

BRO NEVEZ

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



Statue of Armand Tuffin de la Rouërie in Fougères
(Photo Agence Bretagne Presse)

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. Contributions, letters to the editor, corrections, and ideas are welcome from all readers and will be printed at the discretion of the Editor.

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

This newsletter can be sent as a PDF file attached to an e-mail instead of the print version. Just let the Editor know how you would like to receive it. The e-mail version is much more colorful than the photocopied print copy!

Back issues of Bro Nevez can be found on the U.S. ICDBL website

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



Editorial

It seems as if just as I had sent off the September issue of *Bro Nevez* I discovered a number of events that had taken place or were soon to take place during September. It is rare that *Bro Nevez* can provide much advance notice of events in Brittany for those who might want to put them on their calendar (assuming a presence in Brittany). But, while my presentation of festivals and other events is not timely, hopefully American readers especially will find them interesting in documenting the strength of the Breton cultural scene. – Lois Kuter



Progress for Breton in the Schools?

In September the federation Kelennomp put out a press release asking why nothing is being done to enact the Convention on the transmission of the Breton language signed onto by the French State and the Region of Brittany on March 15, 2022. This State-Region convention is for the period of 2022 to 2027.

Kelennomp is made up of representatives of organizations concerned with teaching the Breton language, including Diwan, Div Yezh, Divaskell, Kevre Breizh. Thus, the concerns they express address the area of education. The press release outlines eight areas of development proposed in the Convention.

- In the bilingual schools, the number of students is to rise from 19,000 in 2022 to 30,000 in 2027 by enhancing opportunities in the three streams: public (Div Yezh), private / Catholic (Divaskell) and associative (Diwan).
- Pursuing support for the permanence of Diwan.
- Enabling bilingual teachers who want to return to Brittany to teach to be appointed there, and a complete accounting of existing bilingual teachers.
- Strong action to train bilingual teachers to build the pool available, with adaptations needed in the recruitment process. The objective is to increase the number of positions open by 50% by 2027.
- Creation of a bilingual training class for professorship of schools at the Iroise high school of Brest to lead to a Masters of teaching and education. Development of long-distance learning

for masters training for bilingual public school teachers.

- Achievement of equal time in teaching in Breton and in French in all the secondary bilingual schools in reinforcing the recruitment and Breton language training for teachers of non-linguistic subjects.
- Progressive generalization of Breton language teaching during the normal school hours in the primary schools, beginning in Finistère and expanding to the rest of the school system.

Little action is being taken to advance the goals of the Convention. Indeed, the press release by Kelenomp notes that school openings have been limited for 2022/23 with just nine in the public schools and two in Catholic (private) schools, and parents have in some cases been discouraged by school administrators to enroll their children in bilingual programs.

Teacher training and openings in certification for new bilingual teachers is far below the level needed to build Breton language options for school children at both the primary and secondary level.

Without more action on the part of the Recteur de l'Académie de Rennes and Ministry of National Education there is little hope that the terms of the State-Region Convention on the Breton language will be fulfilled.

For more details on the issues outlined in the Kelennomp press release visit their website section on "Actualités": kelennomp.bzh



Ya! – 900 issues for this Breton Language Weekly Magazine

Created in 2005 by Yann-Fañch Jacq, this weekly magazine published its 900th issue this September 2022. Ya is

Breton for Yes and while the majority of articles in its eight pages are in Breton, place is given also to Gallo. The content is varied with articles on current events in Brittany and the world beyond, cinema and book reviews, crossword puzzles, recipes, and a lesson for those who want to improve their Breton (Kentel Yann Gerven). Young writers are provided a page to express their perspectives as well.

As the name Ya might indicate, this weekly magazine is a positive addition to Breton language journalism. Check out the website: ya.bzh and the site for Keit Vimp Bev, keit-vimp-bev.com

[information for this note was drawn from an article published September 11, 2022, by Bernez Rouz on his blog Teñzor ar brezhoneg skrivet / Treasure of written Breton – trezor-breton.bzh]



Creating a Brezhoneg Living Dictionary

The following article from October 1, 2022, is reprinted from the Breizh Amerika website Breizh-Amerika.com

with permission of that organization. You can find it and many other articles (in English and French) in the Blog section of the website. Breizh-Amerika has been a very effective organization in linking Brittany and the U.S. for economic as well as cultural initiatives and their website provides a wealth of information on a wide range of topics.

Breizh Amerika is partnering with Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages (livingtongues.org) to create a Brezhoneg Living Dictionary.

The Brezhoneg Living Dictionary will contain hundreds of words and phrases in the Brezhoneg language as well as translations into French and English, and will serve as an online reference tool for language learners throughout the Breton diaspora.

Being a search-driven and easily discoverable free tool, a Living Dictionary goes well beyond a static print dictionary by including audio recordings by fluent speakers, engaging images and videos. The Brezhoneg Living Dictionary addresses the urgent need to provide comprehensive, freely accessible, and easy-to-navigate tech tools that can assist communities working on the revitalization of Breton language and culture around the world.

The Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages is on a mission to ensure language survival for generations to come. They support communities who are safeguarding their languages from extinction through activism, education, and technology.

Their research teams document endangered languages and cultural practices, publish scientific studies, run digital training workshops to empower language activists, and collaborate with communities to create language resources such as Living Dictionaries that will serve as a basis for language revitalization.

Living Dictionaries, collaborative multimedia web tools

Led by activists and linguists around the globe, Living Dictionaries are collaborative multimedia online tools

that can help languages survive for generations to come. Ideal for maintaining indigenous as well as diaspora languages, Living Dictionaries are never out-of-print, infinitely expandable resources. They go well beyond a static print dictionary by combining language data with digital audio recordings of speakers, photos and videos. The intended audience of this web platform is inclusive, diverse and multilingual.

Between 2005 and 2019, we worked in over 100 endangered language communities worldwide, doing fieldwork and creating trusting relationships with community members. Since 2020, we have provided free assistance to more than 300 language activists in 25+ countries around the world through online training webinars during the time of COVID-19. In all, we have assisted in the creation of close to 400 Living Dictionaries. Many of these dictionaries are still under construction and may only contain a handful of entries, whereas others have been developed by teams over the course of many years and contain anywhere from 1k to 10k entries.

The Living Dictionaries web platform (Livingdictionaries.app) is a work-in-progress and has a long-term goal of helping to safeguard 3,000+ endangered languages by building dictionaries for them over the next 30+ years. All linguistic and cultural data stored on the platform belongs to the language communities themselves, and dictionary managers can use a convenient "Export" feature to download their text data and multimedia at any time. The Living Tongues team offers guidance, technical support and free training for all citizen-linguists working on the platform. We prioritize supporting dictionaries that are stewarded by community members who wish to see their languages thrive online.

Building a Brezhoneg Living Dictionary

Breizh Amerika, a non-profit organization, works tirelessly to increase awareness of Breton culture, language, and film to global audiences. We are very excited to be working on building a Brezhoneg Living Dictionary to bring greater awareness to Breton language, which UNESCO has called severely endangered.

Brezhoneg, also known as Breton, is an endangered Southwestern Brittonic (Brythonic) tongue that is part of the Celtic language family. It is currently spoken by thousands of people in Brittany, France, and is undergoing a revival thanks to grassroots efforts to increase visibility and educational opportunities for the language in France and in the Breton diaspora around the world.

Breizh Amerika will work over the coming weeks with organizations like Dizale (dizale.bzh) to build The

Brezhoneg Living Dictionary which will contain hundreds of words and phrases in the Brezhoneg language.

