

# BRO NEVEZ

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



Brittany Takes a Stand

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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## From the Editor :

My apologies for a May newsletter that arrives to you in June. As you can imagine, it take a great deal of time to put together some 20 pages of information. So I welcome the very interesting "travel report" from the U.S. ICDBL President, David Brûlé, which you will find below. I hope to hear more from U.S. ICDBL members who might have the good fortune to travel to Brittany, or who might want to share news of a good book, CD, or website about Brittany that you have discovered and enjoyed.

Lois Kuter



## En Ur Foetan Hent

David Brûlé

Any month spent in Brittany is a good month. The month of May is even better than most. Family obligations once again brought us back to the homestead in the Argoat along the river Oust. Situated not too far from the haunting forest of Quenecan and the ruins of the 11<sup>th</sup> century Abbaye de Bon Repos (translated as "Diskouiz Mad", on many road signs here!), in the former family farm called the Guerniaux ("Boggy place with alders"), we settled in for the month. Other than family chores, I permitted myself to focus in on getting up to speed with what was happening in the aspects of the Breton world that interest me most: the language, the music, and Diwan Landerne.

It didn't take long to find another tale of duplicity and obfuscation coming from the government in Paris. In the May 12 edition of Ouest France, there appeared a picture of "Bretons at the Elysée Palace" all smiles, with President Sarkozy also smiling, accompanied an article describing a luncheon for the Bretons. Interestingly, Patrick Le Lay, former CEO of TF1 and moving force behind the invitation of the Breton entrepreneurs to meet the President, had something to say about the Breton language at the conclusion of the luncheon. He invoked and stressed the pressing need for France to recognize, once and for all, the importance of its regional languages. Smiles from Sarko and the nodding of heads all around. That was reassuring. End of luncheon, with the President rushing off to meet some representatives of the fishing industry. So that put me in a hopeful mood to continue searching for other encouraging signs.

Hmmm. There soon will be an unusual voyage of a giant yellow animated butterfly, which will visit historical sites along the Nantes-Brest Canal. The butterfly's image will

be projected onto the walls of the various buildings in town along the canal. Sounds...original.

Another interesting bit of news involved Diwan: a new Master's program will be opening up under the auspices of Kelenn, the Diwan teacher training center. Up to now, future teachers of Breton need to complete a Masters in European studies and Breton language. This new Diwan-crafted Master's will be far more suitable for preparing teachers to meet the needs of young learners of Breton.

Two days later, however, my little bubble of feeling good was burst by a follow-up article to the friendly luncheon at the Elysée. Two days after the meeting, the Ministry of National Education announced that the CAPES for Breton, Basque, Corsican, Catalan, and Occitan would be eliminated for 2012! This came out of the blue and was considered a deliberate provocation, especially after the old-boy smiles all around at the luncheon. Breton leaders reacted rapidly, and Ronan Le Coadec, professor at Rennes stated that "the Certificate of Professional Aptitude for Secondary Education (CAPES) is the only way to recruit new teachers for *colleges* and *lycées*". Without it, of course, recruitment and placement would disappear. After a weekend of outpouring of anger and frustration by Bretons and their representatives, including Jean-Yves Le Drian, president of the Regional Council of Brittany, and Christian Menard, representing Finistère and a member of the UMP, Sarkozy's party, the Minister of National Education changed his mind. The CAPES, extinct for a weekend would be reinstated for 2012 after all. The whole maneuver was interpreted as a classic French political trial balloon, to see how much reaction and ire it would attract. It attracted plenty. The Ministry backtracked, but as mentioned above, a more innovative Master's degree could perhaps eventually replace the CAPES.

To add variety to the experience of the above *douche écossaise*, a few happy acquisitions came my way. I purchased the *Atlas de Bretagne* created by Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez and Divi Kervella, and published by Coop Breizh this year. A collection of close to 135 maps, each dedicated to a specific theme, making this a very handy and usable guide to all sorts of topics from meteorology and geology, to architecture, languages and dialects, the historic evolution of language regions, battles, history and environmental aspects, to name a few. It's a bilingual publication with the Breton text written by Kervella, who is also the author of the Breton Assimil method. Bodlore-Penlaez is also the author of the *Atlas of European Nations Without a State (Atlas des Nations sans État en Europe)* This is a large format, 150 page book, very colorful and easy to use, an indispensable resource portraying what was, and has become Brittany in all its complexity (see the review in *Bro Nevez* 116, November 2010)..

Another item that made its way into this year's collection is a new CD by Gweltaz Ar Fur. He celebrated his retirement from owning and managing the landmark bookstore *Ar Bed Keltiek* in Quimper by releasing an original collection of songs in Breton, of course. Backed by exceptional musicians such as Christian Le Maitre, Soig Sibénil, and Patrice Marzin, Gweltaz covers a range of themes and styles, with a richness and fervor in his



voice that has lost none of its appeal over the years. Gweltaz was one of the original founders and supporters of the Diwan movement, and his charming tune "Demat Diwan" immediately became one of my favorites. His son Keven is now a Diwan teacher, and his two grandchildren are attending Diwan schools.

In fact, a last project during my month was to make the trek to Diwan Landerne to visit principal Sandra Thépot and her classes. What was foremost in mind was to find out how the wildly unpopular education "reforms" by the Sarkozy government were affecting the Diwan school we try to help.\* More than 16,000 teaching positions are to be eliminated under Sarko's austerity campaign, causing outrage among parent groups all over France, some of whom have begun occupying schools, staging sit-ins and demonstrations. The loss of so many teachers will of course raise class sizes, and contribute to the increasing disarray of French education. Sandra cautiously expressed relief in that no Diwan Landerne teaching positions were to be eliminated in this round of cuts, so for the time being the contingent of three teachers is hanging on. The relationship between the government in Paris and the Diwan system is so complex, however, it's very difficult to remain optimistic.

The budget in her school continues to be very tight, with the mayor of Landernau proceeding with a yearly increase in rent without providing any funds or support for the upkeep of the school buildings.\*\* Everything, including plumbing problems and painting the classrooms is done by parent volunteers. On another note, there are several second-hand computers, but they are rarely up and running. Some parents with technological skills have helped to trouble-shoot, but the problems are chronic. To remain viable and competitive, the school really should provide the opportunity to students to access the net, as in other schools. Perhaps this could be a good fund-raising goal for the U.S. ICDBL to undertake: to provide our Landernau school with at least one computer that could be a dependable anchor for the little network of the Diwan classrooms.

After the seriousness of our conversation with Sandra, the 6<sup>th</sup> graders came back in from sports outside in the courtyard, and got to enthusiastically grill me on the topic of North American wildlife. Everything from snapping turtles and rattlesnakes to iguanas, horses, moose and skunks got thorough attention! They're really into animals. I did coax them into teaching me the seasons and associated weather expressions in Breton, and for awhile we had a trilingual dynamic going on. Yet our afternoon visit was short, and we were anxious to get back to the interior and the Argoat before dark.

Already our month was ending, and the train trip back to Paris was approaching as we reluctantly headed eastward away from Landernau.

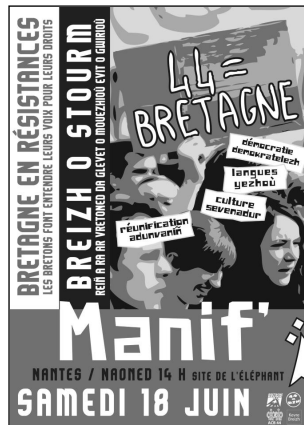
Editor's Notes:

\* The U.S. ICDBL has had a supportive role for Diwan and especially Skol Diwan Landerne since 1992 when Lois Kuter was asked to become that school's "godmother."

\*\* This May the Lesneven Diwan school – one of the largest, with 100 children – learned that it would be expected to pay four times the current rent in the coming year for its school buildings. This was a rude awakening as the school prepares to celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in June.

## Brittany Takes A Stand

On June 18 Bretons have been called to demonstrate their opposition to the splitting off of the Loire-Atlantique department by the Pétain government during Nazi occupation of Brittany 70 years ago. June 30, 1941, is the date of the decree which cut off this elemental portion of Brittany. This June 2011 gathering is in Nantes, a major city on the Loire River which is at the heart of Brittany's history. This is certainly not the first big demonstration to be held in Nantes to speak out for reunification and for Brittany.



This demonstration also has the aim to speak out against cultural uniformity and to speak up for cultural and linguistic diversity and identity within France and to bring these demands to the attention of the President and French government (and future candidates in the 2012 presidential election).

The English language version of information on the website getting information out about this demonstration translates "La Bretagne en Résistances" as "Resisting

Brittany" which gives the unfortunate sense that we are acting in resistance to Brittany (like one would resist the urge to eat a piece of cake, or some other bad habit). Yes, it can also be interpreted to mean that Brittany is the one making an act of resistance. But, a better translation would be "Brittany In Resistance," "Brittany In Defiance," or "Brittany Hanging Tough." My preference is for "Brittany Taking A Stand."

The website [www.bretagne-en-resistance.eu](http://www.bretagne-en-resistance.eu) has the following to say about this June 18 gathering (my translation of the French version).

