

BRO NEVEZ

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

ENCHANTED BRITTANY



Guingamp † † †
Ancient roofs and chimney-pots

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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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.

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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.

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

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On The Cover . . .

... is an illustration from *Enchanted Brittany*, by Amy Oakley, with illustrations by Thornton Oakley (The Century Co., New York) published in 1930. In recognition of the victory of the En Avant soccer team from Guingamp, travel literature in this issue of Bro Nevez features that city. While travel writers of the late 19 and early 20th centuries were awed by the crowds of pilgrims who swelled the population of the town of Guingamp for the annual pardon in July, those looking back on May of 2009 will certainly be awed by the numbers gathered in the streets of this town of some 8,000 inhabitants to cheer the return of the victorious soccer team from the French championship – where they beat another team from Brittany, Rennes.

In this Issue of Bro Nevez

... You will read about the soccer match between Rennes and Guingamp for the French championship and you will be reintroduced to Brittany's unique style of Celtic wrestling called *gouren*.

You will also read about challenges for the Breton language and for Native American languages, and you will learn about the action being taken to teach Breton, Celtic languages, and Indian languages so that they might one day be taken off the endangered list.

There are some losses in the family of Bretons who have spent their lives working to promote the Breton language and culture, and there are some advances to report as well in the work being done in Brittany. In this issue you will also read of just some of the celebrations of Breton culture that take place in the month of May for Gouel Erwan / Fest Yves. As always, Jean Pierre Le Mat provides a provocative look "Deep Inside a Breton Skull."

At the back of Bro Nevez you will find a flyer to introduce the Diwan schools as well as one that presents the U.S. ICDBL - feel free to give these to interested friends!!!



War-Raok Breizh! Go Brittany! – Brittany Celebrates Soccer

Lois Kuter

There are close to 20,000 amateur soccer clubs in France and over 2 million registered soccer players. It is estimated that a million soccer matches are played in France each year. And Brittany has certainly has its share of players and games.

On May 9th some “firsts” were made as two Breton soccer teams met in the Coupe de France where the best of the professional teams of France meet for the championship. It was a win-win situation for Bretons and the 80,056 soccer fans who filled the Saint Denis stadium just outside Paris (a record attendance) to watch the match between Stade Rennais from the city of Rennes (population 205,000) and En Avant Guingamp from the small town of Guingamp (population 7,700). Soccer teams are always an international mix of players and certainly this is the case for these two Breton teams. The team from Guingamp has five players from Africa and it was Eduardo (who goes by just that name) from Brazil who scored the two goals to win the game 2-1 for the En Avant. In the victory celebration back in Guingamp he could be spotted with a Brazilian flag over one shoulder and a Breton flag over the other.

But this was definitely a game where Bretons seized the opportunity to show pride in their identity. There were thousands of Breton flags waving during the match (20,000 of which were provided by the Region of Brittany) and because red and black are the colors of both teams, the stadium was awash in these colors. As was the 18,000-seat Roudourou stadium in Guingamp filled with fans greeting the returning heroes. This was the just the second time a team from the Division 2 beat a team from Division 1.*

With special permission from the French Football Federation the Bro Gozh – Brittany’s national anthem - was sung twice - via a recording by the choral group Mouez ar Mor as well as performed live by Alan Stivell. The bagad (Breton ensemble of bombardes, pipes and durms inspired by Scottish bagpipe bands) of Cesson-Sévigné, a small town just to the northeast of Rennes, played for that city, and the Bagad Gwengamp played for Guingamp, and they performed together as well. While fans from Rennes were deeply disappointed with the loss of their team, there was consolation in the fact that a Breton team won.

* There are 20 teams in Ligue 1. Brittany is represented by teams from Lorient and Nantes as well as Rennes. Other teams are from Marseille, Lille, Bordeaux, Lyon, Saint-Germain, Toulouse, Nice,

Auxerre, Monaco, Grenoble, Valenciennes, Nancy, Le Mans, Caen, Sochaux-Montbéliard, Saint-Etienne and Havre.

There are also 20 teams in Ligue 2 with Brittany represented by teams from Vannes and Brest as well as Guingamp. Other teams are from Lens (Avion), Strasbourg, Metz, Boulogne, Montpellier, Tours, Dijon, Angers, Sedan (Bazeilles), Bastia, Amiens, Clermont, Ajaccio, Châteauroux, Reims, Nîmes and Pont Sainte-Marie (Champagne)

For more about soccer in Brittany (and France) see the following websites where I gleaned much of the information above.

<http://footbretagne.fff.fr> (Ligue de Bretagne de Football)

www.lfp.fr (Ligue de Football Professionnel)

www.eaguingamp.com (En Avant de Guingamp)

www.staderennais.com (Stade Rennais)

The President of the U.S. ICDBL, David Brûlé, (from Millers Falls, Massachusetts) provides the following “nearly first-hand” account of the game. David is soon-to-be retired Chairman of the Foreign Language Department for the Amherst-Pelham Regional School System and a teacher of French and Spanish. His wife Monique is from Brittany and David regularly spends five to six weeks in the Loudeac-Uzel region. It is from there that he sends us his report.



9 May '09

Letter from the Arc'hoat by David Brûlé

All-Breton Championship at the Stade de France

Paris-- *Gouel Ar Vretoned* ran the headline of the newspaper the sportscaster flashed across the TF 1, the national station carrying the historic clash of Rennes vs. Guingamp for the Coupe de France championship in soccer.

I caught the game from my living room a few miles away from the stadium, settled in for the match with my supply of camembert and red wine--a little different from American Super Bowl fare of pizza, grinders, and beer.

All week the papers had been building up this almost unexpected match-up. Even the staid and prestigious *Le Monde* developed the sociopolitical analysis of the

meeting of these two teams: two Breton teams, one from the city of Rennes in predominantly French - speaking Brittany (although the historic capital) versus Guingamp, a small Breton-speaking city in the Côtes D'Armor. The context was evident and easy fodder for the analyst: the City vs. the Country, Capital vs. Village, French vs. Breton, Goliath and David. Guingamp, a division 2 team was clearly the underdog facing Rennes the division 1 champion with population, power, money, and prestige backing it. Regardless, newspapers developed the all-Breton theme--waxing poetic in the sense that either way, Brittany would have its champion.

In the stadium, clearly the atmosphere was festive and friendly. A sold-out crowd of over 80,000 filled the state-of-the-art venue, with its "floating roof" technology, the place awash in the *Gwen ha Du*--everyone was Breton either by "origin or sentiment" as one reporter wrote. Another called Paris the largest Breton city in France, and he wasn't far from speaking the truth! An article in the *Ouest France* evoked the fact that just one RER (commuter train) stop away was the tomb of the Duchess Anne de Bretagne in the royal sepulcher of St. Denis. Every Breton reference was grist for the mill. Bombarde and binou, round hats and the Ermine symbol were everywhere. The papers announced that the Breton anthem *Bro Goz Ma Zadou* would be intoned before the *Marseillaise*, but if that were the case, the national TV stations only carried the French national anthem. Should we have expected anything else.

The game itself was exciting, for a soccer match. In the first half, Guingamp clearly played more aggressively, surprising the over-confident Rennes team. By halftime, it was still 0-0. As the second half opened, Rennes came out strong, but missing a number of shots on goal that could have turned the game into a rout. It didn't look so good for the En Avant Guingamp or for the Aodou An Ar Vor fans. Then it happened: a goal by Rennes seemed to show that the Rennes power was coming alive and would soon begin to dominate the rest of the game. Sighing, and knowing how these 1-0 games can drag on, I left the room to rummage for more snacks stashed away in the kitchen when a roar from the living room got me back on the run. Guingamp had just scored a goal within three minutes of the other by Rennes, and now the score was even again, 1-1. Then the miracle happened, Eduardo, the modest Brazilian tactician and football genius marked another goal for Guingamp, and as we say in the States, "that's all she wrote. ." Guingamp stayed ahead to win 2-1, and the improbable victory for the underdog, 50 years in waiting, was in the history books.

The jubilation in Guingamp was great, and of course the camera shots of cafes and bars in Rennes showed

a stunned crowd, many disappointed children and a number of adults deeply sobbing. They take their football very seriously here. Absent was any sense of hooliganism, no trashing of business districts either by the victors or the vanquished. It remained a dignified celebration of Breton football. The game itself was played out without any overt physical aggression. There were no red cards, and only two yellow cards were given--one for a shoulder nudge thrown by a frustrated Swedish defender on the Rennes team, and the other given to Eduardo who removed his jersey in triumph while celebrating his second goal. There's no removing of shirts in soccer, so he was given a yellow card. Decorum, after all must be preserved.

The next morning, a Sunday, it was time to set out from the Gare Montparnasse for my little home in the Arc'hoat. Of course, the day after the Big Game in Paris, I wasn't alone in returning to Brittany. The station was full of Bretons, both supporters of Rennes and of Guingamp. Everyone was reasonably subdued by then at 10 AM, either still dumb-founded by the loss or hung-over and partied-out from the night's celebration. The two TGV to St. Brieux and Brest were sold out with those returning to Rennes or the Aodou d'Armor. The *Gwen ha Du* was everywhere in sight but the individual team banners were rolled up, the face paint washed off, and quiet chatter was all that was heard. The car I was in was thoughtfully quiet too, as we pulled out of Montparnasse. Before long, the familiar stations came and went: Le Mans, Laval, then Rennes. As the fans of the vanquished team filed off the train in Rennes, small groups waved to one another and shuffled along the quai to the exits. Those of us remaining on the train to St. Brieux and Guingamp looked out the windows and watched them go. One smiling En Avant Guingamp fan next to me chuckled: "*Allez les gars! On s'excuse aupres de Rennes?*" (Come on guys, shall we apologize to Rennes?) After a second's reflection, we all chimed in: "hmmm., Naah!" (Non, et Nann!)

