

BRO NEVEZ

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



Brittany Adopts a Plant

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

Happy New Year for 2017 to all who receive this newsletter. It is dated December 2016 since that is when the bulk of it was completed and I fully intended to send it out before the holidays. But between a computer virus, busy schedule at my job, and the sheer time it takes to organize the newsletter, most of you will receive it in January. I do feel it is important to spend time thoughtfully preparing news items, reading the books that I will review, and reviewing what I write to try to eliminate as many typographical and other errors as possible. So, enough excuses. Please enjoy the contents of this newsletter. – Lois

A few Breton Phrases for Christmas and the New Year

The following phrases (Breton-French-English) have been offered by Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù (with my English added)

Nedeleg laouen / Joyeux Noël / Merry Christmas

Bloavezh mat / Bonne Année / Happy New Year

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

Gwellañ hetoù / Meilleurs vœux / Best wishes

Da geñver ar bloavezh nevez / à l'occasion de la nouvelle année / for the New Year

Evit ar bloavezh 2017 / pour l'année 2017 / for the year 2017

Hetiñ a ran ur bloavezh mat deoc'h e 2017 / Je vous présente mes meilleurs vœux pour l'année 2017 / I present to you my best wishes for the 2017 year

A Few Statistics for the Breton Language

The following numbers are from Ofis ar Brezhoneg. Check out their website for lots of resources for the Breton language: www.brezhoneg.bzh

Total number of active speakers of Breton (from a TMO-Frañch Broudic survey of 2007): 206,000

Number of children in the Diwan and bilingual school programs for the school year beginning in the fall of 2016: 17,024.

This includes the Diwan schools, and public and Catholic bilingual schools

Students by school type (2016):

Diwan	4,242
Public schools	7,488
Catholic schools	5,294

Number of students by Department (2016):

Finistère	8,032
Morbihan	4,411
Côtes d'Armor	2,541
Ile-et-Vilaine	1,329
Loire-Atlantique	711

Number of students at the secondary level taking Breton classes (2015 school year):

Middle School	5,224
High School	6,764

Number of students at the primary school level getting an introduction to Breton (2015): 845

Number of adult learners (2015): 3,354 in weekly classes; 302 in intensive 3 or 6-month classes

While the numbers of students in bilingual programs continue to grow – very slowly – this represents a small percentage of total students in schools of Brittany – just under 2% for all of Brittany (but close to 5% in Finistère).

Problems persist in hiring teachers needed to encourage more growth. This fall two teachers lined up to teach middle school history/geography were assigned to Versailles instead. This was despite support by the Region of Brittany to help them perfect their Breton so they could teach these subjects through Breton, and despite a convention between the French state and the Region of Brittany that all teachers able to teach in Breton would be able to do so. But, this is not likely to be the case in Versailles!

Ar bak e Brezhoneg evit liseidi Diwan /Le bac en Breton pour les lycéens Diwan

A petition to allow students to take baccalaureate exams in Breton was launched in early December by students of the Diwan high school in Carhaix. Within ten days over 2,500 signatures were collected in support.

As the students note on their website for the petition, Diwan is a school system, free and open to all, which allows students to use Breton for their studies throughout 15 years of schooling. While high school subjects are taught through the Breton language, students are obligated to take baccalaureate exams in French – forcing them to review everything in French. Right now History/Geography and Breton language exams can be taken in Breton, so students are asking that exams for Economic and Social Sciences, Mathematics and Sciences also be offered through the Breton language. Diwan students have done excellently on the baccalaureate exams, so conducting classes in Breton has not posed any obstacle to their educational success. But, they are penalized by having to do the gymnastics of switching to French after studying and thinking in Breton throughout their school years.

The link to the site for this petition is :

<https://www.change.org/p/bak-e-brezhoneg-bac-en-breton>

The petition will go the Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, in the Ministry of National Education, and to Thierry Terret, Rector of the Academy of Rennes.



<http://www.lenn.electre.com/>

Finding Breton Language Publications: Lenn

This website was created by a partnership of Livre et lecture en Bretagne, Ofis ar Brezhoneg and Electre. The aim is to help Breton speakers and non-Breton speakers discover publications in the Breton language. Some 1,000 publications are noted with details about each one. This also allows one to find publishers who produce Breton language works.

The site is bilingual and easy to navigate. It's not only a great resource for readers, but also book stores or libraries who might want to add to their offerings.

As noted on the site in a general presentation about Breton language publications, books can be difficult to locate since only more specialized bookstores carry a good selection (or any). Purchasing books is often directly from the publisher or at an annual book fair where publishers display their publications. There's not a lot of advertising to alert readers to new publications so this website tries to fill the need of making sure those interested in finding books on any topic, or any style, for any age or level of mastery have that opportunity. Close

to 40 publishers who specialize in Breton language works or sometimes publish in the Breton language are represented.

Long-Distance Learning Resources for the Breton Language

A question I received by e-mail prompted me to investigate some of the learning opportunities that might work for those of us here in North America who have no access to Breton classes or teachers (and that is pretty much all of us!).

Here are just a few options one might consider:

Kervarker

www.kervarker.org

This site offers an online course based on Mark Kerrain's *Ni a gomz brezhoneg* (TES Editions). This includes a series of lessons with voice recordings to listen to spoken Breton, as well as other resources such as grammatical guides, useful phrases, history of the Breton language, some short stories to practice reading skills ... Most site content is accessible in English, including English translations for vocabulary and phrases. Lessons also include exercises to complete.

EduBreizh

www.edubreizh.com

This site also offers Breton classes through the internet with an annual 15 euro fee for "membership." There are lots of "test" options to see if what is offered is what you want, but you will need to purchase things (and the cost would be worth it). One feature on the site are episodes of "Breizh kiss," a bilingual sitcom for TV produced by France 3 Breizh. This is a great way to get an ear for Breton as it is used in everyday life (of a modern sitcom family). Included are little tests to encourage you to develop your listening skills.

Skol Ober

www.skolober.com

Created in 1932, thousands of Bretons and others around the world have used this correspondence course to focus on reading and writing skills especially. There is a small fee to cover costs and exchanging lessons with your teacher may require postage if he/she is not available by e-mail for this. There are some textbooks in English but the choices are a bit limited. There is an English option on the website for most information and it may be possible to line up a teacher who can use English rather than French. You can ask about options using the e-mail

skolober@brezhoneg.org

Ar Falz / Skol Vreizh

www.skolvreizh.com

Skol Vreizh does not offer online courses, but has published a number of excellent books about Breton history and culture, and in the Breton language. Two recent publications would work for self-learners:

Brezhoneg Prim ha Dillo, by Yann-Ber Kemener.

This is a book with an audio CD for beginners learning Breton. It focuses on conversations of a family discovering Brittany with topics ranging from food, meeting people, visiting places, and going to festivals and festoù noz. Included are vocabulary lists, grammatical explanations, guides to pronunciation and exercises to complete.

Brezhoneg Pell ha Fonnus, Yann-Ber Kemener.

This book too includes audio and lots of learning aids as well as conversations on a variety of contemporary topics, but is aimed for those in an intermediate or advanced level. 24 chapters take a family to a variety of destinations including a protest march and the hospital, besides more pleasant destinations.