*70 years ago, on June 30, 1941, Marshal Pétain, head of a State submitted to Nazi occupation, signed a decree which amputated the Nantes Pays from Brittany. This decree created a precedent to maintain a partition of Brittany.*

*Brittany is Taking a Stand – against uniformity, for democracy, for cultural and linguistic diversity, for the respect of our identity, and for the reunification of Brittany.*

*En 2011 Bretons continue to take a stand against uniformity to defend cultural and linguistic diversity, their identity, and to demand reunification of Brittany.*

*This stand is mobilized on a daily basis by a network of strong associations who work in solidarity, sometimes with the support of local communities or networks of Breton businesses.*

*In Nantes on June 18, 2011, Bretons will express fully their will to stand firm to the President, the Government and future candidates in the presidential election of 2012.*

*Brittany Takes a Stand for Democracy  
For a Republic truly decentralized as found elsewhere throughout Europe which allows territories and populations to have the legal and financial means to take on local development where there is a balance of power. For the respect of international and European law. (Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, convention cadre pour la protection des minorités nationales 1995, Charte de Droits Fondamentaux de l'EU inscribed in the treaty of Lisbon signed in 2007 which protects minorities and which States must respect ...)*

*Brittany Takes a Stand for Cultural Diversity  
For the development of non-commercial practices and the support of cultural associations by public powers. For political policies which insure the development of a people's culture, not an official or commercial culture. For ambitious political action for public policies to support Breton culture (publishing, audiovisual, dance, music, artistic creation and distribution ...)*

Brittany Takes a Stand for Linguistic Diversity  
*For ambitious political action for public policies to support linguistic diversity.*

*For an official recognition for our languages (Breton and Gallo) with the means to allow for their transmission and development in education, media, and the public sphere, and for the ratification by France of the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages.*

Brittany Takes a Stand for Our Identity  
*For teaching and reaching out to the wider public to make known the elements which constitute the Breton part of our individual and collective identity (language, history, geography, literature, arts ...)*

Brittany Takes a Stand for Reunification  
*To finally respond positively to the ongoing requests by elected officials, the Breton population and citizens (2/3<sup>rd</sup> of Bretons are in favor of reunification).*

*To give Brittany new capacities for public policies in favor of development of its territory, for employment, and for cultural and linguistic diversity.*

*To give Brittany the weight needed to negotiate with the State and the European Union for measures which will insure a respect for its choices and its identity.*

*To give Brittany a truly dynamic economic durability.*

*Bretons Take a Stand for a Brittany that is beautiful, prosperous, interdependent and open to the world!*

When Bretons gather it is natural to close an event with music – most often a fest noz, but in this case there will be a free concert. And certainly this will attract a large number with a line-up that includes Hip-Hop from the group Unité Maü Maü from Rennes, pop-rock in the Breton language with Nolwenn Korbell, a quick presentation of Breton history from Alan Simon and guests, électro-ciné-pop by the group Costik from Nantes, and the musically militant Breton punk-rock group Ramoneurs de Menhirs with traditional singer Louis Ebrel.

The following organizations are collaborating in the organization of this demonstration. They bring together a large number of associations and thousands of Bretons who work year-round in support of Brittany.

#### **Bretagne Réunie**

Site Internet : <http://www.bretagne-reunie.org>

#### **44=Breizh**

Site Internet : <http://www.44breizh.com>

#### **Kevre Breizh**

Site Internet : <http://kevre.overblog.com>

#### **Agence Culturelle bretonne de Loire-Atlantique Morvan Lebesque**

Site Internet : <http://a.c.b.free.fr/>

#### **Institut Culturel de Bretagne**

Site Internet : <http://icb.culture-bretagne.org/>

#### **Collectif breton pour la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme**

Site Internet : <http://www.collectifbreton.eu>



## **Gouel Breizh – Festival of Brittany**

Each year Brittany and Bretons worldwide celebrate their heritage in what is called Gouel Breizh / Fête de la Bretagne. This is the newer, more secular, name for what has been known as Gouel Sant Erwan (Saint Yves) which is celebrated in May and which has become for Bretons around the world what Saint Patrick's Day is for the Irish. Each year this event serves as a showcase for Breton arts and music. From May 13 to 22, Brittany hosted over 200 events – music, festoù-noz, theater, and others – incorporated into this festival. And Bretons in other regions of France and in other countries – the U.S. and Canada, China, Viet-Nam, Tunisia, and Slovakia – also organized events.

Here are two interesting events organized as part of Gouel Breizh.



## **Brittany and Wales Sing Together Gouel Bro Gozh ma Zadoù and the Bro Gozh Committee**

[www.brogozhmazadou.com](http://www.brogozhmazadou.com)

From May 14-19 as part of the Festival of Brittany and the annual celebration of Sant Erwan, the Committee for the Bro Gozh ma Zadoù (Old

Country of my Fathers) organized a series of concerts in all five of Brittany's Departments where Breton and Welsh choirs performed together.

The Welsh choir Côr Meibion Blaenporth performed with the Breton choral groups Mouezh Paotred Breizh, the Chorale Anna Vreizh, Les Choralines Korholen, Kanerion an Oriant, Mouezh Bro Konk and the choral group Awel Dreger. The choir also performed at the



Diwan middle school in Nantes and the Diwan school of Lorient and no doubt students shared song there too.

The Bro Gozh Committee was created in 2003 to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Breton National Anthem which was adopted by the Breton Regionalist Union in 1903. The Breton anthem was directly inspired by the Welsh national anthem and while this was adopted in Brittany in earlier versions, it was the adaptation by Taldir Jafrennou which stuck. Today, as the Bro Gozh is heard more frequently at sports events (like soccer games) and other events in Brittany, the Committee also serves to assist people with information and performance. Just insuring that people can easily find the song text and music is a mission fulfilled so that Bretons will be encouraged to include the anthem more often at events.

The Bro Gozh Committee has an excellent website (in Breton and French) where the history of this anthem and its Welsh links are explored. And on this website you can find the full text (with a French translation), transcriptions of the music, and a number of performances on various instruments, choir and orchestra. And there are clips of performances by Alan Stivell, Nolwenn Le Roy, Marie Martin, and the singing of the Bro Gozh at the soccer championship in 2009 when two Breton teams from Guingamp and Rennes played (see Bro Nevez 110, May 2009). And you can watch a film created by Mikael Baudu (with Gengolo Filmloù and France 3) about the Bro Gozh and its links to Wales which also includes a number of performances.

The Bro Gozh Committee has also created a new prize the "Prix Bro Gozh" to be given each year to the person or organization that has best promoted the Breton national anthem. This year the prize was given to Alan Stivell on May 14 in Rennes during the performance there.

## **BZH New York and Gouel Breizh**

This is the fifth year that BZH-New York has joined in the worldwide celebration of Gouel Breizh

This year BZH-New York organized several events to celebrate the exchange of traditional and contemporary cultures. A concert on May 18<sup>th</sup> involved a blend of music of India, Brittany, and the jazz world. On Saturday, May 21, a big fest noz was held featuring musicians from Brittany Sylvain Barou, Ronan Pellen, and the group Ndiarz (Yann LeCorre, Youen LeCam, Jean Marie Nivaigne).



While masters of traditional Breton dance music, these musicians have also explored other world and Celtic traditions and they were also part of the concert where musicians of the jazz, Breton and Indian music traditions tested their improvisational skills.

Year-round action ... [www.bzh-ny.org](http://www.bzh-ny.org)

BZH-NY is active year-round in a variety of activities to link Bretons in the New York City area to each other and to anyone interested in Brittany and its culture. This April BZH-New York offered its first Breton language course for beginners and for more advanced students by Breton professor Dewi Siberil. Despite a weeknight time, the back room of the Tout Va Bien Restaurant in New York City was loaded with some 20 eager learners.

To get an idea of the BZH New York Gouel Breizh events this May check out the following sites:

(interviews in French)

[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xiyzqc\\_updated-bretagne-vid\\_music](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xiyzqc_updated-bretagne-vid_music)

(Interviews in English)

<http://www.dailymotion.com/BZH-NY#videoid=xiwtbg>

(World Music event)

<http://www.dailymotion.com/BZH-NY#videoid=xixgcb>

## **Gouel Broadel ar Brezhoneg – National Festival of the Breton Language**

June 10-12 in Cavan

Not to be confused with Gouel Breizh, this is a festival to celebrate the Breton language. After a ten-year absence this festival was revived last year in the town of Cavan (Kawan) and attracted some 6,000 people. It returns to Cavan this year for a long weekend in June. The festival will feature music and dance, theater, storytelling, activities for children, traditional games, films, and a conference and original performances featuring the work of the poet Anjela Duval.

Some of Brittany's best traditional singers will demonstrate the important place of this language in Brittany's rich musical heritage. And there will be a strong line-up of innovative groups who will show just how much creativity is still possible in the Breton language. This is an enjoyable way to immerse oneself in the Breton language and its contemporary use in performance and everyday life.

For more information:

[www.gouelbroadelarbrezhoneg.org](http://www.gouelbroadelarbrezhoneg.org)

## Book Prizes for Works in the Breton Language



One way to encourage the development of the use of the Breton language by writers and readers is to establish prizes to recognize excellence.

A new Prize for Breton Literature has been launched by the city of Vannes and its first recipient will be announced at the 2011 Salon du Livre to be held there June 17-19. A five member jury has selected seven works to be considered for the prize.

*Kan ar mein* by Mich Beyer, published by An Alarc'h  
*Traoù kouer* by Herve Bihan, published by Al Liamm  
*Sonata in E. Minor* by Kristian Brisson, published by Mouladurioù Hor Yezh  
*Kergelenn* by Herve Gouedard, published by Al Liamm  
*Ar marc'h glas* by Riwal Huon, published by Al Liamm  
*Buhez prevez Lola P.* by Maïwenn Morvan, published by Emgleo Breiz  
*Ar gitar tredan* by Jakez-Erwan Mouton, published by An Alarc'h

There are a number of literary prizes for books produced by Bretons – in French and Breton. The following are prizes I know of that are given annually for works in the Breton language:

Priz Xavier de Langlais – This was created in 1976 by Madame de Langlais to remember her husband who was a well known writer and artist.

Prix Per Roy – This is a prize that has been given since the early 1980s by the Association des Écrivains Bretons (Unvaniezh Skrivagnerien Breizh) for a work in the Breton language.

Prix Imram – This prize has been given since 1984 and is named after a work by its first recipient Maodez Glanndour. It is administered by the Maison Internationale des Poètes et des Écrivains in Saint Malo and recognizes the totality of works of an author and sometimes a songwriter.

