

# BRO NEVEZ

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



1st collection of poetry by Reun ar C'halan

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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The **U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)** was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981. **Bro Nevez** ("new country" in the Breton language) is the newsletter produced by the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly: February/March, May/June, August/September and November/December. Contributions, letters to the Editor, and ideas are welcome from all readers and will be printed at the discretion of the Editor.

The U.S. ICDBL provides Bro Nevez on a complimentary basis to a number of language and cultural organizations in Brittany to show our support for their work. Your Membership/Subscription allows us to do this. Membership (which includes subscription) for one year is \$20. Checks should be in U.S. dollars, made payable to "U.S. ICDBL" and mailed to Lois Kuter at the address above.

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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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## Editorial

I had fully intended to get this issue of Bro Nevez out in September but the month simply ran out on me. I blame it on my retirement. After 27 years as the Manager of Volunteer Services at the Academy of Natural Sciences museum in Philadelphia I retired at the end of September. Organizing 27 years of paper and computer files to prepare for my successor turned out to be quite time-consuming ... but satisfying in leaving things in good order and in thinning out thousands of pages of document to be archived or simply thrown out. My job was always interesting and I will miss the people I worked with as well as the hundreds of volunteers I helped get on board to support the museum and its research. I will not miss the increasing load of paperwork that the job required, nor will I miss the daily commute by sometimes woefully late trains, nor will I miss waking up to an alarm clock before the sun rises.

I do hope to devote more time to Bro Nevez and to a much needed updating of the U.S. ICDBL website. And I will be doing some goofing-off to watch birds and wild animals in my backyard, catch up on reading, and take walks to explore my neighborhood. And ultimately I do want to take some time for a long overdue trip to Brittany!



## A New School Year and New Schools for the Breton Language

While numbers are not yet available for the 2017 school year the website of Ofis ar Brezhoneg offers a look at both challenges and growth with this new school year. Challenges for small schools especially are found in the threat to contracts which provide State support for school workers such as cafeteria servers and those assisting with pre-and post-school activities. This could have a big impact on supporting needed personnel with budgets already stretched thin. This would especially impact newer Diwan schools which are not yet under contract with the National Education system. Despite

this, a new Diwan primary school will open in Plougastell-Daoulaz.

It is in the public school bilingual sector where growth is most evident with ten new sites – the biggest growth since these schools were first opened in 1982. Three are found in Côtes d'Armor (Mur, Quintin et St-Brieuc 2), two in Finistère (Plomelin et Pleuven), three in l'Ille-et-Vilaine (La Bouëxière, la Guerche-de-Bretagne, Val d'Anast) and two in Morbihan (Ploemel et Pluvigner). With one new school in the Catholic school bilingual sector and the new Diwan school, this brings the total to 12. This has been possible in part because of the State-Region convention and work of Ofis ar Brezhoneg to provide parents in the Region of Brittany with needed information on the creation of schools and teacher training.

At the middle school level eight new schools have opened: five for the public bilingual schools ((Brieg, Douarnenez, Lorient, Pont-l'Abbé, St-Martin-des-Champs) and three for the Catholic schools (Brec'h, Pont-l'Abbé and Rennes).

The State-Region 2015-2020 Convention has also supported the training of more teachers. 55 students have been admitted for the 1<sup>st</sup> level (CRPE) and 2<sup>nd</sup> level (CAPES) university trainings, the 2<sup>nd</sup> best number for any year since Breton has been taught. The Convention stipulates that 15% of the teaching posts opened by the Rennes Academy must be for bilingual teachers, and if possible 20%.

This growth is enabled by the Region's support of continuing education – six and three-month intensive trainings in Breton – where students can get financial aid through the DESK and SKOAZELL programs.

### **Prizioù Dazont ar Brezhoneg**

Prizes for the future of the Breton language

Each year Ofis ar Brezhoneg and the television channel France 3 Bretagne award prizes to those who foster the Breton language in their daily lives, in work with companies and associations, and in creative work. The prizes (1,500 euros for first prize and 500 euros for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> prizes) are financed by the Region of Brittany.

The awards were actually made in March 2017, but it's not too late to recognize the important contribution of the winners.

#### Breton Speaker of the Year:

1<sup>st</sup> prize – **Yann Tierson and Emilie Quinquis**, musicians who made the choice to learn Breton and make it the language of their daily life.

2<sup>nd</sup> prize – **Laëtitia Anger** who created Les Archi Kurieux, a company creating activities highlighting Breton heritage in the Breton language.

3<sup>rd</sup> prize – **Fanny Labbay** who recently learned to speak Breton and decided to make it her everyday language. She works in the Diwan school in Bourbriac and also teaches introductory classes for Breton.

#### Association:

1<sup>st</sup> prize: **Dizale**, an organization specializing in Breton language dubbing for audiovisual.

2<sup>nd</sup> prize: **Brezhoneg e Brest**, an association to promote the use of the Breton language in the city of Brest.

3<sup>rd</sup> prize: **L'Amicale des pompiers de Rennes**, the fire company of Rennes who produced a bilingual Breton-French calendar.

#### Business:

1<sup>st</sup> prize: **Le Kêr**, a recreation/education park based on Breton history where three Breton speakers are employed, signs and films are bilingual, and guided tours are provided in Breton.

2<sup>nd</sup> prize: **Ar Bradenn – Aquatiris**, a phylo-purification company which uses Breton in its communications.

3<sup>rd</sup> prize: **Korrimel**, an electronic messaging system entirely in Breton, allowing the use of the .bzh

#### Public Organization:

1<sup>st</sup> prize: **The Departmental Council of Finistère**, the first Department to adopt a plan for the Breton language 2016-2021.

2<sup>nd</sup> prize: the town of **Hennebont** for the creation of Agenda 21, a 2016-2020 plan to develop Breton language and culture.

3<sup>rd</sup> prize: the **hospital of Carhaix** for its placement of bilingual signage and work to develop the use of Breton in the health field.

#### Fictional Book:

1<sup>st</sup> prize: **Bar Abba**, novel by **Yann Bijer** (Ed. Al Liamm).

2<sup>nd</sup> prize: **Kerdiwal**, a collection of poems by **Herve Seubil gKernaoudour** (Ed. Al Liamm)

3<sup>rd</sup> prize: **Rebetiko hag istorioù all**, a collection of short stories by **Kristian Braz** (Ed. Al Liamm)

#### Audiovisual Creation:

1<sup>st</sup> prize: **A-vihanig / Depuis tout petit**, a 26 minute documentary film by **Bleuenn Le Borgne**.

2<sup>nd</sup> prize : **Pa ya kuit Solenn / Quand Solenn s'en va**, a 26 minute docu-fiction by **Anne Gouerou**.

3<sup>rd</sup> prize : **C'hwila gano / Vous chanterez**, a series of five 10-minute episodes by **Perynn Bleunven and Justine Morvan**

#### Breton Language Song on CD

1<sup>st</sup> prize: **Youn Kamm et le Bagad du Bout du Monde** by Youn Kamm (Apprentis Producteurs / Coop Breizh).

2<sup>nd</sup> prize: **Valgori** by **Brieg Guerveno** (Paker Prod / Coop Breizh).

3<sup>rd</sup> prize: **Exil** by **Maria Desbordes** (Awen Records / Coop Breizh).



Joël Auvin, Marie Riual, Louis Elégoët, Alain Le Noac'h  
Photos from Agence Bretagne Presse

## New Members for Brittany's Order of the Ermine

On September 16 in St-Quay-Portrieux the Cultural Institute of Brittany inducted four new members into the Order of the Ermine. Created in 1381 this is one of the oldest military/honorary orders of Europe, distinctive for its inclusion of women and commoners. It was abolished with the French Revolution in the late 1700s but reestablished in 1972 and 1973, and then again in 1988 by the Cultural Institute of Brittany. 127 individuals have been inducted into the Order of the Ermine in recognition of their lifetime contribution to Brittany. 71 are living members who are committed to continuing this support.

Three organizations were awarded the Medal of the Cultural Institute – a relatively new addition to the ceremony – for their outstanding work for Brittany:

The digital library of **IDBE** (institut de documentation bretonne et européenne)

**Le Ker**, a park themed on the history of Brittany  
**CanalBreizh**, the first web-radio for Breton music

The four new inductees into the Order of the Ermine are presented below. The Breton text is from the Cultural Institute of Brittany. The English is my translation (of the French version provided).

**Loeiz Elegoed / Louis Elégoët** (Sant-Neven / Saint-Méen, Lesneven, 1942)

Goude bezañ graet studioù istor eo deuet da vezañ kelenner ha soutenet en deus un dezenn : Sant-Neven, buhez ha diskar ur sevenadur en ur barrez a vro Leon (e 1980), dindan renerezh Yves Le Gallo. Skrivet en deus ivez Hendaodoù ha teroueroù (1990) hag ul levr a bouez diwar-benn tud uhel bed ar beizanted e Leon-Uhel : ar Juloded (1996). War goulenn rektorelezh Roazhon en deus skrivet un dornlevr istor Breizh a zo bet dasparzhet er skoloù : Breizh, un istor, un embannadur e galleg (CRDP, 1998) hag unan e brezhoneg (TES, 1999).

