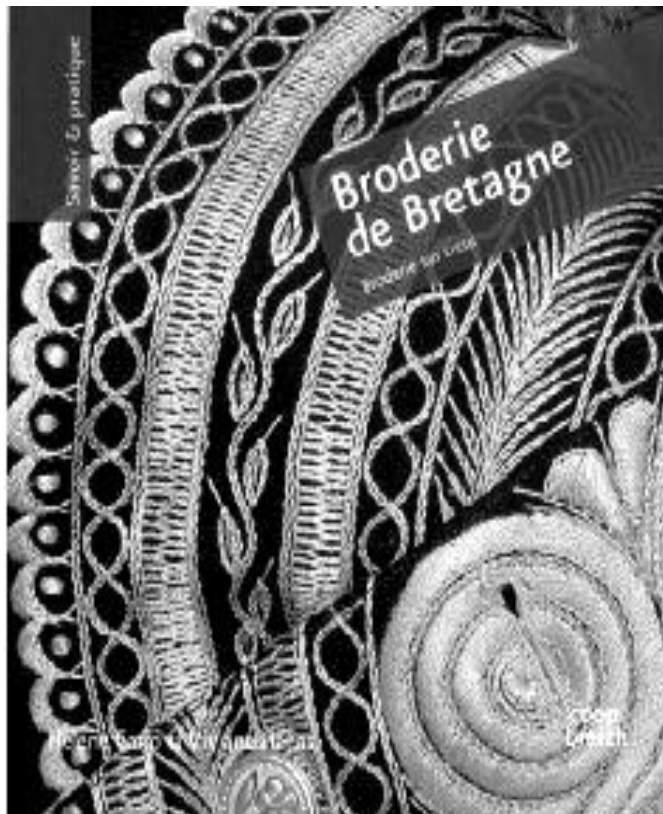


BRO NEVEZ

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



Viviane Helias – one of four new members
of the Order of the Ermine – see page 10

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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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 . . .

You find the cover page to *Broderie de Bretagne*, a book co-authored by Viviane Hélias, one of four new members inducted into the Order of the Ermine of Brittany this fall. Sadly, the black and white, rather fuzzy, image does not begin to convey the beauty of this richly developed art in Brittany. See pages 10 & 13-14.

EDITORIAL

As you will notice the "November" issue of Bro Nevez is reaching you at the very end of November – and for some of you December! Please be assured that your editor has been diligently at work on this issue for quite a while, but there is much to report from Brittany. It can take a while to gather information from the variety of sources I use – and that includes the internet more and more, as well as

many newsletters and magazines we exchange for Bro Nevez, or to which I subscribe.

I am very pleased to have in the issue the usual contribution for Jean-Pierre Le Mat (his series "Deep Inside a Breton Skull") which always offers much food for thought. Kevin Rottet has also offered us a meaty book review focused on orthography of the Breton language. And Natalie Novik, just back from a trip to Brittany, has contributed a wealth of observations and notes on events, music CDs and performances, books, and museum exhibits.

My thanks to all who contribute a different voice and interesting ideas to the pages of Bro Nevez.

Lois Kuter



A New School Year for the Breton Language

The following information is drawn primarily from the Ofis ar Brezhoneg's Observatoire de la langue bretonne report: Situation de l'enseignement bilingue en Bretagne en 2008 which is accessible via their website :www.ofis-bzh.org. Numbers for that report were gathered from Diwan Breizh, Div Yezh Breizh and Dihun Briezh. – Lois Kuter

For the 2008 school year 12,287 students were enrolled in Diwan and bilingual programs of the public and Catholic school systems from pre-school through high school. This represents a growth of 4.66% from 2007 – the weakest increase in numbers since 1981. These classes are found at 377 sites in 126 communes of Brittany – representing 8.4% of communes. This represents just 1.38% of students in Brittany's schools.

Diwan immersion schools reached over 3,000 students with 3,030 in its classes (46 of which are at the Diwan school in Paris). This represents a 2.12% increase from 2007. Diwan opened two new preschools in La Mézière (Ile-et-Vilaine) and Saint Renan (Finistère). And a new middle school – Skolaj Liger-Atlantel – was opened in Saint Herblain (near Nantes) to serve students moving up from elementary schools in the Loire-Atlantique and Ile-et-Vilaine departments. Diwan has preschool classes at 36 sites (totaling 969 children), elementary school classes at 35 sites (with 1,165 students), 6 middle schools (665 students), and 1 high school in Carhaix (231 students).

Public school bilingual classes reached over 5,000 students this year with a total of 5,016 – an 8.17% increase. Two new preschools were opened in Pleyber-Christ (Finistère) and Ploeren (Morbihan). Two middle school classes were opened in Carhaix (Finistère) and Saint-Brieuc (Cotes d'Armor). The public bilingual program has pre-school classes at 72 sites (2,362 children), elementary school classes at 67 sites (2,121 children), middle school classes at 16 sites (123 students), and high school classes at 6 sites (123 students).

The **Catholic schools** have a total of 4,241 students – a 2.54% increase in numbers. For the first time since beginning of bilingual programs in the Catholic schools, no new classes were opened for the school year. Even worse, a school closing in Lorient meant the loss of bilingual programming for 50 preschoolers there. Catholic bilingual programs are found at 60 sites for pre-schoolers (1,800 children), 60 sites for elementary school students (1,987 children), 16 sites for middle school classes (427 students) and just one site for high school classes in Lesneven (with 27 students).

While Breton language programs continue to expand in the schools, it is painfully slow and not up to the demands of parents. Both the public and Catholic schools fail to appoint teachers even when there is a clear demand and sufficient numbers of enrollees to merit such an appointment. For the public schools the Merville school is a case in point where over 50 children are ready and waiting for a bilingual program and only 28 are able to get one because teachers have not been appointed.

Another problem encountered especially by the Diwan schools is the location of building space for schools. This can delay the opening of a new class and often requires hands-on engagement by parents to insure classrooms are up to par for the opening day of classes. As numbers expand, new facilities must be found and these are often very difficult to locate or costly to renovate.

While there is good news as the school year opens once again with increased numbers, obstacles to growth remain. Financing for Diwan remains a big challenge where new schools do not come under contracts for five years and where locating and rehabbing classrooms can quickly add up in costs. For the public and Catholic bilingual programs resistance on the part of school officials to approve new class openings and the appointment of teachers seems to be an ongoing issue. The demand for bilingual schooling grows much faster than the possibilities to enroll one's child in a program.

And Breton Classes for Adults

This is an area that also continues to see growth and an estimated 3,000 adults are enrolled in some kind of class whether it be a weekly evening class or more intensive training program. There are over 200 sites for evening classes in 174 different communes of Brittany. This is a growth from 70 sites in 2006 and 150 in 2007. A campaign to get more adults learning and perfecting Breton was launched this fall with posters, radio spots, flyers and mailings in municipal magazines. While it's easiest to learn a language when very young, it's never too late.

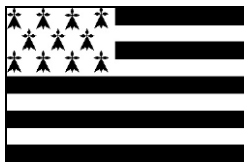
One organization that has been at the heart of adult education for many years is **Skol Ober**, offering correspondence classes for Breton for over 75 years. With e-mail the exchange today, it is easier than ever to do lessons by correspondence, allowing those who do not have easy access to classes – whether they be adults, high school or college students – the chance to work with a teacher. The cost is minimal and students work at their own pace. Who knows, it may be possible to find a teacher able and willing to work through English instead of taking the torturous route through French. For more information check out the website: www.skolober.com.

10,000 Demonstrators in Nantes for the Defense of Breton Identity, Culture, and Language, and for a Reunified Brittany

On September 20, 2008, an estimated 10,000 people marched in Nantes to demand the administrative reunification of Brittany – reattaching the department of Loire-Atlantique to the official region of Brittany – the right to free cultural expression and official status for the Breton language. These are not new demands, but one issue in particular was important in drawing people to this demonstration. This was a project for laws to control the employment of amateur performers (musicians, singers, bands, theater groups, choirs, etc.) which would have impacted thousands of performers and hundreds of festivals and events in Brittany (see Bro Nevez 104, August 2008). This project was scuttled by the Ministry of Culture before the demonstration, but the strong turn-out showed that Bretons feel very strongly about the importance of showing their opposition to such actions that would have a devastating effect on cultural expression. Bagads – who would have been hard hit by the new labor laws – were strongly present for the demonstration and mini-festival which followed. As were a number of Brittany's best known musicians – Alan Stivell, Gilles Servat, Pascal Lamour, Nolwenn Korbell, and Tri Yann. These professional musicians who would presumably be protected by the new laws had plenty to say about how they would in fact stifle the growth of Breton culture.

It was not by accident that Nantes, the historic capital of Brittany, was chosen for the "Fesimanif" since the issue of reunification of Brittany is an ongoing demand. The President of the General Council of Loire-Atlantique, Patrick Mareschal, was on hand to support the demonstration as were the Regional Council of Brittany's President, Jean-Yves Le Drian, and the Deputy Mayor for Culture of Nantes, Jean Louis Jossic. Patrick Malrieu, President of the Cultural Council of Brittany was also a speaker and the list of representatives from the major cultural institutions of Brittany who supported and joined the demonstration is a long one.

A strong theme in the speeches and demonstrators' banners was also the need to insure the future for the Breton language.



Breton Language Radios of Brittany form a Network

Press release, October 11, 2008, from Brudañ ha Skignañ (my translation and slight abbreviation – Lois Kuter)

The association Brudañ ha Skignañ has as its objective to work to develop exchanges and co-productions of radio programs in the Breton language, while also producing programs itself – notably, news journals and magazines.

Since last year, four radios have been in this network and meet regularly to optimize radio offerings and put resources to common use: Radio Kreiz Breizh, Radio Bro-Gwened, Radio Kerne, and Arvorig FM.

Brudañ ha Skignañ plays a role in organizing common work. Members of the association must be radios with at least half of their programming (other than music) in the Breton language. It is administered by an administrative council with two representatives from each member radio. Officers elected in July 2008 are as follows:

Jean-Claude Le Gouaille, President
(President of Arvorig FM)
Yannig Audran, Vice-President
(Member of Radio Bro Gwened)
Youenn Rosmorduc, Secretary
(Secretary of Radio Kerne)
Jean-Pierre Deredel, Treasurer
(President of Radio Kreiz Breizh)

There has been an exchange of programming for a long time, but in the last few months the four radios have expressed the desire to go much further to provide a better news service for Breton speaking listeners. Our primary objective for 2008 to create a news journal in Breton has been realized; a team of journalists produces a daily program called Keleier ar Vro. The first broadcast [10 minutes] takes place at 5:30 pm on Monday through Friday, simultaneously on all four radio stations. It is also rebroadcast in the evening depending on the program schedule for each station.

Keleier ar Vro – A Daily News Journal

Up until now, none of the radios had the opportunity to produce a news journal on the regional level. The goal is to fill this gap by combining efforts. Each radio station will have among its staff a core of journalists who have the task of gathering local news. In this way the news will come from the three departments of Lower Brittany, to be aired and completed with "regional" news to make up a daily broadcast which should be of interest to all Breton speakers no matter where they live.

An Innovative Architecture for Networking

The radio stations of the “pays” form the foundation of the network. Our process is not to create uniformity in the radio stations – quite the contrary! The chosen way of functioning frees radios from the classic pyramid and centralized models. It relies on local radios which create their programming and are mutually enriched through their experience and skills. Thus, the work on news initiated this year draws on journalists based at each of the four radios; they are in charge of collecting news from their zone and then putting it into a collective airing. The reports that come from this will show the diversity of events and reflect the richness of the language spoken in the different “pays” of Lower Brittany.

This project has the advantage of allowing the development of a spirit of networking for each radio. In its decentralized construction, the innovative character of this news journal allows listeners to have a more complete vision of events - not only those listeners who live in Lower Brittany but also those who capture it via internet.

Using the internet site <http://radio.stalig.com> it is possible to tap in live to programs on the four radios anywhere in the world.

A Project for a Magazine

In the coming weeks, program offerings should be further enriched thanks to a new magazine which you will hear about once details are completed for production, format and airing.

Brudañ ha Skignañ is supported by the Region of Brittany, the General Council of Finistère, the General Council of Morbihan, and the General Council of Côtes d’Armor.

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Contest for Haiku in Breton

For the 7th year a contest for the best haiku poem in the Breton language has been launched by the association Taol-Kurun in Qumperlé.

While any theme can be used for this short poem, “an dorn” (the word “hand”) has been chosen to set poets on a common track. There are categories for children and adults and a maximum of three poems can be submitted. There is a contest for French and Gallo haiku as well as Breton. Your poem should be sent before January 2009 to be in the running (taolkurun@laposte.net). The winners will be announced at the January 2009 Taol Kurun festival and the 30 best haiku will be published.

For more information and to see examples of haiku submitted in the past, consult the webstie for Taol Kurun: <http://taolkurun.free.fr>.

Nobel Prize for Literature 2008 goes to a Breton

While American newspapers identify Jean-Marie Le Clézio as a “French writer,” he is in fact a world traveler with strong family roots in Brittany. Both his father and his mother’s family were Breton – families that immigrated to Mauritius in the 18th century. Jean-Marie Le Clézio was born in Nice in 1940 and moved with his family as a child to Nigeria where his father (a British citizen) was a doctor. He grew up bilingual in French and English, did university studies in England and France, and lived in Thailand, Mexico, South Korea and Panama as well as Africa. As a child he spent summers in Brittany, and today spends time in Poullan-sur-Mer near Douarnenez where he has a home. He is a citizen of France but also Mauritius. He is currently a professor of French at the University of Albuquerque.

His 40-some books often have as their theme dispossessed, displaced and native peoples and their destruction by colonialism and dominant Western culture and technology. His book *Révolution* published in 2003 has as its main character a figure whose life is somewhat parallel to his own.

While French President Nicolas Sarkozy claimed the Nobel Prize for Literature was “an honor for France, the French language, and the French-speaking world,” Le Clézio has very clearly identified himself as a Breton. He is clearly a writer that is a citizen of the world and advocate for all peoples who have been victims of economic, political, and cultural domination.

Reunification of Brittany: The Ongoing Demand to Put Loire-Atlantique Back Into Brittany

Lois Kuter

There are a number of treaties in Breton history between Brittany and France that clearly identify Nantes and the region around it - now called the Department of Loire-Atlantique - as an integral part of Brittany. Indeed, Nantes was the capital. Even when in 1790 the "provinces" of France were replaced by "departments" (Brittany would be made up of five) the historical eastern frontier line between France and southeastern Brittany remained the eastern border of Loire-Atlantique.

It was in 1941 by means of a decree of the Vichy government on June 30th that this department (then called Loire-Inférieure) was cut out of the "Region" called Brittany. In successive government plans for regionalization (1955, 1972 and 1982) this exclusion of Loire-Atlantique would be stubbornly maintained despite Breton protests.