Prix Sten Kidna – This is a prize given by the town of Bono (near Auray) for new fiction works (usually a novel) in Breton.

Priz danevelloù Ti-Kêr Karaez – This is a prize given by the City of Carhaix during the Festival du Livre en Bretagne held there annually.

France 3 television station and the organization *Produit en Bretagne* (see below) give a number of prizes to encourage creativity in the Breton language in writing,

music, theater and other endeavors, and literature is a category included in the annual awards they give.



## Produit en Bretagne Produet e Breizh Produced in Brittany

[www.produitenbretagne.com](http://www.produitenbretagne.com)

This organization was created in 1994 to promote companies and businesses of Brittany and products that serve to give a positive Breton “branding.” Today it has 260 members which employ some 100,000 people. The logo you see here – which is a distinctive yellow and blue - can be found on the products of its member companies and this will tell you that the product was “Made in Brittany.”

### Marketing in the Breton Language

If you explore the *Produit en Bretagne* website you will find a section called *Lexique / Geriadurig / Lexicon* which lists over 200 terms in French/Breton/English one might need in doing business in Brittany or in shopping for products of all kinds. This listing includes a short paragraph that describes the mission of *Produit en Bretagne*:

*Evit diorren armerzh ha sevenadur Breizh, broudañ ar perzhded, doujañ an endro ha diorren an implij.*

*For an economic and cultural development of Brittany, to promote quality, respect of the environment and employment growth.*

Here's a sample of some words (French / Breton / English) included in this useful list:

adhesion / emzeladur / membership  
boite / boest / box  
boisson / evaj / a drink  
client / arval / customer  
entreprise / embregerezh / company  
goût / blaz / taste  
marque / merk / brand  
métier / micher / job  
plat de résistance / pennveuz / the main course  
réunion, rencontre / emvod / meeting  
salarié / goprad / employee  
viande et volaille / kig ha kig-yer / meat and poultry  
vente / gwerzh / sale

### Prizes for Breton Music 2011

*Produit en Bretagne* also supports Breton products by awarding prizes, and since 1999 has had one for books and for music recordings. This is a way to support

publishers and music producers of Brittany and the writers and musicians who reflect an ever evolving Breton culture. These companies also offer employment to people of Brittany and contribute to the economy.

In 2001 a jury made up of professionals in the world of music production and promotion reviewed over 30 new CDs to select five winners. These CDs have been briefly noted in past issues of Bro Nevez, but by going to their websites you can get great images and sound samples which give a far better introduction to their work. On May 20 these artist received their prizes at an evening event organized by Produit en Bretagne and the City of Vannes.

Grand Prize for a Recording:

Roland Becker, *Immrana* (Oyoun Muzik Productions, Diffusion Coop Breizh)  
Master of bombard and saxophone, Roland Becker uses his knowledge of Breton tradition in compositions that are always interesting. [www.rolandbecker.com](http://www.rolandbecker.com)

Prize for Breton Music:

Startijenn, *Kreiz da fas!* (Paker Production, Diffusion Coop Breizh)  
Six young musicians well known on the fest-noz scene. [www.startijenn.com](http://www.startijenn.com)

Prize for a Young Artist:

Aodan, *Origin* (Alkémia Production, Diffusion Coop Breizh)  
A group which dramatically presents song and music from Brittany with oriental and eastern European influences. [www.aodan.net](http://www.aodan.net)

Special Prize:

Didier Squiban & Sheer K, *Mesk* (Diogène Productions, Arkal / Last Exit Records, Diffusion Breizh)  
Pianist Didier Squiban works with a rock group in a “mesk” (mix) of jazz, electronic and Breton sounds. [www.myspace.com/mesk\\_muisc](http://www.myspace.com/mesk_muisc)

“Coup de Coeur” Prize:

Louis Ebrel, *Ma Zad ma Mamm* (Kerne Production, L'Oz Production, Diffusion Keltia Musique)  
Louise Ebrel carries the Breton language song tradition from her family, but has worked with a number of musicians in innovative rearrangements of Breton music. [www.musicme.com/Louis-Ebrel/](http://www.musicme.com/Louis-Ebrel/) (this is not a site for Louise Ebrel but includes some nice biographical information as well as some sound samples).

## Heard of, But Not Heard - 30 New CDs from Brittany

Notes below were composed from information gleaned from reviews and notes in the following Breton magazines: *Armor* 493 (Feb. 2011), 494 (March 2011), 495 (April 2011), 496 (May 2011), *Ar Men* 181 (March-April 2011) & 182 (May-June 2011), *Musique Bretonne* 225 (March-April 2011). Additional information was found on the Coop Breizh website (where many CDs can be purchased). In most cases an internet search of these musicians and singers will lead to a spot where you can hear a sample of their music.

**Ernest Ahippah. *Ankafifilo*** (ahippah.net)

In testimony to the welcome presence of many cultures in Brittany, this CD reflects the African roots of singer Ernest Ahippah who lives in Brittany and considers himself a Breton. He is the founder of the Brittany-Ivory Coast Association as well as a singer and composer.

**Bagad Plougastel. *Bagad Plougastel***. VOC 2085 (bagad-plougastel.com)

This is a double CD by a bagad that has risen to the top category of Breton bagadoù – the unique Breton pipe band that includes bombards, Highland Scottish style pipes, and drums. The CD includes two suites of tunes – Kant Bro and Kant Giz – and other excerpts from bagad competition performances from 1998 to 2010.

**Clàrsach**. Circh 1010. [www.maisondelahaarpe.org](http://www.maisondelahaarpe.org)

This CD includes five masters of metal-strung harp recorded in July 2010 at the Rencontres Internationales de harpe celtique in Dinan: Anne Heymann (USA), Nodlaig Brolly (Ireland), Jochen Vogel (Germany), Dimitri Boekhoorn (Netherlands) and Myrdhin (Brittany). Music ranges from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to contemporary compositions and the CD is accompanied by an informative booklet of information.

**Cécille Corbel. *Arrietty***, le petit monde des charpardeurs. Wasabi Records 9102231

Singer and harpist Cécile Corbel with her second CD, this one devoted to music she performed for the Japanese animation film “Arietty.” Think of Celtic Fairies in the Land of the Rising Sun.

**Yvon Etienne. *Mes 68 Chansons***. Coop Breizh.

This is a 3-CD set said to include 50% love songs, 50% nostalgic songs, and 50% humorous songs. Singer-songwriter Yvon Etienne is well known for his humor and satirical jabs (in solo and in work with the group Les Goristes) and this CD includes some well known and loved songs as well as some lesser known texts he has composed.

**Festival Plinn du Danouët**. Association Chapelle du Danouët, 22390 Bourbirac.





This is a 4-CD set of over five hours of music from the annual festival held in the village of Danouët to celebrate the dance plinn and music of central western Brittany. For 35 years this small festival with a definitely local flavor has pulled the best of traditional singers of kan ha diskas as well as gwerz (ballads) and marches (slower rambles more like a dance than a military march). Included here are singers, paired biniou-bombard players, and the traditional style of clarinet playing unique to Brittany. Voices are of all ages, but all reflect the spirit of this festival.

**Forzh Penaos. Sovaj – Musique de fest-noz.**

This is the fourth CD by a band that has been on the fest-noz scene for 18 years. This CD includes a variety of dances from eastern and western Brittany, including a gavotte pourlette, suite for plinn, tricot, Scottish, rond paludier, ridee, rond de Saint-Vincent, and a suite for the rond de Loudéac, as well as a melody. Instruments used by the group include the pairing of bombard and biniou, flutes and guitars.

**Les Gabiers d'Artimon. Chants de Marins.** CD11

This maritime “men’s choir” from Lorient has performed for some 30 years and this is their 11<sup>th</sup> CD. It includes well known maritime songs and compositions from Brittany.

**Kejaj. Kejaj.** Aztec Musique CM 2296.

This is the first CD by a group including seasoned musicians of Brittany: Herve Le Lu (bombard), Ronan Pellen (cistre), Yannig Noguét (accordion) and Etienne Kallac (bass). Their roots in Breton traditional music insure that the arrangements and compositions of Breton dances meet the high standards for danceability at a fest noz.

**Erwan Keravec. Urban Pipes.** Collectif à l’envers. Buda distribution, Socadisc 860 207

This piper uses Scottish Highland bagpipes for music more closely resembling free jazz and the compositions of John Cage than traditional sounds of Brittany or Scotland. It is free of any Celtic melody or rhythmic familiarity, but does include an urban pibroch where a theme and variations are developed in the style of Scottish pibroch. One will also find bits of voice by Basque singer Bénat Achiary and lombarde (a softer variation of the bombard) by Guénolé Keravec woven in. This is a very unusual use of bagpipes that some may find disturbing but others will find fascinating. (Note – A CD of the same title was done by Keravec in 2008 produced by Buda Musique 86160; it is not clear if this is a new CD or re-release of the earlier one.)

**The Last Morning Soundtrack. A distance – A Lack.** Mosaic Music.

A duo of Breton composer and singer Sylvain Texier with cellist Benjamin Gaury. Texier composes the texts – in

English – and adds percussion and glockenspiel to his guitar accompaniment of the songs.

**André Le Meut. Le Chant de la bombarde – Kan er vombard.**

Le Meut is a master of the bombard but also of song from the Vannetais regions. Here he pairs with biniou koz and biniou braz (Scottish Highland style bagpipes) and plays in trio with biniou and percussion or accordion. You’ll also hear him in song with accordion and piano accompaniment – all melodies and dances of the rich Vannetais tradition.

**Live in Kawan (fest-noz).** Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù.

This is a CD of a live performance at festoù-noz and evening concerts during the Local Electik Festival of Cavan (Kawan in Breton). It includes a number of sonneurs, singers, and groups familiar to Tregor Brittany: Le Bour-Bodros Quintet, l’Olympique Treujenn Gaol du Trégor, Moal-Chaplain, Corre-Suignard, and Ifig and Nanda Troadec.

