

BRO NEVEZ

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



**POUR RELANCER L'ÉCONOMIE,
SOUTENIR L'EMPLOI
ET DÉCIDER EN BRETAGNE**



**ÉTATS GÉNÉRAUX DE BRETAGNE
BREUJOÙ BREIZH**



**REJOIGNEZ-NOUS POUR BÂTIR
LA BRETAGNE DE DEMAIN !**

SAMEDI 8 MARS 2014

A PARTIR DE 11 H 30 (RESTAURATION SUR PLACE)

M O R L A I X

PARC DES EXPOSITIONS DE LANGOLVAS



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Les Bonnets rouges
Vivre décider travailler en Bretagne
Ar Bodedoù Ruz
Bevañ divizout labourat e Breizh



Bodedoù Ruz - Live, Work and Decide in Brittany

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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Editor's Note - My apology for the lateness of this "February" issue of Bro Nevez. I will blame it on too much snow, extreme cold, a three-day power outage, and a challenging winter over all. But, it also seemed worth waiting for news of the March 8th Bonnets Rouges gathering – read next.



Following up on large demonstrations this past November to call for a rejection of an eco-tax that would negatively impact the Breton economy (see Bro Nevez 128, November 2013) thousands of Bretons gathered in Morlaix on March 8th for an États Généraux (States General) organized by the Bonnets Rouges – the collective "Live, Work and Decide in Brittany." At this gathering held 225 years after the last States General of Brittany of 1789, 11 demands were identified from "doléances" (grievances) submitted by Bretons – some 15,000 in all. The first four of these had already been identified in the Charter of the Bonnets Rouges (see below).

- Maintain the free use of our roads in Brittany and definitively cancel the Ecotax.
- Free up initiatives and support employment by lightening administrative burdens and constraints.
- End social dumping and the inequalities of competition within Europe.
- Localize economic decision-making and power in Brittany.

The seven other demands come from an analysis of the grievances submitted:

- Develop infrastructure and alternative modes of transport with a recalibration West-East.
- Give Bretons control of the energy channel and development of renewable energies.
- Localize finances.
- Give official recognition to the Breton languages and culture.
- Support experimentation, dialogue, and transparency - the "living together" in Brittany.
- Endow Brittany with its own audiovisual and technological media.
- A Brittany of five departments with local political decision making.

With some 60 local branches, the Bonnets Rouges have wide public support in its aim to bring the French President to Brittany to negotiate progress on these demands.

The Charter of the 'Red Caps' give a good idea of the basic aims of this widely inclusive organization,

Charter of the Bonnets Rouges

(from the website www.bonnetsrougesbzh.eu)

Our Objectives

- To live, plan and work in Brittany.
The Bonnets Rouges firmly believe that Brittany has a future. They want to prepare this future for the benefit of future generations.

Our aims

- To maintain employment and productive work in Brittany.
- To develop the region of Brittany in an intelligent and balanced way in consultation with the populations concerned.

Our actions

- To maintain free use of our roads and to cancel the Ecotax. This tax is destroying employment, destabilizing our region and distorting competition to the detriment of Brittany.
- To end unfair competition and social dumping. These inequalities are destroying our jobs and altering our relationships with other populations.
- To develop Breton initiatives. The avalanche of standards and administrative constraints discourages initiative, accentuates irresponsibility and benefits defrauders.
- To localize decision making which concerns Brittany – a process which has been removed from us by the bureaucratic machine which only functions for itself.

Our values

- In our Armorican peninsula, we depend on one another. Brittany will build itself collectively regardless of the divisions between professions and politics.
- We uphold the values of progress, solidarity, confidence and humanism. We do not recognize hatred or rejection of others.
- Those who have this spirit, those who adopt these aims and actions, can be proud to wear the 'bonnet rouge' – the red hat. Together we will take the initiative to localize employment and decision making.

The following is an excerpt from an article by Sara Miller Llana which was published in the Christian Science Monitor on December 23, 2013 ("Why Brittany's 'red caps' are a red alert for France's Hollande"). This part of the article is subtitled "Brittany's significance" and is worth quoting here:

Brittany has been a Socialist stronghold. Nearly 56 percent of the region voted for Hollande [the French President] in 2012 elections, well above the national

average of 51 percent. So Hollande would be wise to take note of the red cap movement, says Ronan Le Coadic, a professor of Breton language and culture at the University of Rennes,

Here a spirit of independence runs deep. This region of France was part of the Duchy of Brittany, a medieval feudal state, for a thousand years before being annexed to France in 1532. It has retained its Celtic cultural influences. Today the Celtic language, Breton, has enjoyed a cultural revival. Traditional folk music, including Celtic harps and bagpipes, can be heard in local watering holes.

In an Ifop poll in December 2012, 37 percent of respondents from Brittany declared that they felt more Breton than French. In that same poll, 20 percent said they support independence from Brittany. But unlike the Basque separatist movement or the independence movement in Scotland, which will be put to referendum next fall, there is no significant political movement for independence or even autonomy. Regional pride is expressed as a celebration of a language, culture, and place.

But the "red caps" are raising new questions about autonomy and decentralization to which the government has responded, says Thierry Jigourel, a [Breton] journalist and writer on Brittany. In December, upon signing a pact with Brittany's leaders – one that the red caps dismiss – it promised a plan for new regional autonomy.

It remains to be seen what that might look like, but the demand for more decentralization grows. Mr. Jigourel, who attended the first mega-march in Quimper, says the protest movement against taxation looks more like a regional pride protest. From the Breton hymns being sung to the waving of Breton flags, he says locals are questioning why France has not devolved more powers to its regions, as have Spain, Italy and Germany.

"France has an irrational, almost religious centralization," Jigourel says. "There is a nationalism that can develop [from the red cap movement] but it is not French nationalism. It is Breton nationalism, which contests French centralization."

This is not just a local movement that is confined to Brittany, however, says Dr. Le Coadic: Bretons, he says, are a stoic people, not prone to complaining, so when they do, something must be wrong. France, he says, is in a crisis, having lost its place in the world, its sense of identity, and the trust in its all-powerful state.

"Bretons might be the first but not the last to protest," he says. "There is deep social crisis in all of France."



Deep Inside a Breton Skull 41:

Universal Republic (Scenario 1)

Jean-Pierre Le Mat

*« O République Universelle
Tu n'es encore que l'étincelle
Demain tu seras le soleil ! » (Victor Hugo)*

*"O Universal Republic
You're still only the spark,
Tomorrow you'll be the sun !" (Victor Hugo)*

Let us imagine a universal republic in 2032.

Why 2032? Elementary... It's 500 years after 1532.

So what? In 1532 was the Union between France and Brittany. This Union marked the end of Breton Independence. After years of wars, negotiation, uncertainties for the Breton people, the Breton parliament accepted Brittany to be part of the French kingdom. This period, at the end of XVth and beginning of XVIth century, marks a deep change in European history. Through the invention of printing, Europe was entering the "Gutenberg Galaxy". Modernity is born and with it the Nation-State, representative democracy, industrial organization, the ideas of "progress".

500 years later, will we know such a change? Are we entering in the "Steve Jobs Galaxy"? What could be post-modernity?

Here is scenario 1 for the year 2032.

We will imagine what the world will be, if the "values" of the French Republic will be, truly, universal values. France always wanted to represent universal ideas.

First, let us extend the current trends in demographics and economic globalization. We can foretell that the capital of the Universal Republic will be in Asia, probably Beijing.

So what? Well, let's go! Let's go there! Remember, we are now living in year 2032.

Just like the article 2 of the old French Constitution "The language of the Republic is French", the Article 2 of the Constitution of the Universal Republic set in stone : "The language of the Republic is Chinese."