A Loss for the Breton Language and Brittany: Martial Ménard (1951-2016)

Martial Ménard was born in Paris to parents from Broons (Côtes d'Armor). He moved back to Brittany in the early 1970s at a time when the Breton movement was quite active. In these years Alan Stivell and Tri Yann were sparking a discovery of Breton identity and there were massive protests against what were viewed as French impositions against Breton popular will (such as a nuclear power plant in Plogoff). It was a period in which the Front de Libération de la Bretagne (FLB) was active in blowing up symbols of French oppression. Martial Ménard would become active with the FLB and for this was sentenced to nine years in prison. With the arrival of Mitterrand in the presidency FLB prisoners were amnestied and Marcel took up residence in Quimper and then in Plomelin where he became a Diwan teacher. This was when I briefly met him as he was working to find a way to create books in Breton for children – sorely lacking at that time.

In 1983 his desire to insure that young readers had materials to use led him to create the publishing house called An Here. This led to numerous publications for all ages as well as the beginning of his work to create Breton dictionaries. In 1995 he published the first monolingual dictionary for the Breton language, *Geriadur brezhoneg* which would lead to a second edition with some 20,000 words. He would also create publications for erotic language and oaths and insults in the Breton language. While An Here ceased to operate in 2006, Martial continued his linguistic work with the publication in 2012 of a French-Breton dictionary

including some 40,000 entries. He was working on a Breton-French dictionary to complement this that would be on line.

In 2013 Martial Ménard was inducted into the Order of the Ermine in recognition of his vast work to provide Breton learners and readers with key resources. He will be remembered for his tenacious and scholarly work for the Breton language. He will be missed for all the invaluable work he yet wanted to do.

Brittany Chooses a National Plant

Just as Scotland has its thistle, Ireland its shamrock and Wales its leek, Brittany now has a plant – the Lann, Ajonc in French, or Gorse (or Furze) in English.

Not only is this beautiful flowering bush present throughout the Breton countryside and on the seaside, it has been an important part of Breton rural life. Formerly it was an important source of fuel to heat homes and cook food (and bake bread). It was also used as fodder for horses and bedding for cows. Gorse would also be used in damp parts of the farmyard or roads to soak up water and later be used in composing.

There are many popular beliefs and sayings related to gorse – many shared with other Celtic traditions. Souls of the dead in purgatory are thought to reside in gorse bushes and care had to be taken when cutting branches. Gorse was also thought to be a protection against fairies and evil spirits so at certain times of the year a branch might be brought into a house or barn. And, the “man in the moon” is actually a peasant carrying a load of gorse on his back who stole the gorse and then lied to the land-owner about it. The moon swallowed him up and you can see him there today as a lesson to thieves and liars. For more about lore related to gorse and many other plants, flowers and trees of Brittany see Daniel Giraudon's *Traditions Populaire de Bretagne – Du chêne au Roseau, folklore des plantes, des fleurs, des buissons et des arbres* (Yoran Embanner, 2010).



The following is the announcement of the choice of Gorse as Brittany's plant by Skol Uhel Ar Vro, the Cultural Institute of Brittany. My translation in English (from French) follows.

Tud Kuzul Re Fur Skol-Uhel ar Vro, e kerzh emvod an 10 a viz Kerzu 2016, o deus studiet ar c'hinnigoù a zo

bet kaset dezho e-keñver an oberiadenn PLANT2016. Etre ar 1^{añ} a viz Mae hag an 30 a viz Gwengolo e voe dastumet respontoù ar Vretoned diwar-benn ar blantenn-arouez da zibab evit o bro. Tost da 800 respont o tennañ da 93 seurtad plant a voe kaset.

Ar Guzulieren n'o deus graet nemet kaougantañ an disoc'hoù : Al LANN eo a voe meneget ar muiañ. Setu sifroù ar plant kinniget 10 gwech pe muioc'h : al lann 207 gwech ; ar brug 96 ; an ortañsia 74 ; ar balan 74, ar gwinizh-du/an ed-du 25 ; an ortañsia glas 14 ; an armor 12 ; an artichaod 11 ; foeon-ar-Glenan 10. 48 plantenn zo bet meneget ur wech hepken.

An arguzennoù evit al lann, displeget gant ar ginnigourien, zo niverus ha liesabeg : e bleuñv a-hed ar bloaz, e orin lavarennoù ha divinadelloù, ar gweledvaoù, boued evit ar c'hezeg ha reoù all c'hoazh. Ur strollad, digor d'an holl, a vo e bal brudañ implij ar blantenn-se, vo krouet e korfad Skol-Uhel ar Vro.

Da vezañ kendalc'het...



At their December 10, 2016, meeting, Members of the Council of Wise Ones of the Cultural Institute of Brittany studied proposals sent to them for the project PLANT2016. Between May 1st and September 30th Bretons sent in their

choices for a symbolic plant for Brittany. Nearly 800 responses proposed 93 types of plants.

The Council had only to verify the results: it was GORSE (Lann in Breton, Ajonc in French) that was the most often cited. Here are the numbers for the plants that were proposed by at least 10 people: 207 times for gorse. 96 for heather (bruyère), 74 for hydrangea (hortensia), 74 for broom (genêt), 25 for buckwheat (blé noir), 14 for blue hydrangea, 12 for thrift or sea pink (armérie maritime), 12 for artichoke, 10 for the Glenan narcissus. 48 other plants were cited just once.

Arguments in favor of gorse put forth by those proposing this plant were numerous and varied: the fact that it flowers all year long, its frequent use in sayings and riddles, its notable presence in the Breton landscape, its use as food for horses, etc. A group, open to anyone who wants to join, will be created in the Cultural Institute of Brittany to promote the use of this plant as Brittany's symbol.

More to come ...

Also from the Cultural Institute of Brittany

<http://www.skoluhelarvro.net/>

Skol Uhel Ar Vro has made an effort to build a website where you can find reliable and interesting information about Breton history and culture. You can find a wealth of information in the section of the website called “Keys to the Breton Culture” (Les clés de la culture bretonne)

Included are the following sections:

Espace breton et celtique

Information about Brittany's place in the world, inter-Celtic relations, geography, the sea and Bretons' relations to it, nature and the environment.

Mémoires des Bretons

A focus on history and people of Brittany with sections on anthropology, culture and patrimony, history, prehistory and archeology and religion

Prospective et développement

Economic, institutional, and social development of Brittany,

Paroles de Bretagne

Languages of Brittany with sections on literature and oral expression, languages and linguistics and written literature

Arts de Bretagne

The history of art and artists of Brittany

Also on the Cultural Institute of Brittany are basic data bases on the following topics:

- Battles in the history of Brittany
- Writers of the 20th century
- A directory of story-tellers
- Women of Brittany – 1,000 biographical presentations
- Famous names in Breton history – 1,055 names including 995 people, 34 places and 26 major events key in Brittany's history. This includes a listing of 82 people who made Breton their language for writing and creating.



New Books from Brittany

Celtic Studies – Two Re-Edited Works by Françoise Le Roux & Christian-J. Guyonvarc'h

Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h have brought expertise in the history of religions and archeology, as well as linguistics

and philology to a number of works on the early Celts. They were influenced by their teacher George Dumézil (1898-1986) with whom they studied at the École Pratique des Hautes Études and the Collège de France in Paris.