If you go to Wikipedia and find "Loire-Atlantique" here is what you will read under the paragraph on "History": "Loire-Atlantique is one of the original 83 departments created during the French Revolution on March 4, 1790. Originally, it was named Loire-Inférieure, but its name was changed in 1957 to Loire-Atlantique. The area was originally part of Brittany, and contains what many people still consider to be Brittany's capital, Nantes. This department was separated from Brittany in 1941 by the Vichy government. There is a popular campaign to have it reintegrated in Brittany."

This "popular campaign" definitely continues. In 2001 both the General Council of the Department of Loire-Atlantique and the Regional Council of Brittany voted for the return of this department to Brittany. Surveys taken of the population of this area show an overwhelming desire on the part of the population for reunification of Brittany. And while Bretons who live and have always lived in this department know they are Breton they fear that children will grow up influenced by government campaigns to create a "Pays de la Loire" identity. The history lessons that so clearly show the importance of Nantes and this region in *Breton* history are not featured in French history text books.

There are many who are speaking out, and this is not an issue that will go away. For more information visit the website www.cuab.org (Comité pour la unité administrative de la Bretagne).



La mairie de La Remaudière en Loire-Atlantique.

Being Breton in the Loire-Atlantique: Alan Coraud Speaks Out

Alan Coraud has never hesitated to identify himself as a Breton and continues to fight for the recognition that the department of the Loire-Atlantique is in Brittany and should be in Brittany administratively. With his wife, Luce, he runs an advertising agency specializing in tourism and he also manages a small vineyard to produce Muscadet, a wine unique to the Nantes region. Thus, a Breton wine.

Alan Coraud was elected the Mayor of the village of La Remaudière (to the east of Nantes) on March 2008 where one of his first acts was to hoist a Breton flag in front of the Mayor's Office, with the support of the Municipal Council who voted 14 to 1 for the flag. He made news headlines in early November by politely refusing an invitation to the mayors in the Loire-Atlantique from the Senators of this department for a reception in Paris. His response to the invitation? He stated to begin "Trugarez med n'eo ket possubl evidon rag me e vin e staj brezhoneg" (which he translated into French, and which means "Thank you, but I must take a Breton class."). This was to show that in Loire-Atlantique there is at least one mayor who is unhappy with the French Senate's work to keep recognition of regional languages out of the French Constitution.

The following interview (liberally translated from French and slightly condensed) was made during my last trip to Brittany the fall of 2007. It will show how efforts to repackage Muscadet from a Breton wine to a wine of the Loire Valley has both a demoralizing effect on those proud of their Breton identity and a negative economic impact on wine-makers.

Interview with Alan Coraud, September 2007

Lois Kuter – Are there Breton wines?

Alan Coraud – The Nantes vineyards have a very long history back to the creation of the Breton nation before King Nominoë. Brittany as made up of Breton tribes and those of Lower Brittany came to purchase wine from the Nantes vineyards. After the battle of Ballon (845) when Brittany became a true nation with its current borders, including the areas of Rennes and Nantes, wine of the Nantes region was the wine of Brittany. Thus there's a long history to wine-making in Brittany in the Nantes country. Up until the 1950s wine was also made on the peninsulas of Guerande and Sizun, south of Vannes, but one had to be brave to drink those.

LK – Can you talk about muscadet, which is a wine one can find in the U.S.

AC – Actually one has been able to find muscadet all over the world for a long time now – in the U.S. and Japan just to name the most distant from Brittany. The name muscadet appeared from the 17th century on. It is less ancient than Bordeaux. What has made muscadet a success for the Nantes vineyards is the Breton maritime tradition, since the exportation to maritime neighbors like the United Kingdom, Netherlands and Scandinavia was through the ports of Nantes and Saint Nazaire. Well before “muscadet” existed there was exportation of wines from Nantes in the 14th through 16th centuries.

The origin of the name muscadet comes from Bourgogne. The melon de Borgogne would become the melon of Brittany when it was established in the vineyards of Nantes. The name muscadet only came into effect in the 17th century. England has been the primary market for muscadet. It is a dry white wine that goes well with fish, shellfish ... But it is also a wine that can age and when its character changes it is well matched to other foods. Nantes with its muscadet has an image much like the city of Bordeaux has for its wine.

LK – Please comment on the issue of Loire-Atlantique and its place in Brittany.

AC – Brittany is a country divided into nine regions – in the past, nine bishoprics with their cathedrals. Nantes was the capital of Brittany. Alan Barbetorte, the Breton king who chased the Vikings and the Franks from Brittany, established Nantes as the capital in 925. He was in fact not king, but Duke. Nantes remained the capital of Brittany up until annexation to France after the 1532 treaty – a treaty which has no international validity since the Bretons never signed it.

People of Nantes were very patriotic to Brittany, and because of that the kings of France made Rennes the capital of Brittany where the population was more pro-France. Brittany was autonomous but definitely under submission to France. Nantes was the capital of Brittany with sovereignty while Rennes was the capital of Brittany under submission.

Loire-Atlantique is a name that refers to the river Loire that becomes the Atlantic. The river becomes the ocean in Brittany, and low and high tides are felt on the Loire up to the city of Ancenis on the border of Brittany and France – the eastern border of our country. Loire-Atlantique is the name of the department. The “department” comes from the idea of dividing a territory [France] into ninety pieces. This must be something that would appear to Americans and all free people of the world as aberrant – to divide ancient provinces into administrative blocks. But it's like that in France. In 1941 Petain under the Third Reich and collaborating France decided to separate Loire-Atlantique from Brittany – to divide and conquer was a well known method to weaken Brittany.

After that, every French government since the Liberation from the Nazis to the current day has continued that strategy, and when the French state implemented regionalization, Brittany no longer had the Pays Nantais [“circonscriptions d'action régionale” in 1955 and other actions in 1972 and 1982].

To continue to call the region “Brittany” as such without the Nantes pays is dishonest. Since 1972 and regionalization everything has been done by the French state to insure that any “Breton” image for the Nantes area is eliminated. Including for wine. Those professional organizations which are closely aligned with the state have tried to eliminate a Breton image for wines of Nantes. Muscadet is promoted through the CIVN (Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins de Nantes), but this organization has been incorporated into Inter-Loire (Interprofession des Vins de Loire) which includes Anjou, Orléans and Touraine. The Val de Loire is very much the birthplace of the kings of France and the symbol of the fleur de lys, with all the châteaux of the Loire representing French royalty. It is an intellectual swindle to assimilate the Breton wines of the Nantes country into the Loire Valley. Thus today muscadet has become a “wine of the Loire Valley.” Other “vins du pays” (wines that are not registered and thus a little less prestigious) have also changed names to indicate they are of the Loire Valley.

In 1970 the professional group Viticole Nantais asked Paris for the authorization to call the wines of the Nantes area “wines of the Marches de Bretagne.” Historically during several centuries when Brittany was independent the “marches” were border areas of some twenty kilometers south or east of the border which were claimed by both France and Brittany. For wines of Nantes, this is a

wrong title since Nantes is not in the border zones, but we were still happy to get this name because at least the notion of "Brittany" was in the title.

Afterwards, the French state required us to add "Vins du pays du jardin de France" before noting "Marches de Bretagne." The paranoiac hysteria in regards to Brittany is so strong that to let just the notion of "Brittany" appear on a bottle of wine was considered a nationalist gesture. And now with this new law France imposes "Vin du pays du Val de Loire," eliminating "Jardin de France" as well as "Marches de Bretagne." One is required to put "Val de Loire" on the bottle.

They profit from the ignorance of wine makers who have not been taught the history of their own Nantes country, who confuse the symbols – the ermine of Brittany and the fleur de lys of France. And we come to the stupidity of having the fleur de lys on bottles of wine from Nantes. It would be as if wines from the Alsace would be required to be labeled "Wines of the east [of France]" and one would use a symbol that had nothing to do with Alsace.

It's a loss of identity purposely programmed. Nantes wines are largely exported. Twenty years ago 45% of muscadet was consumed by Bretons. At least 25% to 35% was exported. Thus it is a wine that has never been for the French market. In contrast, wines of the Loire Valley, like the Anjou, which was never exported is consumed everywhere in France. French people want French wines – Anjou, Touraine, Bordeaux, Bourgogne, Champagne – but they have never been interested in Breton wines. Fortunately we have the English, Dutch, Scandinavians, and more recently more distant countries like the U.S. or Japan who buy our wine. For that reason being named "Wines of the Loire Valley" is an economic catastrophe for us because we lose our Breton identity and international recognition. The English would not understand muscadet labeled "Loire Valley." For them it is the wine of their neighbor and friend ("cousin"), the Bretons. One cannot forget that in French it is Grande Bretagne (Great Britain) and Bretagne for us (Brittany).

Thus there are a lot of similarities and friendships between people. Celtic identity is also important as a label for exporting, including for the U.S. since there are 100 million Celts all over the world. For those of us in "tribal marketing," identity of a country is very important.

Thus for fifteen years one has tried to eliminate the Breton image of wines from Nantes, and one has lost a market. The initiative made to identify Nantes wines with the Loire Valley and thus create a French market has been a failure. And, in addition we have lost out in the export market. And Bretons drink much less muscadet because they no longer identify it as being from their country.

Before, on Sunday mornings the French drank and still drink what is called the "petit jaune" – the pastis – it's French

tradition. In Brittany the tradition was to drink a glass of muscadet in the café after church. One would uncork a very good bottle on Sunday – muscadet sur lie - which was top of the line. But Bretons more and more drink dry white French wines because, for them, there is no longer that identification of muscadet with their Breton identity. This is thus a big catastrophe for Nantes wine makers as Breton and export markets both decline.



Four New Members of Brittany's Order of the Ermine

Lois Kuter

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

The following information (in Breton and with my translation from the French) about this year's inductees comes from *Sterenn*, the newsletter of Skol Uhel ar Vro (No. 18, 2008). This will briefly introduce you to four very interesting people of Brittany. For information on many of the other 86 individuals inducted into the Order of the Ermine since 1972 consult the Skol Uhel ar Vro website: www.culture-bretagne.org



Roger ABJEAN

Bet ganet e 1925 e Plouider, e tizolo ar galleg da seizh vloaz er skol. Goude studioù e skolaj Lesneven, ez a tre kloerdi bras Kemper e 1944. D'ar mare-se eo e tesk da vat ar sonerezh. Anvet eo da veleg e 1949 evit ur bloaz en enez Sun. Frommet eo gant

mouez ar besketerien a gan kanaouennoù da vezañ kanet da zeiz Gwener ar Groaz en iliz e lec'h mont da besketa.

Setu divizet e dazont : e-pad dek vloaz e Landivizio, pemp-war'n-ugent e Montroulez ha ugent e Karanteg e vo gouestlet e vuhez da ziorrenn sonerezh Breizh e servij an Iliz.

Laz-kanañ Kanerien Bro Leon bet krouet gantañ a dap ar priz kentañ e kenstrivadeg broadel al lazoù-kanañ e Pariz. Deuet fall eo ouzhpennañ kanaouennoù nann-relijiel ha kollet gantañ e ditl a vestr ar chapel. Ne vern dezhañ hag ur wech staliet e Montroulez e ro lañs d'ul laz-kanañ nevez, Kanerien Sant Vaze. Lakaat ra da ganañ kantikoù ha kanaouennoù Breizh met ivez oberennoù klassel : tapet e vez gant al laz-kanañ priz kentañ kenstrivadeg etrevroadel ar gwellañ enrolladur e 1964 a drugarez d'ar bladenn Judas Macchabée gant Haëndel. En hevelep bloaz e sav gant Georges Le Coz kentañ kor gwazed Breizh. Da heul reolennoù liderezh nevez an Iliz e sav un oferenn e brezhoneg penn da benn, *Oferenn war gan*. Laz-kanañ Bro-Leon bet krouet gant skoazell Georges Le Coz e 1968, a zigor kentañ gouel abati ar Releg e 1971, ret eo gouzout ez eo Roger Abjean kizidikaet ivez gant dazont ar vein kozh. A bouez bras eo bet e gejadenn gant Eliane Pronost. E-pad meur a vloaz e kanont gant Pevarad Bro Leon ha d'ar mare-se eo e vo graet dibaouez sonadegoù, enrolladoù, pladennoù (ouzhpenn 60) hag embannadurioù. E 1985 ez a d'ober war-dro parrez Karanteg, d'ar mare-se e vez krouet gantañ Kanerien Sant Karanteg.

Graet eo bet marc'heg al Lejion a Enor e 2005.

Roger Abjean (English translation)

Born in 1925 in Plouider, he only discovered French at the age of 7 years. After studies in Lesneven, he entered the great seminary of Quimper where he obtained a solid musical training. Joining the priesthood in 1949 he was named for a year to the Island of Sein (Enez Sun). He discovered there a remarkable written song repertoire for the islanders who sang it on Good Friday, a day when no one went off to sea.

His future was determined: ten years in Landivisiou, twenty-five in Morlaix, twenty in Carantec, he would be a pioneer in the renaissance of Breton music put to the service of the Church.

In Landivisiau he created the choral group Kanerien Bro Leon which won the first prize at a national contest of choirs in Paris. His openness to profane music was not viewed well and he lost title as preceptor. But that did not hold him back and he created a new choir in Morlaix, Kanerien Sant Vaze. He arranged numerous cantiques (hymns) and Breton songs, but was also open to a classical sound: the choir won the first prize in the international contest for the best arrangement in 1964 with Judas Maccabeus by Handel. That same year he created the first men's choir with Georges Le Coz. Encouraged by

Catholic liturgical reform, he composed a mass entirely in Breton, *Oferenn war gan*. The Ensemble Choral de Leon, created in 1968 with Georges Le Coz, opened the first festival of Relecq in 1971, since Roger Abjean was also conscious of architectural patrimony. His meeting with Eliane Pronost was decisive. He accompanied her with the Quatour de Leon for many years with concerts, more than 60 recordings, and publications. His last post in 1985 led him to Carantec where he created the choir Kanerien Sant Karanteg.

He was made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 2005.



Gweltaz AR FUR

Photo © Bernard Galeron)

Bet ganet eo d'ar 25 a viz Ebrel 1950 en Henbont. Divroet da Metz gant e familh e-pad ar bloaz 1964 e verz neuze pegen pouezus eo Breizh evitañ hag e tiviz kemer perzh er stourm politikel o sevel kanaouennoù, peurgetket en abeg d'ar c'hudennoù sokial a ra o reuz en e gêr genidik.

A boan ugent vloaz eo pa vez moulet e bladennoù 45 T kentañ e tiez Kelenn ha Droug ha pa bign war al leurenn er gouelioù pe er manifestadegoù e-lec'h ma klevet e ganaouenn vrudet kentañ *Le sort du paysan français*.

Ur bladenn hir kentañ, *Chants celtiques moulet* e 1973 heuliet gant *Bonedoù ruz* e 1975 hag e teu da vezañ unan eus kanerien Breizh brudet evit o stourm politikel ha sevenadurel. E 1976 e krog mare ar sonadegoù a-dreuz ar bed : Alamagn, Iwerzhon, Kebek.

