

# BRO NEVEZ

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



Auray

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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**U.S. ICDBL website: [www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm](http://www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm)**  
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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.

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

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

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

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## On the Cover

Reproduced on the cover is a drawing by Thornton Oakley from *Enchanted Brittany* by Amy Oakley, published in 1930. An account from this book is included among others in "Auray in Travel Accounts of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century." A particular focus on Auray was chosen because the Kevrenn Alre – a premier bagad and dance ensemble from Brittany – will be in the U.S. this March.

## Why is this issue of Bro Nevez so late????

... Because the Kevrenn Alre will be coming to my home town, Philadelphia, I have been spending many hours helping to organize their trip here. And a number of U.S. ICDBL Members have also been a part of this adventure. You will read about it later in these pages. This has been very exciting, but has required a huge investment of time and energy. Thus, you are receiving a slightly smaller and definitely later issue of Bro Nevez this time.

With this issue we also welcome newly elected, and in many cases re-elected, officers and a board of consultants for the U.S. ICDBL. This is definitely an interesting group of people and they introduce themselves in this issue of Bro Nevez (as they introduced themselves for the election).

## **Some Short Notes - Breton Language “Happenings” in Brittany**

The following notes show just a glimpse of some organizations, resources, and events in Brittany related to the Breton language. There's a lot more happening in Brittany than Bro Nevez can report!!! – Lois Kuter

### **Diwan prepares for a 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

On April 19, 1977, the first president of Diwan, Gweltaz ar Fur, officially registered the creation of this organization which brought together teachers and parents from Quimper and the area of Ploudalmézeau in Bro Leon who were working on getting Breton language preschools off the ground in those first years. Today there are some 2,950 children at 35 school sites in all five departments of Brittany, five middle schools and a high school. There's a great deal of work to go to open new classes – more middle schools as well as specialized technological and professional training programs.

As expenses climb faster than support (which does climb), meeting each year's budget becomes ever more of a challenge. Under its contract with the National Education system, it is only after five years of existence that new schools qualify to have their teachers' salaries covered. While those trying to create a new bilingual class in a public or Catholic school can face obstacles, these are multiplied for those trying to locate building space for a new Diwan class. Adding a bilingual class in existing public and Catholic schools normally means moving space around within one school building. To open a Diwan school you need to find a whole new building – this is not easy, especially since government regulations limit the amount of public money that can be used for “private” schools. Parents often invest heavily in rehabbing or even building new school class spaces.

Diwan has always operated as a public school with free tuition so that all are welcome and able to attend. Diwan parents and support groups do a great deal of fundraising, and Diwan counts on individual donors to help its continued expansion. You can be one of those individuals. Send a check made out to the U.S. ICDBL to me (see address on the front page of the newsletter). Thank you to all those who include a contribution for Diwan with your membership renewal.

During the 2007/08 school year, Diwan will be organizing a number of events to mark its 30th anniversary – with 30 different events in fact, including an international symposium on bilingual and immersion education for minority languages, and a

big closing festival. Diwan has much to celebrate in its 30 years. It has proven to be an effective educational option for children who succeed academically and who master Breton as a living language. All those who have worked so hard to meet huge economic and political challenges are certainly to be congratulated for their courage and faith in this exceptional school system for the Breton language.

(information for this note was gathered in part from: *Kannadig Diwan*, Niv. 183, Miz Genver 2007)

### **“Quêteurs de mémoire” Seekers of Memories ... in Breton**

The General Council of the Department of Finistère launched an initiative in 2006 to encourage children learning Breton in school to research a project with an older person – through the Breton language. Thus, in learning an activity – cooking crafts, storytelling – or learning about a topic – local history, the environment, a particular job – children talked with people who had Breton as their first language. In this inter-generational project (often undertaken by a class) children learn not only about their heritage, but also learn more about the rich diversity of the Breton language and its expressiveness outside of a classroom setting. And they have fun getting a better understanding of the cultural, ecological, architectural or economic uniqueness of their home area.

The projects are supported with a small amount of money from the General Council of the Department of Finistère. The children document their projects in written reports, film or computer internet sites, or they simply learn a craft or song and perform it for others. As an example, the children in the Commana Diwan School are learning the art of storytelling from masters Jañ Mari Skragh and Gwendal ar Floc'h and will show how much they have learned by telling their own stories at the Kan ar Bobl festival competition for storytelling in the Breton language.

For more information about this very interesting project to link generations through the Breton language, checkout the website:

<http://queteurs.cg29.fr>

(information from: *Keleier Ofis ar Brezhoneg* Nov. 70, Genver 2007)

### **Ya d'ar Brezhoneg – Yes to Breton**

Launched in 2001, the Yes to Breton campaign continues to be waged by Ofis ar Brezhoneg ([www.ofis-bzh.org](http://www.ofis-bzh.org)). Targeted first were organizations

and businesses, and 300 signed on, impacting some 230,000 employees and 180,000 members of organizations. More recently the campaign has shifted to towns and cities where some 50 have signed on so far, representing a population of 500,000.

Signing on to Ya d'ar Brezhoneg means, at the first stage, that a town or city would agree to implement at least 5 of some 28 proposed actions to make Breton more visible/audible. This can include bilingual signage, municipal forms in Breton, support of a bilingual school program, or language classes for municipal employees. For small towns this can be relatively easy, but for larger cities like Lannion, Brest or Lannester, the expenses can add up.

Good luck to the Ofis ar Brezhoneg in continuing this effective campaign to put Breton in a more public spotlight.

(information from: *Keleier Ofis ar Brezhoneg* Nov. 70, Genver 2007)

### **How to spot a Breton Speaker – Look for the “Spilhennig”**

The idea is not new and a number of Bretons have wondered for many years why nothing had been done. Especially since the model was already well established with the Irish “fáinne” (ring). The “spilhenneg” (little pin) created by the Ofis ar Brezhoneg can now be worn by Breton speakers to welcome others to speak Breton with them. So simple and so effective in opening a conversation e brezhoneg.



(information and image from *Bremañ* Nov. 304, C'hwevrer 2007)

### **Television in Breton – France 3 Ouest**

Yes, there is a bit of Breton on television in Brittany, but it is indeed a very small amount – a grand total of 89 ½ minutes per week on FR3, a public TV channel with regional satellites (directed from Paris). This small amount is in contrast to the strong presence of Breton on radio, and the internet opens up all new possibilities for global audiences for both radio and television type broadcasts. It is unlikely that FR3 will greatly expand Breton language programming (and it is always possible that the bosses in Paris will decide to eliminate some of it), but for now what is lacking in quantity is made up for in quality. Here's the Breton language programming you find on the widely watched FR3 channel:

*Mouchig Dall* is a 20-minute program for younger children aired each Wednesday at 9 am. Its two personable hosts, Goulwena and Riwal, keep the action going with games, cartoons, short films, poetry, jokes, songs, and skits and children from the Diwan and bilingual programs of the public and Catholic schools are regular participants on the show.

*Te ha me* is an 8-minute program on Saturdays at 10:45. Aimed at youth, its host Goulwena an Henaff interviews a new guest each week to show the diverse interests and personalities of Breton-speaking teens throughout Brittany.

*Digor Din* is an 18 minute program on Saturdays at 10:30 and also targets a younger audience. It focuses on arts and cultural expressions of all kinds in Brittany – especially those in the Breton language.

*An Taol Lagad* is a 3 ½ minute news broadcast on weekdays at 12:30 pm with a rebroadcast on Saturdays. This is not just a translation of French news programming but a complimentary program of its own. (Not broadcast in eastern Brittany).

*Red an Amzer* is a 26 minute program on Sundays at 11:30 am. This features documentary style films and/or invited guests to explore a range of political, economic, environmental, maritime, and social topics of Brittany.

(information from: *Keleier Ofis ar Brezhoneg* Nov. 70, Genver 2007)

### **www.klask.com Finding Breton language publications**

Klask – to seek. This new internet site is the brainchild of Katel Simon and Tangi ar Menn and it allows one to find a large number of books, DVDs, CDs, games, and lots of other publications in the Breton language. Not only does this help one find material from a number of small publishers in one place, but you can also use this site (which is bilingual French-Breton) to order things. You can search by type of publication (poetry, CD, bilingual books, theater, learning materials, etc.) or by publisher. The screen brings up a picture of the cover with title and price and options to find more details about the book or to add it to one's “shopping cart.” For now the site has some 500 publications/products from 30 publishers. It will grow.

(information from: *Keleier Ofis ar Brezhoneg* Nov. 70, Genver 2007 and the website itself)

## 2007 Election of officers for the U.S. ICDBL

The following individuals have been elected to begin or renew duties of responsibility for the U.S. Branch of the ICDBL. These are mini-biographies that each of them wrote to present themselves as nominees. As several of the voters noted on their ballots, this is indeed a remarkable group of people with a great deal of knowledge to bring to their work in guiding the future of the U.S. ICDBL.

### PRESIDENT

**David Brûlé.** (Millers Falls, Massachusetts) U.S. ICDBL Member since 1985. I'm Chairman of the Foreign Language Department for the Amherst-Pelham Regional School System and a teacher of French and Spanish. I'm particularly interested in the functional approach to language learning and teaching as it applies to the mainstream languages, and I'm particularly interested in developing functional approaches to learning and teaching Breton and Irish.

I regularly spend 5-6 weeks in the Loudeac-Uzel region of Haute-Bretagne and have developed numerous contacts with Breton language and dance activities in Mur, Kemper, Morlaix, etc. Perhaps these regular trips to Brittany plus my location in the center of a highly culturally and musically active area (Amherst College, University of Massachusetts, Smith College, Hampshire College, Mt. Holyoke) could be of service to the ICDBL.

I have been an active member of the Board of the U.S. ICDBL since 1990 and would like to continue to offer my help.

### SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Lois Kuter.** (Jenkinton, Pennsylvania). Founding Member of the U.S. ICDBL 1980. Editor of Bro Nevez, newsletter of the U.S. ICDBL, since its inception. My involvement in the Celtic cultures occurred by accident when I took up learning the Scottish Highland bagpipes on a whim as a teen. I studied of Celtic musics as an anthropology major and participant in the newly established ethnomusicology program at Oberlin College (class of 1973, and earned a PhD in Anthropology/ Ethnomusicology from Indiana University in 1981 with a doctoral thesis on Breton music and language as markers of identity in Brittany. I earn my living as Director of the Volunteer Program at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, but continue to use my expertise on Breton culture to teach classes and give lectures on Breton and Celtic music when I can. During a ten-year period, I produced over 200 radio programs of Breton music for WXPB-FM (based at the University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia). For my work with the U.S. ICDBL I was the first American to be inducted into the

Order of the Ermine, in September 1995, by the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro). Founded by Breton Duke Jean IV in 1381, this honorary order was re-instituted in the 1970s to recognize exceptional service in support of the Breton culture. And this honor recognizes a life-time commitment to supporting Brittany and its culture.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Karl Haloj.** (Harrodsburg, KY) I am relatively new to the U.S. ICDBL (joining in 2005), but I have long standing love and interest in the Breton language and culture. I have lived in Brittany and go back whenever the occasion presents itself. Though I read Breton better than I speak it, I am inching toward fluency. I am currently chugging my way through 'Romant ar Roue Arzhur'. I have worked as a Teacher (French, Spanish, ESL) and a Translator (French, Spanish, Italian). I am currently a free-lance 'Linguistic Consultant'. And 'County Director, France' for Abbey Road Overseas Programs.

**Richard Herr.** (Berkeley, California). U.S. ICDBL Member since 1983. I am an emeritus professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, specializing in modern France and Spain I have been a member of the ICDBL since the early 1980s, first attracted by my interest in the history of minority cultures and languages in western Europe. Through the ICDBL I have become familiar with the situation in Brittany and have spoken about it in lectures. In 1999 my wife Valerie and I, armed with an introduction from Lois Kuter, enjoyed a warm welcome from the teachers and students of the Skol Diwan Landerne. Their spirit and dedication inspired in me a commitment to support the struggle of the Diwan schools to preserve Breton as a living language.

**Kathi Hochberg.** (Harrison, New York). U.S. ICDBL Member since 1992. I have been a French teacher since 1973. I grew up between Westchester County, New York, and the St. Brieuc area of Brittany. I attended college in France. Having family in Brittany, I spend most school vacations there. Since my retirement in June 2006 I can now spend more time abroad. While I do not speak Breton, I am fluent in French. I am constantly immersed in Breton culture. While on sabbatical in 1992, I pursued studies in the development of the Breton language as well as cultural topics/issues to enhance my teaching and add to my general interest and knowledge of French. In the early to mid '90's I served as Harrison, New York's, ambassadrice to Montgeron, France, as the sister cities liaison. In meeting the teachers, students and parents at Skol Diwan Landerne in 2005, I was touched by the warmth with which they welcomed me, their dedication to preserving the Breton language and their undying spirit.

Due to my involvement in teaching French and my interest and attachment to Breton life and culture, and the inspiration of my new friends in Landerneau, I would like to continue to serve on the Board of Directors of the U.S. ICDBL.

**Natalie Novik.** (Anchorage, Alaska). U.S. ICDBL Member since 1983. I grew up in Paris, France, where the Breton side of my family has a strong influence on me. As I became more conscious of my Breton background, one of my first goals was to learn the Breton language, which led me to a) create a Breton club in the community where I lived, and b) become actively involved in the development of Diwan. While my Master's Degree focused on Native America and Siberia, I also studied middle Welsh and middle Breton for two years with Dr. Fleuriot at the Sorbonne's Hautes Etudes post-graduate institute.

Over the years I remained very active with various Breton organizations, supported Diwan, and promoted the Breton language in festivals, schools, cultural events, both in Europe and in America where I had the opportunity to teach Breton. My interests also include Breton dancing and music, Breton costumes, lore and legends, Breton history, oil spills, economic issues, and the status of Brittany in France, in the European community and among the Celtic countries. In Alaska where I am the only ICDBL member, I represent Brittany as best as I can, participating in various Celtic festivals, doing exhibits, demonstrating dances, giving concerts, etc. I go back to Brittany every year, and continue to deepen my knowledge of the language and culture and follow the political, sociological and economic development of Brittany up close rather than on the internet.

I have served on the Boards of several non-profit Breton organizations and was elected in June 2005 President of the Celtic Community of Alaska, a non-profit dedicated to promoting the Celtic cultures and educating the public about them. In my professional life, I have been working for the past six years for an international non-profit association, a useful experience for the Board of the ICDBL. I have kept excellent contacts in Brittany and would continue to bring to this position the advantage of being able to approach people and organizations over there who know my name and reputation. Over the years I have also contributed numerous articles to Bro Nevez, and to other newsletters and magazines on Brittany, Celtic cultures and history.

Specific skills include: typing, proof-reading, and teaching in Breton (and English and French!); Web page development (Dreamweaver, Frontpage, Word, Powerpoint); and photography (universal language).

**Gregory T. Stump.** (Lexington, Kentucky). U.S. ICDBL Member since 1983. I am a professor of English and Linguistics at the University of Kentucky. I have a long-standing research interest in the Breton language: I spent the 1989-90 academic year on sabbatical in Brittany, where I investigated the Breton dialect of Plougastel, consulting regularly with several native speakers. As a consequence of that work, I have since published several articles on the theoretical significance of particular aspects of Breton grammar, and the Breton inflectional system figures prominently in my book *Inflectional Morphology* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

My interest in Breton, however, is not limited to its grammatical characteristics. I am avidly interested in more general aspects (both traditional and modern) of Breton culture and society, and I believe that supporting the efforts of Bretons to understand, maintain, and enrich their heritage is an important and urgent goal.

I am eager to serve another term on the U.S. ICDBL's board of directors (which I joined in 1990).

**Lenora Timm.** (Davis, California). A Founding Member of the U.S. ICDBL in 1981 and former President. I first became interested in Breton in the late '60's while living in France for a year and a half. It was during that time that I grew aware of the imperiled position of Breton. I determined then to return later to study the language, both in the sense of doing a linguistic analysis of one of the dialects, and in the sense of learning to speak and read it to some extent. I have been at work, intermittently, on both of these projects. Most of my research has been carried out in and around the town of Carhaix (Finistère), in which one of the four major dialects of Breton—Cornouaillais (Kernev, in Breton)—is spoken. I have developed a goodly number of Breton-speaking contacts in this region, some of whom have become good friends over the years. Based on my research I published a number of articles on the Breton language and its sociolinguistic status in the early 1980s.

In Summer 1979 I took a 3-week course in literary Breton at L'Université d'Été held at Lorient, where I had the opportunity to meet and interact with numerous people committed to the preservation of Breton, some of my many co-students at this course were then, and still are, working for Diwan, which in my view is one of the most promising developments furthering Breton language maintenance to have emerged in decades.

In addition to my Breton pursuits I have several other research interests, including in interest in the Spanish of the Southwest; child language; and language, gender and society.



## A Note of Loss - Gei Zantzinger (1936-2007)

Lois Kuter

I am saddened to share the news of the death of Gei Zantzinger who passed away February 16 from a form of leukemia which attacks the blood and bone marrow. This was an illness that moved very rapidly to take a man who had years of creative and important work planned as a filmmaker and ethnomusicologist. A member of the U.S. ICDBL since 1993, Gei sent me a check in January to support the Kevrenn Alre concert in Philadelphia. His short note said that he would be away, but he wanted to send support and his wishes of good luck. Gei traveled frequently and spent a great deal of time in southern Africa.

Gei Zantzinger focused most of his work as a filmmaker to document the musical traditions rooted in southern Africa. Thus, it was all the more surprising to me when he first contacted me in 1991 or 1992 and expressed an interest in the music of Brittany. He had read an article I wrote (“A Musical Renaissance in Brittany”) about my research on Breton identity and its expression in music in the late 1970s and 80s which had been published in the October 1990 issue of *Resound*, the quarterly newsletter of the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University. This was not a long or particularly brilliant article, but Gei saw something interesting happening in Brittany.

We talked, and Gei organized a trip to Brittany to do some filming, working closely with Dastum and a network of exceptional singers and musicians. The film “Of Pipers and Wrens” would see the light of day in 1997. His first trip was in the fall of 1992 for three weeks, during which time he attended (and filmed) music and dance at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Dastum. He would travel again to Brittany at least one more time in 1995. I had a small role in pointing Gei in the right direction and finding him a few contacts, but once in Brittany, he was the one who asked the right questions, and knew just what to film. It didn’t hurt that the musicians he worked with were some of the most talented and knowledgeable one could find – they understood the story he wanted to tell about the challenges and successes in the transmission of the rich oral tradition of Brittany. He loved working with Annie Ebrel best of all, but he had the opportunity to interview and film a “who’s who” of singers and

musicians including Patrick Molard and Youenn Le Bihan, Erik Marchand, Marthe Vassallo, Albert Poulain, Mathieu Hamon, Gilbert Hervieux, and Patrick Malrieu to name a few. And the film captures short performances by two greats of Breton music now departed: Manu Kerjean and Youenn Gwernig.

The experience of seeing how this film was put together and helping to “edit” and prepare a narrative script for “Of Pipers and Wrens” over several years was a fascinating experience for me. My role was truly that of a consultant where Gei and filmmaker/editor Michael Bailey would lay out the clips and music and I would give my advice and suggestions. Gathering with Gei and Michael was always a learning experience and I greatly looked forward to sessions where Michael would work magic with computer technology to move pieces of the film around to try out ideas. Meeting at Gei’s old stone farmhouse in Chester County, Pennsylvania to trade ideas was always a treat.