Françoise Le Roux (1927-2004) was born in Rennes and co-founded the review *Ogam* and its supplement *Celticum*. Christian-J. Guyonvarc'h (1926-2012) grew up in a Breton speaking family in Guémené-sur-Scorff.

Both have published hundreds of articles and collaborated on a series of scholarly works for a wide reading public. These include *Druides* (1986) followed by *La Civilisation celtique* (1990), *La Société celtique* (1991) and *Fêtes celtiques* (1995). Their work is based on studies of archeology and linguistics with research of early Irish and Welsh literature. Both were well versed in ancient and modern Celtic languages allowing them to study texts so important in understanding early Celtic religion and society.

The re-edition of four of these works by Yoran Embanner includes the addition of indexes and some useful annotation of references cited. See *Bro Nevez* 137 (March 2016) for notes on *La Civilisation celtique* and *Les Fêtes celtiques*.



Françoise Le Roux & Christian-J. Guyonvarc'h. *La Société celtique*. Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée. Yoran Embanner, 2016. 237 pages. ISBN 978-2-36747-018-4.

While aimed at the “general public” this book is no easy read and clearly underlines the challenge of using current languages with vocabulary and ways of thinking to describe pre-Christian Celts. The authors use a great deal of ink addressing the problems of earlier studies of Celts which were biased by the idea that the Celtic world was “inadequate:” Celts lacked a centralized state and national consciousness and patriotism. They were barbaric with a primitive civilization lacking in arts. They performed cruel human sacrifices. The authors propose that such misperceptions stem from interpreting mythological action as actual historical narrative. A good 20 pages of the first chapter of the book is devoted to revealing all the errors of scholars who wrote about early Celts.

But the book's real focus is on the tripartite principles of the pre-Christian world. This is drawn from the author's examination of ancient Hindu castes, Caesar's writings about the Celts and Medieval Irish texts and myths. They identify three classes and their functions:

The druid and king co-exist as sovereigns – the druid as the spiritual authority with ultimate control to insure a well-functioning society. The king regulates and imposes laws.

The king comes from the warrior class who serve under the king to enforce laws, regulate society and defend it from enemies.

The artisans insure prosperity, health and abundance.

Much of the book shows examples of the tripartite functions and the importance of the number three in Irish and Welsh mythologies. It is complex stuff, certainly only summed up here in a very simplistic way!



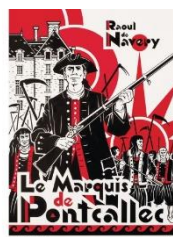
Françoise Le Roux & Christian-J. Guyonvarc'h. *La Souveraineté guerrière de l'Irlande - Mórrígan - Bodh - Macha*. Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée. Yoran Embanner, 2016. 297 pages. ISBN 978-2-36747-019-1.

As is the case for *La Société celtique*, this book is aimed at a general public but will be best appreciated by scholars with a firm knowledge of early Irish literature. The notion of sovereignty as embodied in a goddess of war is examined through early Irish texts. She is called Mórrígan (Great Queen), Bodh (horn), and Macha ((plain) and the authors look at each name and its meanings. As they present the texts of early Irish literature they also examine notions of other Celtic scholars – often in the highly critical manner found in their other works.

Also examined is the crow and its role as a symbol of the goddess of war. The authors also include an etymological study of the gods' and goddesses' names. And like other studies by these authors, they have examined Irish texts written in more modern times as well as the writings of the Romans about Celts which are a bit more "first-hand" but written with a Roman bias. The authors emphasize that studying early Celtic literature can only be done by those who have studied early Celtic language (as they have). And they caution the reader that earlier studies of Celtic gods leave a lot to be desired with their "preconceived ideas, bizarre opinions and impudent ignorance."

This book was definitely a challenge for me with my rudimentary knowledge of early Celtic literature. And while my reading knowledge of French is very good, it is not at a level of mastery needed to fully grasp the authors' interpretation of Irish texts and the finer points of interpreting the meaning of words.

More New Books from Brittany: Three Creative Interpretations of Breton History



Raoul de Navery. *Le Marquis de Pontcallec*. 1878. Re-edited by Yoran Embanner 2016. 296 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-94-8.

Raoul de Navery, whose true name was Eugénie Caroline Suffray, was born in Ploërmel in 1829 (deceased in 1885). Not able to get along well with her strict mother, she attended a boarding school in Rennes and when she was 17 she was married to a 31 year old colleague of her father. She soon left her too-old husband and was a tutor for wealthy families before moving to Metz to teach teen-aged students. She composed a few theater pieces for her students which led to many more plays in the 25 years to come before she decided to become a novelist in 1860. Around the time of her husband's death in 1871 she moved to Paris. She returned only rarely to Brittany and only a dozen of the 100 or so novels she wrote were set there – including *Le Marquis de Pontcallec* published first in 1878. It was re-edited in 1879 and then became part of a four-volume set called *Drames de l'Histoire* (1899-1901). A biography and full list of her books can be found in Jacqueline and Bernard Le Nail's *Dictionnaire des Auteurs de Jeunesse de Bretagne*, 2001.

As Jean André Le Gall notes in a very helpful Postface to this historical novel, a great deal of liberty is taken in depicting a gallant, handsome and heroic Marquis de Pontcallec who rallies to the cause of a Brittany free of French tyranny in the last few years of his life – 1716 to 1720 when he was condemned to death for conspiring against France and quickly executed. As Le Gall notes, in fact, Pontcallec was a small player in an effort to protest French taxation and it was his execution that brought him legendary importance. The nobility of Brittany did mobilize to draft and "Acte de l'Union" in 1718-1719 with 500 to 600 signatures opposing the imposition of new taxes on Brittany despite the rejection of this by the Parliament and Estates of Brittany. The "Acte" had no effect, so a call went out for a gathering of opponents – to which just 16 gentlemen came, including Pontcallec. The rebellion barely got off the ground but in calling Spain to their aid, the perpetrators were considered traitors to France. Pontcallec was 38 years old and not the youthful 22 ascribed to him in this novel.

The author does include references to Brittany's history and evokes well the terrible impact of the reign of Philippe d'Orléans (1715-1723) on Brittany. But she invents quite a few characters to inhabit Pontcallec's world, and the romantic style of this novel where the

heroes and heroines are saintly and the bad guys are dastardly is certainly quaint in style. Indeed it is of a different age. Within the first 40 pages, the Marquis de Pontcallec arrives in the nick of time with a bag of gold to deliver a poor hardworking and gentle farmer from the clutches of the cruel and pitiless tax collectors. And then as he leaves that scene, jumps into the river Scorff to save a poor young mother with three young children who has thrown herself (with her children) into the river in despair after her husband is jailed for petty thefts.

While not a source of accurate history or biography, this book is fun to read, full of drama, where you will find yourself rooting for the Bretons and mourning the loss of Pontcallec who is beheaded at the end. It is highly visual and as I read this book I was watching an old black and white Hollywood style movie of the 40s or 50s.



Gilbert Siou. *Morvan Lez Breizh, Roi des Bretons*. Yoran Embanner, 2016. 137 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-74-0.