To get everybody equal and to allow everybody to be part of the universal democracy, all children of the world learn Chinese. French is considered as a regional language. Its use is only tolerated. On behalf of the principle of unity and equality, some GNO want to go farther, and prohibit the French language in the civil services.

What is taught in schools has been standardized. It is the same education programs, in Brest and Strasbourg as before, but now also in Beijing, Moscow or Philadelphia. All the little children have to get the same universal knowledge. Nevertheless, they have to study the past, including events that occurred before the proclamation of the Universal Republic. So, everywhere, the little children are taught the Chinese dynasties.

The French asked for a memorial law teaching that their Revolution of 1789 is important to them and to mankind. The official historians are open-minded to small people and minor events. However, they must be sure that these local memories marred by emotions don't disturb the global history, which is a unifying force.

More than half the budget of the Ministry of Culture is spent in the Enlightened City, Beijing. It is highly fashionable, when you're a wealthy hillbilly, to spend a weekend in the capital city and attend a performance of the Beijing Opera. On public television, all the broadcasts are in Chinese language. The daily news describes in detail congestion on highways around Beijing, and Buddhists demonstrations on Tiananmen Square.

The French language benefits with three minutes per week during regional broadcasts.

With its new status in the Universal Republic, France's budget is ten times lighter. But the French administration doesn't have to pay salaries of the civil servants working in universal Education, universal Finance, universal health, and universal police. These departments are located in Beijing. They are managed by competent experts, concerned about the common interest.

In France, in the year 2014, the bosses of big companies were very close to the bosses of public services. All of them stayed in Paris. In the Universal Republic, it is the same. Efforts to have world companies outside Beijing have nevertheless been made. Old American and European industrial plants have been maintained, more or less. The television channels reported the promises of politicians about a harmonious repartition of industrial plants all over the world. They don't want Western

Europe becoming an economic desert, only dedicated to holidays and leisure. This tourist destination is however seen as a fashionable spot, and industrial pollutions must be avoided there. The Eiffel Tower is so pretty and the French people are so quaint that this place should not be wasted by industrial activity. The region is a paradise for retirees.

The French claim that they are not treated fairly. They want now to lead a global movement for decentralization. They are trying unsuccessfully to convince their neighbors. Bretons no longer speak French, since the official language is Chinese. Actually, they do not feel concerned. Five former western departments of France have been linked to the new "Atlantic Arc" region, which also includes the British Isles and the west of the Iberian Peninsula. The Universal Republic, full of wisdom, changed the regional boundaries. Administrative borders were redrawn so that they do not coincide with the old boundaries, which symbolized the old regime and its bloody wars.

The French are considered worldwide much too conservative people, nostalgic of the old order. The Minister of universal order said, in his annual speech, that the French people, according to their long-standing culture, are unable to share the values of the Universal Republic. All the members of government agreed with that.

(next time : scenario 2)

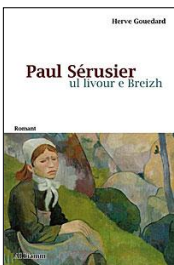


Prizioù 2014 – Prizes for Breton Language Creation

Each year in January the France 3 Bretagne television station and the Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg award prizes for action for the Breton language in seven categories: literature, audiovisual, music, public institutions, economic initiatives, organizations, and a Breton speaker of the year.

To pay homage to what would have been the 100th birthday of the famous Bigouden writer Pierre-Jakez Hélias, the ceremony was held in Pont l'Abbé. Besides writing in the Breton language, Hélias was also a pioneer in Breton language radio and television programming. The Bagad Cap Caval provided music for the ceremony.

Here are the nominees and winners for each category.



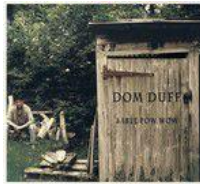
Best fiction book

Hervé Gouedard, for *Paul Sérusier, ul livour e Breizh* (Paul Sérusier, a painter in Brittany) published by Al Liamm.

Runners up:

Yann Gerven for his collection of short stories, *Traoù nevez*, published by Skol Vreizh

Erwan Hupel for his novel *Yudal*, about the life of a school teacher.



Best CD sung in Breton

Dom Duff for *Babel Pow-Wow* which was self-produced thanks to the support of 300 subscribers. This is the second time Dom Duff has won this prize.

Runners up were:

Gwennyn for her CD *Beo*

Yannig Noguét & Rozenn Tallec for their CD *Mouezh an Diaoul*



Best Audiovisual production

Soazig Daniellou for *Lann vraz*, the first full length fiction film in the Breton language, produced by Kalanna productions.

Runners-up were:

Eric Gudenkauf for *A-hed an dour* on the Canal from Brest to Nantes.

Claude Nadeau and Lionel Buannic for *War an Ton Bras*, a series on Breton classical music.

Future for Breton in the economic world



The Breizhit company www.breizhit.com for games in the Breton language which test one's knowledge about Brittany.

The runner up was:

Conseo Breizh for Breton language information for people interested in Made in Breizh products.



Associations and Breton

The Diwan high school in Carhaix which had been voted the best high school of France in national press for its success in the baccalaureat exams.

Runners up:

The Club de Rugby des Abers in the city of Lannilis for its use of Breton.

The Kreiz-Breizh office of tourism for its use of Breton.



Public Institutions

The town of Querrien for all the work it did to promote bilingualism in public use.

Runners up:

The Glenmor performance center in Carhaix for its public use of Breton

The Celtic Department of the Université de Rennes 2 for its work to create a Breton language course at Harvard University.



Breton Speaker of the Year

Malo Bouessel du Bourg for his action for the Breton language in the economic world as well as literary and institutional areas. He paid homage to his father Yann Bouessel du Bourg (1924-1996) who had been very active in promoting the Breton language and history.

Runners up:

Isabelle Le Nabat, founder of the website Webklas to support bilingual teachers

Soazig Danielou, for work to create a structure for audiovisual work in the Breton language.



Promoting the Breton (and Gallo) Language

There are many ways that Bretons promote the Breton language by including it in activities that welcome Breton and non-Breton speakers to use and learn about this language, and this is also true for the Gallo language of eastern Brittany. The following are just a few examples of activities where these languages are celebrated.



Week of the Breton language in the Pays d'Auray

From March 29 through April 6 the town of Auray will host a range of activities to bring visibility to the Breton language. These will include public activities in the market place, in the center of town, and in stores. There will be workshops in schools and the week will close with a conference in the Breton language

(with simultaneous translation) on the theme "Douar ha douar" (water and earth).

Kan en Davarn

In the realm of song and story-telling (in Breton and Gallo) Bretons have been active in organizing evenings where people gather and share their talents. A never event is called "Kan en davarn" (song in the tavern) where a particular singer is featured but others gather around a large table over dinner and/or drinks and participate – often in singing along with the lead singer on choruses or offering a song of their own. Those who happen to be in the bar/restaurant also benefit from this sharing of song and sometimes also participate. Modeled on the Vannetais tradition called *filajoù*, these informal gatherings have been held in the Tavn Roue Morvan in Lorient but are also initiated elsewhere. In the Gallo pays of eastern Brittany the organizations l'Épille and La Bouèze have been organizing "répas chantés" for quite some time and Dastum has also been active in supporting this type of gathering where there is no stage and spotlight.

Beilhadegou Dastum

The Tregor branch of Dastum (Dastum Bro-Dreger) has regularly organized evening gatherings (*veillées*, in French) where singers, musicians and storytellers share their repertoire. This gathers young and old and offers the chance for those developing their talents to do so in an informal and supportive atmosphere.

Kaozeadennoù brezhoneg e Plouillio

Breton language "talks"

Daniel Giraudon (see book reviews below) has been organizing informal talks where invited speakers gather around a table to share ideas and memories. These often focus on local history and offer a great opportunity for those learning Breton to listen to native speakers.