Kenderc'hel a ra gant e labour reiñ d'anavezout istor Breizh en ur skrivañ pennadoù e levrioù a-stroll pe diwar-benn danvezioù resis (dre genlabourat e Skol Uhel ar Vro e rann ar relijion da skouer). Levrioù en deus skrivet eñ e-unan ivez (Bro Leon. Istor ha douaroniezh a-vremañ, Ar Vro Bagan, Istor ha douaroniezh a-vremañ (Palantines 2013). Degas a ra bremañ e anaoudegezh hag e varregezh war an istor hag ar brezhoneg d'ar skolioù dre genlabourat gant ti-embann ar skolioù (TES). Estreget bezañ ur brezhoneger ampart, un istorour aketus, ur furcher dielloù pizh, ez eo ivez ur pedagogour eus ar c'hentañ, barrek da zisplegañ fraezh ha sklaer danvezioù ledan ha kemplezh. Louis Elégoët (Saint-Méen, Lesneven, 1942)

Studies of history led him to become a teacher, and he completed a thesis, *Saint-Méen. Vie et déclin d'une civilisation paroissiale dans le Bas-Léon* (in 1980), under the direction of Yves Le Gallo. He also published *Ancêtres et terroirs* (1990) and a major work on the peasant aristocracy of Haut-Léon, *Les Juloded* (1996). By request of the Rectorat of Rennes he wrote a manual on the history of Brittany which was given to middle-schoolers with an edition in French, *Bretagne, une histoire* (DRDP, 1998) and an edition in Breton (TES, 1999). He continued to make the history of Brittany better known through collective works where there were specific themes (for example through his participation in the Religion Section of the Cultural Institute of Brittany) as well as through his own works including *Histoire et géographie contemporaine* (Palantines, 2007), and *Le Pays Pagan. Histoire et géographie contemporaine* (Palantines, 2013). Today he puts his knowledge of history and the Breton language to work in contributions to TES editions for school children. An excellent Breton speaker, scrupulous historian, detailed explorer of archives, he is also a remarkable teacher able to present the biggest and most complex questions in a simple and effective way.

**Mari Riwal / Marie Riual** (Kemper / Quimper, 1955)

Ganet eo bet en un tiegezh a gemere perzh e kevredigezhioù sevenadurel breizhat a bep seurt. Kelenner a vicher anezhi, gouestlet he deus hec'h amzer vak d'ar c'helc'hioù keltiek (e Pont-Aven, Kemper, Pont-n-Abad) en ur gemer perzh e kement obererezh a oa : dañsoù, dilhad, korollouriezh, stummañ an izili, devezhioù studi, mont-en-dro ar ar gengevredigezh War 'l leur, mererezh Gouelioù Kerne (abaoe 1980), plac'h a youl vat (e gouelioù a bep seurt, festivalioù, strolladoù kanañ, diskouezadegoù ha labourioù mirdiour evel er mirdi bigoudenn...), ezel eus bodadoù barn e kenstrivadegoù, prezegennoù... A drugarez da emouestl padus tud evel Marie-Christine eo bet kemmet ar sell negativel a oa war Breizh goude ar brezel en unan pozitivel hag a grou liammoù sokial etre an holl

rummadoù tud. Un anadenn gevredigezhel a ya en tu-hont d'an dachenn sevenadurel strizh hag a ro lañs n'eo ket hepken da ekonomiezh ar vro met ivez d'ar youl da vestroniañ un amzer da zont dibabet diouzh talvoudoù sokial ha kenedus Breizh.

With parents deeply involved in various Breton cultural organizations, she is a teacher who devotes her free time to the life of the Celtic Circles of Pont-Aven, Quimper and Pont l'Abbé. This includes dance, costumes, choreography, training members, participating in daylong study sessions, and assisting with the confederation War'l Leur and the administration of the Festival de Cornouaille (since 1980). She volunteers for multiple festivals, vocal groups, museum exhibits and work (Musée Bigouden), sits on contest juries, and presents at conferences. It is thanks to the discrete and continuous devotion of people like Marie-Christine that Brittany has been able to transform the negative identity of the post war years into a positive identity which is creative and generates social and intergenerational links. This societal phenomenon has an impact far beyond the cultural world, contributing also to the economy of Brittany and the desire to master its chosen destiny and maintain its esthetic and social values.

**Alan an Noac'h / Alain Le Noac'h** (Plogoneg / Plogonnec, 1932)

Ar skeudenn wellañ a c'heller ober eus Alan an Noac'h eo hini un den dedennet gant danvezioù a bep seurt hag a labour, itik d'al labour, sioul ha dizehan ! Ar brezhoneger a zo anezhañ en deus dastumet pinvidigezh an hengoun dre gomz er Porzhe. E Loudieg emañ o chom, ha lakaet en deus war wel pinvidigezh sevenadurel ar c'horn-bro-se na oa ket anavezet pe nebeut betek neuze. Embannet ez eus bet pemp levrenn hep ankounac'haat e genlabour da niverenn 4 Dastum (1976) diwar-benn Bro Loudieg. Kemer perzh e kelc'h keltiek Loudieg a roas an tu dezhañ da studiañ dañsoù, boazioù hag hengounioù tud ar vro. Met ar c'hoant da c'houzout bepred muioc'h a gas anezhañ war hent Istor ar c'horn-bro : Loudieg, kronikennoù (1887), Distrig Loudieg e-pad Dispac'h 1789 (1988 ha 1989), Al lienoù (Breizh) (1992), Hiberneiz : enbroidi lwerzhon e Breizh er 17<sup>vet</sup> ha 18<sup>vet</sup> kantved, 3 lev'r embannet gant Skol Uhel ar Vro) abaoe 2006. Dedennet eo gant ar brezhoneg hag un ezel oberiant eo eus rann Yezh ha yezhoniezh Skol Uhel ar Vro

Alain Le Noac'h is probably best characterized by his eclectic and intensive work, quiet and relentless! A Breton speaker, he did collection work of the oral tradition in his area of origin, the Porzay. Residing in Loudéac he made the repertoire of this area known – traditions very poorly known before his action - and knew how to do this in publications (5 collections in addition to

his contribution to Dastum's No. 4 on the Pays de Loudéac in 1976) as well as through work with the Celtic Circle of Loudéac which led him to also study the dances and local popular traditions (*Chants et danses en pays de Loudéac*, 2012). But his incessant curiosity also stimulated his interest in local history: *Loudéac Chroniques* (1987), *Le district de Loudéac durant la Révolution de 1789* (1988 and 1989), *Les toiles (Bretagne)* (1992), *Hibernois: Immigrés irlandais en Bretagne aux 17<sup>e</sup> et 18<sup>e</sup> siècles* (3 volumes published by the Cultural Institute of Brittany since 2006). His interest in the Breton language has led him to become an active and regular member of the Language and Linguistics Section of the Institute.

**Joël Auvin, lesanvet Nono / Joël Auvin, alias Nono** (Zinzag-Lokrist / Inzinzac-Lochrist, 1949)

Ma n'eo ket anavezet ar c'helenner prederouriezh gant an darn vrasañ eus an dud... piv e Breizh ne oar ket piv eo Nono, an treser ? Tresañ a ra Nono war don ar fent ha kroget e oa da zuañ mogerenoù ar skolveur e Roazhon e 1970. Koulz lavarout dibosupl eo ober ur roll klok eus an holl levrioù, stourmoù ha festoù-noz en deus graet tresadennoù evito (a youl vat), eus an holl c'helaouennoù gant tresadennoù a denne da geleier ar mare (Pobl Vreizh, Le Canard de Nantes à Brest, Frilouz, Ouest-France, le Télégramme...). Darn eus e dresadennoù a zeuio da vezañ glad rummataet gant an Unesco... Piv n'anavez ket Job-lak-e-barzh, an hini a eve buanoc'h eget e skeud ? E dresadennoù flemmus a zo hon mirdi broadel deomp-ni.... Setu tost d'un hanter kantved e tres Istor Breizh, an darvoudoù joaus kenkoulz hag ar re zoanius, an trec'hioù hag ar stourmoù. Follennata karnedoù Nono a zo adreñ buhez d'an istor a-vremañ, e sell a zo bepred ken bev, ken denel ha ken lemm...morse droukflemmus !

Even if the Philosophy professor Joël Auvin is little known to the general public ... who in Brittany does not know the illustrator Nono? His skill as an illustrator of humor was revealed in his drawings on the walls of the Rennes University campus in 1970, and it is impossible to list all the works to which he has contributed, the combats and festoù noz to which he has contributed (as a volunteer), and the magazines and newspapers which have sought his unique view of events (*Le peuple breton, Le canard de Nantes à Brest, Frilouz, Ouest France, le Télégramme...*). No doubt, some of his designs will be considered part of the world's patrimony. Who is not familiar with Job-lak-e-barzh, he who drinks faster than his shadow? His caricatures are our Pantheon. For a half-century his pen has presented the history of Brittany, its joys and pains, its successes and its combats. To thumb through the design notebooks of Nono is to relive our contemporary history, a history

which his viewpoint always keeps lively, human, dynamic, and incisive, but never corrosive.