Gei Zantzinger did not just work with Michael Bailey and me to put together the film “Of Pipers and Wrens.” He sent copies of the partially completed film back to a number of musicians in Brittany to get their comments (and criticism). He worked carefully to get song translations and to get just the right wording when doing subtitles for French or Breton speakers. While done with an American audience in mind, Gei wanted a film that Bretons felt expressed what they wanted to say about their music and Breton identity. To insure that the film could be viewed by people in Brittany a version in French was also done with narration in French and subtitles for places where people spoke English or Breton.

Gei seemed to intuitively understand what music-making and dancing in Brittany was all about, even though the time he spent there was very short. But then, Gei understood and loved music of all kinds, and he loved and respected people who made music and fought to keep their heritage alive.

The “Breton” period of Gei’s film-making career is just a small part of his long professional life. The

notes accompanying “Of Pipers and Wrens” give the following information about his background as an ethnomusicologist and filmmaker.

*Gei Zantzinger began making films in southern Africa in 1966, while he was a Ph.D. Candidate in the Folklore/Folklife Program at the University of Pennsylvania, and a Research Associate at the University Museum. He studied film under Sol Worth at the Annenberg School of Communications. Fourteen of his ethnographic films describe subjects in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. ... In addition to an album featuring the bluegrass music of North Carolina-born Ola Belle Reed and family for Rounder Records, he co-produced a jazz album with composer Sumi Tonooka for Radiant Records. He has in progress [in 1997] two CD albums, one on Barotse music in western Zambia, the other an anthology of pre-electric music in the Cape Verde Islands. In 1983 he organized Constant Spring Productions, an independent production facility where he produced five further titles: “Songs of the Adventurers” (Lesotho), “Songs of the Badius” (Cape Verde), “Audrey Bronson” (USA), “Susumu” (USA) and “A Spirit Here Today” (Mozambique). Gei Zantzinger was born and raised in southeastern Pennsylvania, which he considered his home and work base.*

A memorial program for Gei Zantzinger will be held on Friday, April 6, 2007 (what would have been his 71<sup>st</sup> birthday) at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology in Philadelphia at 6 pm. Those who would like more information are invited to contact Lois Kuter.



## An American Guitarist in Brittany

Two reviews by Lois Kuter

**David Surette** (compiler and editor). **Fest Breizh – 50 Traditional Dance Tunes from Brittany.** Self-produced. David Surette. 2006. 37 pages.

Fest Breizh is a collection of 50 short dance tunes from Brittany deliberately put into simple transcriptions that would be comfortable for fiddle players as well as guitar players. Chords for guitar are included. The audience for this book are musicians here in the U.S. who might gather for Irish music

sessions or to play traditional old timey or New England style music for contra dances.

Surette wisely advises those who want to learn to play Breton music to listen to Bretons playing it – if not in traveling to Brittany through a number of CDs which present different styles – solo and groups. With this in mind, most of the tunes in the book are drawn from recordings and a discography of 24 recordings is included at the end of the book (although some of these might be hard to locate today since they were recorded in the 1990s and even 1980s). Musicians and groups Surette draws tunes from include: Kornog, Storvan, Padraig Sicard, Gilles Le Bigot, Skolvan, Dremmwel, Alan Stivell, Tud, Barzaz, Christian Le Maitre, Strakal, Pennou Skoulm, Skeduz, and the *sonneurs* Baron and Anneix.

As the title to the collection indicates dances are featured – a variety of gavottes, fisel, en dro, hanter dro, laridé, rond de Loudéac and rond de St-Vincent, as well as one dérobée, a pach-pi and a march.

While the introductory notes to this collection take up only 13 pages, they are well written with accurate and helpful information for those who are not familiar with Breton music. The section on “Breton Dance Tunes” briefly introduces the variety of Breton dance types and the structure of some dances into a 3 and 4-part suite. In this section Surette also describes his selection of keys for the transcriptions and makes suggestions as to tempo and ornamentation – leaving interpretation open to the individual, but always urging them to listen to recordings or live performances to get a sense of the many things that a transcription on paper cannot communicate about the more subtle characteristics of Breton music.

The introductory notes also provide a nice introduction to David Surette himself and his long-standing love of Brittany and its music. Surette first traveled to Brittany in 1984 and has made a number of return trips since. One of the first groups to gain his attention was Kornog, and for a guitarist, this group would indeed leave a lasting impression with the presence of acoustic guitar wizard Soig Siberil, not to mention bouzouki master Jamie McMenemy.

As a guitarist, Surette has been very aware of the use of the guitar in Breton music through his travels and in listening to recordings, and devoted a two-week study trip to Brittany in the Spring of 1995 to looking at guitar music. It is clear from his “Letter from Brittany” published as a result of this trip in *Acoustic Guitar* and reprinted in *Fest Breizh* that Surette was paying attention to much more than guitar music. He listened



to traditional song and participated in festoù noz and festivals large and small, and he hung out and jammed with musicians in Breton bars. Surette saw how music was a force used effectively by Bretons to counter pressure from Paris to eliminate Breton culture.

By offering American musicians some dance tune transcriptions Surette is not acting as a militant to perpetuate Breton music, but as someone who truly loves the music and wants to share a bit with others who might also enjoy it. While the introductory notes are designed to help those using the collection learn a little bit about Brittany and its musical heritage, Surette's brief list of resources at the end of the book are designed to give people the means to learn a lot more and find recordings. This includes addresses, e-mails, and websites for Coop Breizh and Keltia Musique who produce and distribute CDs and books, as well as for Dastum, a network of "archives" and promoters of traditional styles of Breton music and oral traditions. And the U.S. ICDBL is also included with a nice promotion of our newsletter and website resources.

I am not a musician (or at least not one who can take much advantage from transcriptions) so I can't judge the quality of the musical transcriptions offered, but this is a very nice collection with useful notes to help musicians learn and enjoy a few tunes from Brittany. It is very simply produced. The simplicity of the cover with its "crudely" drawn triskell would not entice someone to pick this off a shelf, but what dad would go for a fancy graphic design when his own loving daughter provided an original piece of art for the cover?

The transcriptions in this simple 37-page "booklet" are a welcome resource for musicians who have always wanted to learn a few Breton dance tunes.

**David Surette. Northern Roots.** Madrine Music (PO Box 433, South Berwick, ME 03908)  
[www.burkesurette.com](http://www.burkesurette.com). 2005. 52'46 minutes.

If anyone were to think that the U.S. was a cola nation devoid of any real music of its own, this is a CD that might remind them otherwise. From California to Florida we all share a familiarity with advertisement jingles or massively marketed pop songs, but uniquely American music created and passed down through an oral tradition is alive and well. Some of this continent's unique sounds include Native American drumming circles at powwows, Appalachian ballads and bluegrass music, blues from the deep south or urban Chicago, or salsa music of New York City's Puerto

Rican neighborhoods. These are ever-changing, as truly alive traditions should be, as new generations compose and modify. There is no one "American" music but many traditions that continue to thrive, some better than others.

David Surette is a master of guitar and mandolin and this new CD, *Northern Roots*, features the tradition of New England contra dance music. And he assures us that this remains a vital grass-roots tradition where people gather for dancing on Saturday nights and musicians tune up to empower the dancing – sounds like an American version of a fest noz to me. And in this New England tradition the jigs and reels are rooted in English, Irish and Scottish traditions with an influence from French-Canadian music. All this is combined on this CD which includes dance tunes one might hear at a contra dance in New England. But Surette's influences are varied and the tunes on this CD are as well. There is a Breton medley including the melody for the Breton song "Ar C'hont Gwilhou" followed by some laridé dances. I particularly like the suite of Scottish pipe tunes where Surette makes a guitar sound very much like a bagpipe with his grace notes.

Surette's playing makes you want to get up and dance, but it's not just a driving rhythm that makes this CD so nice. He packs a lot of expression into each piece and the guitar and mandolin finger work on slower melodies are as impressive as the break-neck pace of some of the dances. Surette is solo on 11 of the 15 selections on the CD, and is joined in three dance tunes by fiddler Rodney Miller who plays with him in the contra dance band Airdance. Sarah Bahan adds a nice touch with tin whistle to the Breton air and to a waltz. Susie Burke is a singer and performs regularly with Surette, but here she adds to a rich texture with guitar backup.

This is truly an enjoyable CD and Surette is a master of guitar and mandolin. This is clear not only in the technical virtuosity of his playing but also in the musical quality of each performance on the CD.

## **New Music From Brittany**

**Florence Pavie, Yann-Frañch Kemener, Aldo Ripoche. Dialogues.** Buda Musique 3017490. 51'56 minutes.

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

This CD is derived from a stage performance called "Dialogues" that was created and performed at the

Théâtre de Cornouaille in Quimper in March 2006. Yann-Fañch Kemener sings and sometimes recites song texts, working with pianist Florence Pavie and cellist Aldo Ripoché in a unique combination of traditional Breton song and music with classical styles and composition. One can only imagine the dramatic effect of this performance on stage based on the emotional intensity of this CD. The performances are full of passion and underline the drama of traditional Breton songs where women are abducted by or married to men they do not love, where young men leave loved ones when drafted into the king's army, or where magic and sorcery are ever-present and often menacing.

The songs from this CD are drawn from two famous 19<sup>th</sup> century collections: La Villemarqué's *Barzaz Breiz* and Bourgault-Ducoudray's *Trente mélodies populaires de Basse-Bretagne*. And they are also drawn from songs collected and recorded by Claudine Mazéas in the 1950s and early 1960s and by Kemener himself (*Carnets de route*) who grew up with traditional songs around him. Kemener has carefully chosen and arranged the texts, and they are not sung as one might hear them at a fest noz or gathering of friends at a veillée, but performed for full dramatic effect – sometimes as much stated as sung. The piano and cello only add to the intense coloring of each piece.

