

BRO NEVEZ

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



Sant Ronan at the Vallée des Saints

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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EDITOR'S ADDRESS & E-MAIL

Lois Kuter, Editor
Bro Nevez
605 Montgomery Road
Ambler, PA 19002 U.S.A.

215 886-6361
loiskuter@verizon.net

U.S. ICDBL website: www.icdbl.org

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Back issues of Bro Nevez can be found on the U.S. ICDBL website

Ideas expressed within this newsletter are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent ICDBL philosophy or policy.



On the Cover



The cover features the sculpture of Saint Ronan created in 2013 by Philippe Leost for the Vallée des Saints in Carnoët, Brittany. Initiated by Philippe Abjean in 2009, this project has as its aim the erection of 1,000 Breton saints.

So far, a little over 100 are standing. Think Easter Island – like those statues, the Breton saints (men and women) are very large, but they come in a variety of styles – very modern to more traditionally "Celtic." Check out the presentation on lavalleedessaints.com.

Understandably, completing this project is costly, and is supported both by individual donors as well as companies. The statue of Saint Ronan was supported by the clothing company Armor Lux – quite appropriate since Ronan is the patron saint of weavers.

See the travel account from 1930 (Amy Oakley's *Enchanted Brittany*) in this issue of *Bro Nevez* for a bit of information and lore about Saint Ronan and Locronan.

This photo is from the Trip Advisor France website (tripadvisor.fr) which advises the following link in using the photo:

https://www.tripadvisor.fr/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g2137452-d2715313-i208422957-La_Vallee_des_Saints-Carnoet_Cotes_d_Armor_Brittany.html#208422957>
Cette photo de La Vallée des Saints est fournie gracieusement par TripAdvisor

Bécassine Makes an Unwelcome Return



A new movie by Bruno Podalydès to open this June is provoking protest in Brittany and a wide call for boycotts. The first Bécassine appeared in a 1905 issue of the magazine *La*

Semaine de Suzette as a comic strip. This Breton servant girl in Paris delighted readers with her naivete, goof-ups, and cluelessness about the modern world of bourgeoisie Paris. Bécassine was made into a movie first in 1940 and this brought protests at that time by Bretons for the insulting caricature of Breton women.

For Bretons, Bécassine is not only an offensive stereotype of the backwards Breton *plouc* ("hick"), but evokes painful memories of a history of emigration to Paris at the end of the 19th century (to the 1950s) where many women were often employed as servants in wealthy homes – not usually a positive experience and certainly a difficult trip where family and home were left

behind. Unlike Bécassine of the movies who sees travel to Paris as a dream come true, emigrants saw it as an economic necessity and hardship.

The movie-maker for this new film claims that this is not the same character as in the past, but a kind, curious, and resourceful Bécassine who maintains a charming childlike innocence. Judging from a short preview clip, the movie certainly ridicules the bourgeois life style of the turn of the century period, but still shows Bécassine to be an uneducated, clumsy simpleton. Movie viewers will judge for themselves whether or not the Bécassine of this new movie is a loveable heroine or a reincarnation of the stereotypical Breton *plouc*, but one cannot ignore the fact that, for Bretons, this movie clearly revives a character assassination of the past.



Demonstration for Diwan and the Breton Language

On May 26 some 3,000 people took to the streets of Rennes to show support for the Diwan schools, celebrating 40 years of success in providing an option for immersion learning of/in the Breton language. While schools have

expanded over the years, obstacles remain which make growth very slow. Diwan is asking for four reforms:

- Include all new schools in the contract with the State (instead of imposing a long wait period before teachers' salaries are supported).
- Find a long-term solution to fund salaries for non-teaching staff.
- Ensure community support of schools in a financial contract.
- Open up more teaching posts for Breton language teachers.

During its 40 years Diwan has proven its openness (tuition free and welcoming to all) and its effectiveness in providing a high-quality education from preschool through high school. Despite efforts to gain such recognition, Diwan has yet to be recognized by the National Education of France as a public service. And, despite international conventions signed by France that support minority language speakers, the French Constitution is still used to justify exclusion of Diwan schools from financial support that would allow them to prosper fully.