Gouren – A Breton Sport with Deep Celtic Roots

Lois Kuter

Soccer may be the most popular sport in Brittany, but bicycling is a sport where Bretons have excelled and which remains very popular.

Brittany has had many champions including most recently Bernard Hinault, five-time winner of the Tour



de France. But, Brittany has a unique sport of its own – with deep Celtic roots. This is *gouren*, a style of wrestling. Today there are some 1,400 licensed practitioners and numerous contests for wrestlers of different age and weight categories – including women. Bretons have taken the lead in organizing inter-Celtic tournaments which have taken on an international flavor as traditional wrestling styles from Europe and other countries of the world are celebrated. Wrestlers from Spain, the Netherlands (Frisians especially), Canary Islands, Iceland, England, Scotland, Cornwall and Ireland have competed to be the world's best in *gouren* (Breton style) or backhold (British style) wrestling.

So what is *gouren*?

Gouren is a traditional style of wrestling that bears little resemblance to the style found in high school and college sports here in the U.S. where young men grapple on the ground. And it bears even less resemblance to the TV wrestlers with their crazy persona and outfits and glorification of violence.

Gouren is a standing combat where two adversaries shake hands, grip each others' shirts – specially made – in various holds, and use legs against the other's legs to throw them off balance. The aim is to get a *lamm* where one's adversary lands squarely on his two shoulder blades. In earlier days a match would continue until this was done, each new attempt beginning with a handshake. Today matches are timed and have a point system to determine winners.

Every wrestling tournament in Brittany begins with all participants stating the following oath in the Breton language:

*M'hen tou da c'houren gant lealeded
Hep trubarderez na taol fall ebet
Evit ma enor ha hini ma bro
E testeni eus ma gwiriegez
Hag evit heul kiz vad ma zud koz
Kinnig a ran d'am c'henvreur ma dorn ha ma jod.*

I swear to wrestle loyally
Without treachery or brutality
For my honor and that of my country.
In testimony of my truthfulness
And in accordance with my people's custom
I give my partner my hand and my cheek.

Wrestling is probably one of the most ancient Breton sports and was brought to Armorica in the 4th century when Celts from the British Isles settled in what is today called Brittany. In its early days it was a sport for the nobility who used it to hone fighting skills. It soon became very popular in rural areas as a sport where men fought for the honor of their local community. There was a decline in the 19th century but *gouren*

remained strong in the countryside of western Brittany. Scaer and Guiscriff were known for their champions (and still are).

The repopularization of Breton wrestling in the 20th century is credited in particular to one man, Doctor Contennec of Quimperlé (1876-1935) who worked in the post World War I period to renew this sport in a more standardized form. The Inter-Celtic tournament in Quimperlé held in 1928 attracted some 6,000 spectators and marked the beginning of a new era for *gouren*. The organization called FALSAB (Fédération des amis des luttes et sports athlétiques Bretons) formed in 1929 and set down rules to modernize *gouren* – including time limits and weight categories. As was also the case for traditional Breton music and dance, the 1950s was a period of real growth.

As is the case with many Celtic endeavors, the revival of wrestling has had its share of factionalism, but today it thrives and the organization Fédération de Gouren (www.gouren.com) is quite active in organizing not only tournaments but training of wrestlers, teachers and adjudicators. This is a sport where the Breton language is honored not only in the initial oath taken by the wrestlers but in the terminology used by adjudicators during the matches.

Check out the website www.gouren.com for more information and a more visual presentation of this uniquely Breton sport.

How many Breton speakers are there?

In a new book, *Parler breton au XXI siècle*, journalist and researcher Fañch Broudic, analyses the results of a survey by TMO Régions on the practice of Breton. And on his website www.langue-bretonne.com (which has two parallel sections in Breton and French) you find a summary of the results. This survey, like ones conducted in 1990 and 1997, had the aim of finding out how many people in Brittany are able to understand and express themselves in Breton, who uses Breton and in what contexts, and how do those who speak Breton and those who do not view the language.

In all there were 52 questions in the survey conducted in December 2007 of a representative sample of people throughout Brittany. The following are just a few results of this survey

Do you understand Breton: 12% of people surveyed in Lower Brittany said they understood Breton very well and 10% said they understood it fairly well. In Upper Brittany it was just 2%

Do you speak Breton: In Lower Brittany 5% said they spoke it very well, 8% fairly well. The number for Upper

Brittany speaking Breton was 1% of those surveyed. This translates to approximately 172,000 in Lower Brittany and 22,500 in Upper Brittany who speak Breton. If you add students under 15 in the bilingual and Diwan schools, the estimate is that about 206,000 people in Brittany speak Breton.

The survey shows a significant drop in Breton speakers (over 15 years old) since the 1997 survey. The 1997 survey – which included only Lower Brittany - showed that 20% of the population over 15 in Brittany (246,000 people) spoke Breton, while the 2007 survey shows just 13% and a total of 172,000. The drop is attributed largely to the fact that the majority of Breton speakers in 1997 were of an older age. An estimated 83,000 Breton speakers in 1997 were deceased by 2007. The 9,000 young people mastering Breton in schools does little to fill this gap.

In looking at the age range of those speaking Breton in Lower Brittany in the 2007 survey it is shown that 34% are over 75 years old, 36% are 60-74 years old, and 30% are 15 to 59 years old. While the fact that 70% of today's Breton speakers are over 60 years old does not bode well for the future of the Breton language, the survey showed that there was a slight increase in Breton speakers in the 15 to 19 year old range – from less than 1% of this age group in 1997 to 4% today. It was also noted that while the 20 to 39 year olds have the smallest number of Breton speakers, a third of Breton speaking parents in this age group speak Breton with their children.

The survey showed that a majority of those who can speak Breton do not use it as an everyday language. Of 172,000 Breton speakers in Lower Brittany, 34,500 speak Breton every day, 34,500 use it often, 84,000 speak Breton from time to time, and 19,000 never speak it.

When it comes to attitudes about the Breton language, the 2007 survey showed a drop in the number who felt attached to the language with a total of 56% of those surveyed in Lower Brittany vs. 69% in 1997. Those over 40 showed the most interest in the language. When asked about the importance of knowing Breton 2% said it was absolutely indispensable to know Breton, 42% said fairly useful, 44% said there is limited interest, 8% said it is worthless, and 3% did not know.

While less than half of those surveyed felt it was important to be able to know Breton, 89% in Lower Brittany and 87% in Upper Brittany felt that Breton needs to be conserved. But only 67% of those surveyed in Lower Brittany felt that Breton *could* be saved.

These quick statistics do not do justice to the findings of this survey and the nuances of all of the questions

asked. Those who want more details are referred to Fañch Broudic's book: *Parler breton au XXI^e siècle. Le nouveau sondage de TMO Régions*. (Brest: Emgleo Breiz, 2009. 208 pp. ISBN : 978-2-911210-91-3)

And you will find a wealth of information on the history of the Breton language in other books by this scholar. Here are just a few of the more recent ones.

Le breton: une langue en questions. Brest: Emgleo Breiz, 2007. 205 pp. ISBN : 978-2-911210-71-9

La pratique du breton de l'Ancien régime à nos jours. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1995. 490 pp. (Collection: Des Sociétés). Publié avec le concours du Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique (UBO, Brest). ISBN 2-86847-128-5

L'interdiction du breton en 1902. La III^e République contre les langues régionales. Spézet: Coop Breizh, 1996. 183 pp. ISBN : 2-909924-78-5

And you will find a wealth of interesting information on Fañch Broudic's website: <http://www.langue-bretonne.com>. Check out his ever-changing blog "Langue bretonne" and if you read Breton you will find that Broudic has plenty of different content material in that language as well as French. This is a web-site, too, where you can ask questions about the Breton language – how do I say "Yes we can" in Breton – and get suggestions and advice.

Second Annual National Native Language Revitalization Summit

Bretons are by no means the only people to be faced with the threat of a language being lost. In an article by Kara Briggs for Indian Country Today, posted May 5, 2009 (www.indiancountry.com) it is noted that the Indigenous Language Institute in Sante Fe, New Mexico, has documented a decline from 175 Native languages in the U.S. in 1997 to 154 today. As is the case for Breton, language speakers are elderly – over half of Native language speakers are over 70 and only 20 Native languages are routinely spoken to children.

While the situation is critical and Native peoples, like Bretons, have a history where schools did an excellent job of teaching people to be ashamed of their language and culture, there is action today to try to stop the decline. The National Native Language Revitalization Summit held May 11 to 13 in Washington, D.C., is part of that effort. During three days participants shared stories and experiences, and engaged in a number of practical workshops and meetings to learn professional skills needed to organize and support efforts to preserve their languages. On day one participants

spent a day of training, including a workshop on fundraising to support language work.

Day two was a symposium called “From Code Talkers to Immersion” where participants learned about the experiences of Navajo, Hopi and Crow code talkers in World War II, and where ideas were exchanged on creating language immersion schools and language nests where elders and children converse. With participants from all over the country, including Hawaii, this symposium offered the opportunity for Native peoples from many different tribes to learn from each other and address issues that are unique to their experience.

On the third day, summit participants met with congressional delegations at the Senate Indian Affairs Committee Hearing Room to discuss needs for funding Native language programs with government representatives.