Like the historical novel about Pontcallec, this shorter novel is highly graphic – but instead of an

old-style swashbuckler Hollywood movie, Morvan Lez Breizh plays in my mind's eye as a comic book hero, a terrific *bande dessinée* character. The scene opens with the death of the “hero” of this novel, Morvan Lez Breizh in 818. His severed head is identified by Witkar, a friar who has served as a messenger from the Frank's King Louis the Pious to demand that the Bretons pay tribute to that Empire and that they abandon Celtic elements in their practice of Christianity. Rather than bow to Frankish demands, Bretons revolt and Morvan Lez Breizh leads the battle.

Like the novel about Pontcallec, this includes real elements of Breton history and Morvan Lez Breizh was an actual person who fought against the Franks. But the intention of the author seems not to teach history, but to tell a good story.

The bulk of the novel is Morvan's “confession” to Witkar as he repeatedly returns from the dead to recount his lifetime of deeds. And it is the life of a warrior. Unlike the kind and lovable hero of Pontcallec's novelist, this hero is not so likeable. He is a much more believable character of his time which is full of brutality. Women readers will not find Morvan's relationship to women very endearing. There are steamy sexual encounters, but he kills his first wife and unborn child in a fit of rage. He is seduced by a beautiful sorceress and is plagued by her supernatural powers. He marries a woman he has seduced, but she lives unhappily in a household in conflict with Morvan's sister. She will die. It's a man's world and most of life in this novel is made up of bloody

battles between the Bretons and Franks. Lots of severed heads on poles. Morvan is bored when not in the arms of beautiful woman or in battle against Brittany's enemies. The stuff of legend.



Yann Fañch Kemener. *Nous irons pleurer sur vos ombres. Gouelit ma daoulagad*. Yoran Embanner, 2016. 93 pages. ISBN 798-2-916579-88-7.

Yann Fañch Kemener might be best known as a master of traditional Breton language song

which he learned growing up in rural central western Brittany from his family as well as through extensive work to collect songs and stories from older people. The “collection” work done by a number of young singers and musicians has served throughout Brittany as a means to encourage older people to share the wealth of tradition they may sometimes feel is outdated. And it inspires and enables young singers in turn to perform traditional song. And like Yann Fañch Kemener, younger masters of Brittany's traditional song have often used this repertoire in new creative ways – working with jazz, rock, or classical musicians to compose new interpretations.

This book presents a theatrical performance created by Yann Fañch Kemener for the commemoration of the First World War (1914-1918). First performed in 2014 this work includes traditional songs about the war including a *gwerz* Kemener composed about his great-uncle Julien Joa who is the subject of this creation. Photos, letters, poems, and documents by Bretons who participated in World War I are also used in this powerful narrative which evokes not heroism, but the tragic human toll this war took.

The research done by Kemener revealed the answer to a mystery in his family – the true fate of his great-uncle Julien Joa, a soldier believed to have died as a deserter from the army. Instead, this soldier was convicted by a military court to five years in a labor camp in north Africa for public drunkenness and disrespect to an officer. He died there in 1918 – one of many soldiers considered “Not-dead for France” in contrast to soldiers who gloriously “Died for France” in battle. Those “Not-dead for France” included those executed for desertion, those who committed suicide, those who died of diseases, as well as those imprisoned for disobedience.

This book provides some context to understand the period and Kemener's research of it. But the narrative and song texts which make up the theater performance are the most powerful testimony to the memory of Julien Joa and soldiers like him who never returned to Brittany.



Window from a church in Vannes showing Joan of Arc and Arthur de Richemont

Deep inside a Breton skull 50 – Joan of Arc and the prophecies of Merlin

Jean Pierre Le Mat

The prophecies of Merlin were published in Latin by Geoffrey of Monmouth around 1135 BC. Geoffrey said that he copied the prophecies from a very ancient book ("vetustissimus" in Latin), written in a Breton language. During all the Middle-Ages, his book was a kind of "best-seller".

Joan of Arc and Merlin. Strange meeting...

During the trial of Joan of Arc in 1431, and the revision 25 years later, the prophecies of Merlin were brandished as indisputable proofs of God's purpose.

Here are the words of the prophet which are supposed to refer to Joan of Arc:

"Three springs shall burst forth in the town of Winchester, and the streams which run from them will divide the island into three parts. Whoever will drink from the first will enjoy long life and will never be afflicted by the onslaught of illness.

Whoever will drink from the second shall perish from insatiable hunger: pallor and dread will be clear to see on his face.

Whoever will drink from the third shall die a sudden death. And it will not be possible for his body to be buried. In their effort to avoid so voracious a death, fit men will do their best to cover it over from layers of different materials, but whatever structure is placed on top will immediately take on the form of another substance. As soon as they are placed there, earth will be turned to stones, stones to liquid, wood into ashes, ashes into water.

However, from a place called Bois-Chenu, a girl shall be sent to remedy these matters by her healing art. Once she has consulted all the oracles, she shall dry up the noxious springs simply by breathing on them.

Next, when she has restored her own strength by some invigorating drink, she shall carry the Forest of Caledon in her right hand, and in her left the buttressed forts of the walls of London. Wherever she passes she shall leave sulphurous footprints which will reek with a double flame.

The smoke from them will stir up the Ruteni and will provide food for the creatures who live in the sea. Tears of compassion shall flow from her eyes and will fill the island with her dreadful cries. He that will kill her shall be a stag of ten tines, four of which will bear golden coronets; the other six will be turned into the horns of oxen, and these horns will rouse the three islands of Britain with their accursed bellowing".

And also: "Virgo shall climb on back of Sagittarius and so let droop its maiden blossoms."



Joan of Arc statue at the Church of St. Lery Brocelidande

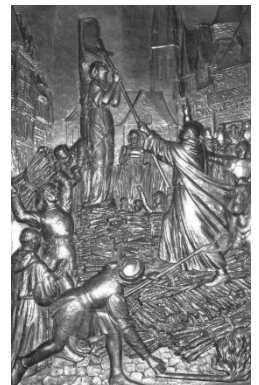
During the first trial, the judges were very cautious. The maid also. Nobody wanted to stress on the prophecies. Nobody wanted to awaken dark or divine powers.

The judge asked Joan : "Have you not been regarded as the envoy of the Bois-Chenu?" Joan answered: "When I came to my king, some asked me if there was in my country a place called Bois-Chenu, because there were some prophecies saying that from there should come a maid who would do wonders. But to this I did not believe that".

Nevertheless, everybody knows that the power attributed to Joan was linked with the prophecies.

The divine origin of Joan's mission was vouched in 1429 by Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris. The same year, Christine de Pisan published a poem where she said that Merlin saw her more than 500 years ago. This very year, the astrologer John of Montalcino predicted to Charles the VII a victory under the sign of the Virgin.

Of course, all that so-called historical proof could have been forged a few years later. They also could have been part of an advertising campaign. It is strange to have a shepherdess fighting like an amazon and speaking like a gentle lady...



Joan of Arc depicted in the church of Guingamp

Anyway, the link between Joan of Arc and the prophecies of Merlin persisted after the trial.

"Wherever she passes she shall leave sulphurous footprints which will reek with a double flame". Joan was burned in the town of Rouen.

"He that will kill her shall be a stag of ten tines". Joan was condemned to death on the name of English king Henry VIth, who at that time was ten years old.