## **A loss for Brittany and the Breton Culture**

### **Jean-Louis Latour (1935-2017)**

This June Brittany lost one of its most ardent defenders, Jean-Louis Latour. Born in Morlaix, May 25, 1935, at the age of 8 he would be sent away from the bombing of World War II to live on a farm in Plouégat-Guérand. There he would be immersed in the Breton language, a language he had heard in songs his father sung. Jean-Louis Latour would do his military service during the war with Algeria where he would discover Islamic culture. He would work as an education counselor in a high school in Vannes and then as the director of the Social Center of Redon from 1972 to his retirement in 1995. But his support of Breton culture and engagement in it is remembered most for his work with Albert Poulain, Albert Noblet, and Jacques Toupel among others to collect traditional song in the rich tradition of the Redon area. Collecting music in Brittany is a social activity to stimulate its performance and to pass along a heritage. Jean-Yves Latour was a fine singer pairing up with Albert Poulain or with the group Chanteurs des Pays de Vilaine. While I do not recall if Jean-Louis Latour was part of the group of a half-dozen or so singers who took to the stage at fest noz for the 1978 Bogue d'Or in Redon, I do recall clearly that they hijacked the dancing from a pop-rock group whose muddled rhythms confused dancers. When the singers started up at the opposite end of the large hall, dancers joyfully gravitated to their more powerful sound.

Jean-Louis Latour was active with the Celtic Circle of Redon and he worked with Lionel Lainé, creator of the Ballet Dihun of Redon, which would do ground-breaking work to present innovative arrangements of traditional dance on stage. Latour became the General Secretary of Kendalc'h in 1965, helping to build the Ti Kendalc'h cultural center in Saint-Vincent-sur-Oust in 1968. He would be the President of Kendalc'h from 1985 to 1995. From 1975 to 1985 he worked to develop tourism of the Redon area, presiding over the tourism office for 14 years. From 1993 to 2003 he served as president of the Cultural Council of Brittany. For all of this work and more not mentioned here in support of all the arts as well as song and dance, he was inducted into the Order of the Ermine in 2003.

## **A Loss for Brittany, the Breton Language, and the U.S. ICDBL**

### **Reun ar C'halan (René Galand)**

(1923-2017)

A tribute by Lois Kuter

*At the end of May Brittany lost a major Breton language writer and poet and the U.S. ICDBL lost a member who was key in our founding in 1980. It seems fitting to let Reun ar C'halan introduce himself. In reviewing a thick pile of correspondence with him from 1980 through the mid 1990s I found the following document sent with a letter of May 13, 1985. Based on the letter this introduction seems to be an English version of a note sent for publication in the magazine Dalc'homp Sonj for its special issue on Bretons around the world (no. 12, hanv 1985). This exact note did not appear but the magazine included a very good article about Reun ar C'halan written by Yann Bouëssel du Bourg.*

### **Why I Joined the ICDBL: A Breton in the USA**

I was born in Ar C'hastell Nevez [Châteauneuf-du-Faou], right in the middle of Breizh Izel. The twenties were a crucial period for the traditional Breton culture. World War I had uprooted the entire male population of military age. Many of these young Bretons were deeply embittered by the experience. Breton regiments had been treated like cannon fodder by the French command, and had suffered twice as many casualties as French regiments. A young Breton soldier who did not speak French had been summarily executed by the French military who had taken him for a German spy. Nearly all of them had been made to feel inferior and held up to ridicule because of their imperfect French. Such experiences led them to believe that, in order to survive, it was imperative to know French. In order to spare their children the indignities to which they had been subjected, they would bring them up in French. In this, they acted very much like recent immigrants to the US who, having suffered from their lack of English, resolved that their children would speak only English. The Bretons who survived World War I thus became unwitting accomplices of the cultural genocide which had been the goal of the French state.

In spite of this, the Breton language remained the language of the Breton peasantry. Since I spent a large part of my childhood on my grandparents' farm, where only Breton was heard, I absorbed the language by osmosis, so to speak, although I never received any formal instruction in the language. It goes without saying that no opportunities were provided for the purpose. The use of Breton was strictly forbidden in school. It was indeed only in my late teens that I was able to purchase

a Breton grammar (Roparz Hémon's: I still have it), as well as some short Breton texts, mostly folk songs.

The decline of the Breton language was precipitated, in the twenties and the thirties, by the economical disasters which fell upon the social group by whom Breton was still spoken, the Breton peasantry. The ensuing depression led to forced emigration. Many went to the large industrial centers of France; some decided to try their luck in Canada or in the United States. This is what my parents did. For a number of reasons, including World War II, I was not reunited with them until 1947, when I was separated from the French Armed Forces in which I had served first as a member of the Résistance, under the Nazi occupation of France, and later as a young infantry officer.

Why did I stay in the United States? I imagine it was to be with the family from which I had been deprived for so many years. I suppose that if I had gone back to France, I would have had the same kind of academic career which I have had in America. I can't believe that my interest in the history, language, and the culture of the Breton people would have been any stronger. In the early fifties, I was already contributing to Breton journals and writing poems and short stories in the Breton language, although I did not become a Breton writer in the true sense of the word until the seventies. This is why it was inevitable that I join the American branch of the US ICDBL as soon as it was created.

Reun ar C'halan (René Galand)

*It is also worth reproducing here part of Reun ar C'halan's introduction to himself from the Wellesley College website since this gives a good introduction to his academic and literary achievements:*

... In 1947, I entered Yale as a graduate student. In 1952, having completed my doctoral thesis, I joined the Wellesley College faculty. In 1993, I retired with the rank of Professor of French emeritus. At Wellesley, I mainly taught courses in XIXth and XXth French century literature and in literary translation. My publications include five books and numerous articles on Chateaubriand, Renan, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Saint-John Perse, Proust, Camus, Robbe-Grillet and other French authors. I have also published articles on Poe, Melville, T.S. Eliot, Lovecraft, Kerouac, and the Spanish poet Jorge Guillén who taught at Wellesley in the forties and fifties. These articles have appeared in *PMLA*, the *French Review*, the *Romantic Review*, *Symposium*, the *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, the *Revue de Littérature comparée*, and other journals and collections of literary essays. For my contribution to the study of French literature, I was made a *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques*.

A native of Western Brittany where the Breton language is spoken, I have devoted much time to the history, the languages, the literatures and the cultures of the Celtic nations. I have presented papers at meetings of the *Harvard Celtic Colloquium* and of *CSNA (Celtic Studies Association of North America)* and given lectures on Breton literature notably at Harvard and the New York French Institute. My publications in this field include three volumes of poems, two volumes of memoirs, one volume of novellas and short stories, uncollected poems and short stories, and numerous articles which have appeared in the *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, in *World Literature Today*, in the Breton literary journal *Al Liamm*, and in volumes of essays on Celtic subjects. Some of my writings have appeared in translation in French, English, German, Welsh, Dutch and Polish publications. My first volume of poems [*Levr ar Blanedenn*] was awarded the Prix Xavier de Langlais in Breton literature (1981). In 2003, I also received the Imram Prize for my life-time contribution to Breton literature.

*The list of publications is much too long to include here, but a visit to the Wikipedia site for René Galand will give you a very full list as well as more biographical detail.*

## Reun ar C'halan and the U.S. ICDBL

Before the days of e-mails, I saved hand-written and typed copies of letters I received from a number of correspondents in the U.S. and in Brittany and I often saved carbon copies of the letters I sent in return. In preparing this article on Reun ar C'halan I read through some 500 pages of correspondence with Reun during the 1980s to the mid-1990s. These show how important he was in the early development of the U.S. ICDBL and its newsletter, and the key role he played in supporting my role in this.

My first letter of March 13, 1980, was to "Mr. Galand," to follow up on a letter sent to him by Henri Lecuyer in which I was mentioned. This was a rather apologetic note about my being unworthy of being asked to set up a U.S. Branch of the ICDBL. Here's what I said: "I have been giving a great deal of thought to just what such a committee should be doing and haven't come up with too many great ideas. The U.S. is certainly different from Europe, and Canada for that matter, where other branches of the International organization are active. ... being located in a part of the country [Indiana at that time] where most people (especially outside the university) have never even heard of Brittany let alone Diwan, it seems to me that the only activity that might in any way contribute to supporting Breton would be in the line of simply informing people of its existence and problems in its existence. I am not sure what Bretons want from Americans as a contribution to the cause of encouraging the existence and development of Breton.

Simply understanding the problems of bilingualism in France (and even more basically, in the U.S.) has to be a first step ...”

I was hoping that Reun ar C’halan would enthusiastically embrace the role of leading the U.S. ICDBL. But, as a university professor, he had less time than I as a doctoral student struggling to write my dissertation on Breton music, language and identity. And, as he rightly pointed out, it was symbolically important to have non-Bretons in the leadership role of the U.S. ICDBL. But Reun was always encouraging as our correspondence continued and he was extremely helpful in identifying a network of people who might be recruited as members.

By May 1980 I had three pages of ideas as to what a U.S. Branch of the ICDBL might do to support the Breton language and build a membership. By August I was working on the details of creating a non-profit organization. By October a “membership drive” was launched and work was under way to establish a board of directors. Reun agreed to serve as one.