Sevenadur 2014

www.sevenadur.org

Each year the Celtic Circle of Rennes organizes two weeks of activities featuring the local culture of the Rennes region with language workshops, exhibits, music and dance, speakers, workshops, concerts, countryside walks, games, and activities for children. These are hosted by different cultural organizations, book shops, cafés, and the Musée de Bretagne. During the two weeks this March participants discover new elements of their own unique culture, but are also introduced to that of Asturias and Africa.

Workshops by Studi ha Dudi

The organization Studi ha Dudi organizes workshops throughout the year for Breton learners on various levels. These have the aim of making language use fun and part of everyday use. This April they are offering a week-long workshop in collaboration with Ti Ar Vro Kemper. There

will also be a free one-day workshop for beginners as well as two music workshops – one on Breton gwerz (Breton language ballads) by Ifig Flatres and another on Celtic harp by Hoëla Barbedette.

La Obra Theater Performance

As part of a week-long series of events for the Breton language in Lannion in April, Div Yezh Lannuon, the association of parents for bilingual programs in the public schools, has invited the theater group La Obra to present their new creation, “Bleunioù Gouez, la mala hierba nunca muere” performed in Breton as well as Spanish. Theater in the Breton language has long flourished in Brittany and offers yet another way to enjoy creation in Breton.

There are certainly many more groups and activities to be cited, but this will give an idea of the creative ways in which Bretons have made Breton and Gallo part of interesting and innovative activities.

The Redadeg Relay Run in support of the Breton Language



The following description is from the website: www.ar-redadeg.org with a few minor adjustments for American English users from me - LK

From 24th to 31st May, from Morlaix to Glomel, 1500 km in Brittany!

The Redadeg, launched in 2008, is a relay race which takes place

every two years.

Popular and festive, it crosses Brittany, day and night to symbolize the transmission of a lively, creative and dynamic Breton language, across the generations and territories.

To back the projects in support of the Breton language the kilometers are sold and the profits are redistributed. These new initiatives are selected based on application, they are very diverse and can relate to teaching, leisure, media, sport or culture but they all promote the use of Breton in social and family life. The race goes through the 5 Breton departments over 1500 kms and crosses more than 300 municipalities.

The Redadeg defends the idea “Brezhoneg ha plijadur”! “Breton language and pleasure”! You can run with your family, friends or colleagues, in disguise, with music, follow the race on foot, or on rollerblades, in pushchairs or on bikes....organize some entertainment or take advantage of the local festivities, concerts, theatre, stands, breakfasts....organized according to the time and

place of the race passing. The main idea is to take part, to be seen, to have fun and it's also the opportunity to hear, to use and to make Breton be heard!

The baton, symbol of the Breton language, carries a secret message. It is passed from hand to hand and is read at the finishing line.

For the start of the 4th edition in 2014, the race will leave from Morlaix on Saturday 24th May and arrive in Glomel on Saturday 31st May in the middle of the International Festival of Clarinettes, Gouel an Dreujenn Gaol.

The Redadeg is an event which is uniting, sporting, cultural, popular and festive all at the same time. The Redadeg is an event with a strong media (in Brittany and elsewhere), economic (direct and indirect) and cultural, impact.



New Books from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Lionel Henry. *Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Breton*. Yoran Embanner 2013. 431 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-59-7



This new book presents over 900 individuals who have been active in the “Breton Movement” called the Emsav. This is a remarkable collection of individuals who have all in some way been militant in their defense and promotion for Brittany.

In reading all of the biographies which ranged from a short paragraph to a little over one page, I became aware of how difficult a task Lionel Henry had in identifying such a large group and in limiting the selection. The first rule of selection was to stick to the 20th and 21st centuries.

In his introduction to the book he notes that the selection was of people who were recognized as militant – people who have spoken out or taken action in several different areas for Brittany. These include first the defense of Breton identity, language and culture – what makes Brittany unique. A second area was activity for Breton sovereignty – whether that is action for Breton autonomy, regionalism or independence from France. A third area was the defense of territorial integrity – action to reunite the Department of Loire Atlantique. And the last area – perhaps the most difficult to identify was action to develop and defend Brittany economically, socially and environmentally.

Clearly an individual's role in a Breton political party or group was a strong factor in their inclusion in this dictionary. This goes beyond a mere membership card so that those cited are people who were active in founding a group or in running for political office – successfully or not. Lionel Henry excluded people who were “salaried” for their work – such as Breton language teachers or university professors who have researched Breton language and culture but have not stepped up in defense of it in any public way. This is a hard line to draw in the area of cultural activity especially. Founding a Celtic Circle, assisting in the establishment of a Diwan school, performing songs of a militant nature, contributing to a Breton language magazine or the publication of a political party all seemed to help insure inclusion in the dictionary.

What is the line between a militant and an individual who has made a significant contribution to Breton culture, society, economy, etc.? The Cultural Institute of Brittany inducts four and sometimes five new members into the Order of the Ermine each year. They are selected based on their life time of work for Brittany. While perhaps they have not participated in a demonstration or signed a petition or joined a Breton political party, it seems as if the members of this group have taken significant action for Brittany (and as members of the Order of the Ermine this is expected to be a life-long obligation). Here are members of the Order of the Ermine who should perhaps be considered for inclusion in the next edition of this useful dictionary: Roger Abjean, Yvonne Breilly-Le Calvez, Jacques Briard, Yves-Pascal Castel, André Chéddeville, Denise Delouche, Pierre-Roland Giot, Viviane Hélias, Jean-Jacques Hénaff, Yvonne Jean-Haffen, Rhisart Hincks, Yvonne Jean-Haffen, Michael Jones, Yann Fañch Kemener, Jean Kerhervé, Raymond Lebossé, Xavier Leclercq, Jean-Guy Le Floc'h, Ivonig Le Merdy, François Le Quéménéur, Jean L'Helgouach, Louis Lichou, Jean Mévellec, Rita Morgan Williams, the Morvan brothers, Mona Ozouf, Gabriele Pescatore, Jordi Pujol, Henri Queffélec, Yves Rocher, Frère Marc Simon, Claude Sterckx, Pierre Toulhoat, Ewa Waliszewska. This includes a number of non-Bretons who have worked to promote Brittany and its culture, but if the dictionary can include someone like Lois Kuter (yes, I'm in it), then perhaps it might consider a few other foreigners who have been militant in their defense of Brittany. And perhaps it could be argued that the good work for Brittany done by some of the members of the Order of the Ermine were just part of their professional job, but it seems that much of this work went above and beyond a paid job.

Where do you draw the line in including actors who have been important in the life of Brittany. Here are a few other names I would propose for consideration: Robert Marie, Pierre Flatrès, Eric Pianessa Le Page, Edith Poilvet, Ronan Caouissin (Herri Caouissin is included), Efflam Cuen, René Henry, Jean Guéhenno, Jude Le Paboul

But, surely there will be other readers of this book who propose different names and there are many entries –

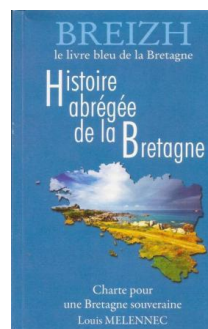
some 350 – that the author recognizes as being in need of more information. Some of these are actually quite complete, but may just need a review by the person they present.