**Fabrice Lothodé and Jean-Yves Cadudal. Spered an tan.** Demat Deoc’h ICD 03.

From the Auray area of Vannetais Brittany, these two “sonnerus” are masters of the bombard and biniou braz. Fabrice Lothodé headed up the famous Bagad Alre for over 15 years and Chim Cadudal played for a number of years with the band Sonerien Du. Here they show off their long partnership and skills as paired players of bombard and biniou braz (Scottish style bagpipes, played like the smaller biniou koz in pair with the bombard). In this duo they have won championships at the Gourin competition a number of times, as well as at other competitions. – no small thing. This CD is a four-part suite of Vannetais Breton melodies and dances where bombards, including the oboe-like “piston,” are paired with biniou koz and braz. *Spered an tan*, which gives its name to the CD title, is a composition by Polig Monjarret to whom the CD is dedicated.

**Franck Lucas. Ready!** Siwa – FL001

First CD for a singer-songwriter from Nantes with 12 English language songs set to a variety of musical styles.

**Yannick Mahé. Le petit voyage.**

This is a mix of musical styles – Berber, jazz, Breton – for songs on a variety of topics including an African song in Breton, maritime song, a song celebrating schools, and a song about why cows look at airplanes flying overhead.

**Philippe Marlu. Méfiez-vous des petites filles.** French Song FS 07 (philippemarlu.com)

This CD includes carefully crafted and performed songs on contemporary topics by Philippe Marlu. He is accompanied by Don Le Bozec on drums, Éric Sourdez

on guitars, Ronan Le Mons on bass, and Jean-Marie Illien on keyboard.

**Nuit de la Saint-Patrick Bercy.** BVC Organisation.  
This DVD of live performances is a compilation of well known Celtic musicians from the Bercy 2010 festival. It includes Lunasa, Hevia, Bagad de Lokoal-Mendon, Gilles Servat, Louise Ebreil, Pascal Lamour, Pat O'May, Dom Duff, Samuel Le Henanff, Kevrenn Alre, and Soldat Louis.

**Scone. 'Si Morag.** Co Le Label TVB COAJ 39  
This group includes singer Solenn Lefeuvre, Pierrick Lemou (fiddle), Kenan Guernaec (flutes), Christophe "Georges" Grandjean (bouzouki), and Yves Lavigne (bodhràn). Experienced in Breton and Celtic music traditions, they perform Scottish and Irish jigs, reels, airs, and waulking songs.

**Skolvan. C'hoari pevar.** Keltia Musique 297  
Begun in 1984, Skolvan is one of the oldest bands in Brittany and remains one of the best. Here they perform a new repertoire of Breton dances and melodies. Two original members remain in the group – Youenn Le Bihan plays the "piston," a softer version of the bombard he invented, and Gilles Le Bigot plays guitar. Bernard Le Dréau who joined the group in the 1990s is on tenor sax and the newest addition, Régis Huiban, brings chromatic accordion. All well known masters of their instruments, this quartet has a unique swing and sound – very Breton, but sometimes jazzy, sometimes with a Balkan rhythm, sometimes with a hint of French "musette." Always great.

**Soldat Louis. V.I.P. – Very intimes poteaux.** Coop Breizh DC 1039  
This is a different kind of "best of" CD with the invitation of a variety of performers to play with this well loved rock band of Brittany. Guest artists include Hughes Auffray, Renaud, Clarisse Lavanant, and Dan ar Braz, among others.

**Spontus. Album IV.** Klam Records KR01  
This group started off in inter-high school band competitions and has now been performing for some 15 years, always drawing dancers to a fest-noz. This is their fourth recording of melodies and dances – many composed by accordion player Youen Paranthoën. The group also includes Erwan Betenguer on guitars, Yann Le Bozec on bass fiddle, and Alan Paranthoën on fiddle.

**Didier Squiban and Jérôme Kerihuel. Addare.**  
Pianist Squiban is joined by percussionist Kerihuel for arrangements of traditional Breton tunes and compositions inspired by Brittany. Some of the traditional tunes arranged here (Ar Bambocher, Enez Eusa, Suite de Plinn, And dro an douar) are not new to Squiban's

repertoire, but this setting with a percussionist is certainly a different take.

**Terlat. Katharsis.** Modal'Art Prouduction  
First recording by this jazz-rock group that has been on the Breton scene for some 15 years. The CD includes a dusting off of some Breton language classics like "Eliz Iza" as well as compositions by the group. Instruments include drums, saxophones, bass, guitars, Fender piano, and diatonic accordion played by Gilles Riaux, Krystian Sarrau, Xavier Lugué, Charles Bordaïs, Johann Calac and Gwenolé Le Villoux.

**Marc Thouénon. Au bout des rêves.** Vocation Records VOC 1999  
This CD features Breton and Irish tunes by a guitarist from the groups Loëned Fall and Boys of the Gap in a solo performance on guitar and bouzouki. Thouénon is supported by Maud Caron on cello and David Hopkins with percussion.

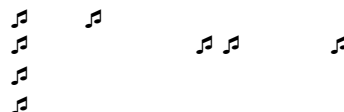
**Ti ar Vro Bro-Leon. Kanit 'ta tudou! – Chanson du dimanche et de tous les jours.**  
This is a collection of 56 song texts from the Leon area of northwestern Brittany in an 88 page booklet produced by Ti ar Vro Bro-Leon under the direction of Maryvonne Berthou. Two CDs allow one to hear the songs interpreted by singers of the area.

**Tri Pichon Noz. Tri Pichon Noz, Vol. 2.** BNC Productions TRIC 02  
This is the second CD by Vannetais traditional singer Marcel Jaffré and Jo Le Sergent with accordion player Samuel Le Héanff. These are straightforward performances of music of the Vannetais area by three masters.

**Anne Vanderlove. Rue Columbus.** Boutou-Production AV 1001  
A singer who has been on the Breton scene for many years, Vanderlove's poetry is set to guitar and touches many themes.

**Elisa Vellia. La femme qui marche.** Le Chant du Monde CDM 1177  
Vellia blends her Greek origins with Celtic influences in song and modern compositions for the Celtic harp.

**Wipidou. L'Appel à la transe.** Bémol Productions.  
This is a group with three masters of their art: Gildas Buhé with traditional Vannetais song, Régis Huiban with accordion, and Pierre Tardivel on saxophone. They perform arrangements of Breton melodies and dances.



## **And ... Two New Compilations from the Coop Breizh.**

The summer is always a good time to produce compilations that will be attractive to tourists who are just discovering Breton music and want to get a sample of different groups and styles. The following new releases offer a very good introduction to a variety of styles and to the immense creativity in Breton music today.

### **Bretagne – les plus belles chansons**

This 4-CD set includes a very good selection of contemporary groups and singers. The emphasis is on groups and arrangements, and the beautiful melodies of traditional song (*gwerz*, *complaints* and songs for dance) seem very much under-represented. Perhaps marketing studies show that those who are new to Breton music are not able to appreciate unaccompanied song???

*Les Grandes voix* – This CD of 20 selections includes a few traditional singers of note who perform in the Breton language such as the Goadec Sisters and Morvan Brothers, Annie Ebrel and Yann Fañch Kemener. Other singers with a less traditional style – in both Breton and French - include Gilles Servat, Tri Yann, Nolwenn Korbell, the Hamon Martin Quartet and Manu Lannhuel. Although they are “great voices,” I am not sure why Sinead O’Connor and Loreena McKennett are included on this CD (they do not perform Breton songs) but perhaps this is meant to provide a few well know names to tourists???

*Les Grandes melodies* – This CD has 19 selections with an interesting mix of performers – vocal and instrumental - including Didier Squiban paired with Yann Fañch Kemener or the Orchestre de Bretagne, the Bagad Kemper with Marthe Vassallo, The Bagad Men ha Tan and Henri Texier, Patrick Molard, Ronan Le Bars, and others.

*Fest Noz* – This CD has a good mix of 18 different groups active today on the Breton fest noz scene, although the instrumental emphasis is a bit counter to the CD intention to present “les plus belles chansons.”

*Chants de mer* – this CD has 24 selections by seven groups: Guillemer, Djiboudjep, Gabiers d’Artimon, Soldat Louis (just one selection), Mikael Yaouank, Michel Tonnerre, and Cabestan.

### **Fest Noz, 40 ans – Les groupes à danser**

The Coop Breizh is distributing a series of four CDs featuring fest noz bands from different decades. These are indeed some great selections although there are a few instances where the placement in a particular

decade seems a bit off – for instance Startijen and the Guichen Brothers are in the 2000 CD while they really got their start in the 1990s. Skolvan is in the 1990s while this band was going strong in the 1980s. PSG (guitarists Pellen, Siberil, Guichen) got going in the late 1980s but are put into the 2000 decade. Arkan, Dalc’h Sonj and Skeduz are in the 1980s while they really got off the ground in the 1990s. But, perhaps the information I have is not correct. Such compilations where one needs to squeeze a selection of performances of different lengths into a specific time frame for a CD means that some great bands might not be included and a few were perhaps shifted to a different decade because that’s when they produced the most CDs or were best known? Without CD notes, it is impossible to tell how selections were determined. These CDs are focused specifically on groups and do not include traditional singers or paired biniou-bombard which are such important elements of the music at a fest noz.

For the most part, the selections on these four CDs are the same ones you will find on two earlier double CD productions by the Coop Breizh: *La Musique bretonne, l’anthologie, vol. 1 & 2 – Les groupes à danser* (2005 & 2007). These elegantly bound book-like double CDs are not arranged neatly by decade, but include excellent notes and photos of each group (I do not know if the new 4 CDs include similar documentation). There are four additional performers on the 2000 decade CD that you will not find on the earlier compilation which was completed in the mid 2000 years.