Today Diwan has 46 primary schools, 6 middle schools and 1 high school.



Kelenomp – A New Association for Breton Language Teachers

This new organization was created in May with the goal of gathering all teachers of Breton, on all levels of learning and in all types of schooling, to work with local, regional and state partners to advance the number of Breton learners. The group will also work on determining how to open up more teaching posts, recruit bilingual personnel, and raise the level of quality in students' mastery of Breton. A *Ouest France* newspaper article (May 26, 2018) pointed out that just 3% of children in Brittany benefit from Breton language teaching (a growth of 1% from 2000), compared to 38.6% of children in the Basque region of France who can learn Basque (a growth of 17.5% since 2000). The very slow advance in learning opportunities for those who want to master Breton is cause for action on the part of teachers and we hope this organization will succeed in lighting some fires!



Ar Redadeg – A Relay "Race" for Breton

Every two years Bretons organize Ar Redadeg where the kilometers run (or walked) are sponsored to raise money for Breton language initiatives – nine this year (see below). During the course of 1,800 kilometers a baton with a message inside is passed from one runner to the next each kilometer. The course goes through 300 communities in all five Breton departments and kicked off in Kemper (Quimper) on May 4 to end on the 12th in Pougern (Plouguerneau) in the Bro Leon. Kilometers are underwritten by Breton companies and organizations, mayors' offices, schools, families and individuals. In 2016 over 120,000 euros were raised; numbers for 2018 are not yet available.

The Redadeg is not just a course where runners and sponsors show support for the Breton language. It is also a festive occasion where spectators and communities organize events along the route – concerts, mini-festivals, festoù-noz ... For each Redadeg an official song is chosen – e Brezhoneg evel just! The winner of the contest this year was "Betek an Trec'h" (Up to victory) by the group Penn Salsardin.

While Bretons celebrate this relay course in their own way, they are by no means unique in using such an event to support their language. The Basques have their Korrika, Galicians the Correlingua, Catalans the Correllengua, Welsh the Rhas, and Irish the Rith.

Projects supported this year:

C'hwi a gano / Tu chanterás

This is the creation of a web series by the association CPTMKK to promote cooperative work for a project in Breton, to create a fiction work for teens, and to open up an audiovisual world.

L'Égalité pour tous (gast.bzh/fr/qui-est-gast/)

This is the organization of workshops and self-defense training by Quimper Égalité/Gast to fight against the inequality between men and women, to link women's causes to the Breton language, and to promote minority causes.

An Hentoú Treuz

This project is to expand the teaching of Breton in new ways and to create resource materials that will highlight the different dialects of Breton, link learners to native speakers, encouraging an oral transmission and exchange of knowledge.

KANeveden (arree-randos.com)

This project is the creation of a multisensory performance engaging children in a fun way using Breton in music and arts. This will engage children with some or no Breton to learn together.

An Taol Lans (mignoned.bzh)

Mignoned ar Brezhoneg's project is to promote contemporary Breton language song and music by creating online media to record, listen to, and use Breton.

BEV – Le BrEton par la Vidéo (dao.bzh)

This project by DAO (Deskiñ d'An Oadourien) is to create online Breton language learning opportunities for all levels of adult learners. This would gather audiovisual resources and offer free online teaching options.

Radio Kerne à Nantes (radiokerne.bzh)

This project is to make radio programming by Radio Kerne accessible in Nantes and to ultimately create a studio and staff to create new Breton language programming focused on Nantes.

Kreizenn Sevenadurel Vrezhon

(kreizennsevenadurelvrezhon.wordpress.com)

This organization plans to create games and activities in the Breton language. Based in the Guingamp area, this would foster activities for children outside of school.

BEV.BZH (bev.bzh)

This is a project by Roued to create social media for Breton speakers to share activities, encourage families to use Breton at home, foster meeting opportunities for families, and create opportunities for learners to stay in Breton speaking households.