This book can be described as a first draft, and if the author had waited for perfection, it would never have been published. In his introduction, the author has invited readers to provide corrections and clarifications – certainly for missing dates and additional information, if not a few additional entries. There are a few inconsistencies in dates to be corrected. For example in the entry for Goulven Mazeas he is noted as a member and founder of the PAB (Parti Autonomiste Breton) in 1930. In the very useful list of abbreviations at the beginning of the book it is noted that the PAB existed from 1927 to 1931. Dates for the SPV (Strollad Pobl Vreizh) are also inconsistent between this list of abbreviations and several different entries as to when it began and ended. I hope that some consistency can be made in noting the two marriages for Fant Meavenn Rozeg, also referred to as Fant Rozeg Maevenn in the three biographies where she is noted: her own Rozeg Fant Renea Maevenn, that of Loeiz Andouard and Yann Chanteau. Maybe my French is lacking but I got the impression she was married to these two gentlemen at the same time. Those are little things. More confusing for me was the use of Breizh Atao to refer both to the publication of that name and to the Breton Movement in general of the 1930s/40s. It is unclear in some biographies if the individual was actually part of the production of the magazine of that name or just generally active in one of the political parties that published it at that period of history.

This is a book that will always be a work in progress as Bretons continue their militant work. There is a systematic listing of elections and results for individuals who have run for office, so this alone will need updating as elections are held.

I love having a printed book that I can pull from the shelf and use to find information – and I already have to prepare this newsletter - but this is the type of publication that can probably be best kept up to date on a website ... with perhaps a reprinting from time to time!

Despite some small flaws, I have to say that this book is a very valuable collection to my library.



Louis Méllenec. *Breizh, Le livre bleu de la Bretagne: Histoire abrégée de la Bretagne.*

Association Bretonne de Culture.
2013. 95 pages. ISBN 978-2-9506923-2-0

This book was first published in 2009 for delegates at the Congress of the Federalist Union of European Nations (Union Fédéraliste des Communautés Européennes). Founded in 1944 by Breton Joseph Martray, this federation brings together some 150 members from 42 “minority” communities of Europe.

This very condensed history is intended to show “how Brittany was invaded, destroyed, colonized by France.” The author argues that contrary to what France would like the world to believe, Brittany was not “reintegrated” into France in the 16th century, but was a strong independent nation with its own government structure and sovereign leaders. The “union” of Brittany with France in 1532 should be seen as a unilateral take-over with France militarily invading and colonizing Brittany. It was with the French Revolution, however, that Brittany lost all true self-governing powers. And from that period on France has worked to present itself as the inventor of Human Rights while implementing an effective campaign to “unify” and “civilize” peoples within its borders (not to mention colonies beyond Europe) by denying their history and cultural worth.

While it is impossible to present the complexity of history in so few pages, and some may find the use of bold and capital letters a bit strident, the author presents a compelling story of how Bretons were brainwashed to believe they had no history of their own and that their language and culture were inferior to that of glorious France and the French language. It is important to understand that it has only been in recent decades that Bretons have had any real introduction to a Breton perspective on Breton history in schools. The introduction of the Breton language into schools has also been a recent phenomenon (since the 1970s) even if there were a few experiments in earlier years and the fight to allow Breton to be taught in schools dates back further.

This book will not give you an in-depth history of Brittany, but it will give you an appreciation of the challenges Bretons have faced for mere survival ... and the challenges that remain.

Copies are available from Association Bretonne de Culture, B.P. 3, 56770 Plouray, for 7 Euros (add several more to cover postage).



Daniel Giraudon. *Traditions populaires de Bretagne: Du coq à l'âne – Quand les animaux parlaient ...*

Yoran Embanner. 2013. 395 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-51-1.

Daniel Giraudon is a professor at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale and researcher at the Centre de

Recherche Bretonne et Celtique (CRBC) in Brest. He has studied oral traditions of Brittany for over 40 years, collecting stories, sayings and phrases in Gallo of eastern Brittany where his family has roots, as well as Breton in the Trégor region (especially) in north central Brittany. Fluent in both these languages, he has gleaned an immense amount of lore from masters throughout Brittany and has written a series of books on the relation of Bretons to their natural world.

This book is the re-edition from a 2000 publication with some additions and relocation of the section on insects to *Le Folklore des insectes et autres petites bestioles* (see review in Bro Nevez 121, February 2012). Featured in *Du coq à l'âne* are animals of the Breton countryside. A little over the first third of the book is devoted to birds: larks, woodcocks, crows, coo coos, owls, jays, thrushes, swallows, blackbirds, peacocks (not native to Brittany!), finches, woodpeckers, magpies, pigeons, wrens and robins. The second third of the book focuses on farm animals: horses, cows, goats, dogs, cats, pigs, chickens and roosters. And the last third presents wild animals: toads, frogs, salamanders, snakes, rabbits, wolves (no longer found in Brittany), foxes, moles, mice and rats.

The book is loaded with legends, Gallo and Breton sayings about animals, riddles, rhymes for children, proverbs, song and poetry. There are lots of expressions comparing peoples' behavior to animals such as “c'hweshet ‘vel un toñseg” – proud like a toad, which will puff up defensively when approached. There are also many ways that animals give omens of death or marriage as in the expression: “Pa groaz ar big war an hentchoù, prestik e tremen an Ankou” (when the magpie crosses paths, death will soon pass). In many cases animals can give a sign of upcoming weather such as the songs of coo coos and frogs in the spring. Sometimes the prediction can be iffy as recognized in the expression: “N’eo ket ur wenilienn a ra an hañv, nag ur barr awel ar goañv” (A swallow doesn’t make it summer any more than a wind gust makes it winter). Some of the sayings and expressions are “earthy” with references to rear ends and excrement and urine (to put it more formally).

There’s a wealth of information about how Bretons in the past (and sometimes in the present still) take precautions to insure the welfare of their animals through special Pardons where the animals are blessed or practices to insure fertility. There are also precautions humans must take to avoid meeting fantastic animals late at night such as angry bulls or huge ferocious black dogs. And there are tales of people being transformed into animals when they die as punishment for bad deeds during their lifetime.

When it comes to wild animals there are clear expressions of loves and hates and fears. Toads, salamanders and snakes sometimes met cruel fates for their association with the devil before being recognized for the helpful ecological role they can play in a garden.

In this as well as in the two books noted below the author does not spare us stories of what seem today cruel practices regarding animals – sometimes a children's game or pastime such as collecting as many bird eggs as possible. But, the close relationship Bretons have had with birds and animals they encountered in rural life is certainly clear in the wealth of language devoted to these creatures and the attention paid to them as domestic animals on whom one depended or as wild animals that were an important part of the environment. As the saying goes: "Ne z'eus ken nemed ar vadiziant etre an dud hag ar chatal (only baptism separates people from animals).

As is the case in all three books by Giraudon presented here you will find hundreds of photos of the animals presented as well as people who shared their wealth of knowledge and lore with the author. There are also old postcards and drawings, as well as newer photos, to set the scene. And each book also has a useful bibliography to further explore. For those interested in Celtic traditions more broadly there are quite a few examples of lore and expressions from Scotland and Ireland included for comparison.



Daniel Giraudon & Yann Riou.
Traditions populaires de Bretagne: Cocquillages et crustacés – dictons, légendes et croyances du bord de mer.
 Yoran Embanner. 2013. 271 pages.
 ISBN 978-2-916579-49-8.

Daniel Giraudon pairs here with Yann Riou, a math professor at ISEN in

Brest who has also collected oral traditions, especially that of the sea and maritime life in the Leon area of northwestern Brittany. As is the case with all the books in this series on popular traditions of Brittany, a wealth of lore in both Gallo and Breton are gathered from all parts of Brittany.

This book on shellfish and crustaceans begins with a story of how the ocean became salty. This is a Breton version of a tale also found in Scandinavia and Scotland where a sea captain steals a magical grinding mill to take on board his ship to crush salt he needs to preserve the fish he catches. The mill produces salt on command, but the captain does not know the words to make it stop. The ship fills with salt and sinks to the bottom of the sea and this is how the sea first became salty.

Before launching into a presentation of the particular creatures of the sea (ar mor) presented in this book, the authors also discuss lore related to tides, the color, sounds, and character of the sea including waves and the danger to sailors.