So here are the groups included for each decade CD for this new series (note that many from earlier decades are still alive and well at festoù-noz today):

*Les groupes à danser des années 70:* Diaouled ar Menez, Dir ha Tan, Kouerien Sant Yann, La Godinette, Kanfardet ar C’hoat, Kanfarded Rostren, Kistinidiz, La Mirlitantouille, Satanazet, Ar Skloferion, Galorn, Sonerien Du, Bleizi Ruz, Korriganed, Chantous d’Loudia, Tri Pichon,

*Les groupes à danser des années 80 :* Dremmwel, Tammles, BF15, Marialla, Ar Re Yaouank, Carré Manchot, Follen, Pennou Skoulm, Ti Jaz, Strakal, Strobinnell, Dalc’h Sonj, Koskerien, Skeduz, Arkan

*Les groupes à danser des années 90 :* Loened Fall, Karma, Filifala, Skolvan, Tan ba’n Ti, Menestra, Darhaou, Spontus, Pevar Den, Emsaverien, Gwenfol Orchestre, Penn Gollo, Rozaroun, Talar, Termajik, Diwall, Ilnze, Katé Mé

*Les groupes à danser des années 2000 :* PSG, David Pasquet Group, Wig a Wag, Arvest, Plantec, Startijen, Tribuil, Bivoac, Deusta, Les Frères Guichen, Ampouilh, Kejaj, Hiks, Hamon Martin Quintet, Pascal Lamour

## Traditional Song in Brittany : Three New Books of Note

During the past months several new books have been published which focus on traditional song of Brittany. Of interest to Breton singers themselves as well as scholars of oral traditions, these are worth a quick presentation here:

**Laurence Berthou-Bécam and Didier Bécam. L'enquête Fortoul (1852-1876) – Chansons populaires de Haute et Basse-Bretagne.** Dastum & CTHS (Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques). 1,140 pages.

The Fortoul study engaged a number of collectors who sought out traditional songs of both eastern and western Brittany. Hippolyte Fortoul instigated this collection project on the part of the government to gather songs of all the regions of France. This would involve teachers, members of scholarly societies, and clergy during the period of 1852 to 1876.

This collection of song in the Breton oral tradition included all types of songs, and while not published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was completed, the manuscripts had been saved. This new two-volume study presents 492 songs including notes and copies of the originals for over 100 of them.

Didier Bécam and Laurence Berthou-Bécam provide a presentation of the collection project, biographies of the over 30 collectors engaged in it, and linguistic analysis of the Gallo and Breton texts. The work also includes a bibliography and discography to find further information and performances of many of the songs.

A CD Rom supplements the book with more detailed analysis for those who aren't content with over 1,000 pages!

**Eva Guillorel. La Complainte et la plainte – Chansons, justice, culture en Bretagne.** Dastum & PUR (Presses Univesitaires de Rennes. 589 pages.

This work is based on the doctoral thesis by Eva Guillorel and focuses on the gwerz – Breton language ballads – and their narration of historical events. Guillorel examined 2,235 song texts to look at how history is reflected in them – and the study included an examination of over 600 records of criminal activity from the 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> century referenced in song. This book also provides a thorough analysis of linguistics, the literary nature of song, music, and the ethnographic context of singers and their audiences to see how song reflects different societal viewpoints. A CD and CD Rom accompany the book.

**André Markowicz and Françoise Morvan. Anciennes complaints de Bretagne.** Editions Ouest France. 128 pages.

This book includes 27 gwerz which have been translated into French. Rather than the usual more literal translation of verses, the authors aim here was to capture the poetry of the text so it could be sung. While a CD of performance would be useful for those wishing to sing these texts, musical annotation is provided (sometimes offering more than one version for a song). The book includes an introduction to the gwerz, a brief history of song collection in Brittany, and explains the authors' process of translation.

## Festival Kleg 2011 – Bombards of the World



There are dozens of large and small festivals throughout Brittany each summer (and year-round). This is one of the “smaller” festivals but one which is at the top of my list of “wanna go-s.” The Kleg festival features the bombard – a powerful “oboe” that bears little resemblance in sound to the soft plaintive voice of the classical orchestral oboe. Not only are Breton bombards celebrated at this festival, but oboes from all over the world are featured which, like the bombard, are part of rich folk traditions.

The best of Breton bombard playing could be heard at the Kleg 2011 festival (held in Cléguérec) in May, and this year's festival also included some innovative cross-cultural collaborations. The Kerlenn Pondi bagad performed with the group Safar from Zanzibar, the Lotout brothers of Brittany played with the Alihan Samedov trio from Azerbaijan, the Breton Le Bour/Bodras Quintet worked with Yoyon Darono from Java, and Kerdedig performed with the Yang father and son duo from China. These musicians gave concerts during the first week of May throughout the area of Pontivy and a big fest noz closed the festival on the 7<sup>th</sup>. For more information about this festival check out: [www.bfi2.fr/en-arwen/index.php](http://www.bfi2.fr/en-arwen/index.php)

## Losses in the U.S. ICDBL Family

### Richard Emile Moraux

With the passing of Rick Moraux this April at the much too young age of 60, the U.S. ICDBL lost a long-time supporter (20 years) and I lost an even longer-time friend.

I first met Rick as a high school student when I joined a local Scottish bagpipe band to learn Scottish Highland



bagpipes. I had purchased a practice chanter (“Made in Pakistan”) in a foreign goods gift shop and when I found out what it was, I joined a small band not far from where I lived in the suburbs of Philadelphia. The Montgomery Highlanders were not a top notch band – we marched in a few parades but never reached the quality needed for competition piping here in the U.S. It was a mixed group of adults of Scottish heritage and a handful of teens of mixed heritage who simply liked the music and wanted to learn it. Rick was already pretty well advanced in his skills so he helped to teach newcomers like me. There were no fees – we met at a local school where the Pipe major of the band was a custodian. It was a challenging instrument to learn but it was fun.

Rick Moraux would later lure me into another slightly more advanced bagpipe band in the area which did compete in competitions. This was much less fun, but insured that I advanced in my piping skills. Although I was oblivious to it at the time, Rick would tell me later that the entry of a “girl” into this pipe band was hotly debated by the older gentlemen in the band. Given the relaxed nature of the Montgomery Highlanders where everyone who wanted to learn was very welcome, I had no idea that I had broken a major gender barrier with this band as its first female piper. Later the daughters of the pipe major – young children at that time who competed in Scottish dancing - would dominate the band!

Rick Moraux would also be the one who would entice me into learning Irish music. As teens we were both intrigued by the vast variety of bagpipes we discovered in the Anthony Baines catalog called *Bagpipes* which we purchased at a Scottish Games in Syracuse, New York in 1968. To our surprise we discovered that a master of one of the most exotic and strange of these instruments, the Irish uilleann pipes, lived in the Philadelphia area. Rick jumped right on the chance to learn this instrument from Thomas Standeven, and I more meekly started to learn Irish wooden flute (only later getting up my courage for uilleann pipes). It was Tomas Standeven (1931-2002) who introduced Brittany to both Rick and me. (See Bro Nevez No. 81, February 2002). And we both learned from Tom that music-making was first of all for Celts a social event. We also learned from Tom that some knowledge if not fluency in the Celtic languages was essential for truly understanding their music.

Rick and I went different ways in life, but both of us kept our love of Celtic music and music-making even if the time we could devote to piping was very limited. In more recent years we were able to get together from time to time to work on uilleann pipes ... with the hope that we might learn a few more tunes (Rick had a preference for hornpipes). We could at least keep up those tunes we knew and try to pass them along to others who might want to learn. When we did get together at Rick’s home, the time for conversation far outweighed the time we put

into piping and there were evenings when the music was pretty nice and others when the pipes squeaked and we spent most of the time fiddling with reeds. There was a lot of teasing about who was making the most mistakes when we would limp through a set of tunes, and Rick always managed to make it look like it had to be me. This always led to lots of laughter. Rick was certainly known for his laughter.

Rick admired greatly the piping traditions of Brittany – the paired playing of biniou and bombard and the bagad. He was an essential member of a small group of Breton music enthusiasts in the Philadelphia area who helped to bring the Kevrenn Alre bagad and dancers to Philadelphia to perform in 2007.

An interest in and love for traditional Celtic music, and especially piping, was just a small part of Rick’s world. He was a loving husband to his wife Patty (whom he met through the Montgomery Highlanders Pipe Band) and whom he lost to cancer in 2006. He was a devoted father to his two children Elizabeth and Steven. And he was a “caretaker” for others – visiting elderly friends or helping out someone with a need. Rick loved people.

He also loved old buildings and was very active in the field of historic restoration of old houses and farms – both professionally as the way he earned his living and as a volunteer. He had a vast knowledge of Pennsylvania history and its crafts. Traveling with Rick could be hazardous since he had a sort of X-ray vision to find 18<sup>th</sup> century log houses long buried under aluminum siding, and he would suddenly pull to a stop to look at what might be a treasure. Preserving old houses and farm buildings was a passion, and Rick had an extensive knowledge and hands-on skills which he generously shared. Rick was also an artist whose paintings and sketches meticulously captured the details of landscapes and buildings. He never stopped learning new techniques.

While I knew Rick through sharing his love for Celtic music and the sociability of making music, many others knew him and loved him for his enthusiasm and the generous way in which he worked to preserve architectural treasures of American history. He is greatly missed by his entire family and a large network of friends.

## **Doris Creegan**

I received a note from the son of Doris Creegan that she passed away this past September 2010 at the age of 92. As is the case for many members of the U.S. ICDBL who are spread out all over the country, I never had the opportunity to meet Doris, and had just a limited exchange of letters. She joined the ICDBL in 1984 just a

few years after the U.S. Branch was founded and remained an active supporter until her death.

In a letter she wrote to me (in French) in 2002 Doris proclaimed "*La Bretagne est vraiment mon pays! Je suis Nantaise d'origine maternelle, y ayant été élevée par mes grand parents Vuillemin ("Bretons & Lorrains à la fois!") qui avaient une maison à Tréboul ...* (Brittany is truly my country ! I am of Nantes on my maternal side, having been raised by my grand parents Vuillemin ("Bretons and Lorrains both! ") who had a house in Tréboul...)"