Kengrouer ar skolioù Diwan eo e 1977 ha kadoriad ar gevredigezh betek 1980. Ar ganaouenn *Didostait Bugale* enrollet war ur bladenn evit arc'hantaouiñ ar gevredigezh a vo adkemeret kalz diwezhatoc'h gant Dan ar Bras evit abadenn an Eurovision. Skrivañ a ra ivez *Frankiz ar Vretoned* e 1978, unan eus kannaoen ar bladenn bet graet evit skoazellañ ar Vretoned toull-bac'het.

Ur c'harg nevez a krog e 1980 pa grou ar stal levrioù *Ar Bed Keltiek* e Kemper, heuliet gant un eil stal e Brest e 1984. D'ar mare-se eo e tiviz reiñ un harz d'e vicher a ganer evit ober gwelloc'h e labour brudañ sonerezh Breizh. Engouestlet eo ivez e buhez sevenadurel Breizh o vezañ teñzorer *C'hoariva Kernev* hag ezel eus *Kreizenn Rannvro al Levrioù e Breizh*.

Tro en deus bet meur a wech da bignat en dro war al leurenn evit kanañ er bloavezioù tremenet, ar wech diwezhañ e oa evit gouel 30vet deiz ha bloaz Diwan e-lec'h m'en deus kanet daou ditl nevez.

Gweltaz ar Fur (English translation)

Gweltaz ar Fur was born April 25, 1950, in Hennebont. While an emigrant in Metz with his family for a year in 1964 he became conscious of his Breton identity and became politically engaged through his first militant song texts, which targeted especially the social situation in his home town.

He was barely 20 when he produced his first 45 rpm records with Kelenn and Droug and began to sing in public at festivals and demonstrations where one heard his first hit *Le sort du paysan français*.

In 1973 he recorded his first album, *Chants celtiques*, with a second in 1975, *Bonedoù Ruz*. He was a part of the small group of singers which symbolized the Breton cultural and political fight. A period of tours around the world thus commenced in 1976: Germany, Ireland, Quebec. In 1977 he was a co-founder of Diwan and served as its president until 1980. The song *Didostait Bugale* recorded on a 45 rpm to profit Diwan was later taken up by Dan ar Braz for the Eurovision song contest. In 1978 Gweltaz wrote *Frankiz ar Vretoned*, a song on an album recorded to benefit imprisoned Bretons.

In 1980 he added a new cord to his bow with the creation of the Ar Bed Keltiek bookstore in Quimper which was soon followed by a second store in Brest in 1984. It was then that he decided to end his career as a singer to better insure the promotion of music of Brittany. At the same time he invested in Breton cultural activity as treasurer of the Théâtre de Cornouaille and member of the Centre Régional du Livre de Bretagne.

During the past few years he has had the opportunity to get back on stage several times, notably for the 30th anniversary of Diwan when he performed two new compositions.



Yvonne BREILLY-LE CALVEZ

Bet ganet eo en un tiegezh kozh eus Dirinon, e-kichen Landerne, etre Leon ha Kerne, etre ar mor hag an don vro. Ret eo dezhi heuliañ dilojadegoù he famih en abeg da labour he zad. Koulskoude, kleñved ar gêr a zo re greñv hag e tistro

bep tro ma c'hell evit kemer perzh e buhez ar vro, evit selaou gant ur blijadur dibar ar c'hantikoù brezhoneg en iliz d'ar Sul. Broudet eo da studiañ ar sonerezh gant ur c'helenner hag en deus merzet he baregezh. Ur

stummadur don e vez roet dezhi. Goude bezañ heuliet he zud e Naoned e 1939 e tremen ar vachelouriezh hag e teu da vezañ skolaerez. An amzer lezet dieub gant he labour a zo gouestlet d'ar sonerezh e framm ul laz-seniñ, aze eo e ra anaoudegezh gant he gwaz. Un elfenn kreiz eo ar sonerezh en he labour kelenn met ivez ar mor hag ar c'hontadennoù. Evit he labour brudañ ar sonerezh e framm ar skol ez eo bet roet dezhi Lore an Akademiezh e 1974 hag ar priz René Mouflard. Roet e vez dezhi medalenn Urzh broadel an Dellid e 1981 evit bezañ krouet ul laz-kanañ bugale e 1965 (meur a bladenn enrollet) hag evit he oberenn a-bezh en deskadurezh. Mare al leve e 1983 a ro dezhi tro da reiñ lañs d'al laz-kanañ "Fa Si Nantes". Dont a ra al laz-kanañ da vezañ ezel eus Kendalc'h da vare Breizh a gan Naoned e 1991. A-benn kadarnaat e vreizhadelezh e Liger-Atlantel e teu al laz-kanañ da vezañ anvet Laz-kanañ Anna Vreizh e 1993 hag e kemer perzh e pep abadenn Kan evid ar Peoh. An darn vrasañ eus ar c'hanaouennoù a zo e brezhoneg, testennoù bet dibabet diouzh ar c'hejadennoù hag an darempredoù mignoniezh bet liammet gant tud evel Naig Rozmor.

Skrivañ a ra un darn vat eus ar sonerezh kendoniet gant he mignon a-viskoazh René Abjean. He troiadoù e Bro-C'hall hag en estren-vro o deus roet an tu dezhi da lakaat mouezh Breizh da vezañ klevet.

Yvonne Breilly-Le Calvez (English translation)

Yvonne Breilly-Le Calvez was born in an old family of Dirinon near Landerneau between Leon and Cornouaille, and between the land and sea. She followed her parents as they moved to new job locations but her attachment to her land is strong and she returned when she could to embrace local life and enjoy *cantiques* in Breton at church. Encouraged by a professor of piano who recognized her interest in music, she went through a very thorough musical training. Again following her parents to Nantes in 1939 she completed her baccalaureate and became a teacher. Parallel to her professional activity she played in an orchestra where she met her husband. Music is at the heart of her teaching and she has also sought to cultivate children's' interest in stories (ten works published) and in maritime themes. For her work in favor of music education as part of the National Education system she received the Palmes académiques in 1974 and the Prix René Mouflard in 1977. The creation of a children's choir in 1965 (several recordings made) and the whole of her life's work earned her the Medal of the Ordre Nationale de Mérit in 1981. Retirement in 1981 allowed her to pursue other projects. The choir "Fa Si Nantes" that she created was integrated into the Kendalc'h federation in 1991 on the occasion of the Breizh a Gan festival in Nantes. To affirm its Breton identity in Loire-Atlantique the choir took on the name Ensemble Choral Anna Vreizh in 1993 and participated in all the performances of Kan Evid ar Peoh. The bulk of her repertoire is in Breton - texts chosen from many meetings

and friendships like that of Naïg Rozmor. She has composed most of the music that has been harmonized by her colleague René Abjean. Her tours in France and overseas have allowed her to take the voice of Brittany afar.



Viviane HÉLIAS

Eus ar vro Vigouden eo e teu Viviane Hélias. En ur vont tre kelc'h keltiek Pont-'n-Abad e 1962 e tizolo holl doareoù sevenadur Breizh. Ul labour brudañ Breizh e ra e framm ar gouelioù folklor e Bro-C'hall hag en Europa. Mont a ra tre Kevread War'Leur e 1969. O vezañ e

karg eus an aozañ ar stajoù dañs e kemer perzh el labour prientñ hag heuliañ an abadennoù. Dre-se eo he deus harpet e-pad meur a vloaz aozerien ar gouelioù pennañ e Breizh.

War ar memes tro e kas da benn ul labour dastum kleweledel gant harp Yann-Fanch Kemener, ar vreudeur Flageul, Lommig Donniou ha Marcel Baloin hag e ra enrolladurioù e-doug gouel Kan ar Bobl.

Ur bodad broderezh e vez staliet ganti e 1980 e framm War'Leur gant ur skipailhig tud (Geneviève Jouanic, Raymonde Yaouanc, Jean-Michel Pérennec, Marie Le Bec et Mimi Kerloc'h). E penn kentañ ar pal a zo reiñ kuzulioù evit gwiskamantoù ar strolladoù. Berzh e ra buan tre hag ez eo ret aozañ stajoù stummañ ha devezhioù studi evit respont d'ar goulenn.

Biñvioù pedagogel a zo savet, ur c'hasedig kleweled hag ul levr. Da heul ez eus bet krouet diskouezadegoù e Pont-'n-Abad, Kemper, e kastell Keryann, ur film "L'art de tirer l'aiguille" hag abadennoù stummañ evit ar c'hevredik. Brudet vez ganti broderezh Breizh en estrenvro, e Bro-Kebek da gentañ ha e Louisiana, Brazil ha Mec'hiko da heul.

Koulskoude ar stourm pouezusañ eviti a zo bet diskouez e oa ret reiñ ur plas d'ar broderezh er skol.

E 2007 he deus savet al levr *Broderie en Bretagne* gant Hélène Cario hag e labouront dija asambles war un eil levr.

Viviane Hélias (English translation)

From the Bigouden country, Viviane Hélias discovered the Breton culture in all its diversity in joining the Celtic Circle of Pont-l'Abbé in 1962. She participated thus in the promotion of Brittany at folklore festivals throughout

France and Europe. In 1969 she joined the confederation War'Leur. In charge of dance workshops, she participated in the programming and coordination of performances, giving her support for many years to the largest fête and festival committees.

Parallel to this she was an audiovisual collector for Breton traditions, supported by Yann Fañch Kemener, the Flageul brothers, Lommig Donniou and Marcel Baloin, and she made recordings of Kan ar Bobl festival performances.

In 1980 she launched an embroidery group within War'Leur with a small team (including Geneviève Jouanic, Raymonde Yaouanc, Jean-Michel Pérennec, Marie Le Bec and Mimi Kerloc'h). At the beginning it offered advice on costumes to dance groups. The demand was so high that it was necessary to organize classes and workshops. Pedagogical materials – a book and video cassette - were completed. This was followed by exhibits at Pont l'Abbé, Quimper, at the château of Kerjean, and a film on "l'Art de tirer l'aiguille" as well as public presentations. It was by means of travel to Quebec that Breton embroidery was made known overseas, before bringing it to Louisiana, Brazil and Mexico.

But her biggest combat was to show that embroidery has a place in the school setting.

She collaborated with Hélène Cario in the publication of the book *Broderie en Bretagne* in 2007 and is working with her on a second work.

[See Natalie Novik's note on *Broderie en Bretagne* in this issue of Bro Nevez]

LOSSES TO BRITTANY AND THE ORDER OF THE ERMINE

Yvonig Gicquel (1933-2008)

On October 24th Brittany lost one of its most ardent defenders. I first met Yvonig Gicquel in the late 1970s and knew him in his role as president of the cultural association Kendalc'h which was a federation of over a hundred "cercles celtiques" and cultural organizations, offering dance, music, and a number of other classes and workshops for youth on Breton culture and history. He served as its president from 1973 to 1982. He had been a founder and president of the Cercle Celtique of Josselin, his home town. He would also serve as President of the Coop Breizh from 1982 to 2003. This cooperative to insure the sale and distribution of Breton books and recordings has served a key role in supporting the work of Breton authors and musicians.

Yvonig Gicquel was at the forefront of a number of key initiatives in Brittany which have impacted socioeconomic

as well as cultural development. With advanced diplomas in common law and political science he was a director for the Morbihan Chamber of Commerce until retiring in 1993. He served on the Administrative Council of CELIB (Comité d'études et de liaison des intérêts bretons) begun in the 1950s and active until the mid 1960s to promote economic development on the regional level.

In 1976 Yvonig Gicquel was central in the development of the Charte culturelle bretonne (Breton Cultural Charter) which would be adopted by the French President at that time, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, in February 1977. This Charter would be key in sparking and supporting the development of many of Brittany's most important cultural organizations.

Yvonig Gicquel is also well known as a prominent historian and author of a number of authoritative books – most notably perhaps, his works on Olivier de Clisson, Alain IX de Rohan, Jean II de Rohan, and the Combat des Trente. Besides a legacy of thoroughly researched books of great value to scholars, he wrote innumerable articles for magazines to insure that all Bretons were aware of their history – a history that was often not presented to them in school.

Yvonig Gicquel served as President of the Cultural institute of Brittany from 1998 until his death. One of his proudest moments was to be inducted into the Order of the Ermine in 1994. Surely he was one of the most deserving of that honor for his lifetime of work for Brittany.

Michel Phlipponneau (1921-2008)

This Breton geographer grew up in the outskirts of Paris, completing high school at the Lycée Hoche in Versailles and university studies in geography in Paris. He taught geography and history in high school before joining the faculty of the Université de Rennes in 1957 where he taught until his retirement in 1985.

In 1952 he became an active member of CELIB and his thorough studies of business and industry in Brittany proved to be key in promoting economic development in the 1960s. He would enter the political scene and served on the General Council for the department of Ille-et-Vilaine from 1973 to 1985. He would serve with the Mayor of Rennes Edmond Hervé until 1989 – and he would disagree quite strongly with this mayor on development plans for the city of Rennes in later years. Michel Phlipponneau used his talents as an "applied geographer" as a member of the Regional Economic and Social Committee from 1989 to 1995. He was known internationally for his work and wrote a number of influential books – perhaps best known among them being *Debout Bretagne!* (1970), *Au joint français, les ouvriers bretons* (1972), *Changer la vie, changer la ville: Rennes*

1977 (1976) to cite just a few. He was also a regular contributor to magazines.

For his very important work in support of Breton economic planning and development during his lifetime he was inducted into the Order of the Ermine in 1992



NOTES FROM BRITTANY

Natalie Novik

Having just spent three weeks in October in Brittany, I offer my comments on some of the latest cultural and other happenings in various parts of the country and a few reviews of music and books.

PERFORMANCES

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BAGAD BRIEG

The renowned Bagad of the small town of Brieg in Western Brittany (not far north of Quimper) celebrated its 30th anniversary the last week-end of October. It started with a concert on the Friday night, then street animations



and performances during the windy Saturday, and culminated with a fest-noz nicknamed "gogonoz" the Saturday night. Numerous groups lined up for the evening entertainment, providing the crowd with a wide range of dances, and in particular the graceful Glazik gavotte of the region. But the culminating point came at midnight when 40 performers from the Bagad walked on

stage. Some of the pipers were wearing tutus on top of their outfits, others were wearing flowers over their ears, and the mood was definitely not serious... but the music was outstanding. Although most people felt like just standing and watching them play, it was so hard to resist the rhythm and the boost of the 20 or so bombards that within minutes several circles had formed to dance a plinn. The dancing in turn hiked up the enthusiasm of the musicians, leading to more tunes and some spectacular

solos by the best performers of the bagad. Many dancers came from nearby Celtic circles, and their skill and knowledge of the dances were obviously enjoyed by the musicians. A kind of competition ensued where the pipers would tease the dancers into high performing steps and the dancers respond in kind. The temperature in the room was Saharan, and required some relief in the nearby beer tent, where various groups were also performing, albeit in different styles, like jazz and country. When I finally left, the quiet streets of Brieg were echoing the sound of the bagad, drowning the jazzy notes coming from the beer tent. The sound followed me for a very long time, like a never-ending salute to the health of one of the best Breton bagads.