In describing shellfish and crustaceans, this book includes lots of folk sayings and expressions that

describe their unique characters, but focuses more on traditions related to the collection of sea life by fishermen – professionals as well as amateurs who venture out at low tide to glean. While in earlier days this was important in gathering food for one's household, today the practice of searching for crabs, clams or other creatures exposed when the tide goes out is still very much practiced by Bretons for the enjoyment of learning about their environment as well as the pleasure of eating fresh seafood. You learn about how each creature is hunted and captured as well as something about how it is prepared and served as a meal.

In the shellfish category you are presented to and learn the many names associated with hermit crabs, barnacles, snails, cockle shells, scallops, razor fish, oysters, mussels and clams. When it comes to the crustaceans you learn about different types of crabs (ar c'hrank, in Breton) and how they are collected and eaten, and you will also learn about different types of lobsters, shrimps, and prawns (langoustine). In presenting the techniques of fishing for these, a section is included on how fishing baskets have been made. While perhaps not always eaten, other creatures to be found on the coast are also presented: sea anemones, starfish, sea urchins, jelly fish, cuttlefish and squid.

For those who are not familiar with a seaside environment – like me – you may find yourself searching for English equivalents to name the creatures well illustrated in photos. Whether you love to eat mussels, sea urchins or oysters or not, this book will certainly give one respect for the wealth and importance of shellfish and crustaceans to be found in the coastal waters surrounding Brittany.



Daniel Giraudon & Yann Riou.
Traditions populaires de Bretagne: Poissons et oiseaux de mer – Dictons, légendes et croyances.
 Yoran Embanner. 2013. 271 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-50-4.

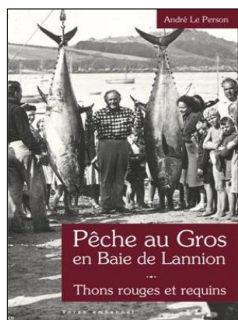
Taking us a little further out to sea, this book focuses on fish and provides a wealth of information on the history of how Bretons fished and the current state of the art. People and their tools are pictured in old photos and drawings and you also find photos of the fishermen and women who shared their knowledge with the authors. The bulk of the book is devoted to fish, including sea bass, conger eels, fresh water eels, goby, sand-eels, Pollack, lote, mackerel, mullet, plaice, rays, red mullets and gurnards, whiting, dog-fish, and dory.

Expressions and sayings related to these fish are included but a focus is on how and when fishing is done and how fish are eaten, with some stories about fishing

exploits and adventures. Also included is an introduction to the custom of “Poisson d’avril” or “Pesk Ebrel” in Breton. This is our own April Fools Day when outlandish things are said and we are sometimes made to look like a fool. You will also enjoy stories about the relationship of Saints Goustan, Neot and Corentin to fish, and you will be introduced to the art of digging up worms and bait for fishing.

While fish take up three-fourths of this book, some 80 pages are devoted to sea birds and their relationship to fishermen as competitors for fish and sometimes as game to be eaten, or simply as companions out at sea who can help one locate a good fishing spot or warn of weather changes. Birds included are cormorants, curlews, gannet, seagulls, oyster-catchers, puffins and petrels.

I have to admit that I am much more of an inland person who prefers a dip in a small stream than a frightful pounding by a wave on a beach, but this did not prevent me from appreciating these two books which present vividly the strong relationship Bretons have had and continue to have with the sea and its creatures.



André Le Person. *Pêche au Gros en Baie de Lannion – Thons rouges et requins, 1946-1953.* Yoran Embanner. 2013. 336 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-57-3.

This new book is also of a maritime nature with a focus on fishing rather than fish. Specifically it details the advent of big game fishing from 1945 to 1953 in the Bay of Lannion on the northwestern coast of Brittany.

For centuries fishermen of this area had fished for sardines and were well aware of the big fish which preyed on their catch and which often did extensive damage to nets. While fishermen knew that these were of different species, the predators were often lumped together under the name of “beluga” and included sharks, dolphins, porpoises, and tuna.

Georges Miroux, a doctor in Lannion and sport fisherman himself, “discovered” these big fish thanks to his relationship with local fishermen, and he would set off a period in which sport fishermen of big sea fish would be attracted to this coast to try their luck in capturing tuna especially. This would include the well know fisherman/woman (and Americans) Michael and Helen Lerner who would make headlines with their record catches as well as Charles Ritz (of the Ritz hotel family), as well as others in this network of sport. While Ernest Hemingway was in this loop, and was invited to try the Breton waters, he was not able to come.

This arrival of outside big game fishermen would require collaboration with local sardine fishermen to outfit boats with specialized equipment and to learn the waterways. And there was cooperation out on the waters as tuna were spotted near sardine nets and the sportsmen navigated among the sardine fishermen.

While considered a boon for local tourism, sport fishing did not have a significant impact on local economy. The huge fish brought in by the sportsmen were impressive but had only been hunted by local fisherman as predators to be gotten rid of. They could not be effectively marketed nor did local fishermen have the financial means to equip boats for this catch. The arrival of the sportsmen who killed the “belugas” was welcomed by local fishermen although the taking of just twenty tuna during this eight-year period surely did not put a big dent in the population.

With the disappearance of the sardines in the early 1950s – due to temperature changes in the water rather than too many predator fish – the sardine fishing and processing industry disappeared. Sardine fishermen turned to other marketable species and the sports fishermen disappeared.

This book is rich in photography which captures to process of fishing tuna as well as the personalities of the sportsmen and women who participated in this eight-year adventure. Also interesting to read are journals and newspaper articles which bring the perspective of both the sports fishermen and the local Breton population who hosted them.

Heard of, but not heard – 11 new recordings form Brittany

The following descriptions have been gleaned from: *Musique bretonne* 238 (Jan/Feb/March 2014) and *Ar Men* 197 (Nov/Dec 2013), 198 (Jan/Feb 2014) & 199 (March/Apr 2014).

Bagad Kemper & Red Cardell. *Fest-Rock.* Keltia Musique KMCD 557.

One of Brittany’s champion bagads, the Bagad Kemper, performs live here with the rock band Red Cardell in a high energy delivery where electric guitar and a rock beat combines nicely with the percussion, bagpipes and bombards of a bagad. In a grand finale, a choir of 500 children from schools in the Quimper area perform a composition by Jean-Louis Hénaff called “Percubagad.”

Eric Barret & Jacques Pellen. *Quiet Place.* CB Musique.

Jacques Pellen on guitar pairs with saxophonist Eric Barret for an innovative jazz performance where traditional Breton themes provide a unique flavor.

Gigi Bourdin & Laurent Jouin. *Les Ânes de Bretagne*. Innacor INNA 41309

Singers Gigi (Gilbert) Bourdin and Laurent Jouin were part of the group Ours du Scorff in the 1990s, singing to the delight of children (and their parents). While directed to adults, these compositions which are full of word play and stories not without humor, will be appreciated by those who loved the style of the “bears of Scorff.” They are accompanied by some excellent musicians including Jacky Molard and Hélène Labarrière.

Celtic Fiddle Festival. *Live in Brittany*. Loftus Music. Americans have had the good fortune to hear this quartet which toured the U.S. as well as Europe during its 20 years. While the make-up of the group has changed over the years it has always included Irish fiddler Kevin Burke and Breton fiddler Christian Lemaitre (known to American audiences also from his tours with Kornog). André Brunet brings fiddling styles from Quebec and Breton guitarist Nicolas Quemener provides an accompaniment. They perform live in Guéméné-sur-Scorff in Brittany.