"The smoke from them will stir up the Ruteni". According to some readings, the Ruteni are the inhabitants of Rodez, main town of the lords of Armagnac. These lords were linked with the French king Charles VIIth and were terrible warriors.

During the trial for revision, the prophecies were again mentioned, but this time frankly enough. It was a decisive argument to consider Joan as the envoy of God. The risk of a schism had disappeared and the wonderful story of Joan was safe for the Church.

In his testimony, Dunois, one of the warlords of the French king, evoked the relationship between Joan and the prophecies: *"A fortnight ago, the Earl of Suffolk had been taken prisoner when Jargeau was besieged. A paper was sent to the said count with four lines. On these four lines, it was written that a maid would come from Bois-Chenu and ride on the backs of the archers and against them".*

The great inquisitor of France, the Dominican monk Jean Brehal, spent countless hours in favor of Joan. He did not hesitate to count Merlin's prophecies as a proof of God's purpose: *"Not far from the paternal house of the said Jehanne, is seen a wood named after an old name, Bois -Chenu. From which place was an old reputation among the peoples that a Maid was to be born, which would do great wonders ... To what does not show little concord what (...) had been predicted by Merlin, English prophet".*

The Inquisitor is a clever guy. He introduces Merlin as an English prophet, which dismissed the suspicion of partiality.

During the Hundred Years war, the prophecies were a dreaded weapon.

An English warlord, Thomelin, refused to fight against Bertrand du Guesclin, because the latter had on his shield a two-headed eagle. Thomelin had read in Merlin's prophecies that he had no chance of victory.

In Brittany, during the year 1351, there was a famous chivalrous battle called the battle of the Thirty. Thirty of the English party and thirty of the French party fought to

death. The leader of the English party galvanized his men in the name of Merlin's prophecies. He lost.

In 1364, at the battle of Auray against the French party, the duke of Brittany, John IV, then supported by the English, learned that the prophecies announced a great danger for him. So, he gave his ducal coat of arms to his cousin, who was killed.

Arthur de Richemond, High Constable of France, had a boar on his coat of arms. He was taken prisoner by the English at the battle of Azincourt, in 1415. The King of England never accepted any ransom for his release. Henry V did not want to let him go because, according to the prophecies, a new Arthur with the boar as symbol will conquer England.

Arthur de Richemond was this Breton warlord, future duke of Brittany, who said at his first meeting with Joan of Arc : *"If you come from God, I don't fear you. If you come from Devil, I fear you even less."*

Nowadays, the Merlin's prophecies are almost forgotten. That's not good.

Those who are stressed with global warming could find a confirmation:

"The harvests will dry up through the star's anger, and all moisture from the sky will cease."

Those who are sorry about drunkenness and materialism also:

"Men will become drunk with the wine which is offered to them; they will turn their backs on Heaven and fix their eyes on the Earth."

Nowadays, people strive, attempt, endeavor, calculate, forecast, anticipate...

Deep inside my skull, let me only believe... Believe and dream about an ancient prophecy.

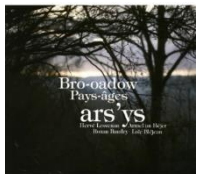
It told about Joan of Arc. It tells also about the return of King Arthur in Brittany:

"The mountains of Armorica shall erupt, and Armorica itself shall be crowned with Brutus' diadem. Kambria shall be filled with joy, and the Cornish oaks shall flourish. The island shall be called by the name of Brutus, and the title given to it by the foreigners shall be done away with. From Conan there shall descend a fierce Boar, which will try the sharpness of its tusks in the forests of Gaul, for it will lop down all the larger oak trees, taking care to protect the smaller ones."

... But this is another story.

Heard of, but not Heard – 29 New Recordings from Brittany

Short notes about these new recordings were drawn from the Coop Breizh website (www.coop-breizh.fr), *Ar Men* magazine (214, September-October 2016 & 215, November-December 2016) and *Musique Bretonne* magazine (249, October-November-December 2016). My apologies for any misspellings of names – in pulling information from CD cover images, it was sometimes difficult to read names accurately.



Ars'ys. Bro-oadow / Pays-âges.

This is the seventh album from this group since they were launched in 2001 by pianist and composer Hervé Lesvenan. Arnel an Héjer composes and sings texts, with accompaniment by Loïc Bléjean and Ronan Baudry

on uilleann pipes, low whistle and soprano sax. Lesvenan brings a classical training to the arrangements with counterpoint and harmonies.



Autour de la mer.

This is a double CD with 38 selections of classic maritime repertoire performed in Brittany. Groups and singers include Tri Yann, Soldat Louis, EV, Babourd Armures, Ffran May, Morwenna, Millions de

Sabords, Claudia Oavis, Armes, Nolwen, Clarisse Lavanant, Gabiers d'Artimon, Yvon Etienne, Jamie MacMenemy and Tonnerre de Brest.



Gildas Arzel. Greneville. KASP 005 Guitarist Gildas Arzel is from the city of Brest. While the Irish song "Ireland's Green Shore" leads off the album, it is to America one travels with folk and bluegrass featured.

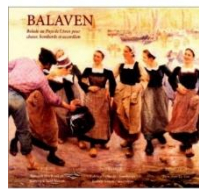
Arzel's acoustic and electric guitar work is joined by mandolin player Christian Séguret and banjo player Jean-Marc Delon.



Bagad Istanbul – Kolektif Istanbul & Bagad Penhars.

This CD features 11 traditional melodies, dances and marches from Brittany and the Turkish/Balkan area. Bagad Penhars from Quimper joins with the Kolektif Istanbul which

focuses on music of Turkish minorities in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece. The music is a unique mix of the bombards, bagpipes, and drum section of a bagad with instruments like the kaval, zuma and davul. And there are also vocals, sax, accordion and trumpet added to the mix.



Balaven – Balade au pays de l'Aven pour chœur, bombarde et accordéon.

This CD features the choirs Mouezh Bro Konk (Concarneau) and Kanerien Sant Meryn (Plomelin) along with the bombard and accordion duo Nijadel (Fabrice Lothodé and Jérémy Simon). Highlighted are traditional songs in the Breton language and dancers from the Aven country.



Baptiste Barbier & Pablo Molard. Incipio.

This is the first CD from the duo of Baptiste Barbier (flute) and Pablo Molard (guitar) who started working together in 2013. The CD includes 9 compositions and traditional tunes

inspired by Breton and Irish music with melodies as well as jigs, gavottes, a waltz and an an dro. They are joined by guest artists Florian Coic (guitars) and Jacky Molard (fiddle).



Bagad Boulvriag. War Raok! Aurrera.

This is the first CD by this bagad from Bourbriac featuring arrangements of airs and dances from the fisel and plinn music/dance areas of Brittany recorded during a 2016 competition. The CD also includes four performances with the Basque choir Ezepletan Kantuz.



Daou ha Daou – Champions de Bretagne de Musique de Couple. (2013-14-15)

Following a CD of the same name for 2010, 2011 and 2012, this CD features the winners of the contest for the paired biniou koz and bombard and biniou braz and bombard held in Gourin each year. Each year 40 pairs or "couples" are selected from some 200 hoping to qualify for this prestigious competition. This CD features 21 selections of marches, dances and melodies with top couples from all three years. This is the best of the best for those who love this uniquely Breton pairing.