The summit was organized by Cultural Survival, a non-profit organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the National Alliance to Save Native Languages, and the National Museum of the American Indian. For more information consult the website for Cultural Survival: www.cs.org

15th Annual Conference of the North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers (NAACLT)

Held at the New York Irish Center in Long Island City, New York, this conference held May 20 to 24th included two full days of sessions and exchanges on: “Best practices in the Celtic language classroom,” “History advocacy and public policy,” “Teaching, linguistics and orthography,” and “Technology.” With speakers from the U.S. and the Celtic countries themselves this was a highly interesting and informative gathering. More specific information is available on the website: www.naaclt.org

And from that website I have copied a quick introduction to this organization: NAACLT is a non-profit professional organization bringing together Celtic language teachers and researchers in Canada and the United States. The association wishes to enable its members to contribute to the greater field of second/foreign language learning through conference participation and publications.

Besides the annual conference (held since 1995), NAACLT has a website to help people find information about other conference and classes in North America for those wishing to learn and teach the Celtic

languages. It also publishes the Journal of Celtic Language Learning.

Not surprisingly, several of those active in NAACLT are also members of the U.S. ICDBL, including notably Kevin Rottet who works on the Journal of Celtic Language Learning and who helped organize this annual conference. A Professor in the Department of French and Italian at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana (where I earned a PhD in Anthropology/ Ethnomusicology years before he joined the faculty), Kevin gave a presentation at the NAACLT conference titled “Alc’hwez ar brezhoneg eeun: A learner’s lexicon of Breton.”

Kevin Rottet joined the U.S. ICDBL in 1995, but one of our founding members in 1981 was Séamus de Bláca (James Blake) who was the keynote speaker for the 2009 NAACLT conference. Because members of the U.S. ICDBL are so widely dispersed geographically, we rarely get the chance to meet each other. So it seemed like a good opportunity to introduce Séamus to the rest of our membership and Bro Nevez readers by including the introduction written for the NAACLT conference program:

For Dr. Séamus Blake, teaching about the roots of Irish culture must include the Gaelic language. He should know – he’s been speaking Gaelic for 30 years and broadcasting in it since 1978. A New Yorker by birth, Séamus was inspired by both parents to learn the language as a child. “My father used to get a local county paper with a column in Irish, and sit me on his lap and read the Irish to me,” says Séamus. He later traveled to Ireland, where he practiced Gaelic while living in the Aran Islands with an Irish family for the summer. Then as a Fulbright scholar Séamus studied Ireland’s language and literature for two years at Dublin’s Trinity College.

In his efforts to revitalize the Irish language and cultivate awareness of its richness, utility and cultural value, Séamus has taught classes in Gaelic and history lessons at Queens College, NYU, John Jay College and The Gaelic Society of New York. Blake is currently a tenured professor at Nassau County Community College. He is the Irish Language Editor of the quarterly academic journal ‘New Hibernia Review’ and the senior bibliographer of the Celtic section for the annual Modern Language Association bibliography.

Dr. Blake has been the host of a weekly, hour-long Irish language program on WFUV.FM RADIO at Fordham University, and at any time on the internet at WFUV.ORG, for 17 years.



Ofis ar Brezhoneg Celebrates 10 Years

This May the Office for the Breton Language celebrates its 10th anniversary. With the mission of promoting the use of Breton in public life, this organization has launched a number of very successful initiatives such as the Ya d'ar Brezhoneg campaign (Yes to Breton) to engage towns and cities as well as organizations and businesses in taking steps to use Breton in their operation. This spring the community of Saint-Herblain (just outside of Nantes) was the 100th to sign on to the campaign. Some of the actions undertaken include the placement of bilingual signs at the entrances and exits to town, promotion of Breton classes for adults, a survey of parents to see if there is interest in a bilingual program in the schools, and an increased number of Breton language books in municipal library branches. Saint-Herblain is home to a Diwan middle school which opened in 2008.

Ofis ar Brezhoneg organizes its work in five main service categories, and the following briefly presents this work (as described on the Ofis ar Brezhoneg website)

[Servij ar Glad yezhel](#) / [Service Patrimoine Linguistique](#)

This service has as its mission the collection, conservation and diffusion of the oral and written patrimony of Brittany. It is focused particularly on the protection, normalization, and use of Brittany's heritage of place and family names. Working with Mayors' offices it helps to establish the correct spelling for Breton place names. A data base which is updated daily contains names and their variations, ancient forms, phonetic pronunciations, as well as a standard spelling for each name. This service produced the first road map with names all in Breton.

[Arsellva ar Brezhoneg](#) / L'Observatoire de la Langue Bretonne

This group gathers sociolinguistic data about the Breton language that is essential to understanding its situation today. These facts are then analyzed and made available in general reports and themed dossiers. This research, regularly updated, allows the preparation of proposals with specific goals to achieve action in favor of the Breton language and its public use.

[Ar servij Treiñ-Alliañ](#) / Le Service Traduction-Conseil

This service works with a diversity of individuals and organizations in very varied areas (administrative, technology, architecture, environment, trash collection, culture ...) to see that Breton is used correctly and to offer assistance in making Breton present in public life. It counsels on how to make signs most readable and how to present information bilingually. It assists in the preparation of proposals from beginning to end. And it

assists in the preparation and revision of translated materials.

TermBret

This center works on the development of new terminology as Breton is used in new areas of work and life (education, commercial venues, media, administration, signage, computers and new technologies ...). It helps in the development of modern technical vocabularies adapted to modern life, making this work available and counseling organizations in how to best use it.

[An Ajañs Diorren](#) / L'Agence de développement

This has as its mission the promotion of Breton in all sectors of society. It supports initiatives undertaken by businesses, associations, and towns to put action plans for bilingualism into place. It organizes campaigns to promote Breton such as Ya d'ar Brezhoneg launched in 2001 to engage a wide public in the promotion of Breton for the future.

At its March meeting the Regional Council of Brittany (4 departments) voted to establish the Ofis ar Brezhoneg as an EPCC (Etablissement publique de Coopération Culturel). This move from a private organization to a public one should insure more stable financing, and it is hoped an expansion of the important work Ofis ar Brezhoneg has done. There is some trepidation that this move to public status could mean that this organization gets bogged down with governmental interference of some kind, but for now this appears to be a positive move forward. Watch for a name change to "Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg."

Homage to Gwennole ar Menn

(1938-2009)

The following is my translation of the homage by Bernard Le Nail published in *Lizher 'minig* (No. 19 bis, April-May 2009) of the Cultural Institute of Brittany. My apologies for any misinterpretations in this translation.
— Lois Kuter

It is said when speaking of Africa "When an old man dies, it's a library that burns." But, in learning of the loss of Gennole ar Menn, who was far from an old man, this is exactly what all who knew him would say. With his loss, Brittany has lost a very great specialist on Breton and Celtic subject matters. His knowledge was encyclopedic and one had the sense that he would never stop seeking and discovering. His rigor as a scholar was legendary, but one was also struck by how kind and down to earth he was. He was also a popularizer, through his innumerable radio and later television broadcasts, as well as no less numerous publications.

Gwennole ar Menn was born in Paris on June 14, 1938. He was the son of Hervé ar Menn (Hanvec 1869 – Paris 1973) who was employed at the RATP and who was an excellent Breton speaker. He was the co-founder before the war of Kenvreurezh ar Viniaouerein (KAV), an association of biniou and bombarde players that would play an essential role in the reinvigoration of the biniou, and he published a number of collections of traditional tunes.

In Paris, Gwennole was part of the Bleimor Breton scout troop during a large part of his youth, in company with Donatien Laurent, Alan Cochevelou (Alan Stivell) and a number of other young Bretons who would go on to play an important role in the spectacular renaissance of Breton culture starting in the 1960s.

After several years teaching (science) Gwennole ar Menn entered the CNRS where he would spend his entire career. Married to Garmenig Ihuellou, he had four sons who were brought up in the Breton language and who are all active today in the service of the Breton culture. Garmenig who formed a wonderful pair with him has been herself extremely active by his side and has written several novels in Breton for youth.

A specialist in anthroponymy (names of people) and toponymy (place names), Gwennole ar Menn created a large number of radio and television programs on these subjects. He also wrote a very large number of articles, most of them in Breton, for newspapers and magazines such as *Al Liamm*, *Skol*, *Hor Yezh*, *Musique Bretonne*, and others. He was the author of several books:

- *Choix de prénoms Bretons* (Saint-Brieuc, PUB, 11971, 71 pages)
- *Histoire du théâtre populaire breton XVe-XXe siècles* (Skol, 1983, 83 pages)
- *La femme au sein d'or: des chants populaires aux légendes celtiques* (Skol, 1985, 168 pages)
- *Grand choix de prénoms bretons* (Breizh, 1985, 93 pages ; re-edited 1991)
- *Les noms de famille les plus portés en Bretagne : 5,000 noms étudiés* (Spézet, Coop Breizh, 1993, 255 pages)

Gwennole ar Menn who worked closely for many years through correspondence with Roparz Hemon and directly with Léon Fleuriot and other eminent linguists and Celtic scholars of the world, also published some twenty books for which he served as the scientific editor: ancient Breton texts, dictionaries and diverse scholarly works.

Gwennole ar Menn joined the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro) at its inception in 1982. Elected president of the Section on Language and Linguistics, he guided its work for nearly 20 years, also

participating actively in the Conseil Scientifique et d'Animation of the Cultural Institute.

He was also a member of numerous scholarly societies in Brittany and Europe.

Another Type of Homage by Lois Kuter

I met Gwennole ar Menn but cannot say that I knew him personally. He received Bro Nevez for many years and has sent encouraging words for the work we have done in support of the Breton language. Just this past March he sent me a reprint of an article he published in 2007 in *Mémoires de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Bretagne* called "La langage bretonne et la poste - les timbres, cartes postales, porte-timbres." This was in response to the reproduction of a past card in Breton on the cover of the February Bro Nevez. His little article explained that these Breton language post cards were very common at the turn of the century so it would have been quite easy for a travel writer like Francis Miltoun to find one to print in his 1905 book *Rambles in Brittany*.