BARON & ANNEIX

The immortal Baron and Anneix couple was in Quimper at the end of October for a late night performance at the bar at the Theatre de Cornouailles. When I say immortal, I mean it: the two are certainly no spring chickens, and yet their vitality can be envied. Jean Baron plays the bombarde and Christian Anneix the biniou, or Breton bagpipe, forming what is known in Brittany as a "couple de sonneurs" (a piping couple). They are both from Eastern Brittany, but their repertoire includes all regions of Brittany. They have formed several musical groups, known by the names of "Gwenva" and "La Godinette", playing with other musicians in a variety of regional styles, and they have released numerous recordings. They have traveled the world over, and stick to this day to their image of two burly long-haired sweet and witty no-nonsense guys. Relaying each other, and overlapping at the end of each musical phrase, they play in a very traditional style, where the interaction between the pipers and the dancers is crucial.

At first, the audience, scattered around the bar, was kind of shy and uncertain whether or not to dance. But encouraged by the musicians, they took to the floor, and in no time a majority of the women present were dancing. The guys seemed to have a preference for the bar, where cider was gone in about 20 minutes. At some point, Jean decided to taunt the local dancers, announcing he was going to play a gavotte de Quimper (or gavotte Glazik) and that they'd better show they knew it or he'd spread the word that people in Quimper had forgotten how to dance. Naturally, he got his wish, and the crowd complied.

Both pipers are still going strong, showing no signs of slowing down, Christian has even managed to become vice-mayor in his little town in the suburbs of Rennes on top of his musical career. Keltia Musique has recently released a CD entitled "Hentad" with the best performances along their 30-year career.

CD's

BAGAD KEMPER WITH VIDEO

The Bagad Kemper released in 2006 a set called "Collection" which includes a CD by the same name and a video of the Bagad at the Interceltic Festival of Lorient in 2001, during which the Bagad performed a great number of the pieces featured on the CD. The Bagad Kemper (from the city of Quimper in Western Brittany) is one of the top pipe bands in Brittany, winner of numerous awards (19 times Champion of Brittany), has traveled all over Europe and even to China and Africa, and has greatly extended its repertoire in recent years to incorporate sounds and rhythms from other places.

The interest of the "Collection" set is for one thing the eclecticism of the CD, which includes performances with Johnny Clegg, Denez Prigent, the Symphonic Orchestra of Prague, Marthe Vassalo, Dan ar Bras, and Greek, Brazilian, Arabic and Spanish tunes, together with a medley of Breton airs and dances, including "Eliz Iza", a very ancient tune made famous by Alan Stivell who collected it from the Goadeg Sisters. The performances are very satisfying and well-rounded. The mastery of the pipe band is very evident in the way they blend in with all these very different styles, and bring an unusual but somehow familiar sonority to the music from outside Brittany. The bombardes in particular are almost trumpet-like in the Brazilian tune, but go back to sounding like an North African oboe or zoukra in the Arabic melody. The sound is probably more versatile than what we usually imagine for such as a simple instrument.

The other part of the set, the video, is of interest if you can play it in the U.S. either on an all-zone DVD player or on your computer: it starts with the Goadeg Sisters singing "Eliz Iza", and brings in the full bagad, with close ups of the musicians. The title of each piece comes on screen as it starts (in French, but sometimes also in Breton), and many of them repeat what is on the CD. Marthe Vassalo takes over singing "Eliz Iza", a little faster and with less of a "keening" trend than the Goadeg Sisters, for whom this was obviously a dirge. It is interesting to note the work of the penn soner, i.e. the pipeband leader, Jean-Louis Henaff, who when he is not conducting does a number of amazing solos, sometimes in competition with another bombarde player. There are also some excellent bagpipe solos, and the percussions are very enjoyable.

The CD is sold in a blue jacket with the gold sheep that has become the emblem of the bagad, a true reflection of the Glazik (blue) costumes the Bagad Kemper wears. For those of you interested in Breton costumes, the Kemper region is called Glazik because the men wear blue outfits, with a magnificent band of embroidery going from one shoulder to the other over the chest, a wide white leather belt with an intricate buckle, and the Bagad has added a

sober blue tie with the sheep motif on it. The video has the advantage that you can zoom in on the outfits of the Bagad; they are spectacular.

Their web site is <http://www.bagad-kemper.org/>, the English version is pending.

YANN-FANCH KEMENER **Tuchant e erruo an hañv**

Actually, the title of the CD is “Kemener, Ripoche, Rouillard, Weber” and the title in Breton, which means “Summer is coming soon”, with a subtitle “Quand la musique bretonne rencontre le baroque...” (when Breton music meets barocco music...). Need I say more? The recording was made in 2006, and brings together again Yann-Fañch Kemener, traditional Breton singer, and Aldo Ripoche, cello player, with a few other barocco musicians, i.e. Florence Rouillard on the harpsichord and Ruth Weber on the violin and viola. I don't think I need to introduce Yann-Fañch Kemener to our readers, and if I do, let's just say that his voice embodies Breton singing at its best, whether he sings kan ha diskan (dancing songs) or gwerziou (laments). In this CD, the baroque accompaniment of the gwerziou makes them sound almost like recitatives in 17th century operas. But at the same time, Yañch-Fanch's voice has a completely different quality and a passion to it which tells you immediately that you are not listening to classical music. When the repertoire switches to kan ha diskan, there is an effort by the musicians to try the overlapping style of the traditional Breton dancing songs, but it is not always the case and when the musicians stop at the end of the first musical phrase to start again at the second, you see where the overlapping is so important to the dancers. But overall, the efforts done by both sides are well worth it, it is a very pleasant and well recorded CD. The jacket and the booklet are bilingual, with the words to all the songs (and a summary in English for each one of them) plus a biography of each musician. I would recommend it to anybody interested in going beyond traditional singing and finding out how classical musicians often found their inspiration in local folk music.

BOOKS

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BRETON HISTORY

If you are interested in Breton history, this new publication might just be for you (if you can read French). Skol Vreizh publishing house has just released a voluminous dictionary of Breton history “Dictionnaire d'histoire de Bretagne”, which was presented on October 21st at the new media library in Quimper by some of the authors, Alain Croix, Jean-Christophe Gassard and Jean-René le Quéau. The dictionary is more an encyclopedic compilation by alphabetical topic than a dictionary. It weighs over 6 pounds, features 101 authors and 910

articles, compiled over five years. It has great color photos, reproductions of lithographies and paintings and numerous maps, some of which were made specially for the dictionary. It also features a list of bibliographical references, an alphabetic index, and an index by author. Skol Vreizh turned to the best specialists in Brittany for each topic, and some researchers also offered their contribution. All the authors volunteered their work, keeping the cost of the book down. It sells for 89 € and can be ordered from Skol Vreizh (www.skolvreizh.com). A recurrent question from the audience during the Q&A session of the evening was whether such a work would be placed on the Internet: the authors replied that, for the time being, it had been deemed preferable to publish it in book form, but it did not exclude that it would be available through research engines on the Internet in the future. They also thought that an English version might be coming in the future. The dictionary is seen as a sum of today's knowledge regarding Breton history, but will probably be further updated and reprinted. And a bit of anecdote: the warriors featured on the cover are not Bretons, they are a well-known manuscript illustration of Vikings getting ready to invade Brittany.

BRODERIES EN BRETAGNE **Hélène Cario and Viviane Hélias**

Once again, this book is in French, and the title translates as “Embroidery in Brittany”. It is still of great interest to non-French readers, because of the abundance of illustrations featuring not only the various styles and history of embroidery in Brittany, but the appendix with how-to diagrams and drawings of typical Breton embroidery. Embroidery started being widely used in Brittany during the 19th century and every village had a different style, a different color, even different stitches. From the delicate needle painting of flowers on aprons in the Vannes region to the heavy golden embroidery covering the torsos of the Bigoudens, and the influence of fashion on threads, beads, lace and other ornaments, Brittany has one of the richest traditions in the world. However, after World War I and even more following World War II, people in Brittany started abandoning the traditional costumes to adopt modern clothing, and the embroiderers fell on lean times. Viviane Hélias, one of the two authors and the daughter of a Breton tailor, has dedicated her life to reviving embroidery in Brittany, starting at a time when it was feared it would disappear. But under the impulse of her mentor, Marie-Anne Le Minor, Breton embroideries took their place as works of art not only on traditional costumes, but also on table linens, tapestries and many other textiles. The early 70's also saw the revival brought about by the Celtic circles, and since the dancers needed by then to either replicate or create new costumes, they had to turn to the few embroiderers left. Viviane was ready to fill the need, and started an embroidery section at the War'l Leur Association to teach the craft to younger generations. She

was successful, and today's younger embroiderers like Jean-Michel Pérenec, Paul Balbous, Pascal Jaouen and many others are not only continuing an ancient tradition but finding new ways of expressing it. People today are very proud of wearing their work, the uniforms of the bagadou are often decorated by them, they are in demand for wedding gowns, their names are known all through Brittany. The exhibit at the Breton Museum in Quimper (see article) is a testimony to their amazing abilities. But if you cannot go see the exhibit, this book is a delight to go through, with excellent photography and close-ups of embroideries, numerous illustrations of old Breton costumes, and a wealth of information about the techniques, fabrics and materials being used. It was published by the Coop Breizh in 2007, and can be ordered from them (www.coopbreizh.fr).

EXHIBITS

"KING ARTHUR" EXHIBIT AT THE BRETON MUSEUM IN RENNES

A word first about the Breton Museum (Musée de Bretagne) in Rennes, for those of you planning to visit Brittany: this Museum is a must to grasp in a relatively short visit the history and culture of Brittany. The exhibits are varied and clear, the labeling is done in French, Breton and English, and the artifacts are very well chosen. There are interactive rooms featuring videos, maps, and other data, and there is never a dull moment. The Museum is located in the center called "Les Champs Libres", one block away from the train station, and if this is your first visit to Brittany, it might be worth getting off the train for a couple hours to get a very exhaustive introduction to Brittany.

The Museum presently houses an exhibit about King Arthur, entitled "King Arthur, a legend in the making" (Le Roi Arthur, une légende en devenir). It is important to remember that just a few miles west of Rennes, lies the famous Brocéliande forest, today called the Paimpont forest, home to numerous arthurian traditions. And indeed, the exhibit starts with a room dedicated to the forest, its sounds, its history and the things that go bump certain nights among the trees or the open moors. The presentation continues with a series of rooms each centered around a theme, like the knights, or Camelot, or Merlin. They feature splendid medieval manuscripts, under-lighted because of their fragility, which makes it impossible to really appreciate the wonderful illustrations. Some rooms have ongoing movies on TV screens (the Monty Pythons' "Sacred Graal" among others) some others display objects that could be the Grail, or not...

However, some of the displays are of no interest whatsoever or fall short of expectations, like some grotesque manikins supposed to represent King Arthur and Guenievre. The problem with such a wide topic is to

focus on what we know of the arthurian legend and make it entertaining: the pitfall is when attempts are made to reach all publics, including children. This was probably the intent with this exhibit, and you find, unfortunately, that it is not as exciting as it could have been, had the curators used a uniformity of tone and style throughout the exhibit. You get the feeling after a while that the artifacts were picked without discernment and that there is no continuum between one room and the other. There are some mentions of the universality of the Arthurian traditions in other parts of Europe, but very few illustrations of that fact. The authors have generously tapped into the late 19th-early 20th century wealth of pseudo-medieval paintings, and this too is overdone.

KANT BRO, KANT GIZ (A hundred villages, a hundred costumes) Breton Museum, Quimper

The Breton costume collection at the Breton Museum in Quimper is one of the richest in Brittany, but now, a new exhibit features the latest acquisitions, and associates the displays of entire outfits on mannequins to other works of art such as paintings and sculpture featuring those very same costumes. It is thought that there are over 200 different costumes (or "giz" in Breton) all over Brittany, and if you count the slight differences between one village (bro) and another, there might be even more. The exhibit focuses on Western Brittany and particularly on Cornouailles, from the extraordinary golden embroidery featured in the Bigouden country to the airy and complex coiffes of the Fouesnant region.

Interestingly, besides the outfits worn by the rich farmers, the exhibit also includes what is called in Brittany the "artisane" outfits, i.e. what the wives of the fishermen and other simple folks were wearing: in most cases, the headdress (or coiffe in French, goef in Breton) is close to the head and small, the woman wears a long shawl and a very simple shirt under it, and a skirt that's not as long as the ones used for parading your wealth. These survived longer than the rich outfits, because they could be worn at work, and we still have photos from the 1920's of rows of "pen sardin" (sardin heads) in Douarnenez working in the canneries, wearing their "artisane" clothes.

EVENTS

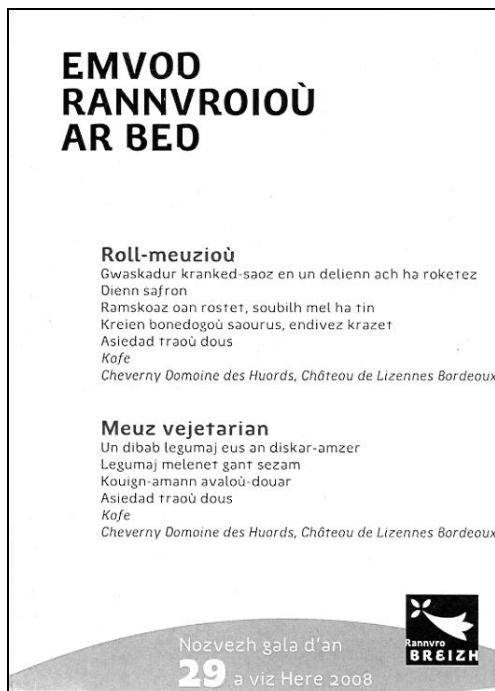
WORLD SUMMIT OF REGIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

St. Malo, the "corsair city", the longtime hometown of Breton privateers, was the host October 29-30 of a world summit of regions on climate change, hosted by the Brittany Region. Jean-Yves Le Drian, President of the Region was there both days, and delivered an opening speech that encouraged all the regions of the world to get recognition in international instances and work together towards mitigating climate change by exchanging best

practices and helping regions in developing countries. Brittany has recently suffered from unprecedented storms, the last one in March devastating entire swaths of the West coast, and is rapidly implementing steps to attenuate the dire consequences of climate unpredictability.

Christian Guyonvarc'h, Le Drian's second in charge of international relations, was the organizer of the Summit, and had ensured that the Breton language was visible at all events. The banners bearing the title of the Summit all had the Breton title second after the French title (Emvod Rannvroioù ar Bed), before English and Spanish, and even the menus included a Breton translation (see the gala dinner menu below). Numerous attendees from Brittany were Breton speakers, and thanks to my little "spilhennig" (Breton pin signifying you are a Breton speaker) I was forced into conversing in Breton, a very useful exercise. Even Le Drian and Guyonvarc'h did not hesitate to address me in Breton, and Guyonvarc'h made sure I met all the "brezonegerien" at the Summit.

