meet the needs of all 'nouveau arrivants'.

AIKB is a Non-Profit making organisation. The multi purpose association offers help in numerous ways; we work in partnership with the AREPCOB to provide French courses for all areas of central west Brittany as well as our French courses at the Pavillon de Rohan in Gouarec (22). Our teachers are all qualified & experienced French Nationals.

New courses start frequently and there is the possibility of either short intensive courses or long term courses to suit all levels.

New courses are now available providing lessons for private individuals as well as for businesses: in small groups; at work, through intensive courses or by private courses tailored to the needs of individuals according to their own busy schedule. Learn throughout central west Brittany including Gouarec, Rostrenen, Carhaix, Corlay, Mur de Bretagne, Cléguérec, Guéméné sur Scorff & Gourin. There are also courses for those French people wishing to learn English.

AIKB offers its members an information service whereby we can offer help with some of those

everyday questions, pointing you in the right direction for your particular needs & helping to make phone calls, translation & rendezvous on your behalf.

We also hold regular conferences and seminars, to explain the many facets of the French administration system, from tax & inheritance issues to laws & social services etc. We liaise with the tax office and other French organisations and associations and have various information and documentation available in English.

We also have a members' library of English books, free of charge for the 'exclusive' use of our members and we organise frequent Cultural visits and guided tours, to learn about the history and Breton patrimony as well as 'fun & fund raising events' which enables everyone to have the chance to really integrate and make new friends.

We enjoy meeting new members and count Bretons, French, English, Dutch, German, South African, Norwegian & Swiss amongst our numbers, some of whom live here permanently others of whom have holiday homes. We welcome any nationality to join us in our aim to integrate into the new European community.

We believe that integration is not just about learning the language. It is about joining in with other French Associations already in existence and of which there are many.

Some of our members take part in a 'Son & Lumiere' each year and others take part in the 'Fête 1900' organised every two years by 'Les Historiques' in Gouarec. There is always participation too, with events for the 'Association des Amis de Bon Repos'. There are many local associations for Breton dancing, archery, hiking, flower arranging etc all just waiting for a few more 'newcomers' to join them.

On the administration side of things, we are often contacted by many of the schools, Mairies, Gendarmes and other organisations on the behalf of Anglophones, when we have interpreted on their behalf with various 'Anglo – Franco' projects & meetings.

During 2006 this association partnered with the Cultural Institute of Brittany to offer the following workshops:

"Breton Natural Environment" by Jean Cévaer
"Breton Place Names & Family Names" by Hervé Abalain

"Breton Literature" by Francis Favereau
"Archaeology of Brittany" by Michael Batt
"Brittany and the Sea" by Jean Cévaer.

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The Celtic League American Branch Celtic Calendar

Each year the American Branch of the Celtic League produces a wonderful inter-Celtic calendar –"an historical and mythological calendar representing the Celtic year: November 1, 2006 to October 31, 2007.

The following is the press release from the Celtic League:

In time for the Celtic New Year (November 1st) the Celtic League's new 2007 Celtic Calendar is now available. Sporting twelve original black and white illustrations of themes from Celtic mythology by noted artists Laurie Fraser Manifold, this year's Calendar is also distinguished by a bold cover illustration honoring Celtic women by Brian MacIsaac. Beginning with November 2005, each month is named in one of the six Celtic languages of Irish, Scots Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish, Breton, and Manx, along with an authentic proverb from the language of the month.

In addition to information about the traditional Celtic feast days, each day of the upcoming year is noted with the anniversary of an important Celtic person or historical event, over one thousand in all. A veritable almanac of Celtic history and culture, copies of the 2007 Celtic Calendar are available for \$10 each, postpaid, from Celtic League Calendar, c/o Tom Cullinan, 3 Stoneliegh Plaza #5C, Bronxville, NY 10708.

The website for the Celtic League American Branch is www.celticleague.org and their e-mail address is celticleague@mail.com

“The Bigoudines” – A Traveler’s Speculations in 1903

By André Saglio, Introduction by Katherine De Forest

From The Century Magazine Vol. 45, No. 2, December 1903

Editor’s Note: The following is both a traveler’s account and a highly speculative account of the ancient origins of the people of the Bigouden region of Brittany. As one often finds in travel accounts of the 19th century and early 20th century, some highly negative stereotypes abound.