Throughout the 1980s we exchanged letters and ideas about the directions the U.S. ICDBL was going (and were soon addressing each other on a first-name basis in our letters). what was happening in Brittany, where my PhD was taking me (not into the university world!), and writing projects in which Reun was engaged. His counsel on the directions to take in organizing the U.S. ICDBL were always helpful and supportive. He generously assisted with translations into Breton and French of notes/flyers about the ICDBL and letters to French government officials. And he shared a wealth of knowledge on Breton language literature through a series of two page Breton language essays for the U.S. ICDBL newsletter (see the list below) as well as reviews and short notes on new Breton language books.

Reun always seemed to find typographical errors in the newsletter that slipped past my proof-reading and dutifully let me know of them in his letters. His suggestions to improve the newsletter were always on target. For a number of years he urged us to adopt a short Breton title for the newsletter which finally happened in 1984 when *Bro Nevez* (new country) was adopted.

Often Reun’s letters started with a note about how busy he was (“hectic” being the favored description), and indeed he was always engaged in writing and reading. He seemed to read every book and journal that had ever been published in the Breton language. Our letters got shorter and less frequent in the early 1990s. In May 1993 Reun wrote that he had been diagnosed with cancer and apologetically told me that we would be out of commission for a while. I last heard from him in December 1994 – still battling to improve his health and

planning for more writing projects as he retired from teaching.

The following are the essays Reun contributed to the U.S. ICDBL newsletter. These one to two page essays were not translated into English, but followed with a short summary in English.

- “E Koun eus Anjela Duval” Newsletter No. 3, May 1982
- “Korn ar Brezhoneg: krennlavarioù Breizh” No. 6, February 1983
- “Sant Ronan” No. 9, May 1983
- “Reading a Breton Text” No. 10, February 1984
- “Kontadennoù Breizh Izel” No. 11, May 1984
- “Ur Gavaden a bouez: Dornskridoù Meven Mordiern e Skol-Veur Harvard” No. 12, August 1984
- “An Istor e gwerzioù-pobl Breizh” No. 13, November 1984
- “Korn ar Brezhoneg: Klemmigan Breizh” No. 14, February 1985
- “Ur c’henlabourer nevez: Lan Tangi” No. 15, May 1985
- “Ar menozioù broadel e c’hoariva Tangi Malmanche” No. 16, August 1985
- “Kantvet deiz-ha-bloaz Emgann Kergidu” No. 17, November 1985
- “An Emsav e romantoù Roparz Hemon” No. 18, February 1986
- “Ur skrivagner Gwenedek: Roperh er Mason (1900-1952)” No. 21, November 1986
- “E koun Maodez Glanndour” No. 22, February 1987
- “An Early Breton text: Buhez Mab-den” No. 24-25, August-November 1987
- “Orin un dro-lavar: Katell Gollet” No. 26, February 1988
- “Anoioù-lec’h e Breizh” [Anvioù-lec’h] No. 27, May-August 1988
- “An anvioù-lec’h e Brezhoneg” No. 28, November 1988
- “An Troioù-lavar hag ijin ar yezh” No. 29, February 1989
- “Droug-hirnez ar soudarded hag ar vartoloded divroet” No. 30, May 1989
- “Ar Sorserezh e Breizh” No. 32, November 1989
- “Yezh Yann-Ber Kalloc’h” No. 33, February 1990
- “Feiz e Breizh” No. 35, August 1990
- “Ur sellboent all war Dispac’h 1789” No. 36, November 1990
- “An Divinadennoù ha kelennadurezh ar vugale” No. 38, May 1991
- “An oberenn lennegel hag an Emsav” No. 40, November 1991

Reun’s last contribution to the U.S. ICDBL newsletter was “The Poetry of Anjela Duval” – a review of Lenora Timm’s book *A Modern Breton Political Poet: Anjela Duval. A Biography and an Anthology* (1990) in *Bro Nevez* 43, August 1992

And it is fitting to reproduce here the first contribution – in memory of Anjela Duval who passed away in November 1981.

## E Koun eus Anjela Duval, Reun ar C'halan

For the Newsletter of the U.S. ICDBL, No. 3 (May 1982)

N'em eus ket bet darempredoù gant Anjela Duval, ha koulskoude e kav din e oan kar-tost dezhi. Keloù he marv (Doue d'he fardono!) a oa un taol mantrus evidon, evel ma vije bet hini va mamm-gozh. Pa oan paotr bihan war ar maez, ouzhpenn daou ugent vloaz zo, siwazh!, em eus tremenet ul lodenn vras eus va amzer gant va zud-kozh, labourerien-douar anezho, war vord ar Ster Aon, e parrez ar C'hastell Nevez, ha kavout a rae din e oa Anjela un tammig evel ma mamm-gozh, ur vaouez jentil ha treuzus ken e oa. N'em boa ket kredet skrivañ dezhi. Gouzout a ouien e oa beuzet gant al lizhiri a veze kaset dezhi eus pep lec'h pa oa deut he anv da vezañ brudet dre Vro-C'hall a-bezh goude un abadenn-skinwel gant André Voisin, met gant Anjela ha gant Bretoned evelti e oa va soñj pa'm boa savet ar barzhoneg "Huñvre," bet embannet er gelaouenn *Barr Heol*.

Kavout a rae din e oa o buhez evel un "iliz ankounac'het," ur "santual savet e-kreiz ar maezioù/A rummad da rummad, a-hed ar c'hantvedoù." Embannet e oa bet "Huñvre" gant "Deiz ha bloaz," ur barzhoneg all savet ganin en enor d'ar brogarour yaouank Yann-Kel Kernalegenn. Anjela a oa bet fromet o lenn ar skridoù-se, war a glevis. Fromet e oan o lenn he barzhonegoù, se zo sur. Enno e oa daskoret din bro va bugaleaj, al loened, ar gwez, ar bleunioù, ar c'hleunioù ne oant ket bet diskaret didreuz, ha dreist-holl kan hon douar genidik, hor yezh.

Anjela a oa chomet dizimez, ha koulskoude n'eo ket an amourouzien he doa bet diouer anezho. Karout a rae un den yaouank, me ret e voe dezhi dibab etre karantez an den yaouank ha karantez he bro. An den yaouank a voe lezet da vont. Kriz e oa an dibab:

E korn va c'halon 'zo ur gleizenn  
'Baoe va yaouankiz he dougan  
Rak, siwazh, an hini a garan  
Ne gare ket pezh a garen.  
Eñ ne gare nemet ar c'hêrioù,  
Ar morioù don, ar broioù pell,  
Ha ne garen 'met ar maezioù,  
Maezioù ken kaer va Breizh-Izel.  
("Karantez-vro")

Krisoc'h e oa ar pezh a c'hoarvezas gant he bro a-hed ar bloavezhioù: ar maezioù « o tistreiñ da fraost ha da repu d'al loened gouez, » ar savadurioù « o tremen e daouarn an estren evit un dornad paper, » ar « mammoù yaouank o komz yezh ar mac'her d'o bugaligoù, » ar gozhidi « e marvdiez ar c'hêrioù o ouelañ d'o foan gollet » (« Dismantroù Breizh »). Gant Anjela ne vo ket bet kollet he foan tra ma vo kavet e Breizh tud yaouank prest da stourm evel m'he deus graet evit ar Yezh have evit ar Vro.

## English Summary : In Memory of Anjela Duval

I did not know her personally, but I had the feeling she was very close to me, since she was so much like the Breton peasants among whom I spent my childhood. I had them in mind when I wrote the poem "Dream": I saw their lives as "a forgotten church," as "a sanctuary built among the fields / From generation to generation, through the ages." Her poems gave me back the land of my childhood, the animals, the trees, the flowers, the hedges which had not yet been razed so senselessly, and above all the song of my native land, our language.

Her love for Brittany was stronger than any human love, as she confessed in this poem:

In a corner of my heart there is a wound  
I carry it since my young days  
For, alas! The one I loved  
Did not love what I loved.  
He cared only for the cities,  
The deep seas, the faraway lands.  
And I only loved the fields  
The beautiful fields of Brittany.

Hard as it was to forsake this love, she found it still harder to witness the fate meted to her beloved land, fields returned to the wilderness, farmhouses passing into strangers' hands for a handful of paper, and the old people mourning their wasted lives in the death houses of the big cities. Anjela's life will not have been wasted as long as there are young Bretons ready to fight as she did for their language and for their land.

## A Few Notable Bretons of the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century – Part 3

From: Jean-Loup Avril, *Mille Bretons – Dictionnaire Biographique*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Portes du Large. 2013

As I did for the last two issues of Bro Nevez, I am continuing here to include short biographical notes about Bretons who have contributed to the Breton language and culture. The five included here were all Breton language writers born in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century or at the turn of the century. These are my translations and I take all responsibility for any misinterpretations that might be found. – Lois Kuter

### Roperz er Mason (Robert Le Masson)

Breton language writer. Born in Lorient, April 7, 1900. Deceased in Hourtin, February 19, 1952. Robert Eduouard Le Masson (in Breton Roperz Edouarz er Mason) was the son of an officer in the colonial troupes. He did his secondary studies in the Lorient high school,

and then was a student at the École Polytechnique, after which he entered the National Navy. He was on board the Dunkerque when the second world war broke out. Appointed captain of the warship in 1940, he became conscious of the importance of the Breton language at that time after having read the poems of Jean-Pierre Calloc'h (Bleimor). At the urging of his friend Loeiz Herrieu, the great Vannetais writer, he started writing poetry, theater pieces and various articles for Breton language publications. He also published a lovely romance novel, *Evit ket ha netra*, placed in his native town of Lorient which had been in large part destroyed by bombings in the war. He died suddenly in the military hospital of Villeneuve-d'Ornon, near Hourin in the Gironde region, just as he was to be named an admiral.