At the end of the Summit, among other agreements, one was signed between the Region and the U.N. Development Program (headed by a Breton) to create a new U.N. agency in Brittany, CLIMSAT, whose office is opening in Brest. CLIMSAT will be in charge of providing satellite images to monitor climate changes to poor regions of the world, and is also headed by a Breton, Alain Retiere, who was previously based in Geneva.



New Music from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Yann Fañch Kemener, Aldo Ripoché, Florence Rouillard, Ruth Weber. *Tuchant e erruo an hañv / Bientôt l'été*. Buda Musique 3017747. 50'11
(www.kemener.com)

Yann Fañch Kemener is one of Brittany's best known traditional singers, with a repertoire passed down in his family and passionately collected by him from other singers since the early 1970s. His solo LPs of the mid 70s with their long ballads remain among my favorite records of Breton music. Kemener is a master of the gwerz – dramatic Breton language ballads – as well as kan ha diskan singing for dancing. His repertoire also includes songs and sayings for children, marches and other "lighter" songs that enrich the Breton tradition.

But, Kemener has worked with a number of singers and musicians of various styles – harpist and singer Anne Auffret, the group Barzaz, jazz and classically trained pianist Didier Squiban, and a number of other collaborations. In 2000 he began to work with cellist Aldo Ripoché and has recorded two CDs with him: *An Eur Glas / L'Heure bleu* (2000) and *An Dorn / La Main* (2004). In a trio formed with Ripoché and pianist Florence Pavie, Kemener brought out the full drama of the Breton gwerz in a performance/CD called *Dialogues* (see Bro Nevez 1010, February 2007, for a review).

With this new CD he works once again with Aldo Ripoché in a quartet including harpsichordist Florence Rouillard and violinist Ruth Weber. The title to the CD, *Tuchant e erruo an hañv* comes from a beautiful song on the CD. The sub-title to the CD "When the Breton music meets the baroque" describes the essence of this meeting of musicians and the idea that traditional Breton music shares a number of similarities to French music of the 17th and 18th centuries. These include the use of unequal temperaments (spaces between notes), ornamentation, ostinato, a figured bass, and a responsive style.

Musicologists might find an analysis of the performances here very interesting. Those who just like music will find the pairing of baroque instrumental styles to Kemener's traditional songs simply pleasing. I found the slower melodies particularly striking with Kemener's wonderfully rich and expressive voice combined with cello, harpsichord and violin and baroque viola. At times the dances seemed to lose a bit of the freeness I find in unaccompanied traditional singing.

The 22 pages of jacket notes are excellent in supporting the CD listener. An introductory section (in French and English) describes the parallels in traditional Breton and baroque French music before the impact of the adoption

of written musical scores in classical music in the 18th century. Each of the 15 song texts is given in Breton with a full French translation and nearly complete English version. A photo and biography in French and English is provided for each of the performers and additional photos show them in performance.

The Breton-baroque bridge is definitely one to be crossed for the interesting new perspective it gives to Breton tradition. The four musicians on this CD are all masters of their art and provide a great performance here.



Yann Fañch Kemener and Aldo Ripoché. *Noël en Bretagne / Nedeleg / Christmas in Brittany*. Buda Musique 3017745. 49'22

I can think of very few recordings of Breton Christmas carols so this is a very welcome recording. This CD is full of beautiful melodies and texts telling the story of the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph's difficult search for shelter, shepherds keeping watch, angels descending, and the three kings arriving – all the classic Christmas stories with a Breton touch, and a unique Breton sound.

Yann Fañch Kemener sings thirteen songs and recites a Christmas tale in both French and Breton – sometimes the songs are solo but most have a variety of simple and effective instrumental accompaniment (as does the story-telling). Most often it is the cello and older cello-like instruments performed by Aldo Ripoché with whom Kemener has partnered since 2000. But you also hear Françoise Gascoin on the wooden baroque flute and Hervé Merlin with a long necked lute (called “therbo” on the jacket notes) and these are lovely in supporting Kemener's voice. On several selections choirs from the Centre de Musique Sacrée in Saint Anne D'Auray and the Ensemble Vocal Er Gedourion provide a discrete chorus.

The songs are set to beautiful slow melodies as well as a few dance tunes – and it is not unusual that a traditional melody or tune one may have heard for a ballad about murder and mayhem or a song for dance lamenting lost love will be borrowed for a religious hymn. The melodies for these carols are indeed lovely – my favorites being those used for “Jezuz Krouedur,” a text by poet Yann-Ber Kalloc'h (1888-1917) and “Pezh trouz zo àr en dour” (“such noise on earth”), a text attributed to Abbot Pierre Noury (1743-1804) who immigrated to Spain during the French Revolution. This latter carol has been made known to a wider public by its performance by Nolwenn Monjarret on a Chieftans album and by Jacques Douai with the Campagne Nationale de Danses Françaises. Indeed, just a few days before receiving this CD the director of choral activities at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, e-mailed me in hopes of getting the text for the song which he hoped to arrange for his choral group. Happily, the text

of the song in Breton, French and English is included in this CD's jacket notes.

The carols on this CD date from the 17th, 18th and early 19th century, and earlier in a few cases. While most of them are familiar Christmas stories revolving around the birth of Jesus there is a thread in the CD tied to more ancient Celtic beliefs and fertility in particular. “Kanam Noël” is subtitled “Brigit's Christmas Carol” and was used formerly by young people to go door to door on Christmas eve. The text does not refer to Brigit, but the CD notes identify her as the ancient Celtic goddess of fertility. The only song in French on the CD, “Cantilene à Notre-Dame” evokes Mary crying for all the women unable to have children.

The CD concludes with a story artfully told by Kemener first in French and then in Breton (both over 7 minutes long). Here one finds a mix of Celtic and Christian spirituality as one hears about setting out food on Christmas eve for the dead, and hearing animals talk on this one night – with the tale of a man who hears his oxen talking of his death, only to bring the predicted event to pass in a fumbled attempt to kill the oxen before they could haul him to his grave. And in this tale about Mary and Joseph's effort to find shelter for the birth of Jesus an armless and blind Brigit has her arms and sight restored in helping Mary and taking newborn Jesus to her breast. For her kindness Brigit is given the power to help women in childbirth and provide bountiful supplies of milk to wet nurses. This is a wonderful tale of magical and miraculous events.

The CD was recorded in the Chapel of Notre-Dame de Gornevec in Plumergat. Which was originally in the parish of Sainte-Anne-d'Auray when founded in the 11th century by monks of Saint Gildas de Ruys. The chapel was rebuilt in the 16th century and restored from ruin in more recent years thanks to fundraising of the community and the association Breizh Santel. Until the 19th century a pardon was held to bless horses and wet nurses came to the chapel to pray for abundant milk.

The CD notes include this story of the chapel as well as its photo, and there are abundant photos of stained glass and delightful wooden statues from churches and chapels throughout Brittany related to the Christmas story. The jacket notes also include introductory notes by Frère Jean-Pierre Longeat and Frère Olivier Riaudel on the meaning of Christmas and the themes on the CDs carols. Each song text is present in Breton with a French translation and short English summary. A short note on its source – a book or singer – is also given. The story related by Kemener is given in its full French and Breton version with a complete English translation.

A paragraph is included in the CD notes to introduce each performer (Kemener, Ripoché, Gascoin and Merlin, as

well as the choral groups). One also finds a few photos of the musicians in performance in the chapel which gives a better idea of the unusual instruments used, which are not well-described by their name alone ("baroque transverse flute" "therbo" "vieilles").

This is a highly recommended CD for the beautiful melodies, fine performances and selection of rarely heard Christmas carols (certainly in the U.S. one is never likely to hear a Breton Carol – no matter how familiar it may be in Brittany). The jacket notes are rich in imagery and texts that convey the message of Christmas in a uniquely Breton way.



Startijenn. Pakit holl! Paker Productions 001. 49'47
(<http://www.startijenn.com>)

"Pakit holl" is translated on the press release I received with this CD as "attrapez tous" – "catch all of it," "take it all in"? No matter how it is translated, this is the title of the lead-off selection for this fest-noz band's second CD – a swinging rond de Saint-Vincent. "Fest noz bands" are groups – usually all instrumental – with a mix of acoustic and electric instruments who perform at the innumerable festoù foz throughout Brittany. A good fest noz band has a wide repertoire of traditional Breton dances from both eastern and western Brittany and will have lots of energy. "Startijenn" = energy in Breton. This band definitely has energy in their arrangements and composition of Breton dances, but the pace is not frenzied and there's a great swing and feeling of freedom to the dances.

Because you have long suites of the full three parts to dances, this is a CD where you can really get up on your feet and indulge in dancing. Besides 6 minutes of the Rond de Saint-Vincent, you have a 10 ½ minute suite for the plinn, a 5 ½ minute rideé, close to 12 minutes for a gavotte suite, as well as a 5 minute waltz and a 5 minute suite of Irish/Breton jigs. And while this band will get you up and dancing, they can also handle the more subtle demands of a slow air – in this case a gwerz collected and recorded by Claudine Mazéas in 1957 (well before these musicians were born) and interpreted by sonneurs Frelaut-Pellenec. And paired bombarde and biniou are featured in this performance of a very lovely melody.

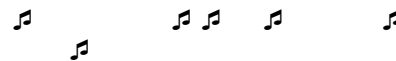
The band consists of Konogan An Habask (biniou and uilleann pipes), Youn Roue (bombard/bombarde), Tangi Ar Gall-Carré (akordeoñs daoudonek/diatonic accordion), Tangi Oillo (gitar/guitar) and Kaou Gwenn (binviou-skeiñ/percussions). The bombarde and biniou are often paired at the heart of performances, but accordion also takes on much of the melodic lead. Indeed, each musician has a key role in the performances so that all the instruments are an integral part of a complex weave of sound. Fiddler Fañch Landreau is a guest artist for the

waltz with a very nice duet with Tangi Ar Gall-Carré on accordion.

This is a young band – all in their 20s judging by their photos. They first started playing in 1997 when at the Diwan middle school in Releg-Kerhuon. Their gavotte suite called "Made in Diwan" celebrates this part of their past, but neither the jacket notes, the press release for the CD, nor their website tell you this. And this is not important except to know that they are all Breton speakers!

I can certainly not claim to be up on the numerous fest noz bands that have spring up in more recent years, but for me, Startijenn has a unique sound of its own – faithful to the rhythm of traditional Breton dances but innovative and interesting. The majority of tunes on this CD are compositions by Tangi Ar Gall-Carré and Konogan An Habask.

I liked every selection on this CD and have "taken them all in" several times now with great enjoyment.



HEARD OF, BUT NOT HEARD

Information for these notes have been gleaned from a variety of websites: Coop Breiz, Dastum, BNC Productions ...) as well as *Armor* No. 465 (October 2008) & *Musique bretonne* No. 209 (July/August 2008) and 210 (Sept./Oct. 2008).

Bagadoù – L'anthologie, Vol. 2. Coop Breizh. CD 975.

This is a 2-CD selection of 17 bagads of Brittany with a handsome hardback book cover to the notes. Each bagad's history and highlights are presented in the text. If this is anything like volume 1, it will include a varied selection of music from this unique musical ensemble of Brittany where the bombarde adds a very colorful presence to pipes and drums. Suites for contests and concerts are featured where other instruments and even voices are often added in complex compositions and arrangements.

Bagad Konk Kerne. Buen Aven Tuna. Coop Breizh.

"Buen aven tuna" is the name of a performance piece created in 2006 for the 20th anniversary of this bagad from Concarneau. In this composition as well as others on the CD, the bagad combines traditional Breton music with diverse world traditions, Latin, jazz, rock and electronic musics.

La Bretagne des Sonneurs, Vol. 1. BNC Prod CD 1008

This is a 2-Cd selection of 21 paired bombard and biniou "couples" put together by Pascal Lamour and Yann Kermabon. The Vannetais tradition is featured in 41 selections. A 50-page booklet is included to present the music and musicians.

Iffic Castel. Bombarde et biniou – Les secrets de la vie de couple. Dastum. 128 page book & DVD

This is a book and DVD for those learning to play bombarde and biniou, and how to play them in pair. Instructions are given on how to tune, maintain and play each instrument and some

secrets of combining the two for this unique music of Brittany. The DVD presents performances by various players who gathered at the 15th anniversary celebration of the Moal-Chaplain pair.

Dastum Bro Dreger. *Doub ha doub ha doub – Rimes et comptimes pour enfants*. Encyclopédie sonore du Trégor-Goëlo. No. 11.

This is the latest in a series of recordings produced by the Tregor branch of Dastum focused on the spoken word. This one presents rhymes and short stories for children collected by Daniel Giraudon from native Breton speakers of the Tregor area during the past 30 years. Ample notes provide texts and a presentation of this genre.

Dastum & Dastum 44. *Père Jean, Sonneur d'accordéon des pays de Redon et de la Mée*. Grands interprètes de Bretagne, Vol. 3.

Jean Debeix, born in 1902, was famous in the region of Redon from 1926 to 1960 for his skills on button accordion which he played at innumerable weddings. After a bit of a break, he took up this instrument again in the 1970s, playing at festivals and festoù noz. This CD includes 44 selections (73 minutes) of live performances, tunes collected at his home, and selections from lp records produced in the 1970s. The recordings capture well the style and extraordinary personality of this musician. A 95-page booklet includes the detailed documentation one can expect from any Dastum CD.

Dastum. *Marie-Josèphe Bertrand – Chanteuse du Centre Bretagne*. Grands interprètes de Bretagne Vol. 4

The recordings of singer Marie-Josèphe Bertrand made over forty years ago by Claudine Mazéas have inspired many a traditional Breton singer and musician who never had the chance to meet her face-to-face. She died in 1970 when she was 84 years old, but her remarkable voice and style made her well known as a singer during all of her life time. When recorded in the 1960s and 70s her voice was still remarkably strong and expressive. Once you hear her voice you know that she is truly the right choice for a series on "great performers" of Brittany. The CD includes all the texts of songs presented as well as biographical information and photos to present this singer.

Dastum & TES (Ti Embann ar Skolioù). *Diskanoù – Chantons en breton !* TES/Dastum.

This is an interactive CD Rom with an audio CD to teach 16 songs in the Breton language. It can be used by schools or by adults. Notes in Breton and French present the varied repertoire of traditional songs and more newly composed songs in Breton. From a gwerz to a lullaby, kan-ha-diskan, and songs of various themes and for various dances, there is surely something for everyone. Song texts and musical scores in several keys are provided as well as a wealth of other information geared to various ages and voices. The CD Rom also gives background about the composers of songs and tunes selected which include Jef Le Penven, Polig Monjarret, Pierre Yves Moign and writers Yann-Ber Kalloc'h, Pierre Jakez Helias, and Denez Abernot. A variety of singers interpret the songs with no or simple accompaniment. There is a maximum of flexibility built in for learners to practice songs and work on finer points of expression and pronunciation.