If you are interested to learn more, send us an email :info@breizh-amerika.com

Breton History on the Internet

Bretons have long lamented the lack of school curriculum presenting the rich history of Brittany. This has been corrected by numerous conferences, website content, and books for both adults and younger readers. Two internet initiatives have also been created to introduce Breton history in a lively manner for those at a more beginner's level.

Istoerioù Breizh

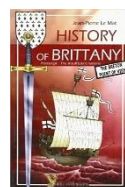
In 2016 Nicholas (Nikolaz) Craignic began his creation of videos to present Breton history from prehistory to a more recent past with several dozen posted on YouTube. You can find them by doing a search for Istoerioù Breizh which will bring you to the YouTube offerings as well as the Facebook page.

An Istor Livet from BreizhoWeb

The Breton language internet TV called BreizhoWeb has introduced a new series of programs on Breton history with fifteen 3-minute episodes in the Breton language. This too is the work of Nikolaz Craignic and these short programs explore some of the iconic elements of history with solid information and humor – for instance, what about those horns on Viking helmets? Viewers can choose subtitles in Breton or French.

BreizhoWeb was created in 2006 and airs programs in the Breton language – films and serials, animation, documentaries, news, games and musical programs. Some 500 hours of programming are available on the BreizhoWeb site: breizhoweb.bzh.

[information for this note was drawn from the NHU (Ni Hon Unan) website postings of September 25, 2019 and November 14, 2022]



And in the English Language?

While some Breton websites have English language options, this is relatively rare. For those who do not read French or Breton, I recommend the following book on Breton history: Jean-Pierre Le Mat, *History of Brittany – The Breton Point of View* (Yoran Embanner, 2016). I have several copies and would be happy to mail one to

anyone interested (sent me an e-mail request: loiskuter@verizon.net). An updated version of *History of Brittany* is now an ebook, available anywhere in the world, for English-speakers: <https://www.amazon.fr/History-Brittany-Breton-Celtic-English-ebook/dp/B0BN27VZBZ/>
Or, order this book from Yoran-embanner.com. It is, of course, also in French.

Louis XIV Returns to Rennes

As reported in *Bro Nevez* 163 (September 2022) the city of Rennes has been at the center of controversy with the exhibit “Celtique?” at the Musée de Bretagne (see pages 15-16). Rennes once again drew attention to itself in September when the Musée des beaux-arts acquired a model of a statue of Louis XIV on horseback presented during a weekend called “journées du patrimoine” The price tag was 2.37 million euros for the statue which is a smaller reproduction of one that stood in front of the Parliament of Brittany from 1726 to the French Revolution when it was melted down for cannons.

Reinstalling a statue of Louis XIV has brought anger on the part of Breton militants because that king brutally put down the revolt by Bretons against a tax on stamped papers – “Révolte du papier timbre.” The uprising started in 1675 in cities of eastern Brittany and was taken up by peasants in rural areas and in the west where a Peasant Code was drafted in the name of “Armorican Liberty.” The revolt became known as the revolt of the Bonnets Rouges which was led by Sébastien Ar Balp. The installation of a statue of Louis XIV is viewed as an insult to the memory of those who revolted against his tyranny.

As reported by Frédéric Magellan for the causer.fr website September 21, 2022) statues of famous people such as Thomas Jefferson, Christopher Columbus, and Napoleon have been targeted for the negative role those men played in history. Time to take them down? It is never a bad thing to evaluate the symbolism of statues and place-names which honor those who should not be glorified as the heroes we would like them to be.

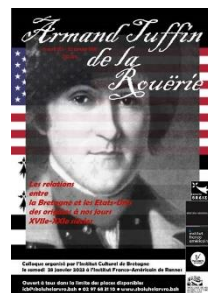


Ar Berligou hag ar gwin e Breizh - Berligou and wine in Brittany

On October 15, 2022, the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro) held two round tables on wine in Brittany – its past, present and future. The first workshop focused on the wine called Berligou with the participation of two authors, Marcel Jussiaume and Alain Poulard, of the recent book *Le Berligou, le Vin des Ducs de Bretagne* (Le Temps Éditeur, 2022)

with Jacky Flippot of the organization Château Essor Blinois. Berligou is a specific grape first cultivated in Brittany by François II, Duke of Brittany, who was given vines by Charles le Téméraire (Charles the Bold), Duke of Burgundy and cousin of François II. In 1460 the Clos du Berligou was situated in Couëron near Nantes and the wine produced there became a favorite of French royalty as well as Anne of Brittany, François II's daughter. With the French Revolution the grape was forgotten only to be revived in the 20th century and commercially produced in 2016 with cultivation in a handful of vineyards in the Nates area.

The second roundtable looked at vineyards and winemaking more broadly in Brittany, presenting its history and future potential for development beyond the area of Nantes. Participants in that round table were Clémentine Charmont, a doctoral student studying the history of vineyards in the Morbihan, Alain Saindrenan, retired university professor, and Maxime Chéneau, an agricultural unionist.



Brittany and the U.S. Colloquium on Armand Tuffin de la Rouërie

In collaboration with Breizh-Amerika the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro) is preparing a colloquium on the occasion of the 230th anniversary of the death of Armond Tuffin de la Rouërie to be held January 23, 2023 at the Institut Franco-Américain in Rennes. This will also look at relations between the U.S. and Brittany from the 17th to the 21st centuries. The programming as currently planned is as follows:

Morning presentations with a focus on history:

10 am – Introduction by Virginia Manhard-Lubin (president of the Institut Franco-Américain de Rennes) and Jacky Flippot (president of the Cultural Institute of Brittany)

10 :15 – Armand de la Rouërie and the American Revolution – his role as a general creating the American cavalry

11 – La Rouërie and the French Revolution – a father of th Breton Chouan Revolt

11:45 – Roundtable on La Rouërie today as he is presented in *bandes dessinées* with Thierry Jigourel, as he is depicted in novels with François-Xavier Lefrance, and in fiction with Thierry de Navacelle.

After a pause for lunch, afternoon sessions focus on American-Breton relations

2:30 – Breton emigration to the U.S. in the 20th century by Charles Kergaravet, President of Breizh-Amerika

3:15 – The U.S.A. in Brittany

4 – Current cultural and economic activity presented by the attachés of the Consulate

430 – Concluding remarks by Elizabeth Webster, U.S. Consul, and Loïg Chesnais-Girard, President of the Region of Brittany (to be confirmed)

For more information: skuluhelarvro.bzh and breizh-amerika.com

A quick Introduction to Armand Tuffin de La Rouërie

The following biographical note is my translation of an entry in Jean-Loup Avril's *Mille Bretons – dictionnaire biographique* (2nd edition, 2003, Les Portes du Large). A more complete biographical note can be found on the French Wikipedia: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armand_Tuffin_de_La_Rouerie – LK

Armand de La Rouërie

Counter-Revolutionary gentleman. Born April 13, 1871 at the Hôtel de la Bélinay in Fougères where a statue by Jean Fréour was inaugurated October 17, 1993 [see the cover of this issue of Bro Nevez]; died January 30, 1793 at the château de la Guyomarais in Saint-Denoual near Lamballe. At the age of 15 Armand Tuffin de La Rouërie was a sub-lieutenant in the French Garde. His troubled youth including love letters and duels made for his departure. After his failure to conquer the heart of his uncle's mistress, an opera singer, he made a short stay at la Trappe [a monastery founded in the 12th century].