While most of the songs and melodies on the CD are well known in Brittany, the performance here is far from the usual. There are two compositions that are not well known. "Prayer," a cello and piano piece by Swiss-born and American-naturalized composer Ernest Block (1880-1959) incorporates old Hebraic melodies. This piece leads into the Breton gwerz (ballad) "Ar Jouis" which recounts how a young girl is sold to a Jewish trader by her brother. Piano and cello are also featured in a composition by Breton composer Adolphe Mahieu (1892-1931) called "la Druide."

This is a CD that requires some work on the part of the listener! Familiarity with the song texts – some of which are classics in the Breton tradition – and knowledge of Breton will definitely enhance one's experience and appreciation for the way Kemener carefully crafts the words, singing style and interplay with cello and piano. The CD notes are helpful in describing how this performance is put together – the sources for the music and texts and the construction of the performance overall. Song texts are given in Breton and French with a very short synopsis in English. There are photos which give an idea of how the performance looked on stage.

This is not a CD you can casually throw on the CD player and then sit back and relax or multi-task as you listen. The passion of the performance requires your attention and an engagement of emotions. While probably best appreciated in a live performance where lighting and staging are part of the show, this is a remarkable recording in its innovative interplay of voice, piano and cello.

## HEARD OF, BUT NOT HEARD

The following short descriptions are gleaned from reviews and notes in the following Breton magazines: *Armor* 441 (Oct. 2006), 442 (Nov. 2006) & 443 (Dec. 2006); *Ar Men* 155 (Nov.-Dec. 2006) & 156 (Jan.-Feb. 2007); *Musique Bretonne* 199 (Nov.-Dec. 2007), & 200 (Jan.-Feb. 2007).

**Bagad Sonerien Bro Dreger. *A Repasser*.** Self-produced.

This is the first CD by this bagad from the Tregor pays.

**Bann-heol. *Sonerezh sakr eus ar broioù keltiek*.**

Keltia Musique RSCD 281.

This is the first CD by a group formed in 2003 to perform sacred and secular music of Brittany and other Celtic countries. The 12 musicians play a number of instruments (violin, cello, harp, uilleann pipes, bombardes, bagpipes, and keyboard). Vocals are provided by Véronique Autret (formerly with the group Gwalarn). One can expect some interesting work by musicians who had an association in the past with the Kevrenn Breat Saint-Mark, and the 13 pieces here are arranged by René Abjean and Christian Desbordes as well as members of the group.

**Cécile Corbel. *Songbook 1*.** Bran Music RSCD 279.

This is the second CD by this artist who sings in Breton and English to harp. The songs are mostly traditional in tone.

**Jean Cras. *L'oeuvre pour piano*.** Performed by Jean Dubé. Syrius SYR 141 393

Pianist Jean Dubé performs works of a classical nature by Breton composer Jean Cras (1879-1932).

**Celticuvres. *Celticuvres*.** Ici Label ICI 0004/06.

This is a group of 14 musicians from a brass band of Compiègne and 11 sonneurs and drummers from a bagad of Brittany who collaborate for a selection of not-so-Celtic music. The collaboration of bagad and brass band is not new, but always interesting.

**Daviken. *Pogonoz*.** Faune Productions. FM P0609.

This is a Celtic rock group with a hard beat and texts on a number of issues of modern life.

**Gérard Delahaye. *Quelle drôle de terre!*** Dylie Productions DY 266.

Delahaye is a well known singer-songwriter with well composed texts and musically interesting arrangements on a variety of topics – from farmers of Brittany to Gandhi, John Lennon, Nelson Mandela, or American soldiers who died in Normandy in 1944.

**Deskomp. *Harzou Nevez***. Self-produced. (www.deskomp.org)

This is the third CD by this group which includes harp and fiddle among other instruments. They perform traditional songs as well as new compositions in unusual arrangements.

**Deus 'ta. *Dañs***. CDAS. CD AS001 DB10.

This is a fest noz band from Finistère, including singer Armel An Héjer. Solos and duos of flute and accordion characterize the sound of this group, with guitar and percussions added to the mix.

**Dihun Bro-Redon. *A-benn dihun***. Dihun Bro Redon DBR 001.

The Catholic bilingual schools of the Redon area collaborate with a variety of artists for a CD of song, rhymes and humorous stories. Various styles of music are used for texts in both Breton and Gallo. The children star, but guest artists include Nowenn Korbel and Goulwena Le Hénaff.

**Gwennyn. *En tu all***. Coop Breizh CD 988.

Gwennyn sings in the Breton language with texts she has composed or borrowed from poets such as Maodez Glanndour or Anjela Duval. These are set to music of her own or by Yann Honoré and Fred Runarvot. This is another young singer with great promise choosing to use the Breton language.

**Gaby Kerdoncuff. *Jabadao***. Hirustica 200601.

Gaby Kerdoncuff is a singer and bombarde player, who also favors the trumpet. He performs here on both bombarde and trumpet with Serge Le Clanche (accordion and piano) and Jean-François Roger (percussions) with innovative compositions and arrangements of traditional Breton themes.

**Kwak. *Nage dans le sable***. Bonsai Music BON 060102. Five musicians with songs on a variety of topical themes.

**Penn Gollo. *Da bep tu***. Coop Breizh CD 987

This group includes accordion, bombarde, guitars ... interpreting traditional dances of Brittany.

**Joseph-Guy Ropartz. *Quatuor No. 2 & 3***. Performed by the Quatuor Stanislas. Timpani 1C 1099.

This quartet is from the Symphonic and Lyric Orchestra of Nancy (northeast France) who have recorded a number of Breton composer Ropartz's works. The

Quartet No. 2 was composed in 1911-1912 and the Quartet No. 3 was composed ten years later, reflecting the hard times of the World War I.

**Joseph Guy Ropartz. *Symphonies No. 2 & 5***.

Performed by the Orchestre Symphonique et lyrique de Nancy. Timpani 1C 1097.

Sebastian Lang-Lessing conducts the Symphonic and Lyric Orchestra of Nancy in two symphonies by Ropartz (1864=1955). Symphony No. 2 dates to 1899-1900 and Symphony No. 5 (the last of the series he composed) was written during the German Occupation in World War II.

**Joseph-Guy Ropartz. *En l'honneur de sainte Anne – Messe, motets, pieces d'orgue***. Editions Hortus 042.

There is a religious theme to these compositions by Ropartz which are performed by the choirs and organ of Sainte-Anne-d'Auray.

**Jean-Luc Roudaut. *Livioù ar bed***. PM 001.

Roudaut has often worked with the Diwan schools and here he puts music to texts by Diwan teacher Armelle Crignou. Performances are by students of the Diwan school of Kerangoff in Brest, with a few guest performers – Ffran May, Anne-Gaëlle Le Floc'h and Dan ar Bras.

**Spontus. *Spontus***. An Naer Produktion. An Naer 902.

This is the third CD by this fest noz band with traditional dances as well as some new compositions. Instruments central to the group are biniou, accordion and fiddle with bass guitar and acoustic guitar integrally tied in.

**Toud' Sames. *Son an den dilabour***. Coop Breizh (www.laurent-jouin.com)

Just released CD by a group that by its composition alone insures great music. Masters of their voice or instrument all, the group includes traditional singer Loris Jouin, flute player Jean-Michel Veillon, percussionists Dom Molard and Hopi Hopkins, and electric bass player Alain Genty.

**Wig a Wag. *Wig a Wag***. Coop Breizh CD 984.

This CD is made up of compositions by a group with an electro-acoustic sound. Morgane Ji, a singer from the Reunion Islands, and Breton guitarist Soig Siberil are guest artists on the CD.



## DEEP INSIDE A BRETON SKULL

### 13 – The Washerwomen of the Night

Jean Pierre Le Mat

Since the end of the Adventurous Times, Lancelot had been cut off from the world of the living. The Round Table companions had faded away, one after another, at the advent of the new world. Of his last years, the first of the knights had left the memory of a saint, free from any terrestrial concern.

However, called by an overwhelming nostalgia, he came back each year to the Brocéliande forest. An irresistible force dragged him there. It had made him the champion and also the rival of King Arthur. This very force still tortured him beyond death. Each year, during the first night of May, he left the delights of Tir na n'Og, the Celtic heaven. He put on his war garb, took his sword, and turned back to the ground of his childhood, the place of his races and his hunts. Lancelot, who was the pride of the flesh and the exaltation of life, was obviously an incomplete dead man.

This year, as he was bypassing the Pas-du-Houx pond, singular noises attracted him. There were lappings, slappings and murmurs. A strange animation in a place usually so still... He approached silently. Knelt shades were bustling at the edge of the water.

The Washerwomen of the Night! According to the old Breton legends, these unfortunate creatures had been condemned by God Almighty to wash their shroud for the time of their damnation. But it remains forever soiled by their sins. The sad matrons can soak, rub, and beat the linen, yet the marks of their faults remain indelible. The divine justice is inflexible.

The Bretons inherited from their God this prejudice, which binds the faults of the women to dirtiness. And also this other prejudice that washing is primarily a female activity. The great man, the hero or the saint can easily show hygienic negligence. Such a fault makes him less austere and finally more convincing. A woman cannot allow herself such casualness. Her other qualities would be questioned at once. Cleanliness for the woman is the equivalent of

courage for a man: a manifestation of virtue. In the eternal fight against the forces of chaos, man is dedicated to any kind of bravery and woman to hygiene. Different strategies, probably complementary.

Lancelot observed the washerwomen and they observed Lancelot. Their murmurs had weakened. They worked more vigorously. Cloth was plunged without rest in the black water and then struck with their beating sticks.

In a second Lancelot was surrounded by the infernal spectra. And all required his assistance, to twist the linen for drying it. They agitated their stained shrouds in front of his eyes and grimaced their injunctions one after another. Their voices were foul winds, coming out of the caves of their mouths.

Lancelot knew the horrible power that the forces of Shade granted in former times to the Washerwomen of the Night. He knew that nobody could refuse assistance. Every Breton had been whispered that secret when he was young, by his mother or grandmother. But, in such a situation, you must avoid the ordinary gestures, under penalty of losing your life and compromising your eternal soul. The unfortunate traveller who would turn the shroud in the usual way, at the opposite of the woman, he is lost. The cloth of damnation will crush the bones of his hands, his arms, and all his body, up to the smallest ossicles.