Fileuses de nuit. *En caravane*. BNC Productions.

This is the second CD by a trio of harpists who use a variety of harps and styles in their travels on this recording. The group

includes Aurore Bréger, Clothilde Trouillaud and Marie Wambergue.

Patrick Lefebvre. *War hent Skrigneg – Accordéon gavotte, Vol. 2*. Coop Breizh.

Lefebvre follows in the footsteps of several famous accordion players of earlier years in the area of Scrignac – Jean Coateval, Yves Gac and Bastien Gwern – with a repertoire of dance tunes for the gavotte.

Loened Fall. *Diwar Logodenn vez razh*. An Naer Produktion. CD & DVD.

This is the third recording by this fest-noz band where kan ha diskan singing by Marthe Vassallo and Ronan Guéblez are at the center of the music for Breton dances. Unless the make-up of the group has changed since their second CD, the group also includes Sabine Le Coadou on bombarde, and Hervé Bertho and Marc Thouenon on guitars.

Merzhin. *Merzhin Live*. Sony-BMG 8869732152

This is a live concert recording on CD and DVD made in Brest in March 2008. This is a rock-Celtic group with powerful drums and wailing bass and electric guitars, but also bombardes, flutes and clarinet as well as song for a more "acoustic" side.

Myrdhin & Zil (Ars Celtica) & Pascal Lamour. *Magic Chaudron*. BNC Productions.

Myrdhin and Zil play electro-harp, Celtic harp, sirr-harp and sing and recite in this production which evokes the ancient Celtic tale of the magic cauldron. They are joined by Pascal Lamour with sax, flutes and electronic instruments to musically evoke the basic elements of earth, water, air and fire. Myrdhin has been at the heart of the revival of Celtic harp in Brittany and his performances are always interesting.

Kristen Noguès. *Logodennig*. Innacor INNA 20807

This double album is in homage to harpist Kristen Noguès (1952-2007) – See Bro Nevez 104, November 2007. The two CDs present the work of this composer and artist over the years, with pieces drawn from other recordings as well as selections not previously released. The CDs and texts present very well the innovative talent of this Breton musician.

Nouvelles vagues celtiques 2008. SL-Music. JS 246.

This CD and DVD with a 12-page booklet present a variety of Breton groups. Some are well known – Karma, Startijenn, Plantec, Ramoneurs de Menirs – while others have gotten less notice and publicity – Devil'Dream, Kafe Koefet, Iwan B and Jerry Cornic.

Plijadur penn da benn – *Chants et musiques de Bretagne*. Coop Breizh & Produit en Bretagne.

This CD features a variety of styles and performances, including Nolwenn Korbell, Soig Siberil, Annie Ebrel, Kanerion Pleuigner and Gilles Servat – to name some – as well as several bagads. Compilations are always a good way for beginners to Breton music to explore the variety of music and styles to be found.

The Terre-Neuve. *Chouchenn*. The Terre-Neuve DB5X2

This is a group with song and instrumental arrangements on a maritime theme including arrangements of well known tunes as well as new compositions. Philippe Lanuzel is the singer for the group which includes also accordion, guitar, piano, fiddle, bombarde and Scottish style bagpipes.

BOOK REVIEWS

Iwan Wmffre. (2007). Breton Orthographies and Dialects: The Twentieth Century Orthography War in Brittany. Oxford: Peter Lang, xxvii + 784 pages. Volume 1, 495 pages, \$131.95, ISBN 978-3-03911-364-4; Volume 2, 283 pages, \$85.95, ISBN 978-3-03911-365-1.

Reviewed by Kevin Rottet

Editor's Note: A version of this review also appears in the *Journal of Celtic Language Learning*, Volume 13, and appears here with their kind permission.

Born to a Breton mother and a Welsh father, Iwan Wmffre is in the unusual position of being a native speaker of both Welsh and Breton, a status which has culminated in his extensive research on both languages as well as on the closely related Cornish. His new monumental two-volume work on Breton orthographies at first glance seems impossibly long and arcane. In fact it is a fascinating study containing such a wealth of information that the reader is left wanting to reread it in order to fully absorb the material covered.

The orthography wars are a well-known part of the 20th century Breton language landscape and bear much responsibility for the often irreconcilable differences among Breton activists. In this masterful work Wmffre unpacks the complex political and personal events of these wars and the even more complex linguistic issues behind them, tapping an extensive collection of personal letters and diaries written by the chief actors of the drama. Wmffre sees the three main lines of the work as: the historical development of the orthographic debate; its ideological underpinnings; and the linguistic bones of contention. The third area makes up the bulk of the second volume, in which an appendix also supplies the text of many original documents and a 26-page bibliography.

As Wmffre notes, much research remains to be done on 19th century Breton orthographies. The two-volume work reviewed here treats only the four major spelling systems of the 20th century: the KLT orthography of 1907, the ZH orthography of 1941, the H system of 1955, and the SS spelling of 1975.

The KLT orthography of 1907 is named for Kerne, Leon, and Tregor, the three dioceses whose dialects it sought to represent. A fourth dialect, known in Breton as Gwenedeg and in French as Vannetais, was excluded; generally regarded as highly divergent from the other dialects, Gwenedeg had been endowed with its own spelling by Guillevic and Le Goff in 1902. The principal proponents of KLT were François Vallée and, later, Emile Ernault. Although KLT as such is no longer in use, it formed the basis of those spelling systems which were to follow.

The first major revision of KLT was the ZH orthography of 1941, often called zedacheg from the French names of the letters Z and H because of the prominent, even iconic role that the digraph <zh> plays in this system. ZH is also known as peurunvan ('superunified') or KLTG, as it attempted to merge KLT with the 1902 orthography for Gwenedeg. ZH was principally promoted by Roparz Hemon, an English teacher from Brest and editor of the literary magazine Gwalarn, and his main disciple, Per Denez. The story of ZH is heavily colored by political intrigue and the persistent association with Nazism during WWII, all of which is meticulously documented in Wmffre's book. Indeed, Hemon claimed that the German authorities of the Occupation, especially in the person of the German linguist Leo Weisgerber, had pressured him to unify written Breton. Hemon's claim has been called into question (Wmffre sees the Parti National Breton [PNB] as the more likely source of such pressure), but it is clear that Leo Weisgerber, an Indo-Europeanist at Marburg, was given the responsibility by the Germans to liaise with Breton militants, whence his contacts with Hemon. In October 1940, Hemon was made the manager of radio broadcasts by Radio Rennes-Bretagne whose mission was to disseminate German propaganda to the Breton-speaking population, thus earning Hemon his reputation as a collaborator. Wmffre's close reading of original documents leads him to conclude that "the accusation that the ZH orthography was imposed by the Germans on Breton writers does not stand", but that clearly "the proponents of the ZH orthography used their privileged relationship with the German occupiers to introduce and establish the new orthography" (117). Noting the Vichy government's refusal to open schools using Breton because speakers could not agree on an orthography, Wmffre explains Hemon's originally reluctant endorsement of ZH as motivated by the anticipated advancement of the Breton cause in education. Unfortunately for the language movement, "it becomes difficult to disentangle Hemon's actions from the policies of the fascist PNB and its German handlers working for the occupation authorities" (173). Regardless of the exact role of the Germans in the establishment of ZH, the fact that some Breton militants including Hemon had conspicuously collaborated led to a post-war backlash against all Breton cultural movements.

The third orthography, called H or skolveurieg ("university orthography"), was a rather slight modification of KLT promoted in 1955 by François Falc'hun, a priest from Léon who became a professor of Celtic linguistics in Rennes. It would be embraced by the organization Emgleo Breiz as well as by the University of Brest (l'Université de Bretagne Occidentale) and noted writers like Fañch Broudic. H was created in part as a reaction to the discredit associated with ZH after WWII. So named because one of its major innovations was to use <h> where both KLT and ZH had used <c'h>, e.g. sah 'bag', merh 'girl, daughter' for sac'h, merc'h, the H orthography was codified in the Dictionnaire

breton-français/français-breton (Garnier, [1986](#)) by Per-Jakez Hélias. After the creation of this third 20th century orthography, “the partisans of the ZH and H orthographies calumniated, denounced and ignored each other” (253) for the next fifteen years.

But there was to be one more major orthographic proposal. The SS or *eterannyezhel* (“interdialectal”) orthography of 1975 is associated with Fañch Morvannou, a Latin lecturer at the University of Brest, and his ASSIMIL textbook *Le breton sans peine*. SS emerged out of the Carhaix talks, a series of 21 meetings held between 1971-1975 which attempted to forge a compromise between ZH and H but inadvertently ended up creating a new orthography. SS is so named because it introduced the digraph <ss> for intervocalic [s] (e.g. *passeeal* ‘to pass’) as part of its series <ss / s / z / zh> to distinguish these as four separate phonemes, which the previous orthographies had failed to do. The motivation for the series is partly etymological, as <zh> is used where Welsh has <th> (e.g. *gwerzhañ* ‘to sell’, cf. Welsh *gwerthu*), <z> for Welsh <dd> (*newez* ‘new’, cf. Welsh *newydd*), and <s> for Welsh <s> (*isel* ‘low’, *nos* ‘night’, both spelled as in Welsh). The iconic <ss> occurs mostly in French borrowings. Although adopted as the official orthography of Skol Vreizh, the SS orthography failed to gain a strong foothold, Wmffre notes, partly because nearly 17 years went by until it got its own dictionary, [Frañsez Favereau](#)’s *Dictionnaire du breton contemporain* = *Geriadur brezhoneg a-vremañ* ([Skol Vreizh, 1992](#)). Even then, variant spellings were given in ZH and H, implying that SS was not really necessary, and all of Favereau’s subsequent dictionaries have been in ZH alone. Albert Deshayes’ recent *Dictionnaire étymologique du breton* (2003) used a version of SS but with several rectifications. He is one of the few holdouts for what is clearly becoming an obsolete orthography.

In fact, ZH has been the predominant orthography since the 1970s. Wmffre traces this development in part to the departure of François Falc’hun, an opponent of ZH, from the University of Rennes (l’Université de Haute Bretagne) in 1967, followed two years later by the appointment of Per Denez, a disciple of Hemon’s. This reshuffling of academic personnel resulted in ZH becoming Rennes’ orthography of choice. Additionally, Denez’ *Brezhoneg Buan hag Aes* (1972), for a long time the most widely used introductory Breton coursebook, was written in ZH, and the Diwan schools selected ZH as their official orthography, thus ensuring that *néo-bretonnants* would give priority to this system. But the fact that ZH is more or less the winner of the orthography wars does not necessarily mean that it was the best choice, and clearly in Wmffre’s judgment, it was not. Of the four orthographies launched in the 20th century, he sees ZH as the least adequate for representing the reality of the language. His own preference goes for SS: “There were some difficulties with the SS orthography, but on the whole it constituted an

improved version of the ZH orthography, and it went further in trying to improve the correlation between the written word and all the spoken dialects.” (293)

Wmffre sees the orthography wars as part of a larger debate on the relationship that written Breton should bear to the spoken language. Consequently much of the first volume focuses on 20th century attempts to create a literary Breton standard, and the ways the architects of this standard—notably Hemon—more or less ignored the spoken Breton of the remaining rural native speakers, considering it to be too corrupted by French influence and too unsophisticated to serve as a literary standard. We learn that some of “the ‘friends’ of Breton have been anticipating its demise for most of the twentieth century” in order that, once the traditional, purportedly corrupt speech of the peasants was out of the way, they could proceed with a linguistic reclamation of Brittany unimpeded. It seems impossible that rational people could seriously have held such a view, but Wmffre documents this extensively with quotes from original sources.

It really isn’t until the conclusion of volume one that Wmffre suggests what some readers will have been thinking all along, namely that the differences between the orthographies are really rather trivial, and a fluent reader of Breton should have little or no trouble reading any of them (unlike traditional Vannetais, where substantial lexical and grammatical differences play a role as well). In fact, Wmffre claims that people may not even notice in which orthography a given text is written. In this light it becomes obvious what a waste of time and energy the orthographic wars have been, and one can only wonder what the current fortunes of the Breton language would be like had militants spent less time battling one another and deployed their energies in more fruitful directions. Wmffre attributes the failure to achieve an orthographic consensus largely to Hemon’s and others’ complete refusal to accommodate the other orthographies by agreeing to even the smallest changes in their own. But a good share of the blame for the massive decline of Breton goes to France’s restrictive policies towards its linguistics minorities. Wmffre notes that if France had been more supportive of Breton in its universities, even at the fairly modest levels of neighboring countries such as the UK and Ireland, “it is likely that Hemon would have gained an academic post and would perhaps not have developed such a visceral hatred for the French language” (474-475).

Wmffre has done Breton and Celtic scholars a great service in bringing together so much data in a single place and presenting such dense material in a highly readable format—though the reader will need some background in linguistics in order to make it through the work, especially volume 2. Knowledge of Breton might not be strictly necessary, and Wmffre states in his preface that he sees this book as relevant for scholars working on standardization and orthographic issues in other

languages. For the most part the volumes are well edited, despite numerous typos in some sections (ironically including section 1.2.18 "Other proposed orthographic systems since 1975"). Published quotes are generally given in the Breton original and an English translation. However, quotes in French are frequently left untranslated, so readers should expect to need fairly fluent reading knowledge of academic French. Overall, this is a marvelous piece of scholarship and an invaluable contribution to Breton studies.

ANOTHER NEW BOOK OF NOTE

Eugène Chalm. *La Grammaire Bretonne Pour Tous.*
(Breton grammar for all). An Alarc'h, 2008

Reviewed by Natalie Novik

This is a very recent work by Eugene Chalm, a writer and Breton teacher from the Cap Sizun area. Born in 1919, he died in 2002, having worked for many years for Skol Ober, teaching Breton by correspondence. This enabled him to understand where the stumbling blocks were for his students, which led him to come up with a grammar manual "for idiots" (in French, of course). The presentation is very clear, the chapters well divided, lots of tables, and the inside jacket includes tables of mutations at hand. The end of the book is dedicated to the formation of complex sentences, something that is very useful in order to understand the way Breton speakers think. There is also a French-Breton-French lexicon of grammar terms and an index. His colleagues at Skol Ober contributed to this work. Chalm also prepared a manual of exercises in Breton which should come out shortly.

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR PAPERS

The 2009 Conference of the **North American Association of Celtic Language Teachers (NAACLT)** will be held May 20-24, 2009 at The New York City Irish Center (10-40 Jackson Ave, Long Island City, website: www.nyirish.org/).

Abstracts of up to 200 words are invited for twenty-minute talks, each followed by a ten-minute discussion period, on issues dealing with the teaching, learning, promotion or appreciation of any of the Celtic languages or cultures. Please submit abstracts electronically by April 18, 2009 to Kevin Rottet (krottet@indiana.edu).

More information and sample programs from previous conferences can be found at our website (www.naaclt.org).