He left for America as a volunteer in 1777, before La Fayette, to serve the revolutionaries. He became "Colonel Armand," standing out at the Battle of Yorktown with his capture of Major Buremor, and he was made a member of the Order of Cincinnatus.

Upon return to Brittany in 1784 he was one of the 11 gentlemen appointed by the États de Bretagne to go to Versailles to claim "the ancient freedoms of the Breton Nation." That earned him some prison time in the Bastille. With the beginning of the [French] Revolution he went to join the princes in Coblenz [a gathering point for counter-revolutionaries], and then returning to Brittany in 1790, he formed a structured counter-revolutionary organization. Pursued and tracked from château to château, he died of a malignant fever

before he could execute his insurrectionary plan which had been leaked to Marat and Danton through the treachery of one of his friends, the doctor Chevetel.

Note: The American Revolution took place from April 1775 to September 1783. The French Revolution went from May 1789 to November 1799.

Armand de la Rouërie and the better known Marquis de Lafayette were by no means the only Bretons to support the American revolutionaries. In his book *Les Bretons et l'Indépendance Américaine* (Editions Yellow Concept, 2004) Henry d'Yvignac lists over 500 Bretons who served in the American war. Given the dominance of Bretons in the maritime history of France, it is not surprising that the majority of those who came to America served on war ships.

For those who want to learn more about the role of Bretons in the American Revolution here are two books (besides that cited above by Henry d'Yvignac) I can recommend:

Christian Bazin, *Le Marquis de la Rouërie, Le Colonel Armand – de la guerre américaine à la conjuration bretonne* (Perrin, 1990)

Philippe Carrer, *La Bretagne et la guerre d'indépendance américaine* (Les Portes du Large, 2005)

And a good read can be found in the historical novel by Hervé Le Bévillon, *Colonel Armand, Marquise de la Rouërie – de la révolution américaine à la Chouannerie bretonne* (Yoran Embanner, 2006)

Brittany and the U.S. – Jack Kerouac Center in the Works

The Jack Kerouac Foundation is making plans and raising funds for a Jack Kerouac Center in the author's hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts. As readers of *Bro Nevez* probably know, Kerouac was a poet and novelist and icon of the Beat movement of the 1950s. He is best known for his novel *On the Road* published in 1957. Jack Kerouac was well aware of his family's Breton roots and befriended Breton poet and author/musician Youenn Gwernig who had emigrated to the U.S. for a period of time in the 1960s.

The site of the new center will be a renovated Catholic church in the St. Jean Baptiste Parish of Lowell which had been the French-Canadian neighborhood of the town. Kerouac served as an altar boy there and his funeral was held there in 1969. The Kerouac Center will be a museum and archives related to Kerouac as well as a performance space and educational center with a bookstore and café.



Festival du Livre en Bretagne / Gouel al Levrioù e Breizh – Carhaix

Poster by Olwenn Manac'h

This is the 33rd year for this major book festival held the last weekend of October in the town of Carhaix. This year the festival honors Catalonia

with films and authors present to share their work. During the two days of the festival some 10,000 people make a visit and a good 100 publishers set up stands to display work. Nearly 3,000 authors are on hand to meet the public and sign books.

There are formal lectures and presentations about Breton literature and other arts, exhibits, film showings, photography displays, and a special reading and activity area for children.

Four prizes are awarded during the festival:

Prix Glenmor for poetry awarded by the organization Glenmor an Distro
(I could find no information on a 2022 awardee)

Prix Xavier de Langlais for prose or a poetry collection in the Breton language awarded since 1976 by Kuzul ar Brezhoneg
(I could find no information on recent years' awardees)

Prix du Roman de la Ville de Carhaix for novels and Priz Danevelloù ti-kêr Karaez for novels in the Breton language awarded by the town of Carhaix.
This year the winners were Louis Grall for *Le nageur d'Aral* (La Manufacture de Livres) and Gael Briand for *Ar Vran hag ar valafenn* (Al Liamm 451)

Prix du livre d'histoire – a new prize for a work on Breton history created by Bretagne Culture Diversité with the Carhaix Festival du Livre

This year's winner was Krystal Gualdé for *L'abîme – Nantes dans la traite atlantique et l'esclavage colonial 1707-1830* (Musée d'histoire de Nantes). 2nd place went to Laurence Moal for *Duchesses – histoire du pouvoir au féminin en Bretagne* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes). 3rd place went to Barry Cunliffe for *Bretons and Britons: The Fight for Identity* (Oxford University Press)

For more information about this festival: festivaldulivre-carhaix.bzh



Festival du Livre en Bretagne de Guerande

Held this year November 19 and 20, this book festival of Brittany held in Guerande is not quite as big as that of Carhaix but equally interesting as an event to meet authors and learn about new publications.

This 18th year of the festival included some 50 publishers and 150 authors. Besides photo exhibits and activities for children the festival included a number of round table discussions by well-known authors of Brittany presenting Breton history and contemporary culture with a focus on Guerande.



30e Festival du Livre en Bretagne – Plestin-les-Grèves

On November 13 the town of Plestin-les-Grèves hosted a book "salon" as part of its larger Gouel Bro Plistin festivities (November 5 to 13). Capping off a week of workshops and performances of music, song, and dance of this area of Trégor, the book fair included authors of children's literature, poetry, history, art, linguistics and other topics – in Breton, Gallo, and French. Besides books, the festival featured discussions and exhibits and the chance to meet authors and explore new books.



Deep Inside a Breton Skull 72

Jean Pierre Le Mat

Coming back from the Carhaix Book Festival.

The Carhaix Book Festival was successful: for the organizers, for the exhibitors, for the authors and for the public. It is also an individual pleasure to meet friends again in a nice place, without a mask, taking advantage of the pause left by the covid.

Before coming to Carhaix, I had stored in my digital library two original copies of Bertrand d'Argentré's *Histoire de Bretagne*. One was published in 1600 AD, the other one published in 1668. I downloaded them for free from Goggle books and gallica.bnf.fr. By quickly leafing

through the two books, I could notice some differences between the editions...

I talked about that with some friends at the festival...

Coming back alone in my car, deep in my skull, I mixed all my thoughts and made the link between the Carhaisian party, my downloads and my old job in digital. In Carhaix, I was in a very real Brittany, with books of paper that you can weigh, friends you can shake hands with. And I wondered if others besides me were also imagining a virtual Brittany. What I mean is, something larger than a digital library that allows you to read or download Breton writings. Well, a country and a people in the metaverse, and not just a digitized geography or a collection of e-books and videos about Brittany.



Dialogue with Bretons from anywhere

The Breton people exist in different forms. The most central are the indigenous people, the ones I met in the aisles of the Carhaix festival. But these people are not isolated on their peninsula. The Breton people also exist in the form of a diaspora in foreign countries of traditional emigration, such as France, Canada or the USA. Third, the Breton people are also made up of our travellers, our globetrotters, our adventurers who are all over the world, ready to brandish our flag, the Gwenn-ha-du, in improbable places. Fourth, there are those who feel solidarity with the Bretons because they live with them. At the end, they feel that they are Breton in their heart. By following our ways, our culture, our ethics, they become Breton. Fifth, the Breton people are also made up of our friends like you, American friends, who look at our culture and at our little country with kindness, when not with love.

How to dialogue with these Bretons who are not rooted natives, who are elsewhere, or who come

from elsewhere? I would like to meet them somewhere, these nice people!...