The heart of Brittany never changes, but its face is rapidly losing many of its prominent characteristics with the leveling influence of the French republic. It is only far out of the beaten track, now, or on special occasions like fêtes, that you see universally the costumes and customs of the old Armorican peninsula. Only an hour’s journey from Quimper, the modernized chief town of Finistère, and you are among the Bigoudines, a people whose dress suggests the Eskimos and Chinese, whose faces are strongly Mongolian in type, and who in language, customs, and beliefs seem to have no relation with the rest of France. More and more the picturesque problem they present is coming to attract attention. Artists, students, and tourists alike are fascinated by it. M. André Saglio, chief of the commission of the Beaux Arts for foreign countries, after spending many summers in the Bigoudine country, was much struck with the resemblance between the costumes and relics preserved in the ethnographical museums of Finland and other Northern countries and those of this strange Brittany clan. Several years of comparative research led to this article, which cannot fail to be of interest to every one, both on account of the novelty of its subject and the art by which, simply through the choice and arrangement of a multitude of slight facts, the mind is prepared to accept the theory that this people is actually a survival of a prehistoric age.

A Peculiar People Among the Bretons

By the side of the ocean, quite at the end of Brittany, there lives a strange race of peasants.

With the great west wind, from one end of the country to the other you may hear the roar of the waves rushing through the granite fiords. The trees, fashioned by the tempests, have a monstrous appearance of life. Sea-gulls veer over the fields, swoop down, crying, and run over the short grass. Here and there rises an abandoned church, a gigantic monolith planted straight in the gorse, the rounded root of a miraculous spring, or a great crucifix where the sorrowful-looking Christ has been pitted with black spots by the fierce rains, and covered with leprous patches of lichen.

Forty-five thousand souls live in this district, between the canton of Pont Croix on the north, the river Odet on the east, and the Atlantic on the west and south. They are

called Bigoudines. The railway from Paris takes the traveler in fifteen hours by a single track from Rennes to Pont l’Abbé, which is the heart of the country, and stops there. It is only a rare tourist who has the curiosity to penetrate still farther into this rude land, where hotels do not exist, and where hospitality is not in the customs of the people.

What would these poor folk have to offer the visitor, for that matter? Their little houses, built of rough stone, often have no other opening than the door; the thatched or tiled roofs generally protect only two rooms, one where they family eats and works, the other where it sleeps in its entirety. The beds are armoires of polished walnut studded with brass nails, alternating with other armoires for linen and provisions. All have uniform doors, closed during the day, so that they give the effect of a continuous piece of woodwork. At night the whole family stows itself away into these little unventilated cells; as children multiply, the others crowd together; the sole place for the stranger is the stable. With these people meat is a luxury only for fêtes, and even the bread – the coarse hard bread made from buckwheat – is made to last a whole month. It is baked at home, and only after the last moldy morsel of the old loaf is finished is a new one made. With this bread they make the soup which forms their monotonous morning and evening repast, sometimes adding to it potatoes, which grow readily in that sandy soil, fertilized with seaweed, and are the only resources of the country. But you must have been accustomed from childhood to this coarse fare and the light cider with which they wash it down to be able to subsist on it.

If it is hard to know anything about the surface life of the Bigoudines, it is still more difficult to penetrate their thought; to know whether their brains are agitated by anything but the simple ideas of the very primitive peoples, the naïve reveries of children, or whether they have preserved some vague traditions of the upheavals of humanity which have ended by casting them upon this extreme point of land. They speak a language which has no affiliation with any ordinary tongue. It is Breton, but a Breton full of unknown words and strange idioms, as yet unstudied by any philologist. As to the French language, they ignore it, intentionally ignore it. The first thing their young men do when they come back from their military service is to forget the few French words it taught them, and the laws obliging parents to send their children to the public schools so far never have made the slightest impression upon that part of Finistère.

The Bigoudines in no way mingle with the surrounding populations, not even with the fisherfolk who live along the

shore, for whom they seem to have the usual antipathy of landmen for those who exploit the sea. From time immemorial they have married only among themselves, so that they have preserved in their faces two perfectly pure types, one flat and yellow, the other long and vivid orange, equally suggestive both of the Laplanders and of North American Indians.