KENTEL 13 / LESSON 13

From Natalie Novik

GERIADURIG / VOCABULARY

In this issue of Bro Nevez, you find some notes on Breton costumes, so it is a good time to learn what the various pieces are called. Note that, while they refer in many cases to outfits that people do not wear on a daily basis, many words are also used for contemporary clothing.

Gwiska	to get dressed
Diwiska	to undress
Bragou	pants (pl. brageier)
Porpant	vest
Chupen	jacket f. ar jupenn
Roched	men's shirt
Tok	hat (men only)

The rich embroideries on traditional vests and assorted jackets as well as the style of the hat are distinct for almost each village, and allow people to know immediately where somebody is from.

Hiviz	women's shirt
Sae	dress f. ar zae
Broz	skirt f. ar broz
Tavañjer	apron f. ar davanjer
Koef	coiffe, headdress (women only)

The women's outfits are traditionally even more distinct than the men's, with embroideries not only on the dress or skirt, but also on the apron, and a lace collar matching the coiffe.

Botez	shoes (pl. botou) f. ar votez
Boutou-koad	wooden clogs
Botou-ler	leather shoes

YEZADUR / GRAMMAR

In Lesson 11, we started looking at the verb "to have", which is not necessarily the only verb used to mean possession. But it is a useful verb since it allows you to conjugate other verbs, the same way you would say in English "I have been" or "I have done".

The present tense of the verb "to have" is as follows:

1st person singular	em eus (sometimes am eus)
2nd person singular	ez peus (sometimes az peus)
3rd person sing. masc.	en deus
3rd person sing. fem.	he deus
1st person plural	hon eus
2nd person plural	ho peus
3rd person plural	o deus
indefinite	ez eus

DEEP INSIDE A BRETON SKULL 20 – THE OUTLAW

Jean Pierre Le Mat

This is not very deep in my skull. Images and sounds from the seventies in Brittany... Old times now, whisper my friends. Some say I must thrust these images and sounds deep into oblivion.

The young man was camping alone in a remote glade of Croix-Hamon Valley. His face was almost childish, enlightened by large clear eyes framed by loops of black hair. He moved slowly, controlling the shift of his arms and the balance of his legs. Among the silent trees, he did not have the triumphant and frantic pace of a normal tourist. Apparently, his life was not dependant on any schedule, and his stay in the forest had not been planned like a military campaign.

He breathed the air of the enchanted forest of Broceliande deeply. His hands caressed the trunks of the trees and tested the stability of the stones. Was he a quiet hermit, or a man in love with nature? You can believe that. However, his week's growth of beard and his drawn face corrected the first impression.

This young man was a fugitive. The police forces were searching for him. He could have blown up a public building, or maybe a statue of public interest, similar to those you can see in every city... Oh, he did not have cloven hoofs, nor an evil eye! Nobody, considering his look or his manners, could have suspected he was a terrorist. He was sociable, a hard worker, happy as a lark.

Without any reason, a voice arose one day in his heart. This voice was deep like that of a god, and curiously familiar like that of a father. It dictated acts he could not justify himself. What? Why? The only thoughts that came to him was the proud and terrible motto of the Bretons : " Ret eo" : It is needed...

He took just enough time to pile some clothing into a bag and kiss his girlfriend. Then he fled. He wanted to find shelter in Ireland. On that island, suspicion is diverted by birds, winds, clouds in the sky. This is a godsend for those who want to cover their tracks. Rigid minds and computerized organizations get tangled up in a subtle network of imagination and negligence. Ireland is not a well oiled mechanism. It is not a kind of glowing machine that engineers can admire. Ireland remains, in spite of its flashy modernity, an unexplainably human country.

Our young outlaw went to Roscoff to embark. He imagined a thousand traps on his road, treason at work, armies in ambush. When he arrived at the Blosson ferry harbour, his vision was troubled by the heat of escape. The two sailors who were drinking their beer in silence - that was

disquieting. The grandfather teasing a small child, was that all there was to it? All these people waiting for the ferry, were they just acting as passengers? Were they going to block all the exits, and rush up to him, howling like devils? Will they point a revolver at him? Will they shoot him down? He walked back.

For him, there remained only one way. He had to travel by train and buses to Ploërmel. According to the railway network, a whole day was necessary for such a journey of two hundred miles from north-west to south central Brittany. And from Ploërmel, he had to walk all the night in the countryside. The following morning, his tracks were removed, dissolved in the ruts water of the forest roads.

In the valley of Croix-Hamon, far from inquisitive eyes, the young man had built a rudimentary hut against a rock. The shelter preserved him from rain. Of course, it was not very comfortable. But he was not sorry. On the contrary, looking at his humble home, he shivered with pride. That was the pride of the rebel, his impudence gleaming on his face like a shining moon.



His name was now jumping on the lips of one and another. The ones, in the taverns, raised their glasses of beer to his luck, quivering delightfully in their bold behavior. It is so nice to be bold by proxy.

The others blamed him for a cowardly bombing, and sought means to sentence the guilty bomber. To blame cowardice is very good for the mind. It is another matter to be bold by proxy.

In the Croix Hamon valley, water was pure and fresh. Everything was OK.

The first night, a hare came to the young man and whispered:

" - Yannig, little Yann, welcome to Broceliande! Welcome among the truly alive! Welcome among the underground forces. You will learn the art of watching without being watched. Hidden under our mask, we grip the reality of things and our own reality. Being unnoticed, we catch confidences, we unveil appearances. We decipher the enigmas, we look at the mysteries from underneath. The body is becoming flexible, the mind sharpens.

Mediocrity curses us, and says we are fearful. With its fat fingers and its thick brain, it cannot seize us.

Our gestures are calculated, and our mind controls all our words. There is no living being as conscious as we are, we, the underground forces ..."

Before Yann could give a slight wave, the hare disappeared.

During the day which followed, the young man contemplated the hare's words. He found them right. He never felt so alive, so wide-awake. But to become part of underground life, you need to deserve it. You must act. You must serve a cause. Yann's was Brittany. A cause beyond reason. Madness. Yann smiled. True madresses are foreign to pettiness. That is why they are so bewitching.

Lying in the grass and lost in his thoughts until late, he saw a lonely wild boar, the head white with old age. And the boar said:

" – Yannig, little Yann, welcome to Broceliande! Welcome among the warriors. Those who know the borders of death know also the limits of life. They explore the extremes. Outlines of things and living beings appear to them precisely. They feel heat and cold, light and darkness. They follow their way, smelling the track of heroes, breaking walls with their glance.

The warriors sow generously, on stones and fertile soil, so that new harvests rise up. They go their way, unconcerned, neither by foes nor friends..."

The following day, the young outlaw stayed close to his shelter. He looked at the clouds above him, moving above the trees. He thought of the job he lost, his girlfriend left alone, his anxious mother. He thought that the net was tightening around him. He thought about prison.

The night was falling when an owl flew without noise, and stood on a lower branch. And here is what it told him:

" - Yannig, little Yann, welcome to the enchanted forest of Broceliande! Welcome to the name of beings of my kind, stoned to death, crucified on the doors of the cattle sheds. Welcome in the land of sacrificial victims. Such is your destiny, little Yann.

You wanted glory for your country? You will have to give away what you care for the most.

You love freedom? You will be imprisoned. You will wear shackles and your feet will be put in fetters. Through the dirty windows of your cell, the rays of the sun will be soiled. Silence will be broken by the noise of locks, sound of vulgar radios, and coarse shouts.

You hold onto your good name? You will be slandered. The judges will blame you. They will speak about honesty,

you the fair one. They will speak about loyalty, you the faithful one. They will speak about safety, you the trustful one. You will hear them and you will be ashamed, for you and for them.

You want to live? Maybe you will... But you will keep in your heart the ghost of an unknown war. Death will haunt your dreams. It will point its finger at the people you love, and it will laugh at them..."

The young man was appalled. He could not suffer such words.

" - OK! I know what I am losing. I can even accept it. But things are far from over. Everything is now starting! "

The bird stayed quiet and looked at him severely. Then it spoke again:

" - Yes, something starts, indeed. That is the great mystery of the sacrifice. Sometimes, the death of thousands men does not change anything. And sometimes the sacrifice of only one of them turns everything upside down. It is said that a true sacrifice requires the blood of the noblest ones. Some also said that the salvation of the human race required the blood of God's child. Carried away by thousands of flames of their stake, the sacrificial victims are driven through paths unknown to the survivors. Nobody knows the outcome.

Your travel is beginning, Yannig, little Yann. Will you carry your strange message to its unknown destination?"

In the quiet night of Broceliande, the young man shed bitter tears. Above him, the owl stayed motionless.

And, in its immobility, there was kindness.



An Added Note:

From 1966 to 2001 in Brittany there was a paramilitary movement called FLB-ARB. Its actions were mainly protests through symbolic bombings against statues or public buildings. Dozens of Bretons militants were jailed, suspected of being members of FLB-ARB: priests, students, people from all classes of the Breton society. During the sixties and seventies, FLB-ARB was very

popular in Brittany, because there were no casualties. This changed in 2000 when a bomb at a McDonald's restaurant killed an innocent victim, although this was never proven to be the work of the FLB-ARB or Breton militants of any kind. Long incarcerations of Breton militants suspected of being involved in some way with this bombing have been common. Three Bretons previously acquitted of involvement are due to be retried this November – eight years after they were first held as suspects and four years after they were acquitted. On November 15 an estimated 350 to 500 Bretons gathered to protest this new trial.

To learn more about the FLB-ARB you can consult the book published in 2006 by Lionel Henry and Annick Lagadec, *FLB-ARB, L'histoire 1966-2005* (Yoran Embanner) – see the review in Bro Nevez 98, May 2006



A Traveler's View of Nantes in 1870

In this account of a week-long stay in Nantes, the author—an Englishman or American—finds little good to say about anything in the city. Nor does he or his traveling companion meet anybody they like - whether rich, middle class, or poor. It is not unusual for accounts of travel to Brittany in the 19th century to be written from the perspective of an "enlightened" traveler (British or American) who is appalled to encounter backward, primitive, superstitious, and uncivilized Celts. While this is one of the more negative accounts I have read, it is interesting in its level of descriptive detail. - LK

"Life in Brittany," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* Vol. 41, No. 246, November 1870

I. – A Week at Nantes

We passed out of the Mont Parnasse station, Paris, promptly at half past nine in the evening, and as promptly, at six the next morning, we glided into Nantes, the ancient capital of ducal Brittany. In eight hours and a half we had traversed France from the metropolis nearly to where the shores of Biscay form the western boundary of the empire; and, leaving in the evening the splendid centre of the latest civilization, we awoke amidst a primitive people, whose ideas and habits were in many things those of a by-gone age. Fortunately the early morning sun had awakened us out of that troubled slumber which one snatches as he can when traveling by rail; and during the last two hours of our journey we were able to enjoy to the fullest the singular landscape of the lower Loire.

The Loire, rising in the east of France, and holding an erratic course through its centre, becomes, near Nantes, a broad, deep, and swiftly flowing stream, bordered by meadowy banks, and holding in its bosom a multitude of fertile little islands. The railway runs along its northern bank, following closely the windings of the river. From the carriage window the eye stretches over the lovely islands which are almost

crowded as they lie in the stream, so numerous are they, and beyond them were beautiful meadows, with their quaint villages and plenteous crops, until the sight is bounded by a range of lofty, and here and there craggy hills, whose summit are now thick with chestnut and oak forests, now crowned by an ancient Breton château, and now bearing upon their sides a curious, sleepy village, and on the very summit a stately old church, in singular contrast with its flock of lowly huts. In the Loire itself the busy world of raftsmen and fishermen, of little steamers and pleasure yachts, was already astir; and we were amused to note, among the former, how primitive and old-fashioned was their *modus operandi*; how the rafts were still navigated by long poles planted in the river's bottom, and the sails were those of the Middle Ages; and with what patient, snail-like plodding each man did his allotted work. Afterward it occurred to us that this first glimpse of Breton river-life was a hint of the condition of that province in all respects – material, intellectual, social, and religious; for we discovered that in all things these Bretons were slow and patient; that they clung to old customs, appliances, and thoughts, and hated the new civilization as an impudent intruder; that here, of all sections of France, the old religion held the least disputed sway; that education was backward, learning rare; that the stiff and ceremonious social life which, elsewhere, revolutions had subdued, here remained stagnant, and gave the key-note of communication between man and man.

The first view of Nantes, as we emerged from the station, and were for once pleasantly disappointed in not being forced to pass through a pandemonium of importunate *cochers*, was striking indeed. The station stands at one end of the town upon a slight eminence; and from its porch our view to its further limits was almost uninterrupted. There lay, just awakening to its daily labor, the quaint and fine old city of another age, only just modernized enough to keep life in it.

Just below us the river wound in an abrupt turn, passing on through the midst of the town and flowing rapidly – perhaps merrily, as if not suspecting its defilement by the crowded city – perhaps desperately, as if conscious that it must 'flow on forever,' defiled or not; and now, as it disappeared among the houses, diving into many separate streams, and forming as many crowded and thickly built islands, straight before us, its foundation below the level of the street, stood the ancient castle-palace of the sovereign dukes of Brittany, repaired here and there for present garrison service, but bearing the gloomy and mouldy look of extreme age; while just beyond, on the summit of a hill overlooking the castle, stood the square-towered cathedral, "built," the guide book told us, "in the twelfth century," and now showing indications of the revolutionary desecration which the venerable pile had suffered more than once.

A rickety old city it was, too, as we gazed on it from the station portico. Houses were leaning over against each other, or jutting threateningly over the narrow streets in a must ludicrously drunken fashion; some were sunk below the street, and seemed about to topple into the waters of the Loire; others sought each other's mutual support, and seemed to have made an eternal contract on the principle of "united we stand, but divided we fall." Further down, where

the Loire, passing the populated islands, remingled its waters into one wide sweeping stream, lay the shipping – small vessels mostly, engaged in the coasting trade, and now moored to the fine long quays; to build which the Nantais were forced to give up – and not without much conservative grumbling about “these terrible times” – their favorite shady promenade at the river’s side. The whole place looked so temptingly odd, so refreshingly unique, that we declined the services of the neat little round omnibus which stood ready to accommodate passengers, and made up our minds to walk to the hotel. My companion fortunately knew the “ins and outs” of the town, having been there before, and promised to lead me through its most interesting parts.