European Action in Support of Languages

In April 2017 an initiative called "Minority SafePack" was

launched by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) with the authorization of the European Commission to collect signatures in each of the 28 member states of the European Union in support of laws to protect minority peoples. As defined on the Minority SafePack website (minority-safepack.eu) this is "a package of law proposals for the safety of the national minorities, a set of EU legal acts that enable the promotion of minority rights, language rights, and the protection of their cultures. In short it sums up our main objectives: *safety* for minorities and *legislative package* for minorities."

In order to move the initiative forward, a minimum of one million signatures was required from at least seven member states at a specific quota for each within a year's period. This objective was met this past April with 1,215,879 signatures, with eleven states surpassing their quota: Croatia, Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Roumania, Slovenia and Slovakia. Once the results are verified by the different governments this will be sent to the European Commission in Brussels. From there it would go to the European Parliament for a vote and definition of the details (October 2018 as the goal for this).

While there is no guarantee that this will bring the desired results, its wide support is cause for hope that Europe can enact some legal backing to improve the situation of minority languages.

Through Skol Uhel ar Vro (Cultural Institute of Brittany) two Bretons worked with FUEN to work on this initiative: Pierre Levesque and Yves Lainé. It has been a long effort (since 2012) which hopefully will culminate in success.

While we have introduced the Federal Union of European Nations in past issues of Bro Nevez, a quick reintroduction is merited here. FUEN has some 90 member organizations from 33 European countries representing minority peoples. FUEN was founded in Paris in 1949 and has worked closely with the European community ever since to represent the interests of minorities and to protect their identity, languages, cultures and rights. Check out their website for the wide range of initiatives they have supported: fuen.org. Bretons have been an active part of this organization since its start.



Summer School for Breton Language Studies

This is the fourth year for a summer Breton language course conducted at the Pierre-Jakez-Helias pole (in Quimper) of the Université de Bretagne Occidentale (UBO) whose main campus is in Brest. Gary German created the summer session *Patrimoine culture et linguistique* recognizing that the need to have an advanced level of French for most Breton courses is an obstacle for many students from other parts of the world given the limited amount of English (or other) language resources. This summer the school runs from June 4 to the 16th, so you will need to wait for next year to apply.

Besides morning sessions to learn and practice the Breton language, the sessions include lectures about Breton history and culture and the opportunity to explore Quimper and some other sites – practicing Breton as one goes.

Here's a presentation from the UBO website (univ-brest.fr/summer-school-en/)

The University of Western Brittany is delighted to announce its fourth annual Summer School in Breton Language and Heritage Studies. Until 2015, scholars with an interest in the Celtic languages and cultures had little opportunity to study the Breton language, literature and culture. Yet, it is sometimes forgotten that, along with Welsh, Breton is the most widely spoken Celtic language with roughly 200,000 native speakers. Given that the language classes are taught through the medium of English, the course provides an excellent opportunity to study the only Celtic language to have survived on the continent of Europe.

Exceptionally, at the end of the Summer School, a workshop on Breton linguistics and the Celto-Slavica 9 Colloquium will be held between June 19 and June 23. Summer School participants are encouraged to enroll in both events.

Graduate, postgraduate students as well as university researchers and specialists with an interest in Celtic studies and the Breton language and culture in particular are warmly encouraged to apply. Motivated undergraduate students, non-academics with a foundation in Celtic language or linguistics are also welcome.

Since 2015, the course has attracted participants from over 12 nations. Their rich and varied background

contributed to expanding the horizons of all. No prior knowledge of Breton is required for the level 1 class. In 2016, we added a second level Breton class and, in 2017, a third level was created for more advanced learners (see Programme for more details). The language classes will be taught by Mr. Tanguy Sollicec (PhD researcher specializing in dialectometry, University of Western Brittany, CRBC) and Ms Myrzinn Boucher-Durand (MA, University of Western Brittany, CRBC / PhD researcher, Celtic Studies, Harvard University).

Harvard University to Welcome a Breton Class ... and Student

Myrzinn Boucher-Durand (named above as one of the teachers for the CRBC Summer School) has been accepted to the doctorate program in the Celtic Studies department at Harvard University where she will be teaching the Breton language.