I have regularly received notices from Gwennole ar Menn of the editions produced by the publisher Skol (he was the publisher!). Most recently I passed along a note of his publication of a supplement to Émile Ernault's *Dictionnaire vannetais* (see Bro Nevez 109, February 2009). It was clear from the notices I received that his work to make rare and valuable works by earlier scholars of the Breton language (some very early indeed from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries) was of immeasurable importance to scholars of Celtic languages.

While Gwennole ar Menn was a passionate scholar, publishing books that would have an appeal to a very small number of fellow scholars of Breton and Celtic languages, he was also passionate about sharing his love of the Breton language with a broad public. As noted by Bernard Le Nail he was very much interested in names - people and places – and a book I have truly enjoyed is his book on popular family names. This was published in 1993 and I have reprinted below the review I did for Bro Nevez (No. 48, November 1993). While statistics may have changed some in the past 15 years, this is still a very relevant and interesting book.

Gwennole Le Menn. *Les Noms de famille les plus portés en Bretagne (5000 noms étudiés)*. Spézet : Coop Breizh. 1993, 255 pages.

This is a fascinating listing of 5,000 of the most commonly found family names in Brittany – the preface to which begins with the words "with hesitation ... " This is indeed a study that one would embark upon with a great deal of hesitation given the complexity of

tracing name changes and variations over time. Gwenno Le Menn is well suited to the challenge. A researcher for Celtic Studies with the C.N.R.S (national research institution of France) he is known in Brittany for regular radio broadcasts on word origins. He published a guide to Breton family names in 1982 (*Noms de famille Bretons – 1,700 noms et variantes*) which is now out of print and published a very popular guide to first-names (*Grand choix de prénoms Bretons*) which has been regularly reprinted since 1971.

Like his previous work, this most recent guide to names is a scholarly study written for the general public. It includes some fascinating information with a simple presentation to names which requires only a careful reading of the introductory section to unlock very interesting details. Depending on print style, names indicate a Breton origin or non-Breton origin and the entries also indicate the earliest date that form of the name was printed somewhere. Also noted is the department of Brittany where the *commune* can be found with the most occurrences of the name and the level of frequency in that department, or in Brittany as a whole, or in France. For example, in looking up the name Le Gall (a name of several U.S. ICDBL members) one would find that it is linguistically of Breton origin, meaning “stranger, French” or someone who does not know the Breton language, and that it was found in written form as early as the year 1239. It is most concentrated in Finistère, and it ranks first in Brittany as the most frequently held name and ranks 150 in France by the number of people who have this name. Within the entry for “Gall” one would also find other variants (Legall, Le Gal, Le Gallic, etc.) and their frequencies and distribution.

This book is obviously of interest to those who find their names in it, but it is also an intriguing study of Breton names in general. Some interesting statistics emerge: of some 75,000 to 80,000 different names one finds in Brittany, nearly half are found in only one commune. Of some 1,500 communes in Brittany, only 566 names can be found in 100 or more of them, and an additional 1,458 names are known in 50 or more.

Here are the top ten names in terms of the number of individuals with the name:

- 1 - Le Gall
- 2 – Le Roux
- 3 – Thomas
- 4 – Le Goff
- 5 – Martin
- 6 – Guillou
- 7 – Hamon
- 8 – Tanguy
- 9 – Simone
- 10 – Morvan

In terms of distribution (the number of communes where the name can be found) the order is different for top ten in terms of how widely distributed the name is:

- 1 – Martin (found in 909 communes of 1,500 in Brittany)
- 1 – Thomas (874)
- 3 – Simon (778)
- 4 – Hamon (775)
- 5 - Lucas (750) (12th in terms of the number of people with the name)
- 6 – Herve (746) (11th in terms of the number of people)
- 7 – Gautier (686) (13th in the terms of the number of people)
- 8 – Le Roux (662)
- 9 – Briand (655) (17th in terms of the number of people)
- 10 – Richard (641) (20th in terms of the number of people)

Although Le Menn notes that there are still great gaps to be filled in researching the history of family names, the number of interesting studies of Breton family names as well as place names is growing, and some of the best places to continue study can be found in a bibliography included in this book.

Another Loss for the Breton Language: Remi Derrien (1943-2009)

Remi Derrien is best known for his work to popularize theater in the Breton language. Born in the Morbihan region of Brittany he studied and taught English in Brest, and during his university days created the theater troupe *Teatr Penn ar Bed* in 1973. He continued to work with this troupe for 35 years until his death at the young age of 63.

He translated a number of plays by Irish authors - John Millington Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* (*Lapous-den Penn-ar-Bed*), and Brendan Behan's *The Hostage* (*An Osta*) - as well as works by writers of numerous other countries. And he wrote a play himself called *Gwrazez* (Women) and brought works by Breton authors Per Jakez Hélias and Guillaume Kergourlay to light and life on stage.

This past March Remi Derrien was awarded the *Priz Hervé ar Menn* for his life of work to promote Breton theater. The richness of the repertoire presented by *Teatr Penn ar Bed* and the quality of the Breton language in the plays made this theater group well loved by the Breton public and it served as a model for other troupes that were to be created in the 1970s and 80s.

Remi Derrien was also a voice appreciated by many on Breton language and bilingual radio and television

programs (Radio-Armorique, Radio Bretagne-Ouest and France 3 Ouest). He actively supported the Breton language as Vice-President for Emgleo Breiz, and was a creative and talented writer.

The Festival of Saint Yves / Gouel Erwan – Red Cardell in NYC

For many centuries the date of the death of Sant Erwan (Saint Yves) – May 19 – has been celebrated in Brittany with Catholic Masses and a procession in Tréguier and to the neighboring village of Minihy Tréguier where he was born and where his tomb is found. In particular, lawyers from all over Brittany, and the world, have come to Tréguier on this day to take part in the ceremonies since Saint Yves is the patron saint of lawyers. Born in the mid 13th century, he is also the protector of the poor as well as orphans and widows.

Many Bretons will tell you that Saint Yves is the patron saint of Brittany, equivalent to St. Patrick for Ireland, St. Andrew for Scotland and St. David for Wales. But in the eyes of the Church and many other Bretons he shares the role with Saint Anne (Santez Anna), and Brittany has a number of patron saints of local importance, like the seven “founding saints”: Samson of the bishopric of Dol. Padern for Vannes, Kaourintin/Corentin for Cornouaille, Paol/Pol for Léon, Tudwal (Tugdual) for Trégor, and Brieg/Brieuc and Malo (for St. Brieuc and St. Malo).

Inspired by the international recognition given to St. Patrick's Day, Bretons have been building a celebration for Sant Erwan since the mid 1990s and this gets bigger each year as Bretons throughout the world use the occasion to celebrate their identity. Here in the U.S. the BZH New York had a party on May 21st featuring, Red Cardell, one of Brittany's hottest bands where Breton rhythms are mixed with a variety of world beats and punk rock sound. First formed in Quimper in 1992 the band is made up of Jean Michel Moal (accordion), Manu Masko (drums and samples) and Jean Pierre Riou (guitar and vocals). Their most recent CD “Le banquet de Cristal” was awarded the grand prize for CD in 2009 by Produit en Bretagne. Check out their website (which has an English version) for more about them: www.redcardell.com. And check out the website for BZH New York for more information about this very active organization of Bretons and friends of Brittany in the “Big Apple”: www.bzh-ny.org



Skol Uhel ar Vro and Gouel Erwan

For the occasion of the celebration of Sant Erwan the Cultural Institute of Brittany organized a series of presentations featuring Bretons and world travel. Here is a sample of the program for May 16 in Vannes:

Laurence Moal – “L'étranger au Moyen-Age en Bretagne. Présence, attitudes, perceptions”

An exploration of Breton national identity at the end of the Middle Ages and perceptions of “foreigners” in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Alain Le Noac'h and Éamon Ó'Ciosáin, “Les Immigrés irlandais en Bretagne au XVII^e siècle

An exploration of Irish immigration to Brittany in the 17th century.

Pierre Joubin and Noa Castro, “70^e anniversaire de la ‘Retirada,’ arrive de Républicains espagnols en Bretagne”

The welcoming of refugees in Brittany from Galicia and Asturias in 1937 and 1939 during the period of civil war in Spain.

On May 28th Bernard Le Nail follows with a presentation on the theme of “Des Outchiteli bretons dans l'Empire de Russie”

During the 18th and 19th centuries when speaking French was a sign of status, rich and noble families of Russia sought instructors (“outchiteli”) to help them perfect this language. Many Bretons were among those emigrating to meet this need.

U.S. ICDBL at the Potomac Celtic Festival in Leesburg, Virginia, June 13 & 14

For the 16th consecutive year (and from the very beginning of this festival), the U.S. ICDBL will have an information tent at the Potomac Celtic Festival in Leesburg, Virginia – just to the west of Washington D.C. While most “Celtic Festivals” in the U.S. feature only Irish and/or Scottish culture, this is one of the few truly inter-Celtic festivals where music, dance and culture from all the Celtic countries are welcome and fostered.

And this festival has also organized workshops – usually with several focused on the Celtic languages. For the second year Lois Kuter will be participating on a panel to present the situation of the Celtic languages – in her case Breton. Last year she was joined by fellow ICDBL members Cheryl Mitchell (for Welsh) and Liam Ó Caiside (for Manx and Scottish Gaelic). Susan Baker will once again do a workshop to teach a few Breton dances.

From our humble beginnings with a single card table and odd assortment of flyers at this festival in 1994 (then called the Oatlands Celtic Festival) we have developed colorful and informative posters, maps, and handouts to draw festival goers into interesting discussions at the ICDBL information tent. If you will be in the area, plan to come to the festival and join us.