Lancelot had to seize one of the dirty cloths that were offered to him. Facing the dark woman, he began to turn the shroud in the same direction as her, avoiding a twist of the linen. Strange work, without rest and without goal. The other evil creatures whirled around them vertiginously. In their frightening murmurs burst words of terror and vice, like bubbles bursting the surface of a diabolic elixir. The soiled linens were slapping in the night, and the water spurting out from the wet shrouds accompanied the frenzy of the ill-fated women.

"What are you doing here, beautiful knight?" the washerwoman thundered, with the glance of a she-wolf. "Did you come here to meet your memories or to meet your destiny? Listen! Look at me, look! Think of the women you met formerly. Is my nose or my mouth reminding you of somebody?"

"Damned creature, your face is that of damnation," answered Lancelot. "If I have now to remember something, it would be my past mistakes. But forgiveness touched them and remorse vanished. Do you try to rekindle my torments? You can't. Every day I contemplate Queen Guinevere in the Tir na n'Og gardens. Divine Peace was granted to us, and our hearts have been calmed down. With Perceval and my comrades in arms, with King Arthur and Guinevere, with the heroes and the saints of the two Britains, we breathe the pure love. It is the soft perfume of the Grail that we sought for such a long time."

"Do not believe, fiery knight, that I am so inferior and that I can't understand you. I know that the pure love is bright as the sun. I know. The pure love is beautiful, because it inspires the highest deeds... But I know also that impure love is holy, because it generates life. Life... Life!"

The washerwoman tightened her jaws, to contain the sob of bitterness which passed through her throat. Then she lowered her head.

"You are ugly," answered Lancelot after a moment of silence.

"Now we are," answered the night washerwoman. "But human life is proceeding through us, and not through everlasting beauty or virtue. You scorn at us, fine hero, for God's sake. Nevertheless, we carry humanity in our wombs."

"Can Good be born from Evil?" asked Lancelot. At once, he had found the taste of adventure and spiritual quest.

"I did not say that!" groaned the damned woman. "Perfection comes from imperfection, and cannot move without going back to imperfection. Great loves, like great aversions, are struck of sterility. Your love party with Guinevere was too pure to be fertile. But when you met the daughter of the Fisher King, you were full of pride and wine. From this union was born your son, Galahad, the holiest of the knights. The fruit of your fault..."

Lancelot remained thoughtful. His thoughts went to Guinevere, and then to Elaine, the daughter of the Fisher King. His spirit turned back to the past.

The night washerwoman continued: "Impurity is not evil. The day when the glance of God wandered on the Virgin Mary, He conceived the strange idea of saving humanity. Strange, this thought of purchasing a salvation... Calculations, sordid balances between a fault and a price to pay for it. Strange, and perhaps ungodly... That very day, He diverted the destiny He had previously fixed to humanity. So were the divine thoughts when He lowered his glance on his maidservant. And Jesus was called to existence..."

"Keep silent, bad woman!" Lancelot ordered. "You are insulting the son of God, the Saviour!"

"Oh, fiery knight, it was not my intention. I am now too old for blasphemy. That is a youthful pleasure, which blunts when ageing. God created me, not to serve him, but to support Him; as manure soil supports the plant and nourishes it."

While speaking, the night washerwoman continued to turn her linen. Lancelot realized that her eyes were becoming gradually red as the ember, and her face was changing. The infernal round approached. He felt, on the nape of his neck, the wet breath of the damned ghosts. The movement of the dark woman became convulsive, and a nasty smile appeared on her lips.

Suddenly, there was a terrible cry near the pond of Pas-du-Houx. A cry of inhuman despair, flying

up to the black stars in the sky. A non terrestrial cry, coming from very ancient times, through a monstrous throat.

Through only one movement of his arm, Lancelot had drawn his sword and sliced the shroud. He held a piece in his left hand, while the night washerwoman, holding the remainder between her fingers, fell to her knees.

On her devastated face, an expression of indescribable anguish had drawn her features and extinguished her glance. The black mass, curled up in the half-light, became fuzzy, dissolving in the night. The ghostly dance had ceased. Although their presence was still perceptible on the pond bank, the other Washerwomen of the Night were now invisible. Lancelot listened to the moans which were more and more vague. He dropped the piece of cloth which he still held in hand. It soaked into the wet ground, and disappeared. Lancelot slowly put his sword back in his belt, and slipped away.

On the banks of the Pas-du-Houx pond, and deep in my Breton skull, things are now becoming quiet.



## **The Potomac Celtic Festival – A Brush with Death, but Still up and kicking ....**

The U.S. ICDBL has had an information tent (tents) at the Potomac Celtic Festival since its very beginnings, so it was with sadness that we heard that it might be cancelled for 2007. But, it's on and we hope to be there again. This has always been a great place for U.S. ICDBL Members within a reasonable travel distance on the east coast to meet. The following is a press release sent this February:

*Now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year, the Potomac Celtic Festival has been more than just a cultural heritage festival; it has been a labor of love, run by a staff of volunteers, craftspeople, vendors, historians, performers, and many others. This year's festival, which will be held on Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup> on the historical grounds of Morven Park in Leesburg, Virginia (new site – not the equestrian center of past years) includes, music and dance from many of your local favourites, Celtic crafters, story telling, workshops, food and drink,*

*and all of the family-fun that has become synonymous with the Potomac Celtic Festival! Visit the web site at [www.pcfest.org](http://www.pcfest.org) for details and updates. Due to tremendous local support, this year we're pleased to celebrate the proud Celtic heritage of the United States of America.*



## **A Conference on Breton Language Theater**

"Peseurt dazont evit ar c'hoariva e Breizh" (What future for Breton language theater in Brittany) is the name of a workshop co-organized by the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro) and the association called C'hoariva. Created in May 2005, C'hoariva gathers the theater troupes throughout Brittany that perform in the Breton language to train actors and technical workers for theater, to support those producing plays to broaden the number offered in Breton, and to assist in the publication of texts of plays.

This all-day March 3, 2007, workshop includes a presentation of the current state of Breton language theater and the troupes active today, a discussion of the creation of theater in the Breton language and in other minority languages, and thoughts on how to promote and work with media to present theater more fully.

Work shops will include plenty of time for questions and discussion and involve a number of key figures in the world of Breton language theater and culture more generally: Goulc'han Kervella and Bob Simon from Strollad Ar Vro Bagan, Fanny Chauffin from Taol Kurun, Fred Müller from the Théâtre Alsacien, Jean Yves Gourves and Lionel Jaffres from Strollad Penn ar Bed, Bernez Kerdraon of SKED, Regional Council Member Jean-Pierre Thomin who has charge of Breton language matters, Breton language scholar Francis Favereau, and Morwena Audic who is on staff with C'hoariva.

For more details about this conference consult the website for the Cultural Institute of Brittany: [www.institutcultureldebretagne.org](http://www.institutcultureldebretagne.org)





## Pipers and Dancers of Brittany coming to the U.S. in March

### The Kevrenn Alre

From March 15 to 22, 2007 the New York City and Philadelphia areas will have the opportunity to see and hear the premier *bagad* and dance ensemble from Brittany, France – the **Kevrenn Alre**. Invited to New York City for the St. Patrick's Day Parade, the Kevrenn Alre will give a number of performances during a six-day stay in the Big Apple. This includes some stage time with the Chieftans at Carnegie Hall (March 17 – that collaboration made possible thanks to the work of U.S. ICDBL member Jan Zollars). The Kevrenn will give a performance at the French Institute Alliance Française in Manhattan, including the opportunity to sample some Breton products (March 16) and a fest noz at the Annex Club in Lower East Side Manhattan (March 18). They will also spend a night doing a Café Concert Tour in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (March 19). For the details check the website [www.bzh-ny.org](http://www.bzh-ny.org). This website will also give you information about the activities of the BZH New York Association, a very active group of Breton expatriates and non-Breton friends of Brittany, which is responsible for bringing the Kevrenn Alre to the U.S. for this adventure.

The Kevrenn Alre will make a 24-hour trip to Philadelphia for a concert & fest noz (March 20) and a Ben Franklin themed tour (March 21). The Kevrenn's strong desire to include Philadelphia on the trip is based on the fact that in 1776 Benjamin Franklin sailed from Philadelphia to France to raise troops for the American Revolution. He landed on December 4, 1776, in the port of Saint-Goustan in Auray (the home town for the Kevrenn Alre) to begin his successful relationship with France. It would take several days to do justice to all the Ben

Franklin sites in Philadelphia, and the Kevrenn Alre will have time to see just a few of them on their March 21 walking tour, but during their morning in the city, the Kevrenn Alre and the historical link between Auray and Philadelphia will be honored with a welcoming ceremony at Philadelphia's City Hall.

My relationship with the Kevrenn Alre and their first attempt to come to Philadelphia began in 1989. The Kevrenn had been invited to an international festival in Waynesville, North Carolina, for July 1990. Why not take a side trip to Philadelphia where plans were underway to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's death? Despite a flurry of letters and conversations with a number of weighty individuals and institutions in Philadelphia, and with the *Association France – États-Unis* preparing celebrations for Franklin in Brittany, a trip to Philadelphia was not to happen that year, although the Kevrenn Alre did travel to Jacksonville, Florida (a twin city for Nantes) and to Disney World in Orlando. They have made several trips to Louisiana for the Celtic Nations Festival, and to perform in New Orleans as an opening act for Ellis Marsalis and in a jam with Buddy Guy. The Kevrenn has also toured in Poland, Algeria, Spain, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Finland.