No change in the world has ever made them give up their costume, seen nowhere else in Brittany. For men it consists of wide black trousers, long waistcoats trimmed on the breast with heavy yellow embroidery, and very short coats edged with velvet and finished with shining buttons. The women wear two or three black skirts, rising in tiers one above the other, bordered with brilliant galloons, and embroidered bodices with double sleeves, the lower one gathered closely at the wrist. The other reaches just to the elbow, where it is turned back almost to the shoulder and covered with a sumptuous pattern, usually in vivid orange. They are always seen with an apron of bright-colored stuff, and a bonnet of spangled silk, over which they draw up a strand of hair from behind. This they surmount by two little white linen coifs, united and held in place by a ribbon called a *rogerer*. The thickness of their clothing accented by this high narrow head-dress, gives them a massive appearance, which they still further heighten by winding a roll of straw round their hips under their skirts, a curious sort of coquetry which proves that they still retain the ideal of beauty of the primitive patriarchs, who considered that women the most attractive who appeared best fitted to bear a large family.

As for the children, they run freely about the roads with the hairy pigs and the tiny brindled cows, and in their tight jackets, as broad at the waist as at the shoulders and in their stiff skirts, suggest cheap dolls. Up to the age of five or six the boys and girls dress exactly alike, except that the former have a pompon on their bonnets and the girls a knot of ribbon.

To understand the intense attraction which this bit of Finistère has for the artist, the poignant seduction which year after year brings back to its entrance such painters as Lucien Simon and André Dauchez, you must add a description of the country itself to that of its inhabitants. You must imagine yourself under that immense expanse of sky, swept by great clouds pierced at every other moment with arrows of sunshine; on that flat stretch of soil tinted with the entire gamut of grays, and with the intense black of the Bigoudine costume accented by the gold of its embroideries and the violence of color in its ribbons and aprons, to all of which nature responds only with the pale splendor of her velvet fields reddened by the sea breezes, the blond enamel of the mosses on the ashen-colored rocks, and the mirror of the sleeping marshes, in which are reflected all the changing hours of the day.

But, above all, what you must invoke is the tantalizing mystery overhanging this land, this extreme boundary of the Old World, which for centuries has been slowly wearing away under the fierce grasp of the ocean. Its melancholy is reflected in the faces of its inhabitants, the men and women who for an inappreciable length of time have been bending over its arid soil to wrest from it their meager livelihood; who by their manners, their beliefs, their language, even by their very blood, are isolated from the rest of France. Those who do not follow the rising tide of progress must be swept away. This is a perishing race on a dying soil.

A strictly agricultural people, the Bigoudines do not know how to fight against their destiny. So pacific are they that they alone in all Brittany do not practice wrestling, and it is no doubt this eternal resignation to the law of the strongest which has saved them from extinction during the ages that have passed since the sea forced them to make this last halt in their flight before their conquerors. They know their helplessness, and have accustomed themselves to venerate through fear everything which appears unexpected or strange to them – the sun that makes the crops rise out of the ground, the water that leaps from the bowels of the earth, fire, rocks, big trees. Their puerile imaginations people the air with tyrannical and easily offended genii, ready to attack those who neglect to propitiate them by the rites demanded for every event in life. They believe that dwarfs roam about the moors, revenging themselves for the indiscrete curiosity of mortals; that the dead bear grudges which bring back their ghosts to the living at the fall of night. Their terrors are somewhat like those of beasts, so long accustomed to subjection that they fear the dead leaf rustling with the wind under their feet, the branches swaying in the forest, the shadow lengthening before them on the road.

The constant anguish of being surrounded even in the ordinary occupations of life by such a throng of supernatural and revengeful beings has, as a natural result, forced these poor people to invent ceremonies efficacious against their spells – favorable omens, objects with the power of annulling evil forces and protecting those who possess or wear them. They wear as amulets bizarre pebbles, which they call *men-quadir*. Rare plants, or plants picked under special circumstances, they believe will transform certain drinks into remedies against the plague and hydrophobia. The stone Loc en Pouldrenzic cures fevers, if the patient can be made to shiver three times before it; hemp carried to Penhors makes sheets which produce quiet sleep; water from the swamp of St. Ivy poured into the sleeves and stockings eases pain; that of the Fontaine de Clarté is efficacious for diseases of the eyes; springs can be made propitious by offerings of pins and pieces of money. It would be easy to multiply examples of a fetishism which is also practiced in many other parts of Brittany, but nowhere else is pushed to such

an extent, or acknowledged so openly, as among the Bigoudines.