She went on to speak of Louis Vuillemin, the oldest son – her uncle – who studied music with Gabriel Fauré. Doris also wrote that she was Celtic through her father's Irish side of the family as well. To replenish her Breton soul, Doris would travel to Brittany (La Baule) every summer she could, and bravely purchased a biniou the summer of 1986 with the hope that she could find someone to teach her to play it.

Doris was a French Professor at the State University of New York in Albany. When most people would be looking forward to a peaceful retirement, she decided in 1993 that it was never too late to continue studies and took classes to go for her PhD. As a proud Bretonne Doris felt it was important to try to learn as much as she could about the Breton language and culture. While never mastering it, she worked to learn the Breton language on her own. As a proud Nantaise, Doris felt it was also important to speak up on the issue of reunification of Brittany. In a letter from March 1999 she noted: "I did take the 100<sup>th</sup> issue of *Ar Men* [a special issue of that magazine on Breton identity] to one of my classes today and gave my students a strong argument as to why the Loire Atlantique should return to Brittany where it belongs!"

I do not doubt that Doris' university students – while studying the French language – learned a great deal about Brittany and its unique cultural heritage.



## Deep inside a Breton skull - 30 Cemeteries, ghosts and love of Brittany

Jean Pierre Le Mat

Is there life after death? Of course, plenty of people died whereas I am still alive. But I know that my way of thinking and treasures that are lying deep inside my skull come from parents, masters, friends, and from people gone a long time ago. These people are now silent and unknown. They are discreet ghosts. Not far from here, a woman is haunting a tree she seeded. An ancient

peasant dead long ago is haunting a barn he built. This tree and this barn are now under my sight.

Some cultures are focused on the question of good and evil. They are seeking what is the right behaviour. In their literary masterpieces, great European cultures have illustrated issues of moral obligations and contradictions between different duties. They staged eternal feelings: love, hate, loyalty. Death thus has become a secondary issue when, after performing his heroic deeds, the hero has lost his meaning.

Death is underestimated by philosophical brains. In some cases, it is considered as a mere consequence of natural laws. In others, it is overcome by eternal principles. Like a rabid dog, death rushed up to a piece of meat while what is essential in life manages to escape.

Then, death is not something important, but only the end of something important. The curtain falls and the spectators do not watch the stage any longer. They rise from their seats. They are already thinking about something else, or remembering what they saw before.

The conviction of immortality is very common in these wise cultures. The great religions promise eternal life in another world. It is also possible to achieve a kind of immortality through military or artistic glory.

Some past civilizations have not underestimated death so much. In Babylon, the epic of Gilgamesh is a thought on the death of Enkidu, the wild man, friend of the king. Gilgamesh looked for the return of Enkidu. He also wanted immortality for himself. But he realized that his quest is impossible, unnecessary and finally inhuman. To find out what your community thinks about death, it must be asked if your people believe in ghosts. Among philosophical people, ghosts are rare. It is exceptional to find ghosts in France, in Italy or in Greece. They proliferate right before the eyes of the Bretons and, more generally, of the Celts.

I suspect the European people who believe in ghosts to have been imperfectly Christianized. This nostalgia for the pleasures of this world, instead hoping for the next world, has a pagan color. Oh, the Breton paganism is not far from Christian values! Here, charity and love are virtues cherished and shared. Perhaps the Bretons, who are whispering people, are afraid to be mixed in Heaven with a crowd of people speaking loud. Perhaps...

In Brittany, ghosts are characters far less frightening than the German ghosts. These eastern creatures have no flesh and only skull and bones. They are carrying heavy chains. They spend their time terrorizing the living people. The Breton ghosts are very different. They have kept their features and all the natural appeal they once

had. Those who knew them when they were alive can recognize them easily. They are not on earth to scare the living but to accomplish a duty they have not performed before. So, usually, the Breton ghosts are sad and depressed, waiting for something. The living person, like you and me, must help them, even if they cannot explain their quest. Our ghosts are prevented from giving explanations, for obscure reasons.

In Brittany, the dead, whoever it is, must return three times to haunt the places where he lived. This has been known here for a long time and is transmitted by old traditions. In the Gwenc'hlan prophecy, it is said: "Red eo d'an holl mervel teir gwech, ken evit arsav en divezh". "Everybody has to die three times, before resting at last". The Creator allows the Bretons to get an unusual chance to erase their sins. Nobody knows why...

Anatole Le Braz, in the Death legends, gives an example of the return of the dead.

Yves Lesqueron, from Plouguiel, had lent money to his friend Louis Hamon to buy a new spade. But Louis Hamon died before repaying his debt. At the funeral, Yves Lesqueron showed regret for his money.

One morning, as he was working in his field of beets, Yves Lesqueron was surprised to see someone who carried a spade crossing the embankment. And he began to work beside him.

- Who are you? asked the peasant.
- Yves, you no longer recognize your friend Louis?
- Louis, my friend, but you are dead, and now you're here!
- Oh... It was you who asked for that.
- Me?
- Did you not say during my funeral that you did not forgive me for dying without seeing your money back? So, I will pay my debt with my work.

Yves Lesqueron remained motionless. Then he told his friend:

- Is that all? So I give you, with all my heart, what you owed me. And no more talk about that, Louis!

The farmer has no sooner spoken that his companion disappeared. At his place, Yves saw only a white smoke rising toward the sun. He heard a soft and distant voice saying :

- A thousand blessings on you, Yves. I am free now.

Here is another example.

Around Kermaria Sulard, people tell the story of old Fanchi, who died childless. His farm was sold by distant relatives and a guy named Jobic bought it. One nightfall, as he was inspecting the land left fallow for several

months, he saw a man plowing a field. And he realized it was the dead man.

He asked the village priest to give him an advice:  
- Do not attempt to interfere with Fanchi, he said. Leave him alone. On the day appointed by God, he will be saved and he will leave you alone. His soul has not done her penance, so she must do so after death. Those who want to live in peace do not seek to penetrate the secrets of God.

Jobic left Fanchi to believe that the good wheat growing in the fields was the result of his work. And coexistence between the dead peasant and the living peasant lasted as long as God willed.

This familiarity between dead and living people is obvious when you visit the Breton cemeteries. The graves are clean and well maintained. Those who are living not far from the family graves flower them regularly. They also take care of the graves of distant relations, when there is no one else in the area. Anonymous hands flower the graves of those who have no family left. During the summer, you can see on the top of them wild flowers, usually marguerites. During the month of November, after the ceremonies of All Saints, some people put flower pots on these poor forgotten graves, when there are too many on their own family ones.

Aisles of the cemetery must be weeded. While speaking with the people at the next grave, you idly pull out weeds that grow among the gravel. The laziest of us let them dry in the sun. The most meticulous people carry them to the bins at the bottom of the cemetery. In Garlan Cemetery, where my parents rest, you can use the collective tools, the rake and the watering can. The public or private authorities, which are watching over the good sleep of the dead, leave these tools at the disposal of the living, hanging on a nail in the stone wall. Nobody would steal them to use in his own garden.



Some Bretons plan to stay in our world, and continue their human struggle beyond death. This is true for several militants of the Breton language. For example, in the town Saint Brieuc, you'll easily find the grave of Fransez Vallée, known as Abhervé. He rests at the Saint Michel cemetery. He was a great grammarian of the Breton language. During all his life,

he improved his French-Breton dictionary. He died in 1949. On his grave, it is written in Breton and in French:

“Brothers, pray for me, pray for my country also, for its freedom, without any other master or king than God”.

To love Brittany is not a crime, probably not a sin. It must be a kind of undecidable proposition for the Divine Judge. Deep in my skull, I suspect that God is experimenting on something in Brittany. The paradise must be very populated by now. The loving people are better in the country they loved, especially if it is a small country. I suspect that, after their death, those who loved Brittany are condemned to wander on our land. Invisible from the living, not suffering from cold or hunger, they whistle our old songs in the wind. They spend hours watching the sea. In the evening, during the festoù noz, they slip between the dancers. They can dream during hours in the mountains of Are, without being bothered by anybody. They don't disturb the living people. Near Brehat island, in the Are mountains or in the town of Saint Brieuc, if I could see with the eyes of my ancestors wandering here and there, I could see another Brittany, a country of the next world.

## Muscadet and Breton Identity



The Agence Bretagne website ([www.agencebretagnepresse.com](http://www.agencebretagnepresse.com)) is a mine of information on current events and issues in Brittany, and among the stories posted on June 1, 2011, was one about a special

monthly promotion of Muscadet wine in Boston, Massachusetts. Muscadet producers in Brittany have battled for a number of years to keep a “Breton” branding for this wine of Brittany which has been lumped into wines of the Loire Valley under labeling laws. Everyone in Brittany knows this is a Breton wine and it has been successfully marketed as such.

And this uniquely Breton character of Muscadet seems to be largely recognized by the Loire Valley Wine Bureau who promote it on their website [www.Loirevalleywine.com](http://www.Loirevalleywine.com).