Annie Ebrel. *Trent ans de chant*. Dastum AE3 OC6906 Annie Ebrel has been one of my favorite traditional singers and has certainly been recognized in Brittany as a master of traditional Breton language ballads known as gwerz as well as songs for dances of central western Brittany. I love her as a solo singer and in pair with the likes of Yann-Fañch Kemener, Erik Marchand, Marcel Guilloux or Manuel Kerjean with whom she started her appearances at festoù noz in the 1990s. But, she has also been outstanding in innovative collaborations with jazz bass player Riccardo Del Fra and in collaboration with other musicians and the group Dibenn. This CD celebrates a great singer and all those who have inspired her and sung with her.

Robin Foster. *Peninsular*. Queen Bee Music QB 29570 Composer and guitarist Robin Foster uses the Presqu'île de Crozon as an inspiration for compositions here with a pop-rock feel. With a certain melancholy and dreaminess or more energetic beat he successfully evokes the spectacular beauty of this peninsula of far western Brittany.

Régis Huiban. *Le Train Birinik*. Musicalisme Be Good/Bemol Productions. Régis Huiban is a master of the chromatic (piano) accordion and here composes a series of seven pieces evoking a trip on the Birinick train, a tiny rail line which ran in the Bigouden region of southwestern Brittany from 1907 to 1946. With traditional airs and a touch of jazz the listener takes an interesting journey through time and place. The accordion of Huiban is joined by guitar of Philippe Goague, bass fiddle by Julien Le Mentec, and percussion by Loïc Larnicol. The CD is accompanied by a booklet about the rail line that linked the port towns of Pont l'Abbé and Saint Guénolé.

Ronan Le Bars Group. *Lammdour*. Keltia Musique KMCD 604.

Brittany has fostered its own masters of the Irish uilleann pipes, just as it has champions of Scottish piping. Ronan Le Bars is one uilleann piper who has not only mastered an Irish repertoire but can use this instrument to present the unique rhythms of Breton dances and the beauty of Breton airs. He is joined here by Nicolas Quémener on guitar, Pierre Stéphan on fiddle, Mean-Marc Illien on keyboards, and Pierrick Tardivel on bass fiddle.

Sylvain Le Roux & Jacques David. *Sadorn noz*. Kreizenn Sevenadurel Lannuon. This CD called “Saturday night” features traditional singers Le Roux and David who have been singing at festoù noz for some fifteen years. This recording shows off kan ha diskan style song for the gavotte as well as two songs for listening with accompaniment by Hoëla Barbadette, Stéphane Foll and Yann-Guirec Le Bars. A booklet provides the Breton song texts with a French translation as well as a presentation of the two singers.

Red Cardell. *Running in Paris*. Keltia Musique KMCD 599.

During its 20 years this well-loved Breton rock band has produced 15 albums with original songs composed and sung by Jean-Pierre Riou. The band has a strong instrumental drive that does not leave out reference to its Breton roots. This is a live performance that will not disappoint fans.

Skaramaka. *Soñj*. Self-produced. This is the first CD from this group created in 2008, one of the relatively few rock bands featuring Breton language songs. Song by Clervie Verveur – sometimes spoken as much as sung – is accompanied by Martin Chapron on electric guitar, Maël Lhopiteau on electric harp, Dylan James on fretless bass, Tristan Le Breton on percussion, and Yoann An Nedeleg on uilleann pipes for a unique sound. This is a young band with a strong future ahead.



A Traveler's Accounts of Brittany from 1913

As is the case for many travel accounts by British or American authors, this one by Charles J. S. Makin which follows is full of stereotypes and negative opinions about the character of the Breton people. As pointed out by Louis Mélenec in his book, *Histoire Abrégée de la Bretagne* (see review above), Bretons have had to fight a negative identity emphasized in the writings of some of the famous authors of France and a quote from Victor Hugo in the following text exemplifies this well. While travel writers might form positive impressions of the Bretons they met first-hand, they were also influenced by the opinions of great authors of their day as seems to be the case for Charles Makin. The observations from a little over 100 years ago might not tell us too much about

people of Brittany, but they do reflect the prejudices of the times. Those with an interest in Breton music will enjoy the very garbled description of a biniou at the end of the selection, and will breathe a sigh of relief that the style of Theodore Botrel has not replaced the "poor" quality of traditional song lamented by this travel writer.

Charles J. S. Makin. *With Pen and Camera in Three Continents*. London: The Tribune Publishing Company. 1913

Chapter III – The Heart of Brittany

The geographical centre of Brittany is approximately contained in a triangle, of which Pontivy and Loudeac occupy two corners of an imaginary base line, and Ploermel is a convenient spot, therefore, to combine its points of interest as an old town and a picturesque one, too, with a consideration of some of the features of the real life of the Breton and the Bretonne. The town also lies midway between the North and the South. The heart of Brittany is a complex one, and a study of its complicated and intricate moral mechanism, is not lessened by the fact that the life of the North differs so materially from that of the South.

It is on the Southern shores of its coast, that the true original type still exists in all its rigid and melancholic strain of temperament. It is a remarkable and indeed most uncommon fact that the characteristics and timbre of a people should be so at variance. It is difficult to realize in some of the remoter districts of the southern half of the province, that not only are we conversing with the Bretons, but with the French. This circumstance frequently occasions the liveliest interest and wonder, that such extremes of personality should occur in the same peoples.

It is profitless to conjecture what would have occurred in the evolution of the race, if the first and second marriage of the Duchess Anne of Brittany to the French Kings Charles VIII and Louis XII had not bound their interests to those of France. It may, however be plausibly assumed that Time and Circumstance would have developed their singular and peculiar individuality, to an even more advanced and insulated degree. Possibly the Province might have grown into a continuous irritating thorn to France, and its people an intractable and independent community, with no desire but to remain apart and govern themselves.

The Normans and Bretons are also remote from each other in sympathy and tone. The former are thoroughly French, quick, thrifty, practical, and devoid of the morbidity that characterizes so many of the inhabitants of the Southern half of the sister province. These traits and dominant notes of personality are also common to the North coast of Brittany, especially in those towns and locations in touch with that great civilizer – the Railway.

The true Breton of to-day is the Celt of the early days of the Roman occupation. He is related to the aboriginal Celt of Great Britain. The modern Welshman and Breton have so much that is similar in their respective languages, that they are able to converse amicably together with comparative ease and facility. The Southern Breton is a christianised Druid, as much of the religious fervour and inherent morbidity of Paganism still remain, softened and tempered though they are by the refining influence of Christianity.

If the Northerner is a Frenchman, it is to the Southerner as the original type, to whom I would ascribe and apply the following physical qualities: "He is lean and meager in build, and frequently haggard and melancholic in appearance, with a distinct and pronounced air of dejection and diffidence emanating from his person." I do not apply these epithets to the countryside generally. Fortunately there are many exceptions, and bright faces and voices are happily encountered to enliven the austere and sober atmosphere. The elements of the minor key cannot however be ignored. It is much too prevalent in Southern Brittany.

Victor Hugo, in one of his novels, thus describes the Breton peasant, and draws a picture which is applicable today. "A man with a clear eye and long hair, living on milk and chestnuts; recognizing every village by the sound of its church bells; never using water, except for drinking purposes; covering his body with a leather coat, ornamented with silk arabesques; ignorant, but clad in an embroidered garment; tattooing his garments as the Celtic ancestors had tattooed their faces; treating as master, the man who had behaved to him like an executioner; speaking a dead language, which seemed to make his thoughts dwell in a tomb; goading on his bullocks to their work; sharpening his scythe; kneading his buckwheat flour; respecting first his plough, and then his grandmother; believing in the Holy Virgin and in the White Lady, adoring the altar and also the mysterious stones standing erect and solitary on the heaths; a labourer in the fields, a fisher on the coasts, a poacher in the woods; loving his King, his Lord, his priest, and the very vermin that lived upon his body; often pensive and motionless on the nightly deserted shore, a melancholy auditor of the monotonous rolling in of the waves." The period in which this portrait is the more correct is during the civil war in La Vendée against the French Revolution. It is, however, very true of the descendants to-day.