For more information about the festival check out the website: www.potomaccelticfest.org



New Music Recordings from Brittany Heard of, but not heard

The following short notes are based on CD reviews and notes in the following Breton magazines: *Armor* 469 (Feb. 2009), 470 (March 2009), 471 (April 2009), 472 (May 2009) / *Ar Men* 169 (March-April 2009), 170 (May-June 2009) / *Musique Bretonne* 213 (March-April 2009).

Andrea Ar Gouilh. Voix de Bretagne: Andrea Ar Gouilh. Label Productions CD 1013.

This singer could be found on recordings of the 1960s when she was accompanied by a very young harp player, Alan Cochevelou (later to become Stivell). While much less active on the public stage in more recent years, her name is certainly not one that has been forgotten. This CD is the fruit of a concert she performed in the Cathedral of Quimper this past year - a selection of well known Breton ballads as well as newer compositions. She is accompanied by organist Michel Boëdec and Celtic harp players Pol and Hervé Quefféléant, as well as violinist Xavier Lecomte. And she is joined by her daughter, Nolwenn Korbell - a notable presence herself on the Breton music scene, who like her mother sings in the Breton language. This CD was awarded the "Coup de Coeur 2009" prize in the CD category of prizes for culture and creativity awarded each year by Produit en Bretagne.

Bagad Cap Caval. Ololé!

This CD and DVD of the Bagad Cap Caval includes three performance suites: "Ololé," "Fransou Min," and "Job Er C'horr" as well as interludes featuring various combinations of instruments. This bagad (Brittany's ensemble of bombardes, Scottish style bagpipes, and percussion) finished at the top of the top category of bagads of Brittany in the first of two championship competitions for 2009.

Bagad Elven. 2 – Mémoire d'aujourd'hui. Self-produced. Bagadelven 02 (<http://bagad.elven.free.fr>)

This is a new double-CD by this bagad. The CDs include traditional songs and tunes collected by the bagad from which they created arrangements for the ensemble.

Jean Baron. Parlons d'amour. TooT 0812

Jean Baron is probably best known as a bombarde player in pair with Christian Anneix or George Epinette on biniou. He is also a master of the veuze, the bagpipe native to the southeastern corner of Brittany, and he can dance with the best of them. But, he is also a fine singer with a rich repertoire of traditional songs collected from the Gallo country of Brittany. This CD features Baron's vocal talents and songs with a varied look on the theme of love.

Claude Besson. Arbres. CBFB 863.

Besson has been on the Breton music scene since the early 1970s when he was known for his militant songs and unique accompaniment with dulcimer. In more recent years one has rarely heard of him, but he is back with a CD of songs that still protest injustices and speak to the need to build a better world. This is a Breton who still has plenty to say in song.

Brou-Hamon-Quimbert. La Nuit comme le jour. Phare-Ouest 203506.

This is the third CD by this trio of singers – Roland Brou, Mathieu Hamon, and Charles Quimbert – who are masters of the traditional song repertoire of several pays of Gallo Brittany. This CD captures a concert performance where four themes very common to the Breton song tradition (whether it be French or Breton language songs) are featured: love and lovers, soldiers and deserters, work and revolts, drink and drinkers. Besides songs passed down in the rich oral tradition of Gallo Brittany there are a few newer compositions by Breton singer-song-writers such as Gerard Delahaye and Melaine Favennec included. And in a rare departure from the unison nature of traditional song Brou, Hamon and Quimbert play around with a bit of polyphony in this performance.

Les Chantous de Poliac. Ballades entre Oust et Arz. VOC 1010.

A double CD of songs from a gathering held in October in the small town of Peillac (area of Redon) where singers and musicians lead a walk through the countryside – and those walking respond in chorus to the lead singer. These are "marches" - songs you would sing in earlier times as you went out to farm fields, traveled on foot to a wedding, or any other destination where song made the hike more pleasant. Breton marches have the swing of a slow dance and they are still great accompaniment for walking in Brittany – whether on your own or on the occasion of an organized excursion.

Cécile Corbel. Song Book Vol. 2. Bran Music / Keltia Musique RSCD 287.

Singer and harpist Cécile Corbel with a variety of songs ranging from a "Corpus Christi carol" to the traditional Irish "Great Selkie" with her own compositions as well.

Delphine Coutant. *La Marée*.

Third recording by this young singer and song-writer. She accompanies her own song compositions on piano, fiddle, and guitar.

Daonet. *Rok a Raok*.

Rock music with texts in the Breton language sung by Gwendal Meillarec (also on electric guitar) with band members Gilles Harnois (electric bass) and Hervé Briand (percussion). The songs address a number of contemporary issues.

Festival Plinn du Danouët 2008. (Michel Diridollou, Danouët, 22390 Bourbriac)

This is a 4-CD set with 46 selections of performances at the 2008 festival for the dance plinn held in Daouët. Included are paired bombarde/biniou and clarinets, accordion, and traditional song (for dance, ballads or cantiques). This is a gem of a festival and proceeds from the CD sales support restoration of the Chapel Notre-Dame-du-Danouët.

Les Goristes. *Bonne Année*. Keltia Musique KMCD 503.

This CD includes irreverent and satirical songs on a variety of societal failings, artfully performed by this group of men from Brest. Never failing to express the humorous side to things, songs are well composed and musical accompaniment impeccable.

Kevrenn Alre. *Alre an iliz* (CD) / *De Auray à New York, de Brec'h à Shanghai* (DVD). KA 01 / KA 02. This new CD presents the full bagad – one of Brittany's top ranked ones – but also many smaller ensembles: a group of bombardes, singers, paired bombarde with bagpipes, an Irish music ensemble with uilleann pipes, and the jazz group Jazz ha Barh. Also included are long-time collaborators with this bagad such as bombarde master Jorj Botuha and the Kanerion Pleuigner. The DVD documents performances in Brittany as well as world-wide by this bagad and the dance group that also makes up the Kevrenn Alre.

Ladmirault-Fauré-Cras-Ravel. *Piano 4 mains*. Skarbo DSK 4073

This CD features piano for four hands performed by Jean-Pierre Ferey and Laurent Boukobza. Two composers – Maurice Ravel and Gabriel Fauré – are well known to those who love classical music. The two Breton composers of their time period are much less known: Paul Ladmirault and Jean Cras. This CD includes Cras' "Âmes d'enfants" originally composed for the six hands of his three daughters and Ladmirault's "Rhapsodie gaélique."

Pennoù Skoulm. *Trinkañ*. Innacor INNA 10806 This is a new CD by five of Brittany's best: Ronan le Bars (uilleann pipes), Nicolas Quemener (guitar), Jean-

Michel Veillon (flute), Christian Lemaître and Jacky Molard (fiddles). This CD features music for dance and with this line-up it's sure to be interesting.

Pevar Den. *E pad an noz*. Coop Breizh CD 1009. This is the fourth recording in fourteen years by this fest noz band. As their name implies (*pevar* = 4, *den* = people), this is a quartet with paired bombarde and biniau at the core and fiddle and flute also an integral part of the sound. On this CD Thierry Lahais adds *veuze* to the rich texture of sounds. Varied dances are featured in this carefully crafted CD.

Re Arz. *Spered*. CD AN 03.

This is a new ensemble created by Yves Ribis with the string quartet Arz Nevez at its core. Also included are the voices of two excellent traditional singers: Véronique Bourjot and Sofi Le Hunsec. The music is of many influences with a Middle Eastern flavor added to the Breton.

Rotor Jambreks. *Start the Rotor*. Last Exit Records LER 004.

A rock band from Brest with a sound sometimes reminiscent of Pink Floyd or Elvis Presley. The reviewer of this CD lauded their original interpretation of the spiritual "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen." One can only imagine how that might sound, but probably pretty good, since this CD was awarded the "Jeune Artiste 2009" prize in the CD category of prizes for culture and creativity awarded annually by Produit en Bretagne.

Saint-Vincent-Providence École de chant chorale.

***Les Chants de l'Iroise*.** Self-produced CLSV 01. This choir from Rennes interprets texts by Jean-Pierre Boulic set to music by René André.

S-Quisse. *Les trios rives*. Ragodin Productions (www.esquisselegroupe.fr)

This is a rearrangement of a fest noz band from Nantes (Esquisse) for concert performances. This is their third recording with a mix of music of Balkan, Breton, Argentine, and electro-funk flavors performed on a variety of instruments.

Telenn – *L'Anthologie de la harpe – Vol. 2*. Coop Breizh CD 976

This is the second 2-CD set packaged in a handsome hard-back book-like jacket full of photos and documentation on the numerous harp players included. While the first anthology collected performers of a more "traditional" style of music, this one captures the use of Celtic harp for more modern compositions. Performers include Triskell, Katrien Delavier, Hoëlla Barbedette, Gwenaël Kerleo, Anne le Signor, Catherine Nguyen ... among others. Particularly interesting and challenging for the harp are compositions by Pierrick Houdy and Perig Herbert.

Gilles Thoraval. *Rêveurs de lendemains*. Planète Mômes PM-004

Singer and guitarist Gilles Thoraval performs contemporary songs of his own composition and interprets others by Breton singer-songwriters Michel Caradec, Yvon Etienne and Louis Capart. He is accompanied by Christian Moreaux on oboe, Yann le Bozec on accordion and Maïna Thoraval on Celtic harp.

Anne Vanderlove. *Forever*. Avel Ouest CD 3300. Vanderlone is a "chanteuse" who has been on the Breton scene for many years, offering songs in French on love, dreams and hopes.

***Veillées à Saint-Carradeuc – Chez Jacqueline*.**

dOeO 01 / deouipenouap.free.fr

A 3-CD set with 53 selections of traditional song and stories of the Pays de Saint-Brieuc. These cover all topics – recorded in cafés, at evening vespers, in homes, and other musical gatherings – including marches, dances, ballads, and songs for all occasions. Fifteen selections are performances from the annual Bogue d'Or song contest where singers from this region have placed among the winners very frequently.