Eighteen years after the first efforts to bring the Kevrenn Alre to Philadelphia and one year after the celebration of Franklin's 300<sup>th</sup> birthday, we will finally welcome this remarkable ensemble to our city. This side trip from their longer stay in New York is made possible thanks to the work of a

small, but dedicated group of individuals (“Friends of Breton Music”) most of whom are U.S. ICDBL members. Some key financial support for the Philadelphia trip has been given by CCC CELT, a local inter-Celtic organization that has worked to build Celtic holdings in libraries in the Philadelphia area ([www.ccccelt.org](http://www.ccccelt.org)), the U.S. ICDBL, as well as a few individual donors. Several French organizations in the Philadelphia area have also been very supportive in getting the word out about the concert: the Alliance Française of Philadelphia, Philadelphie Accueil, a local branch of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), and UFE Philadelphie.

So what is the Kevrenn Alre? An introduction is in order. The word *kevrenn* (pronounced roughly like kev-wren) is the Breton word for a “section.” A *bagad* (bah-gahd) is a “band” or “troop” – an ensemble of bagpipes, “oboes,” and percussion unique to Brittany. Created in the early 1950s and modeled on the Scottish pipe bands, Highland style bagpipes are included as well as a drum section including a bass, tenors and snares. The addition of the *bombard*, a very loud and old member of the oboe family, is what gives this ensemble its unique sound. Able to reach a second octave and provide a staccato sound, the *bombard* adds a level of energy and freeness that allows the *bagadoù* (plural for *bagad*) of Brittany to present highly innovative music.

The *bagad* of the Kevrenn Alre has recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and has won six championships of Brittany, most recently in 2006. With firm roots in the traditional dance and song repertoire of their home region in the Morbihan of south-central Brittany, the Kevrenn Alre *bagad* is well known for its innovative arrangements and a flair for jazz. The group traveling to the U.S. will include 16 *bombard* players, 9 pipers, and 11 percussionists (the snare, tenor and bass found in Scottish bands as well as a number of other more exotic instruments). A singer will also be along to present some traditional songs which are very often at the root of the music arranged for performance by the *bagad* and other instrumental ensembles of Brittany.

The dance group traveling to the U.S. is composed of eight couples and is part of a larger ensemble of thirty dancers. They also participate in competitions, and like the *bagad*, are at the top of a

very competitive field – winning ten championships for Breton dance ensembles. For their stops in New York and Philadelphia they will show off traditional dances of Brittany and a few of the many costumes that are part of a rich heritage of Breton culture. And they will also serve as ambassadors for Brittany, to show just how alive and interesting Breton culture is to day – hopefully inspiring an economic and cultural synergy between the U.S. and Brittany for future projects.

To get more detailed information about the Kevrenn Alre explore their website: [www.kevrenn-alre.com](http://www.kevrenn-alre.com) (to enjoy this site a knowledge of French is helpful but not required)

You can also find more information about the Kevrenn Alre and their New York and Philadelphia events on the website for the BZH New York Association [www.bzh-ny.org](http://www.bzh-ny.org). This website is the work of Jacky Fauchoux, a member of both Breizh New York and the U.S. ICDBL, who has been key in helping link the events in New York and Philadelphia.

If you have questions, you are also welcome to contact Lois Kuter, 215 886-6361 (evenings/weekends) / [lkuter@fast.net](mailto:lkuter@fast.net).



## Auray in Travel Accounts of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Since we are on the topic of Auray it seemed interesting to pull out some descriptions from travel literature of various periods to give an idea of the countryside and especially the history of this region. As you will read, there are some varied opinions as to the beauty of the countryside and some discrepancies in historical facts.

**George Barrell, Jr. The Pedestrian in France and Switzerland. 1853.** (NY: N.P. Putnam & Co.)

Chapter XV – Nantes – Adieu to Brittany

[The author departs after a night in Pont Scorff]. ... Hennebon was the first place upon my route where wine could be obtained at any reasonable price.

The river Blavet is crossed by a suspension-bridge to reach Hennebon. Some shipping was in the stream, and immediately in front, as you cross the

bridge, is the town, its high wall beautifully ornamented with many flowers and vines.

Well-cultivated country to Landevant; - to Auray, desolate and dreary.

Met trains of horses; the head of each animal being tied to the tail of his leader.

Auray is in nowise remarkable.

Directed my steps towards Vannes, in company with a patissier.

We met in the road a number of young people dressed in their best clothes; their hats being ornamented with gay-colored ribbons. The girls were decked in the most showy style, and held little nosegays; with the *garçon d'honneur* possessed one nearly as big as himself. It was a wedding celebration; and my companions pointed out the bridegroom, who was then hurrying across the field to meet his intended bride. One of the party had a bagpipe; so ranging themselves in order of procession, the musician created a monotonous humming, relieved by dismal squeaking, and off they marched as merry as crickets.

We passed through a very thick and pretty collection of trees. Called the Robber's Wood. Ten or fifteen years since it was accounted very dangerous to be traversed, and even three years ago the *malle post* was stopped, and the escort of *gend'armes* attacked, one being killed and another wounded; but at present danger is not to be apprehended.

From this wood to Vannes the march was wonderfully fatiguing. The road was straight and white; the country was flat; there were no trees; the sun was hot; and Vannes appeared to recede at every step in its direction. On reaching it, I immediately engaged a seat in the diligence to leave that afternoon for Nantes, having being tired of the province, and thinking the sooner it was left the better. ...

**"Wanderings in Brittany" Harper's New Monthly Magazine, July 1875** (No. CCCII, Vol. LI)

Regretfully leaving Hennebont, I arrived at Auray, the centre of a district offering more to interest the archaeologist and historical student than any other

part of Brittany. Vannes, within eight or ten miles of Auray, is the chief town of the Morbihan, and the seat of a bishop. As its name indicates, the *Venetii*, the most considerable tribe of Celts of whom history gives us any account, also made that city their capital; but I found Auray, on the whole, a more central spot from which to visit the extraordinary Druidic remains, which, while common throughout Brittany, are more numerous and more important around the Sea of Morbihan or Gulf of Vannes than in any other part of Europe. Auray itself is a place of much interest. The old town is on the steep side of a hill two or three hundred feet high, and spreads across the river, where most especially are the narrowest streets and most ancient and picturesque groups of houses I saw in Brittany, with the exception of a few at Rennes and Morlaix.

Immediately on entering Auray one finds that three points of interest, three historic facts or legends, give an air to the place, invest it with a certain importance which it would otherwise lack, and render it a centre of attraction which draws the religious devotee or the tourist in increasing numbers from year to year. If the stranger calls for a carriage to see the lions, it is at once assumed that he desires to visit the Tomb of the Martyrs at the Chartreuse Convent, including the battle-field, close at hand, which decided the war of the succession, or the church and shrine of St. Anne, or the *menhirs* and *dolmens* of Carnac. In these three spots, within a radius of ten miles, are illustrated the pagan, chivalric, and modern history of Brittany, and the superstitious, religious, and races which have held sway from prehistoric times to the present day. ...

Attached to the convent of La Chartreuse is the Chapelle Expiatoire, which includes the Tomb of the Martyrs of Quiberon, as they are and may without injustice be called.

Our limits forbid more than the briefest outline of an episode which is at once one of the most chivalric and heroic, and one of the most painful and disgraceful, in the history of France. On the one side, devotion pure and elevated, even it to a degree misdirected; on the other, ill faith and cruelty without parallel in modern history.

On a southwesterly direction from Auray extends the long, low, desolate spit of sand called the

Peninsula of Quiberon, exposed to all the gales and melancholy mists which beat that gray Breton waste of land and sea. There, June 27, 1795, an English fleet landed a corps of émigrés composed of the best blood of France, spared thus far by the guillotine. They were commanded by D'Hervilly, and latterly by Sombreuil ... Sombreuil arrived with reinforcements toward the close of the ill-fated expedition, in season to take command, and sacrifice his life for a cause and an army already doomed. The chouans, or peasantry, flocked to the royal standard, and a force of ten or twelve thousand was soon collected, which would have swelled to a large army but for the incompetency of D'Hervilly. Much precious time was wasted, and when the royalists were at last ready to move, Hoche, the ablest general of the Revolution, appeared, and, by a series of masterly movements, hemmed in the invading army, and forced them back on Quiberon, where they were caught as in a trap. The failure of concerted movements, caused partially by lack of confidence in the royalist general, resulted in the defeat of the émigrés near Fort Penhièvre, after heroic efforts. Treachery did the rest. Fort Penhièvre, the key to Quiberon, was given up by traitors. A heavy gale was blowing when Hoche made the final attack, which drove the ill-fated royalists to the extremity of the peninsula, and, while some were able to escape to the English fleet, many perished, dashed against the rocks, in that fearful night when nature seemed to combine with man to increase the horrors of fratricidal war. Nothing was left but to surrender or fight to the last man. Sombreuil, who was in command after the fall of D'Hervilly and the dastardly flight of Puisaye, the next in command, advanced beyond the lines and held a parley with Hoche. A surrender was agreed upon.

Tallien, the member of the Assembly who had been detailed by the government to be present to give his sanction to the proceedings at the surrender expected, then returned to Paris with General Hoche, after having given his acquiescence to counsels of mercy. But there the courage of both these men gave way in face of rumors concerning their lukewarmness or infidelity to the cause. With a perfidy which is but partially palliated by the state of affairs, when to be suspected was to be condemned, they both abandoned the prisoners of Quiberon to the tender mercies of the Jacobins, Tallien even descending so low as to suppress an appeal he had made in favor of mercy, and to urge

the execution of the whole number. The Assembly sent orders that all over sixteen years of age should be shot. The executions were superintended by a tiger named Lamoine, and took place simultaneously at Vannes, Auray and Quiberon. Every day at noon for thirty days the unfortunate captives were taken out by thirties and by forties, ranged facing a deep trench and shot. ... The number murdered was upward of five thousand. ...