Another writer draws a picture, of a type, current in the North, and speaks of a Brittany, which shows its best and happiest side. "Brittany – land of beautiful churches, of poetic traditions, sanctuary of the legend, cradle of the Druids, - still celebrates the brave deeds of her heroes and of her saints. She still sings the old songs to her little ones. Her young men and maidens still dance the gavotte at the pardons. She has not yet lost her faith in her fairies. To her simple peasants the animals still talk on Christmas nights, and on the eve of Toussaint the dead

walk in solemn procession through the fields. The table stands, has always stood, and always will stand, by the one window, and the benches on each side. The beggar is always welcomed, and at weddings the custom still holds for the bride to dance with the beggar, for the sake of good luck which is sure to result." The Bretons are verily a deep psychological study, and the mental and spiritual attributes are very involved. They are far from being a homogeneous people, and though there may be a thread of simplicity and unsophistication permeating the while, there are so many diverse types, that it is all but impossible to draw a picture or find an individual possessing all the characteristics of their singular personalities.

The common basis of their language and that of the Welsh is very striking, and many towns, prefixes to words, and suffixes also, are common to both peoples, with but little alteration. A clan or settlement in Welsh is *plwgf*, in Breton *Plou*. The Latin equivalent is *plebs*. Many places in Brittany commence with *plou*, *plo*, *plu*, *plé*, all of which were the headquarters of the clans. These clans were located in certain homesteads or "trefs," and many villages have in consequence names beginning with "tre."

Ploermel is the "Plou" of St. Arthmael, and owes its origin to the saint of that name. He was born in Glamorganshire, and, having crossed over into Armorica, as Brittany was then known, founded the settlement which was named after him. When the saint came over, he ultimately enclosed a small area of land, within which he and his monastic family lived. This was called his "lann" and the surrounding land the "minihi."

The following few words are characteristic: - Bo, Bod, Bot – a fortress. The modern Breton "Ker: is a villa or house. Din – Dinas (Welsh) a palace or castle. Lan, Lam, La, Le – Llan (Welsh) a church. Tre – Tref (Welsh) a farm or hamlet. Some further words are Bré – hill. Coet – a wood (e.g. Bettws-y-coed). Hen – old. Menez – mountain. Pen – head. Poul – a bay or pool. There is also the district of Cornouaille (Cornwall) in mid-Brittany and numerous other examples could be cited, demonstrating the similarity of the languages.

The natives of the remoter districts of Finisterre are probably the gravest and saddest of the Breton people, though those of the Druidical districts of the Morbihan, are also not overburdened with the light buoyant spirit for the average Frenchman.

The original race that peopled this country was the Iberian or Silurian. They came from Asia, and spread over and settled down in all parts of Western Europe. They were probably sallow and dark-complexioned. They also crossed over into Northern Africa, and now are represented by the Berbers and Kabyles in that country. It is the remnant of this, the original race, that is found among the mixed vivacious people of the North, and who

also retain a considerable degree of the original Gallic strain.

Perhaps no feature is so refreshing as the simplicity of character that is encountered when least anticipated. Having on a certain occasion missed a train, which we found to be the last one available for that day, we were stranded, without hope of arriving home that night. This occurred in a country district in the North. The somewhat severe female station-master held out little encouragement of our being able to discover even a country cart, to transport us to our destination. Ultimately we were directed to a farm, a short distance away, where we availed ourselves of the opportunity of procuring some food to fortify ourselves, in the event of our having to walk home. Hearing that all the horses they possessed were at work in the fields carrying hay, and would not return until nightfall, our spirits rose and the prospects of arriving at our destination that night appeared more hopeful. A further enquiry as to the charge for conveying four of us some eight miles, produced a reply of "Five Francs, Monsieur." Half an hour later, having, in the meantime, visited the hayfield, and become acquainted with the farmer upon whose amiability we depended, we were gratified to mount the conveyance and get under weigh. The farmer was loquacious.

"Your daughter told me that your charge was five francs for taking us home," I remarked, "is that correct"

"Yes, Monsieur," he replied hesitatingly, "I don't think it is too much for four of you, but if you do think so, I will willingly drive you for four francs."

We could not avoid drawing comparisons between the man's simple honesty and that which we should probably encountered under different circumstances. Four people anxious to return home, and at the mercy of the owner of a conveyance alive to the circumstances, would not in the majority of cases have met with such treatment. This little episode is characteristic, and certainly among the country people, is, I believe, one which would be the usual experience of anyone placed in the same difficulty as we were.

It is amongst the holiday-makers, at a wedding or some large social gathering on festival days, that much insight is gained into their customs and habits. The 14th July is a general holiday in France. It is the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille and the dawn of the French Democracy. It is on such a day as this that all classes hasten to the woods and fields, and enter into the hearty enjoyment of the games and dances, which are peculiar to them. The costumes, moreover, which have been carefully laid aside since the last holiday occasion, are again brought out, cleaned, dusted, the silver lace and buttons polished up, and donned by the owners.

The Breton costume is very characteristic, and no portion of it more so than the coiffe. In the northern part of the

province, and especially along the Emerald Coast, the use of the national costume has largely died out before the advance of its ultra-civilization. This is to be regretted. Probably the greatest variety of costumes, both of men and women, are to be found at the Pardons, which are continually being held throughout the country. These events are usually associated with some saint, and it is in his or her honour that they are celebrated. They occur almost twice a week throughout the year, in different parts of the country and are attended by great numbers of people. That of St. Anne D'Auray, on July 25th and 26th of each year, and the six yearly festivals in honour of St. Ronan at Locronan, near Quimper, are the principal ones. Locronan has also an annual "Pardon" on a smaller scale and of lesser magnitude. As many as 15,000 to 20,000 pilgrims, who come from all parts of the Roman Catholic world, are present at these celebrations. The religious instinct is strong, through the manifestation of it varies in a very appreciable degree, at the different Pardons. In some instances, these gatherings are deeply impregnated with fervour, and the pilgrims are in the most reverent and solemn condition of mind. In other places, they partake more of the character of gigantic fairs, and the usual display and appearance of stalls, side shows, swings and mountebanks are prevalent. This is usually so at the Auray pilgrimage, though the religious note is very firmly sounded in the different services, that are held during the two days' celebration.

The Coiffe, the head dress of the female sex throughout the country, has existed from time immemorial. Some few decades ago they were much modified, and their sized reduced generally. Each town and village has its distinctive coiffe, and in a mixed assembly, an expert is able to say at once from what district the wearer comes. They are of all shapes and designs, some being small and fitting close to the head, some being large with wing-like projections on each side, and others having an elaborate arrangement of lace and ribbon surmounting the head. ... Their value ranges from 3 to 10 francs, but the more elaborate designs, if made of superior and more expensive material, cost considerably more. They are picturesque and add very much to the effectiveness of the general costume.

The inner life and habits of the people are French, as regards the North Coast, but in the South they are dominated by the religious fervour and almost fanaticism that permeates their lives. It is morbid and extreme, and is largely induced, I believe, by the moral atmosphere engendered by the Druidical stones and other remains which are found everywhere in the Morbihan and Finistère districts. The morality of the people is all that can be desired. They are innocent and simple-minded, their women are pure, and the rigidity and austerity of Catholic Brittany is an example to the rest of France. They bitterly resent the Law of Association, that ultra Republican-Socialist measure, which has deprived France of a recognized resident Church authority, and has so crippled the work and power of its Church

generally. Churches abound in Brittany and are eloquent evidences of the widespread and earnest adoption and practice of their religion. At Auray, from the summit of an observation tower, some 40 feet in height, the eye rests upon the steeple of 19 churches, which it encounters when looking from its vantage-point round the horizon. As this only includes some 3-5ths of the circle, owing to a belt of woodland and rising ground intervening, this number may probably be increased slightly.