Wididoup. *L'Opium du danseur*. CD Bemol production. (www.bemolvpc.com)

Chromatic (piano) accordion player, Régis Huiban, is at the center of this group which includes song and tenor sax by Gildas Le Buhé and bass by Pierre Tardivel. It's a unique and successful combination of sounds to power the dances featured on the CD.

DEEP INSIDE A BRETON SKULL 22 - Borders

Jean Pierre Le Mat

How can I explain to my American friends what awakens in my brain when I dream about the Breton borders?

I vaguely hear a voice, somewhere in the distance: Go West! Go West, young man!

Even for those who don't know exactly where the west is, this cry is linked with spirit of conquest and life in the open air. It is linked with modern hero figures, with a Colt in their hand and a Stetson hat on their head. The right of conquest, which was aristocratic, was becoming a democratic right. Go West, young man! The borders are open! The borders have been blown open!

Even now, Europeans feel that the Americans have still kept the same enthusiasm they had during their expansion westwards. They kept that in their rush towards the moon, the new technologies or market-shares. The wise European citizen expresses a mix of envy and reprobation towards the young conquerors. But he was himself such a character during the Renaissance, five centuries ago. And now, with Romania, Poland or Hungary joining the European community, and as he feels the decline of his own country, he can find himself whispering to his children: Go East! Go East, young man! The borders are open!

Borders! The Bretons know that their country is too small to close themselves up in it. They have to look across them to get world languages, scientific knowledge, philosophical thoughts, spices for their food.

The borders of Brittany are not limits for us, not even a place where we intend to settle all our life long. They are more important than that. Like the walls of Jerusalem, they draw the spiritual figure of our identity more than the real place we live in.

Like Americans and all the people of the world, Bretons are sons of their past and fathers of their future. But our past is heavier and our future more uncertain than yours. The question of the borders is completely different, whether you are part of a powerful or little nation, whether your past is heavy or not, whether your future is certain or not.

Why bother about borders?

From the Neolithic period, drawing a border was the most common way to organize a community and its resistance against any permanent aggression. Of course, historical borders have no moral value. They were settled in the blood and death of thousands people. But they are acknowledged everywhere as a good basis to limit political powers, to restrict ambitions. Their stability makes it possible to outline a peace agreement. When the borders are steady, a democracy can operate with shared values and shared identity.

The historical borders prevent one neither from contacts nor from exchanges. It is the contrary. Vitality is possible when identity is clearly outlined. That is true for individuals and for communities as well. The Bretons were efficient in international trade when Brittany was considered, by the Bretons themselves and by their customers, as a nation of traders.

A border cannot ensure human rights. But it justifies the last of it: resistance to oppression and aggression.

Our historical border had been asserted twelve centuries ago. Through the Treaty of Angers, in 851, the king of the Franks agreed to include as part of Brittany the border counties of Rennes, of Nantes and also of Retz, south of the river Loire.



Castle of the Dukes in Nantes

Through centuries, our ancestors spread a chain of fortresses, from Clisson to Fougères. They were built when the attacker was French. Through centuries, this border outlined a national identity, through local solidarities, local trade, customs.

The sea is another border. Our country is crowned with fortified harbours, which reminds us that the sea can bring crime and devastation.

In Brittany, the border of the regional administration and the historical border do not fit one another. Since a decree of 1941, during the Nazi period, Brittany was split. The Breton regional administration works now without the department of Loire-Atlantique, without the participation of the inhabitants of the Nantes country. Naturally, like everywhere in the world, we want to fit identity and administrative borders together. France refuses to allow us this right.

The French treat our concern with scorn. They are real hypocrites. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers between 1914 and 1918 died to fit the historical border which they had in mind with the administrative border they wanted. Every year since, they celebrate their victory on the 11th of November. They have registered in their penal code that it is a crime to make any attempt against the integrity of their territory.

In the name of our territorial integrity, we do not use the violent means which should be inspired by French history. Thousands protest peacefully. The most spirited among the young Bretons protested recently with paint and brushes. They were sentenced to prison for defacement.

In losing the link with their past, the Bretons of Nantes feel something like being defaced themselves. But through the eyes of the judge and the political manager, walls are more important than men. They condemn the defacement of walls.

Defacement does not concern only the Bretons of Nantes. The inhabitants of the Loire Valley, upstream Ancenis, are also deprived of their shared identity, split between two administrative regions, "Countries-of-Loire" and "Centre". In France, the Loire Valley is the Valley of the Kings. According to the UNESCO, the Loire Valley is part of the World Heritage, with its historic towns and villages, its wonderful castles and its outstanding cultural landscape. The French administration does not know the Loire Valley. The castles of Chambord or Blois are situated in a vague area, the "Centre region" where the dwellers cannot even be named.

There is history of people and history of environment. But in the city of Nantes, there is another history: a history of power. The city was sacked by the Franks at the end of the 5th century, and then by the Bretons of King Waroch II one century later. They were ransomed by the Franks of Centulf under Dagobert reign, and then by those of Agatheus under Childebert reign. The city was ruined by the Normans during the 9th century. It is only during the 10th century that a steady political power was built by the Breton duke Alan Barvek, Alan Twisted-Beard. The Normans were driven away for good, and a true administration was set up.

Through the centuries, Nantes became a prosperous city, due to sea trade. During the 15th century, it was the first city in Brittany. The power was also based in knowledge: the first Breton university was created in Nantes in 1460.



The cities with world ambitions want to free themselves from their territory and from their natives. Does Nantes want to reach the destiny of Venice, or the destiny of New-York? Could be. And nobody can prevent a city to follow its own dreams. Today, Nantes dreams its own dreams. But we, Bretons, must convince the city to keep in touch with its environment. No entity, whether an animal, a man or a city can live in a sustainable way against its ecosystem.

History is really mixed stuff, a kind of Irish stew. There is a history of people and of environment. In the big cities, there is a history of powers. In the occidental world, there is also a history of human rights. The American and the French revolutionaries believed that they expressed a timeless truth. Actually, the field of the human rights extends gradually. Social rights appeared during the 19th century. Ecological rights appeared at the end of the 20th century. The right to

one's own identity is emerging as a human right now in France. It emerged in the U.S. twenty years ago, with the Native American Languages Act.

The historian will notice that the assertion of new fundamental rights always produces the same reaction. "Not now!"; "There are more important things than that!"; "You are creating a diversion!"; "You have ulterior motives!." It is a long way towards the reunification of Brittany. But this long way will undoubtedly be the best illustration, in the future, of emergence in France of the right to one's own identity.

Editor's Note:

"Go West, Young Man, Go West" was an expression said to be first used by John Babson Lane Soule in the *Terre Haute Express* in 1851. It appealed to Horace Greeley, who rephrased it slightly in an editorial in the *New York Tribune* on 13 July 1865: "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country." In context, he was urging readers to flee the immoral life and poverty of urban cities like Washington to seek a healthy new life of agriculture in the west. The phrase captured the imagination of many in the post Civil War period and was widely quoted in the 19th century and used to justify westward movement and Manifest Destiny to develop "unused" lands of the western United States. After all, the Indians were not doing anything to improve the land or to build things. This phrase may not be so much about borders as it was about entitlement to what was perceived as the empty wilderness of the American continent. Horace Greeley was a complex man - an advocate of social justice and the abolition of slavery. But, like many of his time (and of today) he felt that the "empty" land occupied by Native peoples should be put to more productive use.

Travels in Brittany – Guingamp in 1895, 1905 & 1930

With Guingamp taking center stage in the soccer victory of its team this May, it seemed fitting to feature this town as it appears in the eyes of 19th and early 20th century travel writers.

Henry Blackburn. *Artistic Travel in Normandy, Brittany, the Pyrenees, Spain and Algeria*. (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1895), pp. 80-85

Eight miles from Châteaulaudren, in a green valley watered by the river Trieux, is the quiet old town of Guingamp. Its past history, like that of nearly every town in Brittany, has been so eventful that its present normal state may well be calm; but once a year its inhabitants neither work nor repose. In the month of

September they hold their annual Fête de St. Loup, and pilgrims come from all parts of Brittany by excursion trains to the famous "Pardon" of Guingamp.

Guingamp is a town of not more than 8000 inhabitants, with one principal street, which winds irregularly down like a stream, spreading and overflowing its banks at one point, in triangular fashion, in what is called the market-place, then narrowing again, and working its way through a suburb of small houses into the great high-road to Morlaix. It has two monuments – the church of Notre Dame, and a bronze fountain in the market-place. The timbered houses are old, and many of their gables lean; the cobblestones in the streets are rough, and the public promenade of dust, with withering trees, built on the old ramparts, looks as dreary as any we shall see on our travels. But it is surrounded by green landscape, and the view from the walks on the ramparts, seen through the tops of poplars, is of a green valley with trees and grey rooftops between which winds the river Trieux, slowly turning waterwheels.

The church was built between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, and represents several styles of architecture – Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance. It was originally founded as a castle chapel, and part of the structure is as early as the thirteenth century. It has three towers, the centre one having a spire.