After the Restoration, in 1814, the curé of Auray collected the bones, until then left unburied as they had fallen in the trenches, and deposited them in a subterranean vault under the Chartreuse Convent at Auray, which he had purchased and made an asylum for deaf-mutes. Marshal Soult and other leading men also interested themselves in raising a subscription, and with the means thus obtained the Chapelle Expiatoire was built adjoining the convent, inclosing under its roof the tomb of the martyrs. The tomb is patterned after the Roman funeral type, and is very elegant and impressive. ... the attendant was a mute, and thus no unseemly words disturbed the solemnity of the place or the thoughts suggested. After lighting a lamp, he opened the doors of the tomb; an aperture two feet square was revealed in the pavement. Through this he lowered the light into the crypt below, and disclosed a sight which one can never forget to his dying day. There, in a confused heap, lay the bleached bones of over five thousand murdered men. In that vault lies the arraignment and condemnation of the French Revolution. I left the place the more sadly, because I could not help feeling, from all I have seen of the French people, that the fearful scenes of the Revolution have left no lasting or valuable impression; that the blood shed so profusely in those awful years was poured out in vain. .... [the author goes on to more briefly describe St. Anne d'Auray and an excursion to Belle Ile.]

**M. Bethman-Edwards. France of To-Day – A survey, Comaprative & Retrospective. Vol. II. 1894** (London: Rivington, Percival, & Co.)

Chapter 1 – Departments: Côtes du Nord, Morbihan, pp. 182-187

Between Rennes and Redon the scenery is very charming, and between Vannes and Auray, wastes are no longer the principal feature as in Arthur Young's time; nor do we find any longer "good houses of stone and slate without glass windows."

Auray now, as on the occasion of my visit in 1875, welcomes the stranger, and in the pleasant Hôtel du Pavillon prices remain precisely what they were then. I found, alas! My charming landlady gone to her rest, and the beautiful chamber-maid, of whom all tourists wrote with such rapture, replaced by others. Having grown old, the celebrated beauty of Auray is wise in retiring from the scene of former triumphs. Costume has not changed here any more than prices. But little else – always excepting the stone arrays of Carnac – has remained stationary.

The railway, opened some years since between Auray and Quiberon by way of Carnac, has of course, revolutionized this district; but I came quite unprepared for the tremendous changes awaiting me at both places. The line passes amid small enclosed fields and meadow, pine-woods, and bits of waste, the crops being buckwheat, cider apples, Indian corn, potatoes, and Lucerne. The land prepared for sowing did great credit to the farmer; the pretty little black and white Breton cattle making pictures of every meadow. Brilliant are the hues of pine and gold-brown marsh as we approach the sea.

Carnac is immensely improved since my first visit. It is now, indeed, a flourishing bourg of 2000 and odd souls, with a little hotel ideally clean, a museum, handsome schools, and airy, wholesome streets. The ancient church struck me as far more beautiful and impressive than before. As we waited for a carriage to take us back to Auray by way of the menhirs, it was instructive to watch the boys awaiting the signal for afternoon school. There must have been fifty at least, all well dressed in good stockings, sabots, cloth trousers, and short bloused. As they played about there was no roughness or quarrelling, no impertinent curiosity testified to strangers, and on the church clock striking one, all poured into school with the alacrity of willing scholars.

At last we succeeded in obtaining a carriage, and I soon began to realize the transformation of the last few years. What the speculative builder is doing in suburban England, the peasant is doing in Brittany, the monoliths of Mennec and Erdeven no longer rising from a wilderness as when first I saw them years ago.

From the pyramidal height of little Mont St. Michel I look down upon the same panorama I had seen

twenty years before, but how changed! Little farmhouses with white walls and gray roofs now dot the plain; bright green crops break the uniformity of the waste; everywhere are signs of domesticity and encroaching civilization. The plough and the harrow are at work, and if the scene is less impressive than of old, we can but rejoice in the signs of increased wellbeing.

Thanks to the French government, the prehistoric stones are safe. The builder, the husbandman, and the shepherd may metamorphose the landscape, but they cannot destroy its sublimity. The mysterious alleys of stone remain intact.

Two lads with bright intelligent faces, and speaking excellent French, led us to Kermario, a group of stones some distance from the majestic alleys of Mennec. In 1875 I described my little guide here as “wild as an Arab, and speaking only Breton.” The elder of these two boys had passed the examination of communal schools answering to our sixth standard, and proudly told us of his certificate. This, he said, would be very useful to him on being apprenticed out. His father was a labourer, earning a franc and a half a day, but possessed a bit of land and a cow or two.

“There was an English gentleman here not long ago,” he said, “who could understand me when I spoke Breton. He came from Wales.” I asked both lads several questions concerning England, its form of government, name of capital geographical position, and both answered promptly and correctly. [Bentham-Edwards is identified on the cover page of the book as “Officier de l’Instruction Publique de France” - thus his interest in schooling.]

Thus the rising generation of ancient Armorica is placed on a level with the rest of their countrymen, the loss of picturesqueness and romance being compensated by raised social and moral conditions. The almost savage-looking peasants of former days, long-haired, shaggy, quaintly costumed, are disappearing from even remote regions.

Continuing our journey to Quiberon by railway, route so tediously made by diligence twenty years ago, we find the pinewoods replaced by sea marsh, only broken here and there by cultivation, every field being evidently of recent date. Stumpy windmills and little villages perched above the level,

vary the monotony; beyond these we see glittering white sands and sea, deep and warm in hue as the lake of Capri.

The "solitary, unspeakably wild and poetic drive to Fort Penthièvre" I described in my former travels, is certainly not quite the same thing as a comfortable half-hour's railway journey. But it is pleasant on this Sunday afternoon to see gendarmes and their wives, townsfolk and peasants, all well dressed, taking advantage of the cheap return tickets from this little station. The approach to Quiberon – gravestone of the Vendean War! - is exquisitely beautiful, not less so the gracefully curved bay of smoothest, finest, silvery sand hemming a turquoise sea.

Until the construction of the railway a few years ago, Quiberon was a mere fishing village, occasionally visited by tourists on account of its historic interest. Here the ancient régime may be said to have yielded up the ghost, and its most determined opponents cannot resist the pathos of such a tragedy. But the place itself is no longer in keeping with associations so dreary. A lively, fashionable little watering-place has sprung up with mushroom swiftness. At the station you are beset by clamouring rivals of the big new hotels now grouped around the shore; villas and cottage ornés keep them company; a casino is not wanting; for two or three months in the year Quiberon has become a miniature Etretat!

October is at hand, and visitors are returning home, in spite of the glorious weather. On this 24th of September a brilliant sun shines in a cloudless sky, the temperature is that of July; nothing can be more delightful than this delicious little bay with its smooth sands. We have everything to ourselves. The villas are shut up; in a few days, one hotel after the other will follow suit, and the new Quiberon become inanimate as the old.

There can, however, be no doubt as to its future. A mere name in guidebooks of twenty years ago, the rapidly rising watering-place is too attractive not to become cosmopolitan. Sanitation and enforcement of cleanliness in the public ways are the necessary conditions of such development. The cholera epidemics of 1892 and 1893 will surely lead local authorities throughout Brittany to take precautionary measures. My only astonishment is that such outbreaks have not been twice as

widespread and twice as violent. Not only here, but throughout France sanitation is the last reform thought of. Cities are beautiful, abuses swept away, enormous strides made in other directions.

Some survivals, on the contrary, are welcome enough. After twenty years I found hotel charges the same at Auray. Nor have education and intercourse with the outer world detracted from the unsophisticated character of the people. The fête of a patronal saint occurred during my stay. Well-dressed peasant folk, here retaining the sober costume of former days, flocked by hundreds into the town. There was no noise or drunkenness, but until a late hour could be heard men's and boy's voices singing a low monotonous chant. I was still in Brittany, although no longer the Brittany of former days!

**Henry Blackburn. Artistic Travel in Normandy, Brittany, the Pyrenees, Spain and Algeria. 1895**  
(London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company), Page 113-114

#### The Pardon of Ste. Anne d'Auray

On the 24th of July we take up our quarters at the comfortable 'Hôtel Pavillon d'en Haut,' at Auray. Tomorrow is the great day of the Pardon of Ste. Anne, the occasion of the annual pilgrimage to the miraculous well, whither from far and near, on foot and on horseback, in carts and many strange road conveyances, and by excursion trains, come pilgrims to the shrine of Ste. Anne. Like the great annual gatherings at Guingamp and at Ste. Anne La Palue, the Pardon of Ste. Anne d'Auray attracts a strange medley of people, and thus it is that the ordinarily quiet little town, four miles from the shine, is crowded to overflowing.

The town of Auray, which contains about 5000 inhabitants, is finely situated above the river which bears its name. It was formerly a port of commercial importance, but its trade has drifted to Vannes and L'Orient, and it is best known to travelers as a starting-point for visiting the fields of Carnac and Locmariaker; also as a pleasant and healthy place of residence, where fishing and shooting can be obtained. There are no objects of great antiquity to be seen at Auray itself; its historic castle has disappeared, but there is much to interest the traveler in the old street with timbered houses, leading down to the river.



On a wide Place a few yards off, called the Belvédère, is a column to ascend to see the view, looking northward and eastward, in the direction of Vannes, over a wide stretch of cultivated land, pastures, and woods, dotted with white houses and church spires, one of which is Ste. Anne d'Auray. Immediately beneath is a rocky, precipitous path down to the river, with small vessels loading and unloading, and the grey roofs of toy-like houses and warehouses on the quay. A sudden cloud of smoke, which curls through the gorse and bushes which conceal the greater part of the river from view, comes from a little steamer which has arrived from Belle-Ile with the evening tide, and has brought another crowd of pilgrims for Ste. Anne. All is quiet and beautiful from this vantage-ground; the air is soft, and slowly waves the tree-tops in the avenue which skirts the Belvédère on its southern side; there is nothing to indicate the tumult of to-morrow. ... (pages 115 to 123 describe the pardon and its pilgrims)

**Eustace Reynolds-Ball. "In Brittany," Travel and Exploration – An Illustrated Monthly. December 1910** (Vol. IV, No. 24)

Auray itself is of no interest to the traveler, but offers good headquarters for visiting the famous shrine of St. Anne d'Auray and the Chartreuse d'Auray, and also for excursions to Carnac and Quiberon, now easily reached by a branch railway. The church is architecturally of no account, through the spire (245 feet) is fine. It is modern, and the style is pretentious. It is, however, the most venerated and most highly endowed shrine in Brittany, St. Anne being the patron saint of the Bretons. It contains many relics and a curious replica of the Scala Santa at Rome.