The country dances and songs are indulged in also at weddings, which are important social events, even among the poorer classes in the country districts. They usually partake of the character of a wedding fest, on improvised tables, set out in the open air. All comestibles and liquids are liberally provided. Usually the weddings are in the early morning from eight to nine o'clock. All relations, friends and acquaintance are invited, and they arrive in a curious collection of vehicles, usually loaded to their utmost capacity. The costumes at such times are the best the wearers possess. If the party be composed of the better class or well-to-do farmers' families, they are very picturesque. In some districts there is a periodical celebration of marriages en masse; at such times, twenty, thirty or more couples will be launched into the bonds of matrimony, at one time.

The after-feasting continues for some days. All comers are welcome, the poor, mendicants, and tramps included. The dances are mainly gavottes. I am not aware of there being a national dance, such, for instance, as the tarantella of Southern Italy, an Irish jig, or the sword dance of the Highlander. The musical instrument employed throughout the country is the "biniou," a species of bagpipe, with some similarity to its Scotch relative. The main difference lies in the fact that the "biniou" is commonly played by two performers, in order to attain the full effect. The one has control of the melody pipe, and the other produces an accompaniment together with a smaller attached pipe, with which he can vary it. The music is of poor quality, and the country airs particularly so. It is hoped that as the work of the Breton peasant-poet, Theodore Botrel, becomes better known, that the tone of the ballads and the music they are being set to will improve and so raise the present indifferent standard.



Brittany and Wales – A Relationship Honored

As noted in the travel account above, Bretons and Welsh both speak closely related Celtic languages which have created a special bond and ability to communicate. The following communication I received talks of the economic bond that has long been established between these two countries as well. We congratulate Gwyn Griffiths, Welsh ICDBL representative, for being honored for his work to

document the onion trade between Wales and Brittany and to support the Breton language and culture.

Welsh author and ICDBL member Gwyn Griffiths has been honored by the onion growers and sellers of Roscoff, Brittany, and made a member of the *Confrerie de l'Oignon de Roscoff*. The ceremony took place at the annual Roscoff Fête de l'Oignon on Sunday (August 25).

He was being honored for his books on the Breton onion sellers, affectionately known in Wales as “Shoni Winwns”, but equally well known throughout England and Scotland as the Onion Johnnies. He also played a leading role in establishing Roscoff's onion museum, *La Maison des Johnnies*, first opened in 1995.

François Seité, one of the leaders of the onion men who still spends a part of every autumn selling onions in Bristol, described Gwyn Griffiths's contribution as considerable and his membership of the *Confrerie* as popular. “His books, particularly, the French book – *Le Monde des Johnnies* – published in 2002 gave respect and raised the status of the onion sellers in their own region,” he said. “At one time we occupied the lowest strata of society in Roscoff and the surrounding area. We were the men who went away to spend six months every winter often living in miserable conditions.”

In his response Griffiths, speaking in Breton and French, talked of the contribution the Shonis had made to the economy of the Roscoff area over a period extending back to 1828 and how their popularity in Britain had created an image in the minds of ordinary British people of France as a land of onion growers who went around selling strings of their produce draped over the handlebars of bicycles. An image that is only now being understood by the French people.

In Wales, he said, because many of the Shonis had learnt Welsh, they created a belief that Brittany was a part of France where everybody spoke a language almost exactly the same as Welsh. Although there are many similarities between the languages, this is not quite true.

In recent times the onion of Roscoff, which has a distinctive pink color due to the use of seaweed as fertilizer, has been awarded AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) status, an honor usually associated with French wines and cheeses. AOC is not just a symbol of excellence but that the product is unique and has a history associated to it. Writing books about these men and their history was noted by M. Seité as having made an important contribution in achieving this status.

For the inauguration ceremony of Gwyn Griffiths and two other new members – Elizabeth Cabioch, a farmer's wife, and Yvon Etienne, a Breton broadcaster and musician – the members of the onion *Confrerie* were joined by other groups including the local artichoke producers, shell-fish producers and even more exotically, representatives of

growers of other AOC products, notably the resplendent wine growers of the Rhône valley.

“It was a particular pleasure for me that old friends from the onion selling community were also awarded the *Confrerie* medal among them Sebastien Prigent, 92, who used to sell his onions in Llanelli, and François Keriven, 87, who went to Leeds. M. Prigent enjoyed practicing his Welsh with my two young grandchildren, Leah and Steffan, who attended the festival. It was a very emotional moment. The honor was totally unexpected, and is second only to the privilege of having known so many of the onion sellers, many of whom are no longer with us.”



Bro Nevez by e-mail

If you are receiving this by regular “snail-mail” and would like to get Bro Nevez as an e-mail attachment (Pdf file), please contact the Editor, Lois Kuter:

loiskuter@verizon.net

For overseas mailings to friends in Brittany and Europe, this obviously represents a big cost savings. But, like many others, I like to have a paper copy in hand to read on the train on my way to work or to find filed on a shelf. So, if you would prefer to receive Bro Nevez in the mail, that is fine!

If you would like to send copies to others who may be interested, I would be happy to send you both a paper and electronic version so you can share Bro Nevez freely with others.

I know that for U.S. ICDBL members this may seem like a loss of the only membership benefit we offer. But while your membership may not bring many tangible benefits, it is, in fact, an important show of support to people in Brittany that Americans support their work to keep the Breton language and culture alive and well. In over 30 years of existence we have made an impact – albeit small - in showing that the Breton language is not just the concern of a handful of people in Brittany, but something valued by people throughout the world.

Thank you, U.S. ICDBL members for your support!

Lois Kuter



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 175,000 to 200,000 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 100th issue.

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

The U.S. ICDBL Web Site:

www.icdbl.org

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

Other Action

We assist people from the U.S. and all over the world with requests for information about the Breton language and culture. ICDBL Members throughout the U.S. have been ambassadors for the cause of the Breton language by distributing information at Celtic cultural events and music festivals or concerts, and by simply discussing their concerns with friends and acquaintances.

More direct support for the Breton language ...

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

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

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

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

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Bro Nevez 129

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<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Ar Bonedoù Ruz – The Red Caps: Action to Live, Work and Decide in Brittany	2 - 3
Deep Inside a Breton Skull 41: Universal Republic (Scenario 1). by Jean Pierre Le Mat	3 - 5
Prizioù 2014 – Prizes for Breton Language Creation	5 - 6
Promoting the Breton Language: Short Notes on a Variety of Initiatives	6 - 7
The Redadeg Relay Run in support of the Breton Language	7 - 10
Six New Books from Brittany: Lionel Henry. <i>Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Breton</i> / Louis Méllenec. <i>Breizh, Le livre bleu de la Bretagne: Histoire abrégée de la Bretagne</i> / Daniel Giraudon. <i>Traditions populaires de Bretagne: Du coq à l'âne – Quand les animaux parlaient ...</i> / Daniel Giraudon & Yann Riou. <i>Traditions populaires de Bretagne: Cocquillages et crustacés – dictons, légendes et croyances du bord de mer</i> / Daniel Giraudon & Yann Riou. <i>Traditions populaires de Bretagne: Poisons et oiseaux de mer – Dictons, légendes et croyances</i> / André Le Person. <i>Pêche au Gros en Baie de Lannion – Thons rouges et requins, 1946-1953</i>	
Heard of but not Heard - Notes on New Recordings from Brittany	11 - 12
A Traveler's Accounts of Brittany from 1913: Charles J. S. Makin. <i>With Pen and Camera in Three Continents</i>	12 - 15
Brittany and Wales – A Relationship Honored	15 - 16
Bro Nevez by e-mail?	16
An Introduction to the U.S. ICDBL	17