Because tourists to France are familiar with the Loire Valley as the place to find spectacular châteaux, the website's promotion of the charm of the Loire Valley emphasizes a very French identity:

*Loire Valley: Not Just French, Very French*

*The Loire Valley is as French as France gets. Famous for its natural beauty, magnificent châteaux and picturesque towns, the Loire Valley is rich in history and culture. It is said to be where the purest French is spoken and the land of simple French home cooking. The length of the river, and the varied soils and climate of the valley, make the Loire Valley home to definitive expressions of some of the world's most popular wine*

*grapes (including Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc) as well as some that are grown nowhere else (Melon de Bourgogne, Pineau d'Aunis, etc.) The vineyards of the Loire Valley are divided into five distinct regions, each with its own characteristic wines and varietals.*

It is in the recognition of distinct regions for wines of the Loire Valley that the website shows a recognition that the region around Nantes where Muscadet is produced is indeed Breton. Here's the text that presents the Nantes region:

*The Pays Nantais, on the Atlantic coast of Brittany, near the city of Nantes has been producing wine since the Roman era. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the local wine trade was dominated by Dutch distillers, who were the first to plant a few vines of Melon de Bourgogne, the grape which today makes Muscadet, the largest white wine appellation in France, and the ultimate seaside wine.*

The fact that Muscadet is indeed a Breton wine is also expressed in the section that describes the history and characteristics of Muscadet:

*Varietal: Melon de Bourgogne*

*Melon de Bourgogne is better known as Muscadet, the name of the wine that it produces. This is the dominant grape of the area around Nantes on the coast of Brittany, where the Loire meets the Atlantic Ocean. Muscadet has such a bracing sea tang, and such an affinity for the shellfish of the Breton coast – especially the superlative Belon oysters of the region – that it may come as a surprise that the Melon de Bourgogne is a relatively recent arrival, and its dominance in the region was the result of one terrible winter.*

*The Melon has a long history but not all in one place. As the name would imply, the variety originated in Burgundy but was removed from the vineyards there in the 16th century, as other varieties proved more successful in that climate. However the ability of the vines to withstand frost made it attractive to winemakers in Anjou, where it was also eventually edged out by other varieties.*

*At the same time it caught the attention of Dutch distillers further downstream, who needed large quantities of wine with which to make brandy. The Dutch started planting Melon in vineyards near Nantes, the most convenient port from which to ship the wine to Holland, in the 17th century. At the time the area was planted primarily with red grapes but when the worst winter in recorded history devastated the vineyards in 1709, causing barrels to burst in the cellars and even freezing the coastal waters, the Melon was one of two*



varieties to survive and it has dominated the region ever since.

Although it was originally a rather neutral wine, Muscadet producers have refined their techniques in order to make wines with their own distinctive attributes. In particular, the wine can be designated as Muscadet Sur Lie, indicating that it has been left on the lees for the winter between fermentation in autumn and bottling in spring. This allows the wine to develop a fuller flavor and a slight carbonation that gives the wine additional freshness. For the most part, these wines are best drunk young, but in exceptional vintages certain Muscadet Sur Lie can be kept for several years and, in rare cases, decades.

To an even greater degree than the Sauvignon Blanc and the Chenin Blanc, the Melon de Bourgogne, despite its name, is a grape that achieves its best expression in the Loire. It is rarely planted elsewhere. As Muscadet, however, it produces one of the friendliest, most refreshing wines in the world -- the ideal seaside wine.

#### Crisp Dry Whites

Muscadet

Muscadet Sevre et Maine

Muscadet Cotes de Grandieu

Muscadet Coteaux de la Loire

If you are in a city or region of the U.S. where a variety of wines can be purchased, check out this great wine. If you have not seen it in a store near you, check out the website ([www.loirevalleywine.com](http://www.loirevalleywine.com)) for the Loire Valley Wine Bureau or contact them to find out how and where you can find this wine (and be sure to identify it as a Breton wine!).

Loire Valley Wine Bureau,  
C/O Benson Marketing Group  
230 Park Avenue, 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10169 USA

### **“Be Breizh” and Tourists in Brittany**

[www.tourismebretagne.com](http://www.tourismebretagne.com)

[www.brittanytourism.com](http://www.brittanytourism.com)

A new website has been created by the Comité Régional du Tourisme to promote Brittany as a welcoming destination for tourists. Tourism has long been an important part of the Breton economy and this new site is a useful place to plan a trip.

The spirit of the site is very welcoming and the slogan “Be Breizh” is certainly interesting. The idea behind this is explained on the site as follows:

*What is it to ‘be Breizh’? Breizh is the Breton word for Brittany so to ‘be Breizh’ is an invitation to the world to*

*be transformed by Brittany. It’s an invitation to get under the skin of the real Brittany; to discover its stunning coastline and unspoilt countryside; to taste the freshest of seafood and the finest local produce and to understand the unique Breton culture and identity. Use it as you wish: as an expression of goodwill, strength and courage or, for Star Wars fans, as a way of expressing ‘may the Breton force be with you’! Whatever you do, visit Brittany and be Breizh!*

The site can be found in French, English, Dutch, German, Spanish and Italian. The focus is on the usual tourist things – where to stay, eat, how to travel around, and where and when to find recreational activities like sailing, golf, beaches, historical and natural sites. The section on Brittany Today includes a presentation of the Breton language, administrative areas, facts and figures, weather, Breton identity and symbols. To find information on festivals, music, dance, and other arts you need to look in a section called “A land of inspiration.”

For an American, the British slant to the English version of the site is annoying. I found the information on the French version of the site more interesting and complete. For example, in describing symbols of Brittany the English version gives a brief introduction the flag and what the symbol BZH stands for, and includes coiffes and light houses as symbols. Light houses?? The French version includes a quick introduction to the Triskell and Ermine and a better presentation of the Breton flag. In presenting the Breton language, the English version incorrectly tells one that “degemer mad” is the way to say “hello” while the French version correctly identifies this phrase as the way to say “welcome.” While still very brief, the presentation of the Breton language is much better on the French language site. When it comes to the administrative divisions and facts and figures there is a bit of inconsistency with the French site noting all five departments and a population of 4 million and the English site noting that there are officially 4 departments (the equivalent of “counties” in the British Isles) and a population of 3 million. There are some glitches to correct and it would not hurt to note that many Bretons are fighting to bring Loire-Atlantique back into official Brittany.

Music and dance are briefly presented but here too, the French site is a bit better than the English version where sea shanties are emphasized as the key element of “deep musical roots” in Brittany. The assumption seems to be that the opportunity to hear sea shanties will attract English visitors. The inaccuracies are mostly by omission since the presentation of Breton cultural elements is very brief. But improvements need to be made on the English site especially. In reference to the fest noz it is stated that “the Breton oboe sets the pace, with the bagpipe providing the background sound;

possibly a violin player and an accordionist will add to the fun..." This would not deter an English visitor from attending a fest noz, but this is surely an annoying description for those familiar with the rich offerings of music at a fest noz. And, biniou players should be offended by the idea that they serve as "background sound" for the bombard when this pair plays together. In learning about the fest noz, the explanation of the dances could also stand some improvement since one is left with the impression that there is a randomness to the steps and arm movements. Visitors are encouraged to join in a fest noz, but should also be directed to workshops to learn the dances! A few links to other sites (even if they are only in French) where people could get a better introduction to Breton culture would be useful on the English site.

When it comes to music, dance, and other arts, the website does allow one to locate events by date and place and this is very useful. One can find some of the festivals and festou noz coming up, as well as art exhibits, sporting events, and flea markets ...

There is a lot of useful information on this new site and with time some of the background information on history and culture will hopefully be improved. Again, with the very brief introduction to Breton history on the English site there is a very English slant to things. If one is to attract tourists from the Celtic lands of Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, or the Isle of Man, or any other English speaker who is not from England, then the English language site needs work to make it friendlier and more relevant. Travel tips to get to Brittany right now help you travel only from the UK or Ireland, and thus there is no information (or a link that I could find) to help English speakers from Canada or the U.S., or others who may find English their most comfortable language of the choices given.



## Traveling in Brittany 100 Years Ago

From *Rambles in Brittany*, by Francis Miltoun (Boston: L. C. Page & Co., 1906)

Editor's Note: Since we noted in this issue of Bro Nevez that Bretons are ready to stand up for the reunification of Brittany, it seems like a good idea to include this travel account from a period of time – 1906 - when there was no question that Nantes was in Brittany.

Part II, Chapter II – Nantes to Vannes

Next to Marseille, Nantes is the finest provincial capital of France. This may be disputed, but it is the opinion of the writer.

Perhaps it is because of the glorious part that the city played in the past to preserve its independence, and the independence of Brittany, succumbing only with the second marriage of Queen Anne; but, for some reason, the links that bind it with the past have never grown rusty, nor have modern cosmopolitan characteristics destroyed the individuality of the Breton.

The situation doubtless has much to do with the air of geniality which pervades this city. When the Loire glistens under the caressing rays of the setting sun, and the roof-tops of the town are all of a reddened gold, Nantes might indeed be even now the medieval capital that it was before the age of steam and electricity, which sound the only modern notes to be heard here. At night the spectacle is far more dramatic, with the streets and quays lit by countless lamps; the subdued murmur of the workaday world, now all but gone to rest; for an occasional shriek from a locomotive or a wail from the siren of some great steamer dropping down-river with the tide is all that one hears.

There is a forest of masts of shipping, scores upon scores of great chimney-stacks, of ship-houses, of sugar and oil refineries, and along the quay-side streets there are yet sailors and longshoremen hanging about and smoking a finishing pipe, or drinking a last drop of spirit or glass of beer. But all is "drawing in," and soon all will be hushed in silence, and only the walls and towers of the great castle and the cathedral will keep watch, as they have for five centuries past. This is Nantes, the great trading port. Up in the town blaze forth the great hotels that would do credit to Paris, and yet are so different, and coffee-rooms as splendid and brilliant as any in the capital itself, with the prices of the portions twenty per cent less.

They keep late hours in this part of Nantes, and night does not actually fall until midnight, when, one by one, up go the coffee-room shutters, - to come down again in the same order between six and seven in the morning. This is not bad for a climate which on the Loire approaches almost Mediterranean mildness. It is a pity that cold and austere England does not rise a little earlier in the morning. London, it is true, sits up late enough, but she makes up for it by dawdling away all the morning up to half-past ten or eleven.

In spite of all its loveliness and gaiety, Nantes is a city more ancient than modern, - this antique Namnètes, the capital, by preference, of the Dukes of Brittany, and the political rival of Rennes.

The old lanes and crossways of the middle ages have disappeared in making the spacious great streets of our own time, but there is much left to remind one of other

days in the old houses and in the ever dominant cathedral and castle.