Dom Duff. Kkwll.

No misspelling here. This is the 6th album by Breton language song writer and singer Dom Duff with 11 of his songs all starting with the letter K (ex: Koltar, K', Ker Ashby ...). Besides song, he plays guitar, mandolin, harmonica, banjo ... He is joined by Konan Mevel (bagpipes), Nicola Hayes (fiddle), Vincent Chassagne (bass) and Mourad Ait Abdemalek (percussions).



Duo Kerno Buisson. *Prémambule.*

Jeremy Kerno (song and bombard) pairs with Mélinda Buisson (button accordion) for 12 selections – two melodies and 11 dances including ronds de Loudéac, riguegnée, cercle circassien, ridées, mazurka, avant deux, a waltz, and tours. They are joined by Romain Rio (percussions), Nicolas Pichevin (guitars) and Loïc Le Cotillec (vocals).



Ensemble Nautilus. *Regards de Breizh.*

Innacor INNA 11612
This album springs from a concert featuring photos of Brittany and Bretons by Guy le Querrec. Christophe Rocher, the clarinet

player and arranger for the Ensemble Nautilus, set the images to music. The group includes accordion, saxophones, clarinet, bass fiddle, percussions and electronic sounds to create moods for the images.



Fleuves. *Fleuves.*

This is the first CD for a fest noz band made up of Émilien Robic (clarinet), Romain Dubois (fender rhodes & programming), and Samson Dayou (bass). They perform a variety of Breton dances - plinn, riqueniée, rond de St. Vincent, pilé menu, fisel, and dro, hanter dro ... They are joined by Antonin Volson (percussion), Youn Kamm (trumpet) and Loeiza Beauvir and Youenn Lange (vocals).



Brieg Guerveno. *Valgori.*

This band is labeled in style as progressive rock from the 70s. Brieg Guerveno (guitar and vocals) is joined by Xavier Soulabail (guitar, vocals), Joachim Blanchet (drums, keyboard, vocals) and Eric Cervera (guitar). With the exception of one song text by Bernez Tangi, Guerveno is the author of all the songs which are in Breton. CD notes are bilingual in Breton and English.



Gwennyn. *Avalon.*

Singer Gwennyn works with artistic director and guitarist Patrick Marzin for a pop-Celtic album on the theme of Avalon, Arthurian legends and Breton folktales. They are joined also by Kevin Camus (uilleann pipes, flute), Yvon Molard (percussions), Manu Leroy (bass), with guest artists Robert Le Gall (fiddle, mandolins), David Pasquet and Pascale Rode (bombards) Ronan Rouxel (fiddle), and David Starosta (guitar).



Jeanjeanne. *Jeanjeanne.*

This is a pop-rock group from Brest with singer Cristine Merienne, drummer Yvon Molard, and two electro-harp players Alice Soria-Cadoret and Nikolaz Cadoret. The perform 7 of their own songs which are inspired by various traditions.



Gwenael Kerleo & Yann Crépin. *Soñj - La déclaration.*

This is a pairing of harpist Gwenael Kerlo with pianist Yann Crépin with 14 compositions inspired by Brittany. They are joined by Kevin Camus (uilleann pipes) on two selections and Yvon Molard (percussion) on one selection. Two of the selections on the CD come with a video bonus.



Le Bour-Bodros. *Chadenn.*

Timothée Le Bour (saxophones) and Youen Bodros (button accordion) perform a variety of Breton dances and songs – both traditional and newly composed. They are joined by Gaëtan Samson (percussions) and Rozenn Talec (vocals).



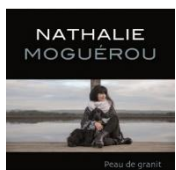
Emmanuel Lemare. *L'île d'Innisfree.*

Emmanuel Lemare is center stage with uilleann pipes and recorders, as well as song and poetry. He is accompanied by Florence Lecordier (accordion), Patrick Le Roux (guitar), Klervi Müller (flute) and Mélanie Goron (fiddle). A good half of the selections are from Irish tradition with selections also drawn from Scotland, Galicia, Serbia ... and Tom Waits and Vivaldi.



Cristine Merienne. *Maryann's Garden.*

Cristine Merienne sings and plays harp for 11 selections of tunes and songs in Breton, French and English. These are composed by herself or others (Kristen Nogues, Bernez Tangi) or arranged from traditional Breton songs and tunes.



Nathalie Moguérou. *Peau de granit.*

Formerly of the group Glaz, Nathalie (Brignonen) Moguérou presents her first solo album of song. Of pop, folk, and rock styles, her melodies with texts by Pascal Moguérou evoke a world of fairies and magical creatures from Celtic lore.



Patrick Molard. *Ceol Mòr / Light & Shade*. Innacor IC15417.

Patrick Molard is a master not only of the Breton biniou, but a number of other bagpipes – notably the Irish uilleann pipes and the Scottish

Highland bagpipes. Here he presents the Scottish tradition of Piobaireachd which he studied in Scotland from masters there. But this is not exactly a “traditional” way to present this music usually played solo on the Highland pipes where a base theme is progressively elaborated in a long series of variations. Those familiar with piobaireachd will find this performance traditional enough in the oral transmission of this music (and you will hear this on the CD), and in the pipes dramatic rendering of a story (with titles like “Lament for the Union,” or “The Blind Piper’s Ostinacy”). But Molard is joined by other musicians who add a new layer to these tunes – brother Jacky Molard on fiddle, and four Breton musicians best known in a jazz world: Yannick Jory on saxophone, Hélène Labarrière on bass fiddle, Éric Daniel on guitars, and Simon Goubert on drums.



Ossian. *Voiles aux Vents*.

This is the first album by this fest noz bad which has been on the scene since 2010. The group is made up of Alan Vallée (guitars), Titouan Gautier (accordion), Grégory Legouic (electric

bass), Frank Fagon (clarinet) and Clément Le Goff (vocals, trombone). They are joined here by guest artists Yann Fañch Kemener (vocals), Thomas Reigner (percussions) and Thierry Lahais (biniou). The CD includes 11 selections of songs, a march, and dances – pilé menu, plinn, tours, kost ar c’hoat, ridée, cercle circassien ...



Denez Prigent. *Denez Live – A-unvan gant ar stered, In unison with the stars*.

This is a CD and DVD featuring live performance by one of Brittany’s finest traditional singers, Denez Prigent. The

CD includes 11 selections of traditional Breton language songs and the DVD has 10 (8 titles also on the CD).



Red Cardell. *Un monde tout à l'envers*. Keltia Musique KMCD 687

This CD features a new, more acoustic, sound for this well-loved rock band of Brittany. Instruments include accordion, alto sax, fiddle, guitars,

piano and sitar, for arrangements by Pierre Sangrà. Songs are less dark in tone and the band has a bit more serene tone.



Silabenn Trio. *Lovadenn*.

This trio from Redon is composed of Yolaine Delamaire (vocals), Janick Martin (button accordion) and Erwan Lherminier (clarinets and vocals). The CD includes 11 selections with a

variety of dances – hanter dro, plinn, an dro, waltz, laridé, ridée - and several ballads.