Brittany is a land of lasting monuments; and of its buildings it has been well said, "ce que la Normandie modelait dans le tuf, la Basse-Bretagne le ciselait en granit"; but remembering the magnificent churches to be seen in Normandy, we need not detain the reader long in Guingamp. If we were asked by tourists if the church of Notre Dame at Guingamp was worth going very far to see, we should answer, No. It is only as a picture that it attracts us much. We shall see finer buildings in other parts of Brittany, but nowhere a more characteristic assembly. The most curious feature is a chapel forming the north porch, which is open and close to the street, lighted at night for services, and separated only from the road by a grille. This *portail*, as it is called, forms the chapel of Notre Dame de Halgoet, and is the sacred shrine to which all come at the fête of Guingamp. It is ornamented by rich stone carving and grotesque gargoyles. The people of Guingamp love the chapel of Notre Dame de Halgoet; it is a retreat for them by day and by night, a place of meeting for old and young, with a perpetual beggars' mart at the door. The north porch with its open grille is a house of call for rich and poor of both sexes, and placed as it is in the centre of the town, abutting upon the principal street, it forms part of their everyday life to go in and out as they pass by. It is one of the many welcome retreats in France; in a land of perpetual noises and glare, of shrill, uncouth voices and latchless doors, the church gives peace and shade.

In the centre of Guingamp is its market-place, and in the centre of the market-place is a fountain, consisting of a circular granite basin with a wrought-iron railing. There is a second basin of bronze, supported by four sea-horses with conventional wings, and a third by four naiads; the central figure is the Virgin, her feet resting on a crescent. This fountain was constructed by an Italian artist, and its waters played for the first time on the night of the annual Pardon in 1745.

A few yards from the cathedral, on the opposite side of the street, is the old Hôtel de l'Ouest, where travelers are entertained in rather rough but bountiful fashion.

"Take a little trout or salmon, caught this morning in the Trieux, a little beef, a little mutton, a little veal, some tongue, some omelettes, some pheasant, some fish salad, some sweets, some coffee, and then – stir gently," is the prescription for travelers who stay at the Hôtel de l'Ouest. As this is a good inn, it may be worth while to state that the total charge for three English travellers, who spent a night and part of a day there, was 12 fr. 80 c.

Excepting at the time of fêtes, Guingamp is almost as quiet and primitive in its ways as in the days of the Black Prince; but on one summer's morning we hear an unusual sound from the great bell of Notre Dame, and find a procession of priests and choristers winding up the principal street, followed by hundreds of the inhabitants. What is the occasion? "The mother of the Maire [Mayor] is dead," is the answer; "she was a bountiful lady, beloved by all, and we are to bury her this morning." And so the inhabitants turn out *en masse*, and march with slow steps, for about half a mile, to the cemetery. It is a dark, silent stream of people, filling the street and carrying everything slowly before it; the only sounds being the chanting of the choir, and the repetition of prayers. We follow to the cemetery, which is crowded with graves, each headed by little iron or wooden crosses, hung with immortelles. The procession divides and disperses down the narrow paths, a few only of the friends of the deceased standing near the grave.

At one corner of the cemetery is a shabby little wooden building, like a gardener's tool-house, which seems to excite much interest. A girl, with shining bronzed face, in a snow-white cap, holding a little child by the hand, is coming out of the door; we venture to ask the reason of her visit. "Just to see my father for a minute," is the ready answer.

In a little wooden box, about the size of a small dog kennel, is her father's skull, or *chef* as it is called; he is tumbling over with his neighbours in other boxes ... The sight is a common one in Brittany, but it is startling and takes us by surprise at first, to see at least fifty of

these shabby boxes, some on shelves in rows, but generally piled up in disorder and neglect. The lady who is being buried so solemnly this morning will some day be unearthed, and her *chef*, in a box duly labeled and decorated with immortelles, will take its place in the ossuary of Guingamp.

Looking round over the thickly wooded but rather somber landscape, and on the old grey roofs of the town, one is a little at a loss to account for the rapturous descriptions which nearly all travellers give of Guingamp. On a fine summer's morning the landscape is seen to perfection; but to tell the truth, the scene is not very striking either for beauty or for colour. Guingamp has been described as "a diamond set in emeralds," and we read of its landscape *riant*, and so on. "Guingamp m'a pris le couer," says another traveler; but their interest is in the past, they people it with memories.

Francis Miltoun. *Rambles in Brittany* (Boston: L.C. Page & Company), 1906., pp. 260-262

Guingamp, laying inland in the rich valley of the Trieux, is the market-town of the arrondissement of the same name. It is of feudal origin and was the ancient capital of the countship, later the duchy, of Penthievre, and of the ancient Goëlle land.

Guingamp Castle is a great square building, flanked by four massive towers, of which one has been practically destroyed.

The Church of Our Lady of Good Help, of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, is a magnificent work of its era, with an elaborately furnished interior.

The Pardon of Bon Secours is Guingamp's gayest event of all the year. In numbers, it is one of the largest in Brittany, and is held on the Saturday before the first Sunday in July. On this occasion the statue of Our Lady, within the porch of the church, is clad in a silken robe, and receives the pilgrims, who refresh themselves with water previously consecrated at its source. With the fall of the sun commences a continual round of national dances, inspired by the lonesome, sharp, shrill wail of the *binious*, played in much the same way as are the Scotch bagpipes, except that their music is even more shrill and heartrending – if possible. At nine o'clock the statue of the virgin is brought to the public square, solemnly conveyed by an immense procession, and three great bonfires are lighted. At midnight a high mass terminates the celebration, and some of the pilgrims depart, and others remain for the banquet which invariably follows.

On the eight of September, 1857, the Madonna of Guingamp received the crown of gold from the chapter

of St. Peter's at Rome, on behalf of the Pope, a distinction offered to images of the Virgin uniting the three traits of antiquity, popularity, and miracle-working.

"La Pompe," or the Fontaine, in hammered lead, is one of the chief artistic curiosities of Guingamp. It is a remarkable work in every way, and dates from 1588, since which time it has only been repaired – not reconstructed. Its preservation is wonderful, and it is an embellishment of which even a greater town might well be proud.

Aside from the fragment of the castle, there are no mediaeval gateways or walls to remind one of the military importance of the place in former days. A century and a quarter ago, a traveler wrote: "Enter Guingamp by gateways, towers, and battlements of the oldest military architecture, every part denoting antiquity, and in the best preservation." All this, unhappily, has disappeared, and one has to go to Vitré and Fougères to see military architecture in Brittany.

Amy Oakley, *Enchanted Brittany* (New York: The Century Co.), 1930, pp. 86-98.

O sleepy little town of Guingamp, how may one guess your secret? Had we not, indeed, tarried all unwittingly within your borders and never known? We had said to each other, of the Place du Centre, "What a setting for grand opera!" We had not divined that once a year, according to the sterling Breton custom, a ceremony takes place beside which the memory of such a show as "The Miracle" of Morris Gest becomes theatrical and pale. Guingamp on the Saturday preceding the first Sunday in July awakens. With open arms she welcomes her pilgrims. Ten thousand hearts and voices combine to bring into being this miracle of piety and devotion, this sacred flower sprung from the soul of a people enamored of beauty, tradition, and romance, this fervent act – the lighting of symbolic fires in praise of the Creator. Nowhere else in all Brittany will the pagan rites now put to Christian uses be found to equal the torch-light procession of Guingamp. All the superstition of Trégor to the north, the mysticism and religious fervor of neighboring Léon, finds its culmination here in this ceremony held in what was once the capital of the Pays du Goëlo and under circumstances which enhance its every element of mystery and enchantment. There is no rival to this Breton festival, while of day-time pardons Sainte-Anne-d'Auray alone commands an equal, although not a similar allegiance.

The allées were a seething mass of humanity on the day preceding the procession. Booths had been installed beneath the shade-trees, side-shows, a shooting gallery bearing the name "Tir Breiz Izel,"

merry-go-rounds; and, to cap the climax, the circus arrived with glitter and blare of drums and cymbals, with mighty wagons whence issued the roar of beasts. Pilgrims were pouring into town. With the arrival of every train the influx passed the terrace – for so the sidewalk was courteously called – of the Hôtel du Commerce. As we munched the inevitable *gâteau sec* offered on such occasions with tea, in lieu of the desired pastry, it amused us to enumerate the towns from which the pilgrims came.

On every woman's head perched an airy confection, stiffly starched for the occasion, of net, tulle, or lace. Those of Guingamp and thereabouts were delicate in the extreme, of hand-made net, embroidered; from Morlaix came tulle coifs of much the same form, with a little more abandon to the drooping ends that becomingly frame the face; lace mob-caps betrayed their wearers hailed from the interior, Carhaix and Huelgoat, whose damsels vie with one another in the choice of silken shawls and aprons. Girls from Pontivy, Guémené, and Baud rivaled if they did not surpass in gaiety and color the maids of Huelgoat; lasses wearing the fly-away cap of Lorient consorted with bewitching beribboned belles from pleasure-loving Quimperlé.

Not to be outdone, the swains and husbands displayed a lavish amount of black velvet – streamers upon hats, cuffs and shirred vests – those of Pontivy not disdaining the traditional white broadcloth jacket weighted down with copper buttons. Welcoming hosts, the "Men of Guingamp" swaggered as though unforgetful of the time, long centuries ago, when, as the ballad tells, their forebears saved the imperiled city of Nantes from the clutches of the English: mindful as well, we imagined, of the days before the marriage of their Duchess Anne when three times the town of Guingamp was beleaguered by Anne's cousinly rival for the duchy of Brittany, the Duc de Rohan. Even in those days it was the *bon Dieu* who was all-powerful in the affairs of Guingamp. Did He not send the Blessed Virgin, with the Christ-child in her arms, to ring the bells of Notre-Dame and to put to flight the forces of the duke and his French allies?