### Tanguy Malmanche

Writer. Born in Saint-Omer (Pas-de-Calais) September 7, 1875; deceased in Clichy, March 20, 1953. Of a Breton family, he divided his childhood between Brest and the Manor du Rest in Plabennec where his grandmother lived. It was there that he learned the Breton language. After law studies in Rennes and literature in Paris, he was employed in the railroad and then as an insurance agent, but he established himself definitively in Courbevoie in 1912 as a master blacksmith.

Malmanche is known for his theater pieces and stories. For most of his drama pieces he wrote a Breton and a French version which were not the exact translation of each other. Among his numerous works we cite: *Marvailh an ene moanek*, *Le conte de l'âme qui avait faim*, a dramatic piece where together on scene were the wind, the Ankou [death] and the Anaon (souls of dead people); *Les Païens*, a piece about the wreckage pillagers of Kerlouan; *Buhez Salaün lesavet ar foll*, *La vie de Salaün qu'ils nommerent le fou*; *Kou le Corbeau*; *La Tour de plomb*. In 1903 Malmanche created *Spered ar Vro*, a literature magazine that had just four editions.

#### References:

Yves-Marie Radel, "Tanguy Malmanche," *Les Cahiers de l'Iroise*, 1954, p. 20-24.

Fañch Morvannou, "Tanguy Malmanche," In Jean Balcou & Yves Le Gallo, *Histoire Littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne*, Champion-Slatkine, 1987.

Mikaela Kerdragon, *Tanguy Malmanche, témoin du fantastique breton*. Paris CIT, 1975.

### Jarl Priel, pseudonym of Charles Joseph Tremel

Writer. Born April 23, 1885, in Plouguviel (Côtes d'Armor) where his parents ran a café-tabac; deceased in Marseille, August 19, 1965. After brilliant secondary studies at the Petit Seminaire of Tréguier, he was not able to pursue further studies due to a lack of resources

and enlisted in the National Navy. Since he played the trombone, he was assigned to the fleet's musical team and made numerous voyages in that role. In 1911 he left for Russia as a professor of French and stayed there until the war mobilization in 1914. In 1916 he was assigned to a Russian unit as an interpreter which he followed all the way to Algeria. In 1921 he was sent to Poland as an interpreter for the French intelligence services. At that period he started to write under the pen name Jarl Priel (Priel is the Breton name of Plouguviel). He sent Charles Dullin a theater piece "Les risques de la virtue" which was performed without great success in 1923. Upon returning to France in 1928, he resigned from his position as translator for the Ministry of War to become Dulin's secretary. He knew Louis Jouvet, Georges Pitoeff and Jean-Louis Barrault. At this time he published stories, theater pieces and novels, among which we cite: *Les trois-mâts errant* (1921) which would be adapted in Breton in 1959 with the title *An teir gwern Pembroke*. Returned to Plouguviel just before the war [WWII] he mounted a theater troupe which performed plays to support prisoners. In 1942 for the occasion of the Bleu Brug festival in Tréguier he wrote a play in Breton for the local Celtic Circle. That was the beginning of a new literary career in Breton which is rich with some fifteen comic and tragic theater pieces, often inspired by the Trégor, but also by collections of memories. In film he interpreted the role of Salaun-le-fou in the *Mystère de Folgoët* (1953) by the Caoussin brothers. In 1963 in declining health, he joined his daughter in Marseille.

#### Reference:

Special issue of Skol Vreizh, No., 44, March 1976.

### Jakez Riou

Breton writer. Born May 1, 1899, in Lothey (Finistère); deceased, January 14, 1937, in Châteaubriant. Like his friend Youenn Drezen, he studied in a Picpucien Seminary in the Spanish Basque country, but renounced the priesthood. After his military service, he was successively a teacher in Moëlan, superintendent of the middle school of Sainte Geneviève of Versailles, and professor in the middle school of Saint Louis of Brest. A journalist with the *Courrier du Finistère* and *Ouest Journal*, he used only the Breton language for his literary activity. He left us works including short stories, theater pieces, and poems which made him one of the greatest writers of his century. *Geotenn ar werc'hes* (*L'Herbe de la Vierge*), a collection of eleven short stories written initially for the journal *Gwalarn*, is considered his masterpiece. He has also given us *Nominoe-oe* (*ce fut Nominoë*); *An ti satanezet* (*La Maison endiablée*); *Serr Noz* (*Crépuscule*). Jakez Riou died of tuberculosis and lies in the cemetery of Ploaré.

Reference:

Fañch Morvannou, "La littérature de langue bretonne au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle," In Jean Balcou & Yves Le Gallo, *Histoire Littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne*, Champion-Slatkine, 1987.

## Youenn Drezen, Breton name for Yves Le Drezen

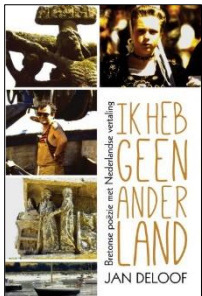
Breton language writer. Born in Pont L'Abbé (Finistère) September 14, 1899; deceased in Lorient, February 15, 1972. From 1911 to 1917 he was a student at the Petit Séminaire de Frères de Picpus in Spain. No longer feeling a religious vocation, he returned to do his military service in Rennes. He was then a journalist for the *Courrier du Finistère*, then for *Ouest-Journal*, like his friend Jakez Riou.

Starting in 1925 Youenn Drezen contributed to Roparz Hemon's review *Gwalarn*. We are obliged to him for numerous poems and short stories in Breton as well as the translation from the Greek into Breton of "Prometheus Unchained" and Eschyle's *The Persians*. *Itron Varia Garmez* (1941), his greatest novel, is a painting of the life of Pont l'Abbé. This novel was also published in French under the name *Notre-Dame Bigouden*. We also have from him an autobiographical novel *Skol Louarn Veig Trebern* (1958), the story of a little boy who plays hooky from school.

During 1939-1945 he directed the journal *Arvor* and worked with Radio-Rennes Bretagne. For his cultural action he was imprisoned with the Liberation. Even though acquitted, he was not able to follow his trade as a journalist and bought a café in Nantes. He ended his days in Lorient where he had a small job with the newspaper *La Liberté du Morbihan*.

Reference:

Michel Leroy. Youenn Drezen, écrivain breton 1899-1972," *Cap-Caval*, 1986. Pp. 15-25.



## A Book Note

### Jan DeLoof. Ik heb geen ander land – Bretonse poëzie met Nederlandse vertaling.

While finding translations of Breton language poetry and literature into English can take some searching, readers in the Netherlands have

been fortunate to have a number of fine works by Jan DeLoof who is an ICDBL representative for that country. Recently, he published this anthology of Breton poetry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the original Breton text of the poems and his Dutch translation of them. It is a retrospective of 50 years of translation work and offers

about 150 poems by 37 poets including Roparz Hemon, Per-Jakez Helias, Maodez Glanndour, Ronan Huon, Anjela Duval, Naig Rozmor, Tugdual Kalvez, to mention only a few of them.



## Deep inside a Breton skull 53 – Brittany is a bouquet of memes

Jean Pierre LE MAT

During the XIX and XX<sup>th</sup> centuries, the idea of nation was strongly connected to genetics. Nationalisms were aiming towards ethnic purity. But this purity can be deadly. Nazism, discriminations and genocides left in the world's history a bloody trace. Is our love of Brittany inevitably spoiled by this doctrinal charge? Have we to bear that cursed inheritance?

The link between genetics and nation comes from the link between biology and nation. It is difficult to get rid of biology. A nation is a community of living beings. Brittany cannot be cut off from nature, or from geography, or from history. Brittany is not an abstraction or a utopia. It would no longer be a human community. Moral utopias are artificial paradises, and human nature soon changes them into hell.

Biologists work on the "extended phenotype", i.e. the expression of the genetic code, not only by physical but also behavioral characteristics: migration of the swallow, gregarious attitude of the hen, aggressiveness of coral fish, sexual or food behavior. It can also be the expression of the genetic code of the other living beings I am associated with. My behavior expresses my wife's genes of gentleness, my dog's genes of foolishness, not speaking of genetics of the microbes I host.

Well, biologists are strange people. They observe a lot, they conclude sometimes and they explain rarely.

During the nineteenth century, one of them, Charles Darwin gave a kind of global explanation about survival and evolution of animal communities. His explanation is an algorithm without numbers: reproduction+mutation+selection.

And what is the link between Brittany and Darwin, Jean-Pierre?

To explain the sustainability of human cultures, the genetic design has obvious limitations. What about chastity among Catholic priests, self-denial among soldiers or suicide bombing? These cultural traits reproduced successfully, sometimes over a very long period. A British biologist, Richard Dawkins, conjectured the existence of another replicator than the gene, also following the Darwinian scheme. Dawkins named this other replicator the "meme".