Spoum. *Magnetik*.

There’s a jazz and funk touch to 10 selections of dances for a fest noz – gavottes, hanter dro, rond de Loudia, rond de St.Vincent, kas a barh, Scottish ... The group includes Julien

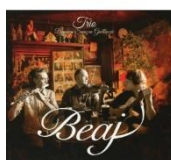
Ryo (saxes), Yann Cariou (flutes), Jean Baptiste “jb” Lecuyer (trumpet), Erwan Volant (guitars), Christoph “Choun” Runarvot (bass) and Pierre Le Toux (percussions).



Startijenn. *Paker Tour Live*

This CD features live recordings from festoù noz and festivals in a 2016 tour by a band very well known in Brittany. Startijenn is made up of Tangi Oillo (guitar), Julien Stévenin (bass guitar),

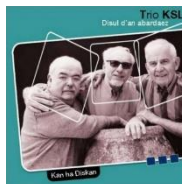
Youenn Roue (bombards), Lionel Le Page (biniou, ulleann pipes), and Tangi Le Gall-Carré (button accordion). The CD includes 14 selections with a variety of dances including plinn, gavotte, hanter dro, rond de Loudia, fisel, Scottish and ridée.



Trio Bonamy, Samzun, Guillouzic. *Beaj*.

This trio of Michel Bonamy (flute), Fred Samzun (fiddle and cello) and Laurent Guillouzic (guitar) draw from traditional music of Brittany, Ireland and the

Balkans on this CD. They are joined by Claire Keville (concertina), Tom Guillouzic (percussion) and Padraic Larkin (vocals).



Trio KSL. *Disul d’an abardaez*.

This is traditional style singing for dances by singers Maurice Bouguennec, Auguste Le Berre and Raymond Pincemin. Songs are for gavottes, jabadao, rond bigouden,

avant deux, dañs Léon, and more



A Few Newer Websites to Explore Breton Music and Culture

Patrimoine Culturel Immatériel Bretagne

www.bed.bzh/pci

Bretagne Culture Diversité has created a website for the group PCI-Bretagne. That is, Patrimoine Culturel Immatériel Bretagne – or in English, Immaterial Cultural Patrimony of Brittany. PCI includes unique traditional practices which are an important element of a patrimony. In the case of Brittany this includes the fest noz, the unique style of wrestling called gouren, basket making techniques, and other elements and practices that express Breton cultural heritage. This site presents those elements as well as the people and actions to preserve and promote Breton cultural patrimony.

Kultur Bretagne webmedia

<http://kubweb.media>

KuB (Kultur Bretagne) webmedia is a site put together by the organization Breizh Creative to promote audiovisual productions. These present all aspects of Breton contemporary and traditional culture including dance and music performances.

An Introduction to Brittany from 1900 – Part III

This is the third and last part of an article by Edward Iraenaus Prime-Stevenson (1858-1942) which was part of a series called “A Reading Journey through France” written for *The Chautauquan* magazine. It was aimed at adult learners, complete with “review questions,” “search questions,” and a bibliography. See *Bro Nevez* 138 and 139 for the earlier parts of this article.

As is always the case for travel accounts of Brittany from the late 19th and early 20th century, the author often borrows ideas and “facts” from other travel writers. For authors restricted to English language sources this certainly restricted things, both for an understanding of history and the contemporary life of Brittany they might try to describe. Since the first-hand observations they could glean from a week or several weeks traveling in Brittany would not get them far beyond an observation of landscape, authors often counted on the observations of others – leading to the repetition of stereotypes and misinformation. Reader beware!

IX. Around Brittany

Between Plouigneau and Brest, the local interests as well as the history grows stronger. Morlaix, Landivisiau and Landerneau on the railway itself, and up on another rough bit of the granite shore, or calm inlet St. Pol-de-Léon, and Roscoff, the lonely Isle de Batz, and

Plouescat, are all justly to be mentioned. The entire cross-section of the province here is included in the Department of Finistère. Finistère and Morbihan are generally and properly regarded as the special districts to be visited in Brittany. Morlaix is a jewel city of the province; an extremely old community, the capital of Finistère. However frequently burnt down, it has been a phoenix of the land. It is crowded into a narrow valley, or pushed in expanse up the slopes; and both around it and in it the picture-like aspect is fascinating to strangers.

St. Pol-de-Léon, upon the coast, once the strongest rival of Morlaix, has a thirteenth century church famed in France, the Chapel du ‘Creizker’ (or Holy Cross), with a singularly fine and lofty spire. Roscoff, too, is a small but representative town, with superior bits of ancient architecture; full of the interest of the life, work-days and holidays, of the Finistère inhabitants.

In this paper there is no need to give more than a few words to Brest itself. It is well known the world around as among the greater French seaports; a very large city. Brest, indeed, is a great western door of ship-communication between France and all the world beyond her; and a military-naval station of the first class. Brest, however, though an old locality (for it was one of the twelve chief harbor-cities of Brittany under the earliest dukes and their château is extant), is a modern place, the creation of Richelieu, Colbert and Vauban. To the practical mind, Brest has such interest as belongs to Liverpool, or Southampton or Havre, rather than any dignity of days of Breton of the past. It affords innumerable excursions, however. With it as a point on the route and the map (Brest is the eye-tooth of the “leopard” in the outline mentioned, just as Morlaix is the leopard’s eye) the tourist not only turns down to go toward his connections for the South Shore, but is in a district with large geographical features needing comment. A few of these follow:

First, of Finistère’s look. The landscapes in this broad finishing-off of the province, where day and night a dreadful ocean breaks on a dreadful coast, one worse even than Cornwall, become desolate and elemental as you advance to the last reaches of it. Brest itself is within a deep inlet forming its harbor (to which access is gained by the tunnel-shape Goulet de Brest) and in a fertile and for the most part pleasant country. But once edge along to the ocean, and there are more terrors than gentle charms. An excursion should be made to Ushant (or Ouessant) some thirteen miles out at sea, which savage island not only has an odd agglomeration of inhabitants and fierce outlooks on the Atlantic, but the interest of having been a specially important seminary of the Druids.

Below the Goulet de Brest is the deep Bay of Douarnenez. Out from it shoots the notorious Pointe du

Raz, a precipitous cape corresponding to Land's End in England; a granitic mass on which the sea thunders so angrily and with such terrors to navigation all around it that we sympathize with the old Breton prayer, "O, God, save me in passing the Raz, as my boat is little and thy sea great." Between the Bay of Douarnenez, the long Bay of Audierne and the Atlantic, is the peninsula of Penmar'h; full of such desolate and storm-swept landscapes that it is not strange to find on its whole westerling territory of rock, salt marsh and sand; and poor little villages or patches of vague ruins. If the summer here be ferocity itself often enough, what must a Penmar'h winter be!

And these sea-limits of Brittany have been spoken of in the past centuries with horror because of men as well as its surf-bound, fanged cliffs. Wrecking was a business. False lights were an art. Murder and plunder were a living. One frank prince of Léon one day said that he had in his land the most precious stone in all the world; for it brought seigniorial claims on sea-débris! Today West Breton is well supplied with beacons; but, all the same, the wrecks are incessant. A somewhat recent calamity was that of the *Drummond Castle*, a great Cape steamer, which struck Ouessant in June, 1896.