Based on information from a June 8 *Ouest France* article, she has an undergraduate degree in Breton earned at universities in Rennes and Galway as well as a Masters degree in Breton/Celtic Studies and in Medieval Celtic languages (Early Irish, Middle Welsh, Early French, Irish, Welsh) from Brest, Rennes and Galway. She will pursue a doctorate degree studying the origins of the Breton language - particularly the Vannetais dialect. She will explore the hypothesis put forth by Léon Fleuriot in the 1980s that Vannetais is based in the Gaulish language while the other dialects have roots in Breton brought from the British Isles.

Trilingual in Breton, French and English, Myrzinn Boucher-Durand has translated a series of children's books on the history of Brittany by Yann Tatibouët into Breton.



Gouel Breizh 2018

Fetedelabretagne.bzh

The Festival of Brittany celebrated its 10th anniversary this year with some 330 events scheduled by 180 different organizers throughout Brittany from May 18 to 27. This involves some 700 associations and 10,000 volunteers. The dates include the day to celebrate the Patron Saint of Lawyers, Sant Erwan (Saint Yves) who is also recognized as Brittany's patron saint (as is Patrick for Ireland). Events span a wide range – music of all genres, festoù-noz, storytelling, workshops, Breton sports and games, crafts, theater .. and more.

This annual festival has spread to Breton communities world-wide. In France, Bretons in Paris, Le Havre Gard, and Champagne-Ardenne, among others, had a full slate

of activities planned. And Bretons in Slovakia, Scotland, Ireland, Vietnam, China, Singapore and Hong Kong have organized events annually on this occasion.



Gouel Breizh, American Style

In the U.S. Breizh Amerika has been part of Gouel Breizh for the past four years, taking

Breton music, dance and cuisine to fifteen different towns and cities: New York, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Cleveland, Rochester, Sante Fe, Albuquerque, and New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Arnaudville and Scott in Louisiana. This year the celebration was centered in San Francisco and San Diego, California, with a number of concerts by the Breizh Amerika Collective, an innovative collaboration of musicians from Brittany (Thomas Moisson, Julien Le Mentec, Gweltaz Rialland) with American musicians – this year, jazz bass player Joe Kyle Jr. The Collective also participated in an Interceltic fest, a ceili and fest-noz with Irish musicians joining in. Events also included a film night showing of “Belle-Île-en-Mer, île bretonne et acadienne” by Phil Corneau and “Copain comme Cajun” by Yann Rivallain. Also featured was a crêpe party and a conference on the history of Bretons in California. For more information, check out the website breizh-amerika.com.

Breizh Amerika Startup

This winter and spring Breizh Amerika opened its annual contest to Breton startup enterprises – four of which travel to New York City to complete an intensive training program to develop business contacts, learn about American marketing, and hopefully identify potential American investors for their projects. This is another great project to create opportunities for Americans and Bretons to learn about each other.

Losses for Brittany

Each year Skol Uhel Ar Vro (Cultural Institute of Brittany) inducts four new members into the Order of the Ermine in recognition of their lifelong commitment to support Brittany – in the promotion of language, culture, economy, sports, arts, literature and other areas. This year the ceremony will take place during the InterCeltic Festival of Lorient (more to come in the next issue of *Bro Nevez*).



Sadly, two of the four to be honored this year passed away unexpectedly this spring: Yann Talbot and Gwyn Griffiths.

Yann Talbot (1940-2018)

Yann Talbot was born in 1940 in Lannion where he did his elementary and secondary studies. After university studies in Rennes in history/geography, he taught for several years before entering seminary studies in 1968. He was ordained a priest in 1970 in Rostrenen before joining the cathedral in Tréguier in 2001. After retirement he continued to hold masses in the Breton language in St.Brieuc and Tréguier.

With priests Armañs ar C'halvez and Per Bourdellez he founded Breuriez Sant Erwan in 1962. Besides promoting the use of Breton in religious practice, Yann Talbot was a writer and contributed a number of articles in Breton to the journals *Al Liamm* and *Imbourc'h*. He also wrote poetry and short stories and translated works by Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, and William Faulkner (*Ur rozenn evit Emili*) into Breton.

Gwyn Griffiths (1941-2018)

Gwyn Griffiths was born in 1941 (but 1939 is also cited as his birth year) in Tregaron, Wales. Welsh was spoken in his