The gene is the genetic coding unit. The meme is the cultural coding unit. The gene is transmitted sexually, among humans and most animals. The meme spread from brain to brain. It can also be dropped in a book, a video, a computer memory. It can reproduce itself through imitation, learning, conversation, living example, internet. It can change through mutations and variations. The environment exerts a selective pressure.

For the moment, there is no proof of the meme material existence. But don't forget that the gene was discovered long after the discovery of the laws of genetics and their use in agriculture.

The software of animal species is a pool of genes. Thus, in the cells of wolves, are associated the genes that code the digestive system and those that code the instincts of predation. Memes are associated in the same way in living communities. This is true not only for human communities, but also for advanced animal communities. Behaviors can be learned and transmitted. So is the place of residence of the jackdaws, the washing of food by communities of monkeys, or the knowledge of poisons in rat communities.

The link between memes and human communities has been explored by Anglo-Saxon authors such as Susan Blackmore ("The Meme Machine") or Howard Bloom ("The Lucifer Principle"). The sense of belonging, creative thinking, languages, cultural habits are evolutionary systems of the Darwinian type. They are based on reproduction, variation and permanent selection.

The hypothesis of the meme is popular among geeks. Eminent biologists, psychologists and sociologists have examined these replicators. They also examined their mode of reproduction and dissemination. What about the Bretons?

To give a future to our Breton language, which belongs to our pool of memes, the isolationist, natalist or genocidal strategies linked with genetic nationalism do not work. Success or failure in transmission can be evaluated by the Game Theory. The results of Axelrod on the effects of cooperation are particularly interesting.

While the idea of a Breton "genetic heritage" has always been questionable, a common memory, stored both in

the brains of the Bretons, in their "know-how" and in the world's computer servers, would define Brittany more than anything else. Brittany, its language and its culture, is a shared wealth, accessible to whomever wants to get it.

Brittany is a bouquet of memes.

... Deep inside my Breton skull, there are genes and there are memes.

About my genes, there is no problem. When I was young, my parents told me that they are Bretons, their parents too, their forerunners as well, probably. And so, I can quietly identify myself as a Breton, even if I must have more prehistoric men than Breton princes in my family tree.

I love science and I asked recently for a genomic research at the company "23andme". And 23andme found that I could be considered as a western European. My DNA is 92,8% northwestern European; 60,5% British or Irish, 10,4% French or German. There is no Breton DNA known. Nevertheless, this result is interesting.

Well, I consider that my parents were more accurate than genomic analysis to tell me who I have come from.

And my memes, deep inside my skull? There is no American company selling memetic analysis for the moment, but surely it will come one day.

I am prouder of my memetic inheritance than of my genetic stock. I must confess that, during all my life, I did nothing to improve my genetic wealth. I transmitted it to my children without changing anything.

A part of my memetic wealth comes from my parents. But they were very proud when I followed studies they knew nothing about. Then, I got memes that are foreign to them. I learnt also Breton dances they didn't know, and chapters of our history. What will be transmitted? I don't know. That is frustrating. It is not the ancestor, but the heir who choose what part of the heritage will be saved.

That is why Brittany is an original but uncertain collective adventure.



## Heard of, but not heard – A few new CDs from Brittany

Information for the following notes were gleaned from Ar Men 219 (juillet-Août 2017), Musique Bretonne 252 (juillet-août-septembre 2017) and the Coop Breiz website



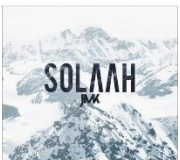
**Breizh eo ma bro.** Sony Music France.

Compilations are always a good way to get introduced to a variety of singers and musicians of different styles. But rather than pull selections from previously released CDs this collection is unique in presenting a series of new interpretations of mostly known compositions and traditional songs by 19 Breton artists: Alan Stivell, Cécile Corbel, Laurent Voulzy, Boulevard des airs, Le Bagad de Lann-Bihoué, Raphaël, Soldat Louis, Renaud Detressan, Gwennyn, Tri Yann, Renan Luce, Clarisse Lavanant, Dan Ar Braz, Rozenn Talc, Gilles Servat, Louis Capart, Didier Barbelivien, Miossec and Jane Birkin. Each presentation is preceded by a text read by sailor Olivier de Kersauzon.



**Dour-Le Pottier Quartet. Treusioù ar pewar Avel.** Alkemia Productions ALK 03.

Jonathan Le Dour and Floraine Le Pottier are at the core of this quartet in duo on fiddle. They are joined by Mathilde Chevrel on the cello and Antonin Volson on percussion. Guest artists for this CD are: Indo-Breton singer Parveen Khan and her brother, tabla player Ilyas Khan, French singer from "Poitou" Christian Pacher (band Ciac Boum), Breton singers Youenn Lange and Fanch Oger, and German singer Stefanie Theobald. The CD includes song for dancing as well as ballads. Webiste (in Breton, French or English: <http://dourlepottier4tet.bzh/>)



**JMK. Solaah.** Nevez Productions. JMK is a trio with Tristan Jézékel on clarinet, Baptiste Moalic on accordion and electronic sampling and Thomas Kerbrat on drums. They perform Breton dances but with a sound and use of

electronics that gives them a unique swing and makes them a favorite to younger generations of dancers.



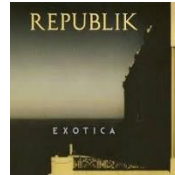
**Kazut de Tyr, Jorjuna.** Hirustic. This is the second CD by this trio composed of trumpet player Gaby Kerdoncuff, accordion player Jean Le Floc'h, and percussionist Yves-Marie Berthou. They explore the modal music

of Breton tradition and the Middle East, and for this CD Kurdistan is part of the route with a sort of "kan ha dskan" by singer Kani Kamar with Breton singer Eric Menneteau. To add more spice and color to well known Breton songs and dance tunes you have the qânûn of Maëlle Vallet and saz by Lionel Manguen.



**Morwenn Le Normand & Ronan Pinc, Vañjet 'vo Mari-Louis! (La revanche de Mari-Louise).**

Singer Morwenn Le Normand pairs with fiddle and cello player Ronan Pinc for a CD of compositions and song from the Vannetais traditional of Lorient. As the title might suggest (Mari-Louise gets her revenge) there is a theme of women's liberation to this CD.



**Republik. Exotica**

This is the second CD by this group centered on singer and guitarist Frank Darcel. He is joined by Stéphane Kerihuel on guitar, Robin Poligné on keyboard and guest artists for this album include singer Dominic Sonic and trumpet player Eric Le Lann. This is a "concept album" evoking stories of residents of a utopian town where money is not at the root of human relations.

## What is a Celtic Circle?

In several places in this newsletter there has been reference made to "Celtic Circles" and the organizations Kendalc'h and War'l Leur. So a brief presentation is merited. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Bretons concerned that their culture and traditions needed to be better presented formed groups which would present dances and costume at festivals, but it was not until after the first World War that groups really began to be organized in different towns and cities of Brittany.

In September 1930 the Fédération des cercles celtiques / Kevredigez ar C'helziou Keltiek, was founded to coordinate work with circles in several cities and in 1932 they would join with the Gorsedd of Bards of Brittany for a congress. At this it was agreed that the national day for Brittany would be May 19, the Fête de Saint Yves. But the congress also discussed needs to promote the Breton language, voting rights for women, and a refusal to celebrate the anniversary of the attachment of Brittany to France (while accepting that Brittany was part of the French community and rejecting separatism).

During the German Occupation of France in World War II there had been some concessions for teaching the Breton language and giving it a media presence. But with collaboration by a small number of Breton nationalists during the war who sought independence for Brittany, pretty much any Breton action in favor of the Breton language and culture was suspect for Nazi collaboration at the Liberation and would be used to discredit the work of Breton activists. \*

The Celtic Circles would reemerge with a narrow focus on dance in the late 1940s and 1950s, yet their role in

promoting pride in Breton heritage would be important and activities would expand well beyond “folklore.”

Today “Nazi collaboration” is still dragged out in attempts to discredit Bretons \*



Kendalc'h ([www.kendalc'h.com](http://www.kendalc'h.com)) was founded in 1950 in Quimper to serve as a federation for groups promoting Breton popular culture. While the focus was on traditional dance, Celtic Circle participants also learned song, language, costume and sport. The Circles were rooted in particular communities where its members would become engaged in research of local history and traditions, incorporating this into the performance of dance and presentation of costumes. Celtic Circles presented music and dance as well as costume at festivals, concerts and performances, and contests for the Circles. While the dance is based on traditional styles and techniques, it is choreographed and can be highly innovative and theatrical in performance.

Kendalc'h is divided into seven federations with 156 member groups – Circles, but also dance workshops, choral groups and cultural centers. This involves some 15,000 individuals. Seven technical commissions support dance and training, contest organization, workshops, the engagement of children and teens, festival participation, costumes, and communications/resource development. The bulk of work is done by volunteers with a very small paid staff to coordinate things.