It was Saturday; and, for one reason, we could not have hit upon a better day and hour to reach Nantes. It was the great weekly market-day, when the peasants and *bonnes* from all the surrounding neighborhood came in with their various stock, and the fishermen reaped the reward of their last few days’ patient, monotonous toil. It was just the time, my friend said, to see them coming in, and to visit the central “halle.” We passed down the hill from the station, took our course along the street which passed just below the high castle walls, and which bordered the river, where the small tradesmen had already begun to let the light of morning upon their wares, and to prepare for the bartering of the day. Finally we came to a large, open, paved square, one side of which was open toward the quays and the river, and the other three included by tall, ancient buildings, so fantastically decorated with facades and window-carvings that they must once have been the homes of the great, but which were now occupied, in *étages*, by merchants in the lower, and tradespeople and working-people in the upper stories. The square, called the “Place du Marché,” presented a most animated, and even to the traveler wearied with sight-seeing, a most interesting scene; for the market was already open, and the farmers – of who there were far more women and stout, hearty girls than of the sterner sex – were arriving, with their odd-looking wagons of every shape, size and beast of burden, filled to the top with fruits and vegetables. There were booths made of wood, some with canvas, others with wooden roofs, open on every side, and supplied with stalls fitted to receive the various produce; while the poorer market-people – those who could not afford the tax for the luxury of a booth – were fain to content themselves with a rude table surmounted by a huge cotton umbrella, or even to spread a cloth upon the pavement, deposit their wares thereon, and deliberately squat down on the ground beside it.

It may not be known to all of my readers that in Brittany each village or commune has its peculiar costume – no two having the same; and it is also a matter of pride with the rustic folk that their distinctive dress shall be as unique and showy as possible. The effect of this lively market scene, therefore, was vastly enhanced by the great variety of color and form in the *coifs* and shawls, the shoes and skirts of the women – these having come from some dozen or twenty villages within a range of fifteen miles around Nantes. There was, indeed, little difference in the dress of the men – the empire of dress being conducted, in that primitive district, as all the world over, to women; it was upon the persons of the *bonnes* that you observed more especially the peculiarities of the

costumes. The *coifs*, or head-caps, were the most noticeable feature of the women’s attire; and, although neatness is by no means a Breton trait, the Breton women are not only very proud of the starch cleanliness and fineness of their *coifs*, but will often purchase one – so as to outdo their neighbors – with the earnings of a month’s hard drudgery. And here, on the market square, was a perfect sea of these dazzling white coifs; some flat and broad at the back, some long and tunnel-like, extending parallel behind the head, some perpendicular and rising high above the forehead, some resembling the familiar cap of the Venetian doges, some more simple, fitting close to the skull and adorned by long, fanciful strings reaching to the waist. Their dresses had the peculiarity of extending from the arms, without tapering in the least, to the middle, being as large below as above; and they all wore little shawls fastened in front, and as various in shape, color and decoration as were the localities from which they came. The men were mostly habited in short jackets, with high, close vests, broad-brimmed hats, leggings, and huge wooden shoes called *sabots*, turning up at the end, and held to the foot by a single strap.

But these people themselves, their physiognomies and manners, were quite as curious as their costumes. Mostly rather under medium height, they were solidly and compactly built, their features were hard, sunburnt, and positive, and their whole appearance that of a stolid, sturdy, hard-plodding, obstinate, persevering peasantry. Energy was written upon every face, but energy of an ignorant and dogged sort. Their movements were deliberate, and, except that all over the square an incessant chattering was kept up, there seemed to be little in common between these rude Celts of the west and what are generally regarded as traits of the French character. Brittany was the last of those provinces, which now compose the French empire, to submit to Roman domination; the last to give up Druidical government and worship which, even to our modern eyes, had something about it imposing and grand in its simplicity; and the last to receive that mixed civilization which began to fructify in France under the Merovingian kings. It will probably, be the last to break away from its superstitious allegiance to papal Rome.

It is here, therefore, of all France, that you find the purest remains of the Celtic race; and that the hardy and stubborn traits of the Celt, discoverable also in Wales and the Scottish highlands, are still to be found in the ideas and manners of the people. These market-people exhibited a very marked contrast to the peasantry in other parts of France. Sharp at a bargain, shrewd in judging physiognomy and character, quick to seize an advantage, wonderfully clever in the art of bartering, their movements were yet heavy, their faces dull, and their sense harder and more positive than sparkling or versatile. When the buying and selling began it was amusing to witness the haggling and beating down, the fist-shaking and screaming, the rivalry between neighboring vendors, the blunt humor and quaint retorts, the general hubbub and clamor which ensued. Although a primitive people, as far as their backwardness in civilization and their seclusion from the line of travel and the centres of enterprise are concerned, they are, as I had good reason to know during my visit, by no means primitively honest. To that obscure corner of the continent has penetrated the familiar legend that the pockets

of Englishmen and Americans are exhaustless, and their “gullibility” boundless; and a single glance of their sharp Breton eye is enough to convince them whether he who stands before them be or not an Anglo-Saxon victim, ready for the sacrifice ...

We left the market, after thoroughly enjoying the scene, and passed up the hilly Rue Crebillon – the principal thoroughfare of Nantes, but as narrow and gloomy-looking as the Roman Corso – and, reaching the top, found ourselves in the principal square to the city. It was an oldish, stately, musty-looking square, on the very crest of the hill. On one side stood the theatre, built in the Pantheon style, with a row of high columns supporting an ornate façade, and surmounted by statues of nine very lugubrious Muses, each one of whom having paid the penalty for being patiently graceful for centuries by having lost some limb or other part equally necessary to the symmetry of the human figure. Two sides of the square were composed of high, ancient buildings, uniform in construction and ornament, the upper stories occupied by families and the lower by cafés, restaurants, and billiard halls. On the fourth side stood the grim and gloomy-looking Hôtel de France – where we were to tarry – which has been for centuries now the best hotel of Nantes, and has the same staid, stand-still look which both the general appearance of the old town and the people themselves present.

Entering the hotel court, we were almost awe-struck by the sphere of stately tranquility, of venerable dullness, in which we found ourselves. It was monastery-like in its stillness. We were ushered to a grand and gloomy apartment, which we might almost have imagined to be the well-preserved sleeping-chamber of some merchant of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The furniture was ponderous and old-fashioned; there were antique clocks and vases and mirrors and curtains and fauteuils; the bed was very low, but supplied with a lofty canopy and obstinately immovable drapery; there was the oaken floor of the olden time, with its neatly disposed pieces and its dangerously slippery gloss; gas was wholly wanting – indeed, it is vulgar at Nantes to use gas in the chambers and saloons, it being considered as only fit to light the kitchens and back entries; there were no water conveniences, such as one expects nowadays in first-class hotels, but only to old-fashioned bowl, basin, and ewer; and everything, indeed, seemed to have remained just as we found it, from a time beyond the memory of living men.

[Our traveler goes on to complain about not being able to get breakfast and he and his companion sit out on a balcony to observe life below – especially vendors. Here are his reflections ...]

The traveler who awakens on his first morning in Paris – especially if he be of an economical habit, and lodges in the Latin quarter – is almost inclined to imagine himself in a vast lunatic asylum. He is appalled by a chorus of weird shrieks and cries, many-keyed and discordant, loud and feeble, far and near; when looking out the window he is surprised to find these startling sounds issuing from hard-featured costermongers or dapper little peasant women, who are busily engaged in selling their pears and artichokes, cherries and potatoes. But, in this respect, Nantes quite outdoes the great

metropolis; and I observed that, at Nantes, nearly all the hawkers are women, and that each had chosen a sort of strange tune or strain, peculiar to herself, which she sung without change day after day. It would puzzle the most accomplished of French linguists, if he did not have a peep into their baskets, to find out from their cries what they were attempting to sell. These women, who, like the market-people, were mostly from the neighboring rural districts, were usually dressed with scrupulous neatness, their long *coifs* white and shining with starch, and their aprons, fresh from the iron, carefully tied with long, wide strings which fell behind; they had cheerful, hardy, sun-burnt, but rather keen and shrewish countenances, which seemed to say, “Here’s for a bargain, and if you don’t buy, I’ll bite ye!” Peculiarly strange were the cries of the shrimp and sardine women, for the reader need hardly be told that Nantes is the great sardine emporium of the world, that delicious fish being caught in the Bay of Biscay near by, and preserved by the large establishments of the Breton capital. The sardine women sell them fresh, or as nearly fresh as possible – for so very delicate is this fish that it is necessary to salt it as soon as it is caught; and their cry is a wild, high-keyed shriek, and fairly startles you, it is so seemingly painful.

Probably there are no harder-working people in the world than these Breton peasant women, whose cries distract one in the early morning. Usually the wives and daughters of suburban farmers, they aid in the tilling and panting of the ground; tend the crops during their growth; gather the fruit and vegetables when they are ripe; load their little carts or heavy baskets, bring them into town, and go hour after hour over the stony street until they have completed their extensive round, screaming at the top of their lungs, and gathering a few *sous* with difficulty here and there; then, their hard day’s work completed, trudging back with their carts and baskets to their distant country home. There are such workers in that frivolous and unthinking France, which we are apt, from a superficial view only, to believe wholly given over to indolence and dissipation. When you learn with what patient labor these creatures earn their daily bread, you are no longer inclined to lie, mentally denouncing them for disturbing your morning nap; you will, now and then, spend spare pennies upon their wares, and not regret it; for sympathy with the trials of the lowly embodies, as well as gratifies, the right-feeling man. ...

[Our traveler here launches into complaints on the amount of time merchants – especially – spend in cafés drinking hock and absinthe, playing cards, sharing gossip ...]

... The Nantes merchant, although shrewd and active when he is at his warehouse, leads a very easy, indolent existence. ...

We had gone to Nantes to see and study society far from the much-traveled routes; and our week there was not wanting in many interesting experiences. We wandered with delight about the old Breton town, unharrassed by *commissionaires*, able to dispense with guides both human and red-bound, and without meeting at every turn a group of sight-see-ers “doing” the town according to Murray. We sauntered along the quays of the Loire, where the sun, even in October, beat

remorselessly down upon us; and observed the curious river life – the sailors in their broad hats, the coast-wise vessels with their freights, the ugly little steamers plying up and down the river. We took the huge flat ferry-boat, and for a *sou* crossed the rapid river, and betook ourselves into the neighboring country, where we found the oddest little broken-down villages, with their long roofs almost touching the ground, their one-sided, ancient churches, and their straggling, rickety, single street; found, here and there, Druidical stones and Roman remains; rambled along the rustic roads for many miles, having on either side of us a vast expanse of vineyards, their fruit just now yielded up, extending as far as eye could reach; and observed that every where the women were the hardest workers, and had the brawniest arms, and seemed far more patient and enduring than their lords.

We went back to the city over the many bridges which span the islands of the Loire, joining together the distant banks; and on these islands saw many sorrowful sights of want and filth, and the savageness of an unlettered people which only earns its bread, and scantily that; for these islands, once beautiful in verdure and fertility, as are those further up the river, are now thickly populated, and with the poorest and worst classes of the city. ...

... But, as men and women in this world are far more curious than the places they inhabit, our chief pleasure consisted in observing the manners and customs, the traditions superstitions, and opinions of this population, far away from the centres of civilization and cleaving to those ideas which to us seem, in this age, amusingly ill placed.

At the east end of the city, just beyond the cathedral, is a long and pleasant avenue, shaded by umbrageous trees, and reached by a broad flight of steps at either end. The houses which face it are old, lofty, and substantially built. Here live the descendants of the proud old Breton aristocracy – perhaps the haughtiest and most exclusive in the world. Here they live on, year after year, associating only with each other, seldom appearing in the outer world, leading an almost hermit-like existence, devoted children of the Romish church, looking with ineffable contempt on the Emperor and all his adherents, observing with pious veneration the anniversary of the death of Louis XVI, awaiting the return of the Bourbons to the throne, and condoling with each other, gloomily longing for the days that are gone. [*The traveler goes on along these lines for several paragraphs*] ...

The mercantile community, which resides for the most part at the western end of the city, is hardly more social and hospitable than the proud old aristocracy which contemns it. To strangers they are uncommunicative and slow to make social advances. They are purse-proud, as others are family-proud. They move in their own circles, have their peculiar habits and pleasures, and pass their lives in a certain groove, with little variety or excitement. They leave town with the first signs of approaching spring, their houses are closed, and they return only when the frosts and bleak storms of November warn them that the country will soon be insupportable. Unlike the mercantile class of England, and, indeed, of most civilized countries, they show little public

spirit; invention, the triumphs of science, educational improvement, politics, the sanitary, moral, and material condition of their city, seem to have but little interest for them ... [*The traveler goes on at length about the dull life of this class, their indulgence in lounging around at clubs and the inbred customs of arranging marriages of the right sort.*]

The lower classes at Nantes are as easy going, as fond of their few amusements, as unimpressible – more so, if possible – by modern ideas, as their social superiors. Their day's work done, their steps tend toward the cabarets, where they spend their earnings on the hot white wines of the district; then, in parties of a dozen, they will interlock arms and go bawling through the streets till far into the night. On Sundays they attire themselves in their best suits, and ramble into the country, or sail or row on the river, or repair to some rustic inn, where they dance, drink and gamble the livelong day. Very few can read or write, none seem to be ambitious to better their condition. If they earn enough to satisfy their pleasures, *pour passer le temps*, after work is over, they are quite content. Drunkenness is more frequently met with than in Paris; there are certain streets in Nantes where, go when you may, you are certain of seeing miserable people reeling about, or lying stupefied at the doors and on the sidewalks. Beggary is common, and the beggars importunate. The ragged little urchins of the street will follow you square after square, running after you, and with piteous accents implore you for one *petit sou*; yet, if you give them none, will go skipping off singing some rude song, or cutting some capers as only a French *gamin* can. The Breton peasant, while naturally fierce and passionate, has a great capacity for keeping his temper, and brawls are happily few and far between.

There is no more striking proof of the stagnant condition of Brittany than the fact that the population of Nantes has decreased within three years from 113,000 to 111,000 inhabitants. Thirty miles below, where the Loire empties its broad stream into the stormy Bay of Biscay, a town is growing up, draining the life out to the old capital, and multiplying with a rapidity which reminds one of our own far Western settlements. The tide of civilization seems to have swept by Nantes, and to have left there but few vestiges of its passage. Ignorance and superstition still cling to it, and dominate it. Even Protestantism, which has timidly penetrated into this strong-hold of the old Church, has caught the drowsy influence of the place, and makes no progress. A week was long enough to stay, and we were glad to get back to Paris, and find ourselves once more in a wide-awake city, frivolously brilliant though it was.



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

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

Who are the Members of the ICDBL?

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

What the does the U.S. ICDBL do?

With Members of the U.S. ICDBL dispersed in 356 of the 51 States of the U.S. -- from Maine to Florida, from Alaska to California, and lots of states in between—we do not hold meetings or have the ability to carry out many projects as a group.

Quarterly Newsletter for Members and Subscribers

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

In the 3,000+ pages of **Bro Nevez** produced so far, over 800 books from Brittany have been reviewed or noted, and over 300 Breton music recordings have been reviewed and an additional 550 new releases briefly described.

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

On our website we have published a guide to Breton music (updated in 2006), a guide to learning materials for

the Breton language, an introduction to and map of the Celtic languages, a presentation of the Diwan Breton language immersion schools, and two documents presenting the Breton language and why it is endangered and what is being done about it. Bretons themselves have created many great websites to present their country and its culture, and we provide links to a large number of excellent and reliable sites created by Bretons themselves.

Other Action

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

More direct support for the Breton language ...

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

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

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

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

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