Catholic Christianity has made but little impression upon them. In the early Middle Ages, when the Christian apostles in Gaul reached the confines of Brittany they found in no way the resistance that without doubt they expected, and not one of them gained the palm of martyrdom. The good Ronan, the most celebrated of them, lived out in peace his long life in a hermitage in the forest of Nivet, dressed, says the legend, in the skin of a spotted heifer, with a twisted branch for his girdle, his drink the black water of the swamp, and his food bread which he baked in the ashes. When he died the people respectfully bore away his body on a cart drawn by two white bulls, and buried it on the summit of a hill overlooking the sea. So it would seem as though his work of conversion and evangelization ended in a triumph.

In reality, it amounted to absolutely nothing. In the crucifix, the holy water, the pictures of Christ, the Virgin, and the disciples, and in the ceremony of the mass, these old pagans in their simplicity saw only new fetishes, which they tranquilly added to the old ones. They even found no difficulty in adding to them. They converted all their legendary heads of clans into patron saints, and sometimes exalted in this way celebrated sorceresses whose renown was perpetuated in their songs and stories. Thus the Bigoudines have a St. Thudy, a St. Thuméte, a St. Nonna, and many others quite unknown to Rome, whom they have created with the same naïveté of mind that has led them to plant crosses on their fairy stones. In a thousand years of untiring effort the church has never been able to advance in the slightest way the work of St. Ronan. Her only victories have been to erect chapels near the spots considered enchanted by the Bigoudines, to see that masses are said at the solemn "pardons" before the people abandon themselves to impious rites, and to place under a sacred invocation the pagan cult of certain natural forces; that of the sun, for instance, worshiped on the festival of the summer solstice by the lighting of fires and by dances. This is the Fête de la St. Jean. Catholic Christianity, in short, has been able to add only its pomps, not its dogmas, to the idolatry which is the only and indestructible religion of the Bigoudines.

What is the origin of these people?

This is the question which comes constantly to one's mind, and ends by taking possession of it entirely when one has noted everything that can be seen with the eyes. An extraordinary combination of chances has kept them so far apart from the evolution of the rest of the French nation that they have even escaped the notice of all the many travelers who have visited Finistère, from Flaubert* or Édouard Vallin down. And the archaeologists who have gone there to study the megalithic monuments scattered all over the country never seem to have noticed the

remarkable human beings living under their shadow, who perhaps better than anything else might have helped to clear up the mystery of those strange constructions.

For, in the total absence of written documents, of all critical study of their language and their customs, of any traditions about their arrival in this far-away land, the mind, reduced to nothing but speculations upon appearances, finds itself confronted by as old a problem, and one as much veiled in obscurity, as that of the origin of the races. As a matter of fact, we shall see that if, as is now conceded, these monstrous menhirs and dolmens are testimonials of the first concerted effort on the part of human beings, deductions as to the antiquity of the Bigoudines also lead back to a period when men, grouped for the first time into tribes, began the conquest of the world. ...

... What physical upturning, what famine, or what rivalries, led the first human societies grouped in the north of Asia to dissolve and scatter like bees from an overcrowded hive? Perhaps they dispersed slowly, as with the more highly perfected brains of men, curiosity began to grow and there came the necessity for conquest. Some of the tribes went to the west and reached the American continent; others directed themselves toward the south toward India, through China; others marched west along the sea-shore. These, like their sister tribes, had among their traditions those of living on the products of the earth, and of domesticating certain species of animals, such as the reindeer, the horse, and the dog. They knew how to polish and point hard stones in such a way that these could be used as weapons and utensils. They honored all the beneficent and fertilizing forces, and rendered them homage by raising to heaven with their own hands great monoliths, or by constructing altars with flat stones, or by heaping together mounds of pebbles upon which they placed as precious offerings all their most necessary implements, their arrow-points and potteries. The unfriendly powers, such as sickness, hunger, death, and the uneasy spirits of the dead who had been buried in the ground, they also revered with sacrifices and propitiating ceremonies.

Along the farthest boundaries of Siberia passed these emigrants, leaving behind them their sacred constructions, so numerous that Nordenskjöld, who saw them from the sea, compared them to the ruins of the fabulous cities exterminated by a Timur or a Jenghiz Khan. In the steppes of Russia a few families stopped, satisfied with the pasture lands they found there; others continued along the edge of the icy sea through

* Editors Note: As noted and quoted in Dastum's double CD: *Pays Bigouden/Ar Vro Vigoudenn* (reviewed earlier in these pages), Gustave Flaubert did indeed visit this region and describes a "fête de l'aire neuve" in his 1847 book *Voyage en Bretagne, Par les champs et par les grèves*.