War'l Leur ([www.warleur.org](http://www.warleur.org)) was formed in 1965, splintering off from Kendalc'h along with the federation of bagads, Bodadeg ar Sonerion. The work of the War'l Leur Circles is very similar to those of Kendalc'h. War'l Leur is composed today of six federations and some 10,000 individual members with a focus on dance and costume and activities

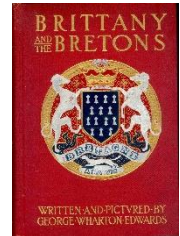
such as workshops, exhibits, and study days on dance, song, music, costume, and embroidery. Like Kendalc'h, the Circles are found in all five Breton departments as well as in Breton communities outside of Brittany. War'l Leur also has various commissions to organize work, including the *visionnage*, a rigorous ongoing evaluation of the quality of the work of each Circle.

The appearance of Celtic Circles at festivals and in parades is definitely a draw for tourists – and who could not appreciate the beauty of the costumes? And the performance of traditional dances in new and innovative

choreography definitely makes the Circles something all Bretons can take pride in. Their important role in stimulating pride in Breton identity and in engaging young people in dance and all aspects of Breton culture cannot be overestimated.

## A Travel Account from Brittany from 1910

**George Wharton Edwards,**  
***Brittany and the Bretons.*** New  
York: Moffet Yard & Co., 1910



George Wharton Edwards was an American born in Connecticut in 1859 (deceased in 1950) and was an award winning artist as well as a writer. We continue with a series of excerpts from this book, this time to Saint-Brieuc, Saint Nicholas-des-Eaux and Guingamp – just to the west of the last stop in Lamballe / Moncontour featured in the last issue of Bro Nevez. The spelling of the author has been maintained, and at times names can be spelled inconsistently.

### **Saint-Brieuc, Saint Nicholas-des-Eaux, Guingamp** (pages 65-78)

Saint-Brieuc, capital of the Department of Cotes-du-nord [today Côtes d'Armor], is situated on the Gouet to which a long descent leads, and where will be found the tidal port. The city is a Bishopric and an important center, containing a cathedral of heavy and somewhat disappointing exterior and a large number of quaint and interesting old houses and towers. The only remains of the thirteenth and fifteenth century church will be found, I am informed, in the wall of the apse to the transepts, which has been pierced to accommodate the chapels. The antiquary will find much here to interest him, but the ordinary tourist, in search of entertainment, will find the town rather dull, and will hie him to the picturesque ravine of the Gouet, or to the Port Legue about one mile to the north, not far from which will be found the ruined tower “De cesson” built in 1395.

The town is celebrated in the annals of the Vendéen war, by the rescue of the Royalists in prison under sentence of death, by an incredibly courageous attack of the Chouans, and every foot of ground in the streets is of historic interest. James the Second of England is said to have taken up his abode in the house called “L'Hotel des ducs de Bourgogne” when he came to Saint Brieuc in 1689 to muster his troops.

According to history, Saint Brieuc, or Brioc, was the son of an Irishman and a Saxon woman, and was brought up by the Armorican Saint Germain, nephew of Saint Patrick, who afterwards became Apostle of the Isle of Man. Brioc was driven from Wales with a large number

of the Irish, and set sail with them to the mouth of the Gueb, where he found shelter with a relative Rigual who had already settled in Brittany, and who gave him the land upon which Saint-Brieuc now stands.

In the Rue Saint Jacques, a street in which almost every house possesses some interesting history, will be found one particularly remarkable. On each side of the richly ornamented doorway is now a tawdry shop or drinking place. The house is a timbered one with projecting upper floors, and the beams are richly sculptured and ornamented with carved vines of great beauty of detail, and the most grotesque figures of warriors, clowns, kings and queens and grotesque masks, all more or less mutilated. At the side of the entrance is a fragment of a figure crowned, an unfortunate king, of which nothing remains but the head. On the opposite side is the effigy of Saint George in armor of the fifteenth century, with upraised hand from which the lance or sword is missing.

This house, if one may believe tradition, belonged to the infamous Guy Eder de la Fontenelle, whose terrible cruelties gave him renown throughout Brittany, and gained for him the title of the Brigand de Cornouaille. Another remarkable house will be found in the rue Fardel, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century, showing two richly ornamented panels of carved wood, between heavy sculptured walls, and on the roofs, stone lions of considerable artistic value. Here, it is said, dwelt for some time unlucky James the Second of England, after his flight.

The Cathedral is low and flat in appearance like a fortress, which indeed it was for a time, for the right tower still shows a machicolated range and loopholes for bowmen, which are now blocked but still visible.

Historians deem it singular that a town so important as Saint Brieuc must have been, from its position and number of inhabitants, was never fortified or walled, as was the case with many other towns throughout Brittany of much less note and size.

Hearing the sound of chanting from the half open small door beyond the grating, as we were examining the tower, I cautiously opened it and we entered the semi-darkness of the vestibule. When our eyes became accustomed to the gloom, we found the interior not without a certain dignity, and between the Romanesque pillars, the altar and stained glass, it seemed at first very fine; but examination proved the glass to be modern and poor, and the mural decorations somewhat mediocre. The chanting we heard came from the choir, and there behind the grill we peeped at some twenty priests, seated in the stalls with open books before them, and three of their number, arrayed somewhat differently as to vestments, were accompanying the voices of the singing priests with large brass instruments like horns and trombones. I had never seen such a sight before, in a

church abroad, and I judged that we had happened upon a rehearsal for some important celebration, for the leader seemed at times out of patience with the others, and made them go over again and again the tune of the mass, or whatever it was. One of the priests, a very stout, red-faced man in a resplendent lace garment, who was nearest the pillar behind which I was ensconced, shirked his task most delightfully, made a great show of singing and moving his head from side to side keeping time, but never making a sound with his lips. At times he took a huge pinch of snuff, which he placed upon the back of his left hand, and, striking it with his right just under his nose, inhaled it with great satisfaction, a mode I had never before seen or heard of. They never knew that we were watching them, and we gained the street without making our presence known, and, as we left Saint Brieuc within the hour, whatever the ceremony was to be, we heard nothing more of it.

From Saint Brieuc to Saint Nicholas des Eaux is some fifty odd miles by train, but the route is not very uninteresting, and as the company will furnish one on demand with an excellent lunch of cold roast chicken, bread, butter, salt and pepper, and a fair bottle of wine, the trip is endurable. The route is by the way of Pontivy, and crosses a section of country of great interest. The inhabitants are of pure Celtic origin, and the language they speak is akin to that spoken in Wales. They often pride themselves, particularly the elders, upon their ignorance of the French tongue, refusing at times, particularly in the interior as I have said before, to answer when so addressed.

Upwards to a million of these people retain their language and picturesque costume, and can be seen to great advantage on fête days and the "Pardons," or church festivals, which are held here during the summer months, a list of which, with dates, will be found elsewhere. Superstitions and legends of incredible character abound, and there are added attractions in the many druidical monuments in the district, particularly those at Carnac and Loc Mariaquer, which I shall describe in another chapter.

Saint Nicholas des Eaux is a picturesque little place on the river Blavet, and from here one may take many trips of great interest and profit. The river makes a great loop around a neck of land which it is said was occupied by a walled town named Sulim or Sola; remains of the ancient walls and pavements of which have been found. One can ascend the height of the chapel of La Trinité by a rather hard scramble, and the labor is well worth while. Saint Gildas, coming here from Rhuys in the year 530, founded a colony of monks in what is now the hamlet of Castannec. He discovered that the people were given over to idolatrous practices, and that they worshiped a gross image of Venus. One night, the story goes, he, in company with his disciples Budic or Bieuzy, rolled it quietly over to their monastery and concealed it in the

walls they were building. Thus the image remained in concealment even after the Northmen arrived and destroyed the monastery. It was not until long years after that the workmen employed in removing the old Priory came upon the image. It was at once venerated by the peasants of the district, who styled it in the Breton "Groak en Goard, the Woman of la Couarde," and set it up over a large fountain cut out of granite, and here the women came to bathe at night, invoking the aid of the Venus of Courade, and practicing certain incantations and phallic ceremonies which became the scandal of the clergy, who besought Count Claude of Lannion to destroy the idol. He publicly rolled it down the hillside into the river, and forbade the peasants to touch it afterwards upon pain of imprisonment, but to no purpose, for the fanatical Bretons rescued it from the river and once more set it up at the fountain. The Bishop of Vannes appealed to, and, at his earnest solicitations, the Count sent troops to upset and smash it to pieces, but they, in secret sympathy with the peasants, only broke off one arm and one of the breasts and once more threw it into the river in a deep spot.

In the following year, Pierre de Lannion, who succeeded his father as ruler of the province, in order to propitiate the inhabitants, rescued the Venus from the river and conveyed it to the Baud where he had built the chateau of Quinipilli, where it now stands. Scandalized by the anatomy of the figure, the priests induced the Count to employ a mason to cut and remodel the statue, so that it now presents a widely different appearance to that it had in olden times. Even now the peasants, particularly the betrothed, will visit the fountain secretly by night, and, in the darkness, perform certain rites and ceremonies which are unexplainable in print. The figure, which is of granite, seems about seven feet high, and on a band about the forehead may be described the letter I.I.T., the meaning of which is unknown. Whatever it is, it is certainly not a Venus, and some antiquarians think it was brought hither by the Roman soldiery, who occupied the walled city of Sulim.