I know, there is Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and all the social networks. But these are exchanges of written words, images or videos. It's not really dating with other people.

In the digital world, things have already been done. I can send greetings to the initiatives of BCD (Bretagne Culture Diversité) or IDBE (Institute of Breton and European Documentation). They digitized our archives. I will also not stop applauding the anonymous people who have lifted the Breton language to 81st place on Wikipedia, before Scottish and Irish Gaelic and many other languages which are more official than Breton. See https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias

Brittany in virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR)?

Building a virtual Brittany, or an augmented Brittany, is not meddling with politics, but with Breton lovers, geeks and startupper. Politicians can be interested or feared by such a future for Brittany. Administrations will seek to impose their standards and their political correctness. A virtual Brittany or an augmented Brittany is a project, not for politicians, but for techno fans, spirited engineers, scientists-poets, home-rulers, Breizhou geeks. Between these free-spirited people, there will be, probably, technological disagreements as there are political oppositions. We'll see. For the moment, the legislation is poor on metaverses, let's take advantage of it. Deep inside my Breton skull, I imagine Brittany in the metaverse. I imagine Brittany with all our vices and all our virtues, virtualized and augmented. I imagine avatars of musicians, separatists, engineers, alcoholics, hucksters, scholars, American friends. To begin with that, I imagine a virtual festival in Carhaix, in an augmented place, where we or our avatars will meet, have a drink at the bar, leafing through the latest e-books released, and buying them with a personal NFT autographed by the author.

This future is possible. I am not saying that it is this future that is coming our way. It is up to

Breton geeks, natives or not, to build this virtual and augmented Brittany.



In Memoriam: Mériadec de Goüyon-Matignon

The following is my rough translation of a press release by Jakez de Poulpiquet for Tudjenteil Breizh (Association of Breton Nobility) of October 15, 2022.

While a name not well known to younger generations, Mériadec de Goüyon-Matignon was a major actor in the Breton Movement during his 96 years.

In the 1950s he was secretary general for the *Movement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne (MOB)* which favored autonomy for Brittany and worked closely with *CELIB (Comité d'Études et de Liaison des Intérêts Bretons)*. In 1964 a split within the MOB would lead to the creation of the *Union Démocratique Bretonne (UDB)* still active as a political party in Brittany.

In the 1960s Mériadec de Goüyon-Matignon would succeed Pierre Laurent (father of Donatien Laurent) as President of *Ker Vreizh*, a cultural center in Paris at which Breton militants would meet. This was also the site for the *Bleimor Scouts* of which Alan Stivell was a member. As President of *Ker Vreizh* Mériadec de Goüyon-Matignon would get to know Georges Cochevelou, Alan's father, and help foster a renaissance of Breton music. During this time he began to learn the Breton language thanks to another important name in the history of Breton music, Claudine Mazéas, who was Secretary for *Ker Vreizh*.

In his work as a director for a Dutch company, Mériadec de Goüyon-Matignon would work in Mexico and then in Tokyo where he was in on the creation of the *Amicale Breizh-Nihon* to foster economic relations between Brittany and Japan. Upon retirement and returning to Brittany he became involved with the *Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro)* working with its president of the time Yvonig Gicquel.

More recently he was one of the first members of the autonomist party *Breizh Europe* after its 2013 creation. He would become a member of its Council, working

with successive presidents Caroline Ollivro and Frank Darcel.

Mériadec de Goüyon-Matignon was the eldest son of a prestigious family of Breton nobility and was related to the reigning princely family of Monaco (a Gouyon-Matignon became prince of Monaco in 1731 under the name of Jacques 1st). When it was created Mériadec de Goüyon-Matignon joined *Tudjenteil Breizh* (Association of Breton Nobility) where he remained on the administrative council and contributed his vast cultivation until his final years.

On the day of his religious funerary service, October 11, 2022, at the church of Saint-Enogat in Dinard, he affirmed once more his love for Brittany in having requested that only cantiques in the Breton language be sung – closing with a vibrant “*Da Feiz hon Tadoù kozh.*”



Dastum – 50 Years

As reported in *Bro Nevez* 162 (June 2022) Dastum celebrates its 50th anniversary this year with a series of events. Founded in 1972 by musicians who wanted to pool resources and collections of field recordings, Dastum has become a major archive for traditional Breton music and oral arts. But it is much more than that, and since its beginnings the intention was not just to store resources related to Breton music and culture but to encourage the transmission of a strong oral tradition.

Through collection work itself those working with Dastum have encouraged older performers to dust off their repertoire, and younger singers and instrumentalists have been inspired to build repertoires – ideally in direct contact with masters of the traditions, but also in accessing thousands of recordings in the Dastum collection.

This November 25 and 26 Dastum organized events in Rostrenen to celebrate also the 10th anniversary of the inscription of the *fest-noz* by UNESCO as an immaterial cultural patrimony of world importance. The events included, of course, a *fest-deiz* (daytime dancing) as well as a massive *fest-noz* with over seventy of Brittany's best and up and coming singers and musicians from all five departments of Brittany.

The weekend also included workshops and a presentation on the *fest-noz* and its history as well as

an exhibit of 43 posters from Dastum's collection which document to evolution and diverse forms this unique event has taken in Brittany.

What is a fest-noz?

Most readers of *Bro Nevez* will already know about the fest-noz, but for those who may need an introduction, the following is my brief overview of this event.

The fest-noz started as a gathering after communal rural work events on farms in central western Brittany. After an evening meal, song and dance would be a way of relaxing after a hard workday. With changes in agriculture and society this event would fade away in the inter-war years (1930s). But Bretons with a passion for their language, song and especially the Breton language kan ha diskan style of responsive singing used to power dancing, would work in the late 1940s and 50s to create new events for performance.

Singer Loeiz Ropars is cited as the force behind this but there were others who organized veillées and contests. Contests for singers of kan ha diskan would expand to put singers on stage with microphones and sonneurs de couple (biniou-bombarde) would also power the dancing. From the new gatherings of smaller communities in central western Brittany, the modern fest-noz would spread. Breton dance was also supported by the growth of cercles celtiques in the post-war years throughout Brittany – dance groups for young people where language, history and other traditions would also be taught.

There are dozens of dances unique to Brittany which are specific to particular geographic regions – both in Lower Breton-speaking Brittany and Gallo Upper Brittany where French is used for song. And song for dancing is found and favored throughout Brittany since instruments such as the paired biniou and bombarde had been reserved for weddings or other special events. The modern fest-noz has sometimes focused on the dance traditions of a particular area, but “new” dances from other areas of Brittany came to be incorporated as well, and in urban areas one found a great diversity of dances.

Popularity of the fest-noz would take off in the 1970s with the popularity of music and innovative performers like Alan Stivell who drew from traditional roots for new and electrified arrangements. Its popularity meant that the fest-noz would serve as an event to raise money for all sorts of causes – from Diwan schools to veterans organizations. Entry fees which were never exorbitant would cover costs of organizing the fest-noz, paying performers, and making a contribution to various causes.

Today the dances at a fest-noz are powered by traditional singers where a response style of song is found in both the Breton-language songs, as well as in French language song of eastern Brittany. The social aspect of the fest-noz made it attractive throughout Brittany for those who love to dance and for those who wanted to meet up with friends or listen to great singers and instrumental groups. But, it is rare that anyone at a fest-noz would not dance, and while not all the dances are easy to learn, everyone is encouraged to learn them. Because line and circle dances do not require a partner, they are welcoming to those who come without a date.