The Cathedral of St. Pierre is not a master-piece of itself, but it encloses a treasure that may well be included in that category, - the tomb of Duke Francis II and Margaret of Foix. The great harmony of this composition, under the half-light of the stained-glass windows, reveals a charm that most mausoleums altogether lack. On a tablet of white marble lie the effigies of the duke and duchess, with two angels kneeling at their heads, and, crouched at their feet, a greyhound, supporting the escutcheon of Brittany. Four statues, at the corners of the pedestal, symbolize Justice, Strength, Temperance, and Prudence. This magnificent tomb is justly counted as Michel Colombe's finest work.

The castle of Nantes, like that of Angers, is now an arsenal, and accordingly is less interesting than if it were even a shattered ruin. It was the castle of the dukes, and the great lodge, a dainty Renaissance building, with delicately sculptured window-frames and balconies capriciously disposed, gives an idea of the comfort and luxury with which pervasive Duchess Anne surrounded herself in the vivid days when she lived at Nantes. With the walls of the castle, one might yet see - were one allowed to ramble over it at will - the chambers where the odious Gilles of Laval, the Maréchal de Raiz, Fouquet, the Cardinal de Retz, and the Duchess de Berri were imprisoned during the long years that it served as a cage for the political prisoners of France. Madame de Sévigné sojourned here in 1675, so the sombre and yet grey castle, besides having entertained many of the Kings of France, from Louis XI onward, has also somewhat of the aspect of a literary shrine.

In the courtyard is a great well with an admirably worked decorative railing in wrought iron, quite worthy to rank with Quintin Matsys's famous well at Antwerp. The museums of painting and archaeology, abounding in rare Breton antiquities, give the town prominence among the artistic centres of provincial France. The former contains some fine examples of the works of Philippe de Champaigne, Lancret, Watteau, and Théodore Rousseau among others.

The environs of Nantes are wonderfully picturesque for the artist, but offer little for the amusement of the 125,000 inhabitants of this city of affairs.

To the north, the Erdre winds its way through flat banks, and widens out here and there into a veritable lake.

From Nantes to the ocean the wind blows more strongly and the horizon widens; the great waterway of the Loire has already become practically an arm of the sea, and one breathes the salt air. The aspect of nature now grows more and more melancholy for the seeker after

gaiety and life; only the artist will revel in these dull brown and gray riverside and seaside towns, which follow the coast-line from St. Nazaire to Batz, Croisic, and Guérande. It is what the French themselves call a land of grayish twilight, with vast stretches of marsh-land and pebble-strewn sands.

It is the true borderland of frontier between the sea and the land, the one almost imperceptibly mingling with the other. ...

"The sea sells cheap," say the natives, who are mostly engaged in the salt industry ... Competition has cut considerably into the industry of recovering salt from the sea-water, but it is still kept up, and these little Breton coast villages depend upon it, and on fishing, for their sustenance.

St. Nazaire, where the sea first meets the waters of the Loire, is quite new, created but yesterday by the march of progress. Tradition connects the site of this busy port - the seventh in rank among the ports of France - with the ancient Gallo-Roman port of Cobilon. No trace of this former appellation exists since the sixth century, when Gregory of Tours, in the first history of France, mentions the settlement as having been pillaged by a Breton chief, and refers to it as Vic-Saint-Nazaire, which nearly approaches its present name.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the market-town was called Port Nazaire, and was defended by a castle erected by the Dukes of Brittany.

Modern navigation has replaced the old sailing-vessels, and to-day, with its coastwise and foreign trade and its great shipyards, St. Nazaire is a busy, bustling town. The blemish it has, in the eyes of most, will be its general aspect of modernity and its uncompromising right-angled, straight streets, laid out on a plan which suggests that of Chicago, if one makes an allowance for the difference in magnitude. St. Nazaire surpasses Chicago, however, in having a sea front, instead of a lake front, and its hotels are better and cost less. What more should a passing traveler want of a modern city?

Between Nantes and St. Nazaire, on the granite flank of Sillon de Bretagne, sits Savenay, as if its houses were ranged around the steps of an amphitheatre. It has fallen considerably from its proud position of having been the flourishing capital of the district. It still is the largest town, but none of the honours go with its size; decay has fallen upon it, and the hotels are dull, sad places, and even the omnibus from the railway has stopped its journeys.

The town was the site of a terrific conflict in the Vendean wars, and was well-nigh massacred. Now vineyards grow upon the very soil that a hundred or more years ago covered thousands of corpses. Altogether it is a

gruesome memory which Savenay conjures up, if on dare even think of it.

Between Savenay and Guérande, at an equal distance between the two, are the peat-bogs of Grand Brière. They are the great resources of the country. Would you see them worked? Then come in August, when you are making your way to some seacoast resort of Lower Brittany. For none days only in the year do the authorities permit the sods to be cut, but everybody takes part therein, you will be told; and enough peat will be gathered, and dried, and pressed into "loaves," as the Briérons call them, to warm Nantes for a year. Guérande is a capital not quite so dead and alive as Savenay; it is the possessor of a part of a most momentous and vivid character in its relation to the history of Brittany and of France. To-day, as in other days, the town is avowedly Breton, as characteristically so as any of its size in the province. Much has been sacrificed to the god of progress, but enough of the ancient aspect of the place remains to recall its features of the time of Duguesclin and Clisson, and the Counts of Montfort and of Blois, who proclaimed peace here in 1365. The enormous Saint Michael Gate is a great fortress-gateway, flanked with two cylindrical and conical roofed towers of the time when feudalism ruled Brittany.

"Guérande," says a Frenchman, "has not unlaced its corselet of stone since the fifteenth century." To-day, even, it is surrounded by its medieval ramparts in a manner like not other northern city in France, reminding one of those great walled cities of Aigues Mortes and Carcassonne in Southern Gaul. This proud belt of machicolated ramparts, ten towers, and four great gates, and its deep, through now herbage-grown, moat is indeed one of the few monuments of the middle ages that remain to us in all their undisturbed splendour.

Guérande is not exactly a deserted village, but its streets are, at midday, as lone and silent as though its population had not been in residence for many months. This is a notable feature in many small French towns during the hour and a half of the midday meal, but nowhere else is it more to be remarked.

The old parish Church of St. Aubin of Guérande has a collection of strangely carved capitals depicting horrible chimerical beasts, and the Chapel of Notre Dame de la Blanche – a fine work of the thirteenth century – is occasionally the scene of a marriage wherein the participants dress themselves in the old-time resplendent costumes. Such an occasion is rare, but should one be fortunate enough to meet with it, he will carry away still another memory of the medieval flavour still lingering about this somnolent little Breton city.

Seaward beyond Guérande are only Bourg de Batz and Croisic, a gay little maritime city with a fine Gothic

church of the highly ornamented species, and many old, high-gabled house of the variety which one sees frequently in stage settings. There are the local watering-places, too, of the Nantais, Ste. Marguerite and Baule, which have nothing of interest, however, for the traveler who seeks to improve his mind and amuse himself simultaneously.

They are undoubtedly of great healthful and economic value to Nantes and St. Nazaire, however, and they do not differ greatly from others of their class elsewhere.

Again returning to the highroad, if one be traveling by road, "*Vous prenez le chemin de Vennes*" (Vannes) "*par la Roche-Bernard qui est aussy celuy de Rhennes et de Rhedon,*" wrote a sixteenth century chronicler, and the direct road to-day lies the same way. It is known as "National Road" No. 165. Straight as the crow flies, but now up and now down, like all Breton roadways, this highway runs from Nantes to Quimper, 232 kilometres.

The aspect of country changes perceptibly as one leaves Savenay on the way to the real Brittany. One crosses the Vilaine by the suspension bridge of La Roche-Bernard, hung so precariously high that the great three-masted coasters may pass beneath. It is unlovely, but convenient, and saves a round of fifty kilometres on the journey, as one goes from Nantes to Vannes, so it may be pardoned.

Northward lies the very ancient town of Châteaubriant, once the centre and life of Breton warfare and political strife. It was an ancient barony of the county of Nantes, and owes its name to the compounding of the word château with that of the original lord, who was named Brient.

The ancient feudal fortress is now a ruin, but the castle built by John of Laval, governor of Brittany under Francis I, still serves the gendarmerie and the sous-préfecture offices. Above the portal of the colonnade one reads this inscription, which gives the date of the completion of the new castle:

DE MAL EN BIEN, DE BIEN MYCVLC  
POUR LACHEVER LE DEVINS VIEVLX  
1538

Each is most interesting, and so abundantly supplied with the lore of romance and reality, that one can only get his fill of studying it on the spot.

The Church of St. Jean de Béré is a historical monument of almost the first rank, and the remains of the ancient Benedictine convent of St. Saviour date originally from a foundation of Brient I.

On the thirteenth and fourteenth of September of each year, on the plain behind the town, is held the celebrated



Fair of Béré, one of those great combinations of marketing and merry-making for which old France was noted, and which have so largely disappeared that to be a part and parcel of one is to have a most agreeable experience. Guibray, near Falaise, in Normandy, the “horse-fair” at Bernay, and the Fair de Béré are the most celebrated in these parts.

... Any one seeking change and rest will certainly find what he is looking for at Châteaubriant. It is somnolently dull all through the week and doubly so on Sundays, but, in spite of all this, it is delightful, and a romantic novelist – or even a writer of romantic novels – could hardly find a more inspiring background than the country round about.

## **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 throughout 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 15-20 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 100<sup>th</sup> 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 800 new releases briefly described.

### **The U.S. ICDBL Web Site: [www.icdbl.org](http://www.icdbl.org)**

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

### **Other Action**

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

### **More direct support for the Breton Language**

The U.S. ICDBL has supported Diwan – Breton language immersion schools – for over ten years with a small annual contribution from our Members. We have maintained a personal link with the children of one particular 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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