Moreover all this region is haunted. Here was the land of Cornouaille – not to be confused with Cornwall – the old domain of fabled Breton kings. Merlin was born here; on the Isle of Sein, where was situated the College of the Druid priestesses, under the great Udehelda. Sir Tristan of Lyonesse had a castle on the island that bears his name, in the Bay of Douarnenez; and over hither did he bring Yseult to the palace of King Mark, the site of which is confidently shown. Under the Bay of Douarnenez lies the wall and sculptured houses of a huge and splendid city, the city of Ys – Moguern-Guer-a-Ys – which was so luxurious and shamefully wicked that it was destroyed by sea as Sodom was punished in fire. Down through the awful clefts of these granite precipices you can walk straight into hell. The devils would be flying around now, if they did not suppose that holy saints still lived in Cornouaille and Penmar'h. The legends of King Gradlon and his unspeakably bad daughter, Dahut, are centralized here, where Princess Dahut, according to one Breton poem, was directly the factor of the sinking of the splendid old city of Ys under the waves, as part of a love-intrigue. The city trusted in its dykes and sluices to be safe against the ocean; but Dahut was without conscience. She stole the key of the sluice-gate from her royal parent and gave it to a paramour:

"Had anyone been watching, he would have seen the fair young girl enter the chamber softly, on her bare, white feet. She approached the King Gradlon, her father, she knelt down, and carried off the chain and silver key.

The King sleeps on; he sleeps. But a cry rises from without, "The water is let loose! The town is drowned!" "Lord King, awake! To horse, and away! The furious sea has broken bounds!" Cursed be the fair young girl who opened, after the feast, the sluice-gate of the City of Ys, that barrier of the sea!

"Woodman, woodman! Tell me - Tell me - has the wild horse of Gradlon passed through the valley?" "I have not seen the horse of Gradlon pass this way; but in the darkness I heard it trip-trip, trip-trip, trip-trip, and fly as fast as fire."

"Fisherman! Hast seen the daughter of ocean, combing her golden hair, in the sunshine, beside the waves?" "I have seen the white daughter of ocean - I have even heard her sing. Her songs were as sad as the moan of the waves."

The dark legend of Ys was made by the gifted composer, Lalo, into his dramatic opera, "Le Roy d'Ys." Brittany has also been given an earlier operatic dress by Meyerbeer, in his graceful "Dinorah: or the 'Pardon' of Ploërmel." In that there is a reference to fairy-folk in Brittany. I am sorry to say that the Breton fairies – korrigans – are malicious; and the dwarfs that creep about do nobody good turns, especially if Finistère dwarfs. A pleasant counteragent to such somber fictions occurs here each year in the great "Pardon" at Ste. Anne-la-Palud, near Douarnenez, where comes an enormous procession with many brilliant details.

With Quimper, the tourist starts on his fairly returning, or at least reversed route; along the South Breton Coast, by branches of the Chemin de Fer d'Orléans. It would be impossible to give a short running commentary on this direct but extremely (indeed overflowing) attractive progress east. South Brittany is not so continually in touch with North France. Certain provincial aspects of the first importance are here, and only here, visible. The country, too, is genial, and opens exquisitely in its agricultural and pacific landscapes, without reference to the marine component. History has been twice as busy, too, with this lower coast, as on that above. Auray, Ploërmel, Vannes are localities that speak of a warlike past, as well as the serene present. Down on the Rhuys peninsula, a lonely region, was the Monastery of St. Gildas, where Abelard tried to preside over a demoralized set of monks, and wrote to Héloïse some of his most melancholy letters.

Moreover, in this southerly district are the most important of all the strange stone monuments, the existence of which elsewhere I have not particularized, simply from economy of space. We are likely to make a double mistake in thinking of Stonehenge in England: the first error being that it is the only monument at all of its sort and the second error that Stonehenge is Druidic. Stonehenge is the supremely impressive pre-historic monument of hewn stone; but it is not the only monolithic wonder at all; and it never was a Druidic

temple – whatever else it was. Here in the flat Morbihan arise quite as astonishing memorials of vanished and unknown mankind working at building.

At Carnac, at Plouharnel and at Lokmariaker, stretch out great avenues of granite block; uncut stones, virgin of all shaping; set up on end, along whole kilometers. Here too are the groups of such stones – the *dolmen*, resembling huge tables, or shelters with sides and roofs, as if for dark and secret rites. Sometimes these stones are, or have been, thirty, forty, fifty, even seventy feet in length. Nearly always, when they are single, or *menhir*, they are set on their smaller end. Their gray, rude impressiveness is increased by their lonely and flat surroundings. What did they mean? How were they erected? Were they secular or religious – mortuary or natal – historic memorials – sexual emblems – or what? Nobody can decide, though the theories are endless. We look at them, walk about them, study them as obelisks or as ponderous edifices – in awe, the awe of curious ignorance. Their secret will not out today. It never will out.

But the tourist must out of Brittany; unless he expects to write a book on it, and to stay in it for that not at all unusual task. Leaving behind him its *menhirs* and *dolmen*, its fisherfolk and grave agriculturalists, its gay fête costumes or sober week-day colors, its superstitions and simple piety, its Pardons and legends, he quits it. By Redon, and a sunny railway journey across a fair country, we arrive at Nantes. Therewith we see not only that ancient city of Breton ducal state, - in later years to give a title to the most cruel and ill-advised Edict ever signed by a French king – but the yellow and now salt waters of the Loire. With that stream, in its Touraine course, these outlines of three French provinces began; and so this text must fittingly come to an end to the sound of Loire waters, rushing past Paimboeuf and St. Nazaire's shipping into the ocean that Cartier crossed from Brittany in 1534 to do his part in exploring a New World to be peopled by a coming race.

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For the 21st Century Tourist: On the Breizh Again

www.visite.bzh

There are number of websites you can visit to find out information about tourist options for Brittany, but this new one tour company offers visitors the opportunity to really learn about Brittany and its history and culture.

Called "On the Breizh Again" they offer short or longer travels for individual or groups, partnering with transportation agencies, hotels, and local communities and organizations to create a unique experience to show you much more than a guide book will tell you.

Its mission as identified on the website (which is in French and English):

- Offer to visitors and Bretons short trips in Brittany, to discover strange or unknown pieces of Breton patrimony.
- Give clear and warm explanations, full of Breton passion.
- Deal with history, nature, culture, architecture, business, agriculture, craft, religion...

I liked the website note about "Innovation":

- There are many interesting or freaky places in Brittany. You can visit old castles (Coatfrec, Tonquédec), Templar sites (Brelevenez, Palacret), crazy projects (Valley of the Saints), Gallo-Roman sites (Corseul), but also whisky distilleries, nature reserves, industrial sites, farms ...
- ON THE BREIZH AGAIN is the first tour operator specialized in the discovery of Breton heritage.

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 newsletter can be e-mailed as a PDF file you can share with others, and back issues can be found on our website. We are happy to send complimentary copies (ideally by e-mail) to organizations and individuals in Brittany active in work for their language and culture.

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.

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.

We welcome new Members or Newsletter Subscribers. Your support shows the people of Brittany that their language and culture 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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