There have been ebbs and flows in the popularity of the fest-noz, but it has served as a very important opportunity for younger musicians to show off their talent – and new generations of traditional singers, biniou-bombarde pairs, as well as bands of various make-up have been fostered. No matter what the musical style, respecting the particular rhythm of any dance is critical. No harsher judgement can be given to performers than the disinterest of those at a fest-noz in dancing to their music.

The Covid restrictions ended the organization of the fest-noz for several years – understandably so since there is perhaps no better way to spread Covid than a crowded event where dancing and conversing with friends at the ever-present bar is central. It is estimated that today the number of fest-noz has dropped by a third, but the fest-noz is definitely back even if the number of events has dropped down from some 1,500-1,900 fest-noz each year. The impact of Covid was not just in shutting down the occasion to dance, but just as importantly, it stifled the development of singers and musicians – young people especially who are the future of the fest-noz's success. The rising cost of organizing a fest-noz has also been a factor in slowing its return to full force with rising space rental costs, needs for amplification systems, and in urban areas required security staff.

However, one can be assured that this important social and musical event of Brittany will continue. In 2012 the fest-noz was put on the UNESCO list of immaterial cultural patrimony of world importance. In 2020 a commission for the fest-noz was creating including several dozen singers and musicians to work on supporting the organization of fest-noz. Central to this is the organization Tamm Kreiz, a website which helps people find fest-noz throughout Brittany as well as concerts, festivals, and singers and musicians – a directory of sorts which supports organizers of and participants in fest-noz.

There are a number of good articles and books which give a more thorough history and view of contemporary fest-noz. Here are just a few:

Olivier Goré, "Festoù-noz – la permanence des pays," *Musique Bretonne* 206, janvier-février 2008, pages 26-29.

Thierry Jigourel. *Festoù-noz – Histoire et actualité d'une fête populaire*. Editions CE, 2010.

Thierry Jigourel. *Fêtes bretonnes et celtiques*. Yoran Embanner, 2020 (includes section on the fest-noz)

Bernard Lasbleiz, "La nouvelle jeunesse des festoù-noz," *Musique Bretonne* 137, septembre-octobre 1995, pages 3-6.

Caroline Le Marquer & Thomas Postic, "Acteurs du fest-noz – une mission d'aide aux organisateurs et une commission fest-noz," *Musique Bretonne* 272, juillet-août-septembre 2022.

Fañch Postic, "Aux origines du fest-noz," *Ar Men* 93, avril 1998, pages 12-23.

Fañch Postic, "Le renouveau du fest-noz" posted November 2016 on Bretagne Culture Diversité's becedia: <http://bed.bzh/becedia>.

Ifig Troadec, "Aux origines du festoù-noz moderne – de la veillée-spectacle aux soirées de danse," *Musique Bretonne* 236, juillet-août-septembre 2013, pages 40-46.

2022 Prix Hervé Le Menn awarded to Laurent Bigot

This past September the Entente Culturelle Bretonne awarded the Prix Hervé Le Menn to Laurent Bigot in recognition of his career devoted to the study, documentation, and transmission of traditional Breton music.

Born in 1958 in St. Malo, Laurent Bigot studied classical music in several conservatories in the Paris area. In 1972 he began learning bombarde and Scottish bagpipes, and soon after he took advantage of vacation time to seek out traditional players of Brittany including Pierre Guillou and Lanig Gueguen.

He began playing at weddings, festoù noz and contests for sonneurs de couple with Pierre Crepillon in 1976, winning the Championship for paired biniou/bombarde with him in 1987 and 1997. He worked with a number of musicians in various styles (traditional Breton, jazz and classical) and worked as a teacher of biniou and bombarde. He was key in developing training for other teachers of traditional Breton music. Besides teaching and performing, he

created radio programs and presented research at numerous conferences. He has written many articles and was a key contributor to the 500-page reference work *Musique bretonne – histoire des sonneurs de tradition*, published in 1996 by Le Chasse-Marée – Ar Men.

The Prix Hervé Le Menn was created by the Entente Culturelle Bretonne in 1988 and is given each year to honor individuals or associations whose work has contributed significantly to the promotion of Brittany's cultural patrimony. The prize comes with a commemorative object and a monetary award which is given to an organization chosen by the prize winner.

[information from: Armelle Le Guillou, « Le Prix Hervé Le Menn 2022 attribué à Laurent Bigot, » Skol Uhel ar Bro, Actualités, September 14, 2022.]

70th Anniversary for the Kevrenn Alré

As reported in *Ar Men* 250 (Sept-Oct. 2022), the Kevrenn Alré celebrated its 70th anniversary this September. The Kevrenn is made up of both a bagad and dance group. The bagad has been champion of Brittany eight times and the dance group has had eleven championships in competitions of cercles celtiques.

The bagad is one of the oldest of Brittany, founded by railroad workers who were inspired by the bagad of Carhaix in 1950- a bagad also of railroad workers. After a period of some decline, the bagad quickly rose to prominence in the 1970s, thanks in large part to the creative talents of bombarde player Roland Becker. His compositions for the bagad of a thematic nature would mark a new direction for bagadoù with elaborate orchestrations and concert productions beyond the competition and festival performances.

The Kevrenn Alré (bagad and dance group) continues to be among the best of Brittany and they have traveled widely, including several trips to the U.S.

Congratulations to them on their 70 years of creative contribution to the Breton music scene – a contribution to continue in the future as new generations join the Kevrenn.



kanomp Breizh

A Celebraton of Breton Language Choral Work - 40th Anniversary for Breizh a Gan

December 3 and 4th are the dates for a festival for choral music of Brittany. Like the bagad which was a

new “tradition” inspired by Scottish pipe bands developed in Brittany in the 1950s, choral music in the Breton language has been developed in more recent years largely on the model of Welsh choirs. And, like the bagad, Breton choirs draw on the song and instrumental tradition of Brittany but also create innovative new compositions where harmony – not normally part of traditional music of Brittany – has a strong place.

Kanomp Breizh is a federation of choral groups and this year’s festival is organized in partnership with the CRBC (Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique). The festival takes place at the Château de Kerjean in Saint-Pol-de-Léon – a significant location in that it was there that Bleun Brug organized the first contest for Breton language choirs in 1905.

The Saturday of the festival has an “academic” slant with speakers on the history of choral music in Brittany:

Yves Coativy (CRBC director) opens the day.
René Abjean (honorary president of Kanomp Breizh and scholar and composer of Breton music) presents “Musique bretonne et chant choral”
Jean-Pierre Thomin (president of Kanomp Breizh and associate researcher of CRBC) presents “Le Bleun Brug et l’émergence des chorales bretonnantes,” “Le Pays de Galles, source majeure du chant choral en Breton”
Yves Defrance (ethnomusicologist) presents “Polyphonies vocales traditionnelles des pays d’Europe”
Jean-Yves Le Coz (president of the choral group Mouezh Paotred Breizh) presents “Les problématiques du chant choral en breton”

The second part of the day is a roundtable discussion on future directions for choral music in Brittany. Speakers are:

Loïc Rousseau (president and director of the choir Kanerion An Oriant)
Jean-Pol Kerjean (choir director for Hekleo)
Jean-Yves Le Coz (president of Mouezh Paotred Breizh)
Jean-Pierre Thomin (president of Kanomp Breizh and the Hekleo coral group)
Mathieu Lamour (director of the federation Kenleur)

The day closes with a “repas chanté” – literally “sung meal” – led by the men’s choir Paotred Pagan, directed by Yann-Ber Premel.