After inspecting the statue during which we were covertly watched by some children, who lay in the grass under the trees which are covered with mistletoe, here called "*la herbe de la croix*," and which it is believed, has lost none of the powers ascribed to it in Pagan times, I got one of the children to show us the way to the Chapel of Saint Trinité and the Hermitage of Saint Gildas. This holy man, it seems, retired at intervals to a sort of cave under one of the rocks by the river, especially during Lent, and this was the origin of the chapel. It consists of two parts in a very quaint spot under the rock to which the bell is attached. There are two altars inside divided by an arch. In one of the chapels there is a sort of pedestal on which is a slab of diorite stone, and my means of a pebble, this stone, called by the peasants "the bell stone of St. Gildas" is struck and gives forth a ringing sound. The custode informs us that the stone-bell is rung at mass on

the day of the Pardon (Whitsun Monday). There is also here, beside the principal altar, a curious Bread stone, so called, used by the officiating priest at the Pardon for the distribution of the "*pain benit*" (Blessed bread) among the pilgrims.

At the village of Bieuzy, a short distance away, which should on no account be slighted, there is a church of the Renaissance order with ancient choir and nave (some say sixteenth century) with three magnificent, stained glass windows, showing scenes connected with the passion of our Saviour, which are worth a day's journey to see. The windows and doors are all flamboyant Gothic. The sculpture of the leaves and branches here, on a blind doorway, is worthy of reproduction in a museum. Architects will be interested in the character of the well heads, and cylinders for the chains above them, which are scattered through the town. The Holy Well, so styled, is not far from the village, and shows a figure of a saint. It is said that the water from this well, if used prayerfully and with entire faith, will restore their minds to the insane.

The Chapel of Saint Nicholas des Eaux, which is in a very tumbledown condition, is a cross-shaped structure of heavy stone, dated 1524, and possesses a notable double door ornamented with most beautifully carved leaves and vines. It has, however, suffered great mutilation.

The Church of Saint Nicodeme is pointed out, by authorities, as the most beautiful existing structure of the kind in all Morbihan. I was most interested, however, in the fountains dedicated to Saint Gaenaliel, who appears with an ox beside him attended by a biniou or piper, and to St. Nicodemus and Abibo, who are accompanied by a human-headed ox, or bull, and a horseman.

The chapel has a curious minstrel gallery of stone, and there are a couple of sculptured oxen on the chancel wall in honor of their patron Saint Cornély.

The great pardon held here, on the second Sunday in August, is one of the most famous throughout Brittany, and, at the fair, the girls come to sell their hair, which is bought by merchants from Paris, and brings sometimes large sums of money. Often, however, the girls are swindled by unscrupulous dealers with imitation jewelry and cheap finery, although as a rule the Breton girl is very shrewd, and well able to hold her own. The young girls who have sold their hair wear caps of black cloth, and not the snowy coifs usually worn, and the scene at the fair is one that should not be missed by the traveler.

On the Sunday following the fair is the celebration of the pardon, which takes the whole day, during which the peasants fast and pray and carry evil smelling candles, of not very clean looking wax, in their hands, and stick them on curious spiked hooks in the crowded church

when they manage to get in. In the evening the figure of an angel is let down on a wire from the gallery of the church spire, and by means of a torch saturated with petroleum, which the priest lights before the figure is launched, sets fire to a huge pile of inflammable brushwood and fireworks, lighting up the fields all about, and the watching faces of the devout peasants who then, with great shouts, take their departure for their distant homes in the dim forests beyond.

In order to continue our journey, we returned to Saint Briec by train, and thence continued along the northwestern shore, for in this way we followed the pardons from town to town.

Guingamp boasts of a most notable pilgrimage, or pardon, that of the *Bon Secours* on the Saturday before the first Sunday in July, and it is inaugurated by a torch light procession in the evening and strange rites only half seen in the dark. It would be well for the traveler to hire a window, as we did, some place along the route, from which much can be seen in comfort and safety, for the peasant, be it said, has not much patience with the stranger or unbeliever during these days of his sacred devotions, and is likely to take offense often when no offense is meant or offered.

There are long lines of pilgrims advancing from the shadows along the roadway, their faces showing pale and their eyes flashing. The sight resembles nothing one has seen before, and a hollow rumble is heard of voices praying in unison, and a vast shuffling of feet, audible long before they come into view. Then it is seen that each peasant holds a sort of wreath in one hand, and a burning candle in the other. The Bretons wear their hair long – down on their shoulders – and often their faces are almost hidden by the long black locks. They wear no beards. They seem to take their cue in praying or chanting from one of their number, whose voice rings out sonorously above the noise of the shuffling feet. So they pass, and one can hardly repress a shudder when the last of them disappear from sight around a bend in the road. For long afterwards, during the night, the glare shines in the windows from the market place about the fountain and one heard the monotonous, hoarse, voices chanting the "*Madame Maria Bon Secours*." Daylight is certainly the best time, or at least the safest, in which to study the pardon, for then the Breton is less fierce towards the stranger.

From the garden of the Hotel de France, one obtains the best view of the town, charmingly situated on the banks of the little river Trieux. There is a little, old stone mill on the river bank, which quite lingers in one's memory.

The market place is of extreme picturesqueness, with quaint, old, over-hanging houses faced and tiled with gray slates, and there are many fine trees, and a curious and rather ornate fountain cast in lead, said to be the

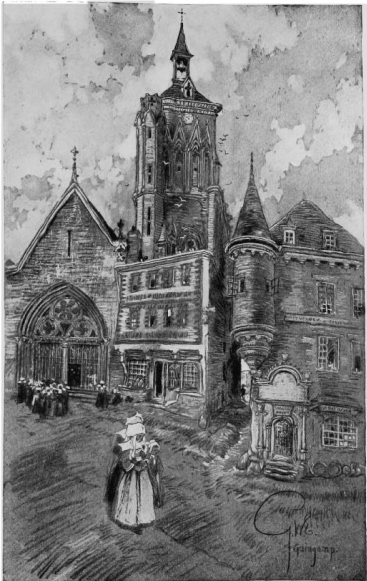
work of a sculptor name Carlay, and dated 1743. Several of the towers of the chateau are shown with great pride, and the walls are overhung with vines and verdure. Until I showed my sketchbook, the people were inclined to be almost uncivil, but thereafter they vied with one another in their politeness to us, and I was somewhat mystified until I found that Madame at the hotel had informed the gendarme that "Monsieur was an artist, and both he and Madame were Americans, *not English*, and that Monsieur had a painting in the *salon* in Paris." This shows the interest of the people in art, even in such an out-of-way spot as the little town of Guingamp.

Following a superstition, the snails found here-abouts are much sought during a certain period of the year by the peasantry, who believe that if they wear them in festoons beneath their clothing, they will be protected from contagious diseases. I endeavored to obtain some idea as to how long the festoons were to be worn, but my questions, addressed to a dear old dame who was knitting before the door in the morning sunlight, only brought a suspicious gleam into her shrewd old eyes, and, after regarding me for an instant, she would only shake her head at me and ejaculate "*Mais, Monsieur, va faire du blague!*"

The Church of Notre Dame de Bon Secours is an imposing edifice, with a most singular mixture of the ogival and Renaissance styles. The lateral façade, with the houses which accompany it, form a most picturesque whole on the Rue de Guingamp, where a large porch, or really a separate chapel, generally occupied by many kneeling peasant women, opens directly on the street. A high iron grill, of ancient design, closes the large "ogive" door or opening. This chapel, in which during the whole day the peasants are coming and going before a statue of the Virgin "du Halgoet de Bon Secours," is one of the most renowned in all Brittany. On the left of the porch of Notre Dame du Helgoet, is the heavy ancient tower surmounted by an iron "fleche." The interior is sufficiently remarkable and majestic to attract even those not interested in architectural problems or purity of style. There is a chill in the air, and the odor of burnt wax and wicks, and on the altar, in the midst of the emblazonment of gold and crimson and blue, shines one small red light like a star. In the center, on the immense columns supporting the central tower, are large heads, rudely sculptured, of grotesque knights, one of which is grimacing with protruding tongue, and there are some tombs, notably that of the Sieur Locmaria, the Seneschal of Charles of Blois. Peasants are kneeling all about near the walls, and there is a strange whispering noise of half muttered prayers, and the clink of coin dropping at intervals in the tin spout of the offering boxes near the door.

The principal ornament of the triangular square is the leaden fountain already mentioned, to which the

peasants, on the night of the pilgrimage and Grand Pardon, after their devotions in the Chapel of Notre Dame du Helgoet, repair, and, surrounding it, wash themselves in its splashing waters for all real or imaginary ills. Woe to him who questions its efficacy! From this square the streets descend to the lower town on the banks of the Trieux, where are found curious old houses and mossy vine-covered walls, and still busy mill wheels near which are long lines of white-capped, voluble, washerwomen, kneeling in boxes in the stream, noisily beating the soapy wet clothing with wooden paddles. The people must be clean here, for no matter upon what day one visits the river bank, save Sunday, one finds the women at work. The stranger is advised to keep away from these women, both here and in other towns of Brittany. They have sharp tongues, are ever ready to “scrap,” and, invariably, are victorious. I have heard tales of “*les Anglais*” who were taken in hand by these for fancied affronts, cast bodily into the river, and arrested by the gendarme and fined afterwards by the sympathizing “*Chef de Police*.”



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