Scandinavia to the British Isles; the greatest number kept on toward the west, leaving along their route their dolmens and menhirs. Finally they crossed the Vosges, and France, with its mild temperatures and fertile soil, appeared to them, without doubt, as the goal of their long pilgrimage; for they settled over the country in every direction, and even went into Spain, as we can see from the line of the megalithic monuments.

Centuries and centuries passed by, and another troop of men arrived from the Orient. They were tall and robust; the high plateaus of India had been the cradle of their race. They knew how to make the earth produce abundantly, thanks to their plows of bronze; the metallic points of their boar-spears rendered them redoubtable, even though they were not warlike. Above everything else they adored the sun, whose image upon earth is fire; they burned their dead. The men of polished stone fled before these invaders; many of them, nevertheless, submitted to the newcomers, and, confounding themselves with these, accepted their language and mingled their new gods with their own old ones.

Still another long period of time went by, and a third and last race appeared, coming from the east, where it had led a difficult existence in the Balkan Mountains. These excelled in forging a metal even harder than bronze – iron, with which they made deadly weapons; for they looked down upon peaceful labor in the fields, and loved only war, pillage, and dominion. These tribes bore the general name of Galates. They conquered the cultivators of France, and chased those who would not submit to them to the very confines of the country.

The last refuge of these primitive peoples was the Armorican peninsula called Brittany. There those who wished to remain faithful to the customs of their fathers could continue to speak their language, to raise stones to heaven according to the old form of worship, to render homage to the sun by fire and to the stars by dances recalling the regular movements of the heavenly bodies in their orbits. They kept also, all the rites efficacious against the unfriendly forces, to which they paid such particular attention as to astonish even the Romans, who came later. Pliny wrote: "Brittany cultivates the art of magic with faith and with such ceremonies that you would say they had been transmitted from the Persians."

Little by little, nevertheless, civilization progressed, more invincible to the barbarians driven into this corner by the sea than the invasion of the Galates. And today, of all the tribes that came from Asia, one alone, the most distant, remains, as in the past, obstinately closed to all union with outsiders – the Bigoudines.

It is to this determination that the simple narrative of the establishment of the peoples in Europe, according to the latest scientific conclusions must lead. And it is far more

than a romantic hypothesis, since it is based upon the geographical situation of the country, upon the Asiatic type of its population, which strikes even the most casual observer, and upon the superstitious reverence its people have preserved for the monoliths that are so numerous everywhere. Still another source of proof, however, in default of any comparative research into the peculiarities of their language, gives a singular probability to this theory, and that is the relation between the beliefs and usages of the Bigoudines and those of the half-savage clans which still strew the route between Europe and Asia with huge sacred stones.

All the accounts of the travelers who have explored the most Northern countries, and who, unfortunately, have paid more attention to geographical or natural sciences than to ethnology, contain notes that enforce this comparison. Each of these peoples without exception has remained faithful to the practice of magic and to the belief in amulets, even though it has accepted without resistance the tents of Catholicism. The Ostyaks respect certain springs and certain woods. The Finns venerate places which they consider sacred, and particular trees under which they perform their devotions. The Samoyeds have altars formed of heaps of stones where they place their most precious objects, especially fragments of metal, exactly as the Bigoudines make offerings to miraculous fountains with pins and bits of broken pottery. Among the Samoyeds, also, the women wear dresses conspicuous for two or three very brilliant bands of stuff, like those of the Bigoudine women. They do not turn up their hair behind, it is true; but his mode, which is so specifically characteristic, exists with the Laplanders and the Eskimos.

In their habitations, however temporary they may be, their beds, as with the Bretons, are always hidden, at least by a cotton curtain. The Lettonians, the Esthonians, the Liwes, the Ingriens, the Tschérénisses, the Tschouwaches, the Nordwines, the Wotyaks, and the Wogouls have costumes that, except for extremely slight variations, are identical with those of the Bigoudines. Not a single one of these tribes, including even the people of the north of China, but offers a remarkable point of resemblance in the yellow it wears as mourning, which we find in the coifs of widows in the Bigoudine country.

We must remember in these deductions to be on our guard against laying ourselves open to the charge of overreaching the limits of observations in order to confirm a seductive theory. And yet why should it be astonishing that the great human wave which swept over Europe from Asia in the prehistoric ages yet marks with a little foam the limit of its course? Is it not more marvelous still to find that in the twentieth century the oldest people of France has nothing of the type, the manners, or the character of the inhabitants of the rest of the country; that it is a race of barbarians – and Mongolians?

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