Sunday’s events feature performance. In the first part five different choral groups from different regions of Brittany are featured:

Choeur d’Homme du Léon

(composed of the groups Paotred Pagan, Mouezh Paotred Breizh, Hekleo)

Ensemble Choral Cornouaillais
(composed of Kanerien Bro Lokorn, Kanerien Izel-Vor, Kanerien Sant Meryn, Mouezh Bro Konk, Mouezh Paotred Breizh)

Ensemble Choral Trégorois
Composed of Kan Dre Gan, Kanerien ar Goëlo, Kanomp Ar Vro Sant Brieg)

Ensemble Choral Vannetais
(Kanerion An Oriant)

Ensemble Choral Nantais
(composed of Aber Al Liger, Anna Vreizh, Kan Ar Vro)

The second part features Mouezh Paotred Breizh directed by Jean-Marie Airault which has been champion of Breton choral competitions.

Then it will be Laz-Kanañ Breizh – Ensemble Coral de Bretagne – which is made up of some 100 singers of the 16 choirs who are members of Kanomp Breizh. They will present selections from the oratorio *Izild A Vreizh* with texts composed by Jéva Omnes and music by Jean-Yves Le Ven



Heard of but not heard - 15 New Recordings from Brittany

Information for these short notes was drawn from Ar Men 250 (Sept.-Oct. 2022) and 251 (Nov.-Dec. 2022), the Coop Breizh website, and other web presences for musicians.



René Abjean, Job an Irien. *Ar Marc'h Dall – Le Cheval Aveugle*. (Bannoù-heol)

This is a CD and booklet for the composition Ar Marc'h Dall with texts in Breton composed by Job an Irien and music by René Abjean. Some 100 singers and musicians are engaged in this performance which includes among others Véronique Autret, Gilles Servat, the Orchestre Symphonique de Bulgare, Chanteurs Corses, and percussionists from the Bagad Kemper. While orchestral in scope with solo singers and choir, you will also hear uilleann pipes, bombardes, biniou koz, and other instruments. I know of this work from a 1980 recording on the Arion label. But it’s renaissance here is certainly a welcome one. The oratorio’s theme is one of love for Brittany and the renaissance of its music and culture.



Ampouailh. Dasson (Tud Yaouank Production)

This is the 4th album by this group first created in 2004 as a trio of bombarde, saxophone and accordion. The group is now composed of Simon Lotout (bombarde), Mickaël Derrien (saxophones), Yuna Leon (violin), Gwylan Menghin (bass guitar) and Heikki Bourgault (guitars). This album includes 11 instrumental selections featuring various Breton dances.



Ars'Ys. Venti / Vents / Vingt.

This CD celebrates the 20th anniversary for this ensemble led by composer Hervé Lesvenen and it includes 12 compositions inspired by Breton and other traditions. The group includes Jérôme Kérihuel (percussions), Julien Stévenin (bass fiddle), Ronan Baudry (saxophones), Ffran May (vocals), Marta Gliozzi (organ), as well as Hervé Lesvenen (composer, arranger and keyboards).



Catel Gorju. Leurenn ar vuhez.

(Dastum, Kanerien Breizh Izel / Chanteurs de Tradition)

Husband and wife Ifig Castel and Anaïg Gorju have been singing together since 1975 and they are well known on the music scene – especially in their Tregor area. They sing at festoù-noz, concerts, festivals, and evening gatherings of all kinds. This CD recognizes their vast repertoire of Breton language song – gwerz and lighter songs as well as songs for dancing – with 15 selections including three-part suites for the gavotte and plinn. As is the case for all Dastum recordings, the CD comes with excellent notes.



Chaplain. Le retour.

After several years of absence singer-composer Anthony Chaplain has released a new album in partnership with Bruno Radin. The CD includes 12 songs (in French) on a variety of life's joys and woes – love and loss, regrets, loneliness ...



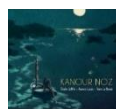
Denez. Ur mor a zaeloù.

This is the 12th album from Denez (Denez Prigent) who is a master of the Breton language song tradition. He is also well known for his fusion of tradition with techno and electronic sounds. Here he returns to the roots with 12 gwerz – dramatic Breton language ballads – some well known and others less.



Descofar. Chimera.

This is a trio from Brest with electric harps, synthesizer and percussion with selections described as “post-rock.” They draw on traditional Breton themes and rock music with a highly improvisational style.



Élodie Jaffré, Awena Lucas, Yann Le Bozec. Kanour Noz.

This is a trio made up of singer Élodie Jaffré, harpist Awena Lucas, and bass fiddle player Yann Le Bozec. This CD includes 13 songs (primarily in Breton) which evoke the image of a fisherman who sings as he goes out to sea at night. The fisherman was in fact Louis Le Hirez (1907-1983), a grand uncle of Élodie Jaffré, who was from the port of Kerroc'h near Ploemeur in the Morbihan. With its strong imagery, the group hopes to create a concert presentation.



Yvon Le Men, Nicolas Repac. Lampe Tempête.

Yvon Le Men is an award-winning poet of Brittany and here he works with musician Nicolas Repac to set 9 poems to music.



Erwan Keravec. Sonneurs 2 (Offshore & Buda Musique 860376)

Erwan Keravec plays Scottish style bagpipes in a way you are unlikely to hear by anyone else. He adapts music by contemporary composers (Philip Glass, Jessica Ekomane, Pierre-Yves Macé, Dror Feiler, Frédéric Aurieron) for a very original use of bagpipes. Here he is joined by Erwan Hamon with bombarde, Gwénolé Keravec with tenor and baritone bombardes, Mickaël Cozien on biniou koz, and the Béla Quartet (two violins, viola and cello).



Kervarec – Dudognon – Le Bot. Kan an Anaon / Le Chant des Trépassés. (self-produced)

This is a trio of bombarde, organ and saxophone/biniou with Pêr Vari Kervarec on vocals and bombarde, Tony Dudognon on organ, and Eliaz Le Bot on biniou and saxophone. Guest artist Gwenola Roparz adds harp. The theme of the CD is a gathering of memories of the deceased, drawing on cantiques and gwerzioù which speak of death and the departed.



Lesvenan-Toularastel-Routurier.

Heureusement. (self produced)

Hervé Lesvenan, pianist and composer, puts together a song project using texts by singer Loïc Toularastel – 12 songs on life's challenges and woes. They are joined by Anne Routurier on cello.



Gildas Moal & René Chaplain. Etrezek an aber sall (Kreizenn Sevenadurel Lannuon)

This bombarde and biniou kozh pair is one of the best and have been playing together for over 30 years. This, their third, CD includes 12 selections of

suites of dances and melodies from the Plinn and Tregor areas. To celebrate their 30 years and the release of this new CD a fest-noz will be held December 17 with some 100 of the “couple’s” friends – some of the best singers and musicians of Brittany.



Spontus. *La danse est enivrante*. Klam Records KR13.

Spontus was created in 1996 and while its make-up has changed, it has always been appreciated for its interpretation of Breton dances, with a focus on those of the Morbihan area. At the core of the band are brothers Alan Paranthoën on fiddle and Youenn Paranthoën on accordion, with electric guitar by Erwan Bérenguer and bass fiddle by Yann Le Nozec.



Erwann Tobi & Heikki Bourgault. *À la cour du palais*. (La compagnie des possibilités CP0007)

This duo is made up of Erwann Tobie on accordion and Heikki Bourgault on guitars. The two had previous worked with Yann Fañch Kemener and have continued performances after his death with concerts and festoù-noz. This is their first album which draws from the song and dance tradition of central western Brittany.



Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù

Tiarvro22.bzh

I have been signed on for the monthly Keloioù/Infos sent by e-mail by Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù (Maison de Culture Bretonne en Trégor-Goëlo). And, every time I look at this newsletter which is in both Breton and French I am amazed by the wealth of activities proposed for Bretons of this region of north-central Brittany. But, there are many “Ti ar Vro”s throughout Brittany based in large cities and smaller towns which serve as cultural centers for numerous organizations promoting Breton languages and culture.

The December newsletter from Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù presents numerous Christmas shopping fairs and shops promoting local Breton products, books and crafts, as well as special holiday activities for families.

For the Breton language, events include a Prezegenn/Causerie in Breton by Katell Chantreau about her research of family transmission of Breton – what parents are doing to encourage children of different ages to use Breton and what support is available to help parents.

The December newsletter also provides a link to Kuzul ar Brezhoneg (brezhoneg.org) to see their catalog of Breton language books. On the subject of books, a note is also included on new books in Breton for children from KerJava Editions and a book signing by Julien Cornic, co-author with Alice Boulouin, of *Les animaux météo/Al Loeved ha liv an amzer*. And book lovers also have the opportunity to attend a book reading group (Bodad lenn) for Breton language books at the Ti ar Vro library.

Also announced in the newsletter is the Gwengamp (Guingamp) Diwan school open house for the public to see the school and meet teachers and parents. And the Diwan schools of Lannuon (Lannion) and Pempoull (Paimpol) are holding their annual Christmas fairs to raise awareness and some funding for the schools.

For theater lovers December offers theater in Breton (c’hoariva) in Pluzunet by the Strollad Gwerleskin and Strollad Kalleg – a police mystery/comedy written by Sylvan Botrel and Marie Hélène Morvan.

One can find year-round Breton classes for adults in the Trégor-Goëlo area and the December newsletter provides dates and locations for monthly Saturday sessions organized by Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù and Ti ar Vro Gwengamp for December through May. For more intense study of Breton a note is included about Stumdi and openings for their 6-month training session (stumdi.bzh).

The Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù news for December also notes a number of musical events. There is a concert by Denez as well as a festival/fest-noz to celebrate the 30th anniversary of sonneurs de couple Gildas Moal and René Chaplain and their new CD (noted above in “Heard of but not heard...”).

The long presence on the music scene in the Tregor region of singers Ifig Castel and Anaïg Gorju will also be celebrated as they release a new CD (also noted in “Heard of but not heard...” above). 17 festoù-noz are noted with dates, locations and performers including the fest-noz celebrations for Moal-Chaplain and Castel-Gorju.

On the topic of music the Website organizers for Tamm Kreiz (tamm-kreiz.bzh) will be present at Ti an Holl in Plestin-les-Grèves for a day. This website is a mine of information about festivals, concerts and musicians and is the go-to source to find every fest-noz in Brittany. Tamm Keriz representatives will offer ideas and advice to those who organize festoù noz.

So, as the Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù newsletter indicates, there is always plenty to enjoy in Brittany,

with lots of opportunities to dance, enjoy music, learn and use the Breton language and gather together.

Ti ar Vro Treger-Gouelioù has also sent out an email encouraging the use of Breton in sending out greeting for the Christmas holidays and new year. Here are some of the suggestions (for which I have added English translations to the Breton and French.

Nedeleg laouen / Joyeux Noël / Merry Christmas
Bloavezh mat / Bonne année / Happy New Year

Bloavezh mat ha yec'hed mat
Bonne année et bonne santé
Happy New Year and good health to you

Nedeleg laouen ha bloavezh mat
Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Nedeleg laouen ha bloavezh mat e 2023 a hetomp deoc'h
Nous vous souhaitons un joyeux Noël et une excellente année 2023
We wish you a Merry Christmas and an excellent 2023

Gwellañ hetoù / Meilleurs voeux / Best wishes

Yec'hed mat d'ho mignoned ha d'ho familhoù
Une bonne santé à vos amis et vos familles
Good health to your friends and families

And in a more elegant style:

Bloavezh mat da beb hini
Ha yec'hed e-leizh an ti !
Une bonne année à tous
Et la santé à toute la maisonnée
A good year for all and good health to all the household

Ur bloaz nevez a hetomp deoc'h
Korf e yec'hed, kalon e peoc'h !
Nous vous souhaitons une bonne année
Un corps en pleine santé et un cœur en paix !
We wish you a happy New Year
A body in full health and a heart in peace!

Brittany and links to the Celtic World



Kevredigezh Breizh-Galiza
Asociación Breaña-Galicia
Comité Bretagne-Galicia

The Brittany-Galicia Committee fosters the twinning of cities and various cultural, economic and sportive exchanges between Brittany

and Galicia, a region of northern Spain with a Celtic heritage.

They maintain a website and blog site (breitagnegalice.blogspot.com) where you can find newsletter dating back to 2009 reporting on the activities of this group.

The newsletter is in both French and Galician with news on activities of twin cities and other exchanges – especially travel by school groups. The latest edition also reports on a variety of events in Brittany such as the Breizh a Gan festival, a new leader for the Order of the Ermine, Tugdual Kalvez's new book *Comment peut-on ne pas être Français*, Dastum's 50th anniversary and a performance by Carlos Nuñez (who is Galician) and the Orchestre Nationale de Bretagne exploring Beethoven's use of Celtic themes.

There is news of various events in Galicia as well such as a horse fair where for over 800 years some 600 wild horses are channeled through the street of Mondoñedo, honors for language professor Xosé Manuel Beivas for his work to establish Galician language teaching, a wine tasting event for wines of Galicia in Madrid, and an exhibit of photos, poetry and performances documenting Galician music groups.

Bretons have been leaders in reaching out to their Celtic cousins with groups for Ireland (Breizh-Eire), Scotland (Association Bretagne-Ecosse), Wales (Cymdeithas Cymru-Llydaw), and Cornwall (Kevredigezh Kembre-Breizh). While perhaps not having contact organizations, there are certainly many exchanges also with Asturias in Spain, and the Isle of Man. The Editor would welcome up-to-date information on these and updates on other groups.

And inter-Celtic understanding has certainly been fostered by 60 years of the Celtic League (see *Bro Nevez* 161, March 2022).

Celtic? Exhibit – The Breton Cultural Movement Reacts

As reported in the last issue of *Bro Nevez* (no. 163, September 2022), the exhibit called "Celtiques?" has caused an uproar in Brittany for its message that Bretons today are not really Celtic.

The following is my translation of a press release from Yvon Ollivier posted on Agence Bretagne Presse, December 7, 2022 – LK

The "Celtique?" exhibit of the Musée de Bretagne denies the true heritage of Brittany.

These past months the Musée de Bretagne in Rennes has presented an exhibit that questions the Celtic origins of Brittany. Detailed critiques from eminent researchers demonstrate the absence of scientific rigor which persisted in the elaboration of the exhibit. Worse, treatment of certain aspects of the question showed evident set prejudices – problematic when it comes to historical truth.

The fact of drawing on maps of Brittany that omitted Loire-Atlantique showed not only the profound thoughtlessness of the exhibit's presentation, but could also be associated – voluntarily or not – with an action to put in place a process to destroy an identity. Because, wasn't the aim to clearly deny the existence of base elements of the Breton people as a territory, language, history – even to represent them in a devalued form so that members of this people renounce and more quickly adopt the identity of the dominant group seeking hegemony?