It is said that in the seventeenth century there were three thousand beggars at Guingamp – about half the population. Be that as it may, one who attends the pardon knows the meaning of "the beggars have come to town." Rags, tags, velvet gowns, all are on hand. In particular they congregate in whining phalanxes about the porch of the church, where in a niche above the main portal the venerated statue of an ebony-black Virgin, gorgeously arrayed, looks over the heads of her worshipers. Here kneel, at every hour of the day, groups of the faithful; here sit priests inscribing names in veritable judgment books; here flicker in the breeze the flames of candles. Posters tell of the great doings to come. The heading, in flamboyant letters runs:

GRAND PARDON DE GUINGAMP
Pèlerinage de Notre-Dame do Bon Secours

The event on this thirtieth of June was to be presided over by the Bishop of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier in the presence of Monseigneur the Bishop of Dara (Haiti), who, we heard, was a good Breton. There would be pontifical mass at ten, vespers at three, and at half-past nine the procession in which every person who would take part must carry a lighted candle. There would be the *feux de joie* (or sacred fires) on the *place*, followed by a midnight mass. The church would remain open throughout the night.

The great day dawned. Burst of sunlight pierced a cloud-banked sky. Afoot, carrying heavy lunch-baskets, or in jogging carts the peasants poured into the old gray town. Many, we could see at a glance, were extremely well-to-do, while others obviously were lowly and ignorant. Young and old, men and women were almost without exception in Breton dress, for the most part were conversing in the gruff Breton tongue. The sound of church bells filled the air, blending with the cawing of rooks and the whistles of arriving trains.

Reapers, threshing-machines, and other infernally noisy inventions had been installed in the park beneath the shade of as druidical oak. Men in beribboned hats and velvet-trimmed jackets inspected with evident interest these incongruously modern contraptions. Drovers threaded their way to the horse-fair or to the allées where cows and pigs were on sale.

Shopkeepers were reaping a harvest, to judge by the number of balloons which floated above the crowd bearing the names of rival establishments. With the pilgrims we gravitated toward the church. Within, a friendly atmosphere prevailed. There was a constant shuffling of feet, a tramping from one relic to another. We encountered many rural types. One old man, with white hair flowing to his shoulders, was carrying by its stem an enormous cabbage. Drovers had brought whips and ropes. There was much hand-shaking among them, while women embraced one another à la Bretonne – a kiss on each cheek (in French fashion) and one more for good measure.

As we entered, a group paused for holy water, rotund parents and a son, all in the costume of Lorient. The boy especially took our fancy, a lad in early teens with cherubic face, dressed like his father, in black-velvet coat, long trousers, and beribboned hat. As the hour for vespers neared, the crowd increased. Mothers with babes in arms lined the thronged aisle and, upon the dramatic entrance of the bishops, held up their children to kiss the pontifical hand as their remote ancestors had been made to kiss the divine hand of the king.

Our next emotion, after vespers and while we were awaiting the torch-light procession, was the circus ...

Guingamp's famed torch-light procession transcended our greatest expectations. Thousands and thousands were participants. From our illuminated hotel we first caught the radiance emanating from the cortège reflected in windows; then the spectacle, on rounding the corner, burst upon us in reality, a sea of light, of fire. Priests directed the throngs. As they passed us came snatches of martial music, alternating with plaintive voices raised in Breton canticles, with groups chanting, in French, hymns to the Virgin. The candle-light played on lacy coifs, on banners innumerable, on sacred relics borne aloft by devotees. At last came the bishops, adorned in scarlet and gold, magnificent with staff and miter, wielding an almost hypnotic power by means of hands uplifted in rhythmic blessings.

When the final group of marchers, plowing a fiery path through the darkness, had at last been swallowed by the night, we made our way to the Place du Centre to await the procession's return and the lighting of the pyres. We had been invited to partake of ices on the balcony of the Pâtisserie Martinet, a point of vantage overlooking one of the three huge piles of fagots, tall as a house, flying a pennant with the naïve inscription: "Vive Jésus." The night was chill. Shivering, we declined the proffered ices. So long had been the procession that we expected to find its head already at the square, but no, the route was longer still. With impatience we waited. At last we spied the first flickering lights.

It comes! In all its other-worldly beauty the marshaled multitude marches against a background of grand-opera houses whose windows are aflame with candles, whose gables glow in the light of blowing lanterns. The crowd parts, cleft like the Red Sea, to allow passage for the bishop, who advances and sets his torch to the base of a pyre. The fagots blaze and crackle. Flames leap on high and swirl in the wind, showers of sparks rise skyward and fall like fireworks on ancient roofs and chimney-pots. Rockets soar. The procession, a sinuous river of light, is flowing uninterruptedly toward the open doorway of the church. As ours dies low the other pyres flare. The belfries of Notre-Dame are seemingly afire.

How many come to Guingamp, I wonder, and, unseeking, find not? To visit Brittany itself and not to dive below the surface into the hidden depths of Breton idealism is to miss the pearl of price – the soul of the people, where blend religion, poetry, love of beauty, and romance ... all indivisible parts of the favored Celtic race.



DIWAN Breton Language Schools are key to the future of the Breton language

Diwan was founded in 1977 as an independent school system to fill a gap in the public education system of France where the Breton language (a Celtic language) was given only a token place in schools of Brittany. In a society where French has become the dominant language in all public life and the media, it was felt that an immersion style of teaching Breton was necessary to give children the chance to master it as a living language.

Immersion means that Breton is used as the predominant language for teaching especially at the preschool and primary school levels. French and a third or even fourth language are added as children progress to upper levels. Immersion also means that Breton is used in everyday activities of a school outside of formal class times such as play time and lunch.

Far from stunting students' abilities in French, tests show that Diwan student's competence in French is as good as if not better than the average for monolingual French schools.

Today the Diwan Breton language schools educate nearly 3,000 students in 34 pre & primary schools, 4 middle schools and 1 high school.

The Challenge

Diwan has proven that its pedagogical system is a success. The challenge for continued growth is financial. Many teachers' salaries are covered in a "contract" with the French State which

puts Diwan in a "private school" category despite the fact that it charges no tuition and operates as a public institution open to anyone who wants to enroll. Whenever a new school is opened it must wait for five years before it can come under the "contract." Because of its "private school" status, there have also been limits placed on the contribution of building space and public monies to support Diwan schools – no matter how willing and able a particular town and population may be to support a Diwan school.

The financial challenges remain very high for Diwan to open new schools to meet the demand of parents and children.

Your help is needed

Consider making even a small contribution to Diwan here at the festival at the Breton stand, or by sending something directly to Diwan at the address below.

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An Introduction to the U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)

The Breton language is spoken by an estimated 240,000 people in Brittany, but it is threatened with extinction as older speakers are not replaced by younger ones. The Breton language is no longer forbidden in schools or totally hidden from public view, but France continues to withhold the resources necessary for its development as a healthy living language, despite demands from an ever widening Breton population for its support and growth in the schools, media, and public life.

Who are the Members of the ICDBL?

Some U.S. ICDBL members are of Breton heritage, but the U.S. ICDBL is intended to be a group of “anyone and everyone” showing support for the Breton language rather than an organization for Breton-Americans like so many other “ethnic” organizations in the U.S. We do have quite a few members with Irish, Scottish or Welsh heritage, so there is a strong inter-Celtic element to our work. Most of our members speak neither Breton nor French and most have never been to Brittany. But we all have some reason to help fight for the survival of the Breton language.

What the does the U.S. ICDBL do?

With Members of the U.S. ICDBL dispersed in 35 of the 51 States of the U.S.--from Maine to Florida, from Alaska to California, and lots of states in between—we do not hold meetings or have the ability to carry out many projects as a group.

Quarterly Newsletter for Members and Subscribers

Our central activity is the publication of a quarterly newsletter called **Bro Nevez** (“new country” in the Breton language). It’s not slick and glossy, but includes 25 pages of current information about what is going on in Brittany related to the Breton language, and short articles on a range of topics, from music and dance, to sports, travel, the economy, or history. In November 2006 we published our 100th issue.

In the 3,000+ pages of **Bro Nevez** produced so far, over 800 books from Brittany have been reviewed or noted, and over 300 Breton music recordings have been reviewed and an additional 600 new releases briefly described.

The U.S. ICDBL Web Site:
www.icdbl.org

On our website we have published a guide to Breton music (updated in 2006), a guide to learning materials for the Breton language, an introduction to and map of the Celtic languages, a presentation of the Diwan Breton language immersion schools, and two documents presenting the Breton language and why it is endangered and what is being done about it. Bretons themselves have created many great websites to present their country and its culture, and we provide links to a large number of excellent and reliable sites created by Bretons themselves.

Other Action

We assist people from the U.S. and all over the world with requests for information about the Breton language and culture. We have had an annual information booth at the Potomac Celtic Festival (Washington, D.C. area) since 1994. ICDBL Members throughout the U.S. have been ambassadors for the cause of the Breton language by distributing information at Celtic cultural events and music festivals or concerts, and by simply discussing their concerns with friends and acquaintances.

More direct support for the Breton language ...

The U.S. ICDBL has supported Diwan—Breton language immersion schools-- for over ten years with a small annual contribution from our Members. We have maintained a personal link with the children of one particular Diwan school—Skol Diwan Landerne—since 1992 when Lois Kuter, the U.S. ICDBL Secretary, was invited to become the school’s “godmother.”

As is the case for all branches of the ICDBL, our support of the Breton language is mostly symbolic—the fact that outsiders care at all offers encouragement to people in Brittany who are working to sustain the Breton language and find new and creative ways to use it. And we know that this has been noticed and much appreciated in Brittany.

PLEASE JOIN US. YOUR SUPPORT SHOWS THE PEOPLE OF BRITTANY THAT THEIR LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT TO THE WORLD

A yearly membership (including subscription to our newsletter) is just \$20. If you would simply like to subscribe to our newsletter, without becoming a Member, that is also \$20. Make out a check to “**U.S. ICDBL**” and mail it to the address below (*new address as of June 20, 2010*).

Lois Kuter
Secretary, U.S. ICDBL
Editor, Bro Nevez
605 Montgomery Road
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