At the Chartreuse d'Auray a rather gruesome monument is shown, the ossuary containing the bones of the seven hundred members of the unfortunate Quiberon expedition of the Emigrés under English auspices in 1795, who were taken prisoners and shot by General Hoche. The guide lets down a lantern through an opening in the vault of the sepulchral chapel, and the curious can see the piles of skulls and bones heaped together pell mell.

The wild, gloomy and deserted peninsula of Quiberon which the tourist has probably already

visited, seems a fitting stage for the last scene of the Quiberon tragedy. A large enclosure bordered by trees is the actual place where the hapless survivors of this abortive expedition were massacred in cold blood. It is known as the Champs des Martyrs, and the expiatory chapel already mentioned is at the further end. ...

**Amy Oakley. Enchanted Brittany. 1930** (NY: The Century Co.)

Chapter XIX: Romantic Morbihan, pp. 375-377.

Auray is noted for three dissimilar events. The first was the decisive battle waged on September 29, 1364, which resulted in the death of Charles de Blois and the acclamation of Jean de Montfort as Jean V, Duke of Brittany. The second was the shooting, in July, 1795, of nine hundred and fifty two Royalist émigrés returning from England) who had disembarked on the peninsula of Quiberon under the protection of the English fleet and of Cadoudal, leader of the Chouans, but who were seized by the Revolutionists and executed at Auray. The place of the holocaust is known as the Martyrs' Field. The third event was, happily, not of a sanguinary nature.

In December, 1776, the American war-ship Reprisal, bound for Nantes, was unable to enter the Loire, owing to contrary winds. Aboard, chaffing at the delay, was Benjamin Franklin, who had been delegated by Congress to negotiate "a treaty of commerce and friendship with the Court of France." Having been at sea since October 26, the date of his sailing from Philadelphia, Franklin was all impatience to go ashore. Leaving the becalmed vessel in the bay of Quiberon, the American landed at Auray. Letters in his hand were written from the town of Auray, under date of December 4, telling that he would proceed to his destination, Nantes, by land. The quai at Auray bears his name.

It is a curious fact that many of the volunteers who came from France to Washington's aid in the darkest days of his country's need (and especially is this true of enlistments in the navy) were Bretons. La Fayette was not born in Brittany and yet it should be remembered in this connection that his mother was a Bretonne (this is authentic, though the incredulous may doubt the Breton origin of Sainte Anne). Marie Louis Julie de la Rivière was her name. She was the daughter of the Marquis de

la Rivière – scion of an ancient Breton family. Her son, born in Haute-Loire in 1757, was christened with a name which tells of his Breton connection – Marie Joseph Paul Roch Yves Gilbert Motier, Marquis de La Fayette. (To his own son, born in Paris in 1779, La Fayette gave the name George Washington.)

It was from Brest that Rochambeau embarked in 1780, accompanied by five thousand men. Twenty-five Bretons were members of the Sons of the Cincinnati; and over three hundred Breton officers served in the American navy. ... [the author goes on to describe the Pardon of Sainte-Anne-d'Auray].



## **A Breton in the American Revolution and Americans in Brittany in World War II**

The following article was first printed in Bro Nevez 51, August 1994. Newer U.S. ICDBL members will not have seen it and those who have received Bro Nevez for a long time will probably not remember reading it. Just as Benjamin Franklin is a media star of American history (certainly in Philadelphia), so Lafayette seems to be the one French participant in the American Revolution that sticks out in the history we are taught. The following article points out that there were many Bretons active in the American Revolution (especially in naval battles against the British), and that one Breton hero of the American Revolution, Colonel Armand, deserves more recognition than he gets. In this interesting article, Louis Bothorel ties the memory of Breton service in the American Revolution to memory of American service in the liberation of Brittany in 1944.

**“From the American War of Independence to Overlord”** by Louis Bothorel,  
translation by Lois Kuter

(this article originally appeared in *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique et Historique de l'arrondissement de Fougères*, vol. 31, 1993)

With just several months in between them, we will be commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Armand Tuffin de la Rouërie and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Overlord. [in 1994] Armand Tuffin de la Rouërie, hero of the American War of Independence, landed not far from Philadelphia at the beginning of 1777. At his own expense he formed the Armand Regiment which he put at the disposition of the Continental Army commanded by George Washington. He fought

under the name of “Colonel Armand.” He participated in numerous battles and became the friend of George Washington who recognized his services by conferring upon him the rank of General of the Army of the United States of America.

Today, a Breton-American committee has taken on the task of giving him the place in history that merits.

Why until now has he been forgotten in history? There are several reasons for that.

First, he did not leave America until the middle of 1784 after being assured that his companions in arms had been taken care of. In the meantime, La Fayette who returned to France right after the victory at Yorktown received the laurels. Ultimately the latter – who was also involved in the French Revolution – benefited so from such media coverage that in official histories he nearly eclipses the commander in chief of the French expeditionary forces, the Maréchal de Rochambeau.

A second reason explains Colonel Armand's relegation to the footnotes. Having returned to the la Rouërie chateau, he soon sympathized with and joined in the restoration movement in France which, little by little, was taking form. He was even imprisoned in the Bastille July 14, 1788, as a defender of Breton liberties when Minister Brienne illegally suppressed the Parliament of Brittany, thus attacking the Breton Constitution. At first favorable to new ideas, la Rouërie turned against the French Revolution when it started to drown the Rights of Man and human dignity.

In 1791 he founded the Breton Association (Association Bretonne) to defend the Rights and Freedoms of Brittany and of Bretons. The Breton Association developed quickly and widely. It would be at the origin of a large resistance movement in all of western France, from Poitou to Normandy. Strong from his American experience in the organization of armed struggle, he also knew how to call on some of the 25,000 Bretons who had participated in one form or another in the American War of Independence.

Dogged in his duty and constantly on the run in all kinds of weather, he died of pneumonia during the night of January 29 to 30, 1793. His body was sought by his enemies and found on February 25, dug up and decapitated. The desecrated head was thrown at the feet of his friends who helped him in the fight to show them the fate that awaited them. One can thus understand why General Armand de la Rouërie and

his great persistence would not get entered into the Pantheon of conformists.

150 years after la Rouërie, Operation Overlord would free Europe from Hitler's hegemony; on June 6, 1944, the American armada landed in Normandy. After difficult and deadly battles, Americans and Allies established their beachhead at Omaha Beach and several other beaches. For the second time in twenty-five years, the Boys came to put Europe back in order.

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, after the advance through Avranches, six divisions of the U.S. Army launched themselves into the Campaign of Brittany:

- The 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division (General Robert W. Grow) having passed through the Pontorson-Antrain zone made its way westward through central Brittany with its first mission dictated by General Patton to take Brest as quickly as possible.
- The 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (General Robert C. Macon) followed the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division at first and then moved rapidly to surround St. Malo.
- Task Force A (General Ludwell H. Earnest) moved more to the north and then along the coast also towards Brest.
- To the east of the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division (General John S. Wood) followed the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (General Donald A. Stroh), heading down towards Rennes and moving in the south from Nantes to Quimperlé.
- The 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (General Ira R. Wyche) moved towards Fougères and Vitre and then veered towards the east.

These six divisions covered all of Brittany. They belonged to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Corps commanded by General Troy H. Middleton and were part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army under the command of General George S. Patton. All along their route these six divisions battled with German troops, comforting the groups of armed resistants and the S.A.S.-F.F.L, and liberating towns and villages. Launched in an offensive that they conducted in accord with General Patton's directives, they ended up against the line of fortresses which constituted the ports of war. The General's "capture Brest" did not take effect until September 18. In parallel, the rapid advance of allied troops towards Germany and the taking of Anvers on September 4,

took attention away from the strategic interest of the Breton theater and its ports.

On August 1<sup>st</sup> with the advance through Avranches completed, the Antrain countryside was one of the first zones to be liberated. Of the three "combat commands" of the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, it was the C.C.A. under the command of General James Taylor, which entered St. Ouen de la Rouërie where the property of Colonel Armand rested.

Did those officers who came on August 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> to salute the memory of Colonel Armand belong to the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division?

Madame Ghislaine Juramie reports the testimony given by Madame François Barbier de Chalais who then inhabited the la Rouërie chateau: "At the end of the Second World War one of the most spectacular maneuvers to follow the longest day was the advance through Avranches. Patton's army surged everywhere on the roads of the Antrain countryside.

One afternoon a jeep appeared at the end of the alley which borders the large lawns in front of the la Rouërie chateau. American officers got out. The resident of the estate, Madame Barbier, welcomed them with the simplicity of great elegance which made her kindness so precious.

She herself recounts the dialogue:

- Here we are finally, Madame, at the Chateau of la Rouërie.
- Certainly sirs, and you are welcome here.
- Permit me to be surprised, madame, to have had so much trouble discovering it.
- This is not surprising. Our homes are hidden in the heart of our woods.
- It is not that, but my friends and I asked the first person we would approach where the home of Colonel Armand could be found.
- I doubt, sirs, that anyone could have told you.
- We then clarified: the home of the Marquis de la Rouërie. No one seemed to recognize it.
- This is not extraordinary. The history is an old one.
- But, madame, Mr. de la Rouërie is as well known in America as La Fayette!"

After this pilgrimage, the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division pounced on Brest like a lightening bolt, as if in response to the American actions of Colonel Armand at the head of his regiment of cavalry. Leaving Avranches on August 1<sup>st</sup>, it found itself at the foot of the Fortress of Brest on the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup>. ...

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