When the Musée de Bretagne engages in destroying the identity of the Breton people, and in this the Celtic community, it promotes in fact the artificial Ligérienne identity, but it especially confirms only an identity of France, a recent construction of several centuries established at the expense of the history of diverse peoples.

The negation of the Celtic dimension of the Breton people, that of a people more generally, with the aim of assimilation is an ethnocide condemned by all the international conventions. These conventions affirm that all cultures have a dignity and value which must be respected and protected because they are the manifestation of the creative genius of humanity.

The signers of this motion:

- Have stated that the exhibit does not respect scientific truth and in fact engages in an ethnocide.
- Demand a teaching for all young Bretons of the historical, geographical and socio-economic context of their territory, Brittany – still refused up to the present – so that they have an enlightened and not deformed knowledge.

They call on the Regional Council of Brittany to act so that all the elements of the identity of Brittany are known and respected.

Signers:

Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro)
Bretagne Réunie
Breizh Impacte
Bretagne Majeur

An Account of Travel in Brittany in 1960

Neville Braybrooke, "Across Brittany by Taxi"
The Christian Century, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 22, June 1, 1966.

Neville Braybrooke is identified in a footnote to the article as a British author and editor.

I detest the ordinary picture post card views of Brittany: the vast expanses of sand lined with eucalyptus trees in the south, the shots of the newly painted casino at Val-André or the prison-like close-ups of the lighthouse at Cap Fréhel. I prefer to remember a strawberry roan rearing up in the main street of Carnac and forcing a band of pilgrims to shelter in a doorway, or a sea gull with a broken wing that is kept as a living mascot by one of the cafés in St. Jacut de la Mer. He was brought there by the fishermen after a heavy winter storm. We christened him "Chekhov," and the last time I was there the name seemed to have stuck. That was in 1960, the year I traveled by taxi from St. Jacut in the north to Carnac in the south – a hundred-mile ride straight across the Breton interior.

My driver was a man of 80, and his car was of a 1918 vintage. Once when we stopped dead at the top of a hill he merely released the brake and said, smiling, "Let's leave it to the wind and the grace of God." We were lucky; there was a petrol station at the bottom.

The valleys, with their clusters of whitewashed houses and medieval calvaries, came as a relief; here the going was at least flat if not smooth. Few of these tiny villages with their modest inns, are marked on maps. They are *backwaters* – and no sooner have I said that than there comes into my mind a more turbulent image of these drowned valleys lost amid the mountaintops. "And the waters withdrew from the face of the earth."

I

In Brittany you always have this sense of going back to the beginnings of time: the feeling that this western promontory of France is but an extension of the Holy Land. ... Hardly a week passes in the summer months that one of the many local Pardons, or Blessing, held in Finistère and Morbihan does not commemorate some event connected with the Holy Family. And there are the more elemental Pardons such as the Blessing of the Fire at St. Jean-du-Doigt, which takes place June 23 and 24, and the Blessing of the Sea at St. Anne le Palud, near Quimper, on the last Sunday of August. But you might also call the latter a Blessing of the Air now; on the occasion of my visit there two planes swooped down and taxied up beside the boats that had been drawn up in rows along the beach. And by lucky

chance my visit to Carnac coincided with the Blessing of the Beasts. The people of Carnac are superstitious about many things but not about their Pardon: they hold it on September 13.

The castle at Josselin, in the middle of Brittany, was built with the local stone, the hardness of which kept the towers free from decoration. On one side of the castle is the river, and on a clear day the stately swans swim over the reflected glory of another age, grace calling to grace and the proud arching of their necks matching the proud arching of the battlements. But alas – the castle with its superb tapestries and magnificent library is seldom opened to the public. We sped on.

Our route took us through the heathlands of the Morbihan, where many of the manor houses have been turned into farm dwellings; over the porches are coats of arms – reminders of the families that once lived there. The countryside is thick with pine forests. There was a suggestion of the sea beyond the horizon, and I noticed that the soil was growing sandier. Then at the ancient town of Vannes we turned west toward the Atlantic for the last lap of our journey. At Auray I caught my first glimpse of the peasant women decked out for their feast in their whitewinged *coiffes*. In the former coach yard with its horse troughs and stirrup mounts they were cramming into buses, many of which had been specially hired for the day. No sooner had they filled one than another pulled in. The old, faded sepia photographs from the beginning of the century remind one that the scene has changed very little; buses have replaced horses, but the designs on the lace headdresses still serve to differentiate one village from another. Traditions die hard here.

II

When we arrived in Carnac vendors were laying out their stalls with rosaries, charms against boils and strings of colored baubles. On trestle table beside the church, arranged in rows, stood copies of a tiny figure in a glass dome; at the base, in thin, curly writing, was the name of St. Cornéli, the town's pope-patron of the third century. When you shake the globe the figure becomes lost in swirling snowflakes. Attached to the church were loudspeakers through which could be heard the choir singing to the saint. He is the patron of horned cattle and domestic pets, and they were asking him to bless their crops and make their cattle fertile. The hymn was catchy, and as other voices took it up the procession moved out into the main street from the north door of the church. Legend has it that the huge balaquino over the porch was placed there by angels. It gives the impression of being made of stone antlers; legend or no legend, it could not have found a better resting place. The clergy, heavy with purple and the chains of office, were preceded in the street by server

boys dressed in scarlet cassocks and white filet lace. At the end of the procession came a bust of the saint, carried shoulder high – with the relic resting in a great, crimson-lined open place in the heart.

The blessing of the beasts took place at 12 o'clock. The cart horses with their gaily plaited manes had about them the shyness of village children dressed for Sunday, and so too did the goats and cows. But not the bulls; they remained stubborn and had to be dragged toward the church. Eventually all the animals were led, two by two, past the west door of the church and blessed by the bishop. Some of the farmer, following an old fertility custom said to date back to the third century, placed at his feet tufts from the tails of their cattle.

The living past and the eating present! Carnac believes in both. The Hotel de Voyageurs, where the English traveler Augustus Hare used to stay, was recommended to me as *une maison serieuse*, and I pass the recommendation on with enthusiasm. It is an unpretentious inn, offering a five-course meal for well under a pound. Fresh oysters are served daily, and a specialty is spider crab cooked in Muscadet. The oysters and crabs are brought from Carnac beach, about two kilometers from the town. Muscadet, by the way, is one of the least known and yet one of the pleasantness dry white wines I have tasted. Until control laws came into force it was openly blended with Chablis.

In the afternoon I asked to be driven to the famous Menec alignments. These stone slabs, as tall as a man, or taller, rise from the heath like a battalion of soldiers; one legend says they are in fact soldiers who were turned to stone for pursuing St. Cornéli. Carnac is full of such legends, and the farm children who live near the alignments are willing to sing songs about them in exchange for English cigarettes or American dollars. My driver was unwilling to commit himself about either the legends or the stones themselves. He merely looked at them, stretching away row after row, and said, "Very quaint, very quaint indeed." I could see that he was growing impatient to begin the long journey home. When I remarked that I had heard that ghosts were reported to haunt the boulders and to cast spells on straying cattle, he shut up like a clam and looked away.

In Carnac it is not hard to understand how these stories have arisen. If you come out to see the alignments by moonlight you can easily believe that you are looking at a battalion of warriors newly risen from the dead, or at a field sown with the teeth of a prehistoric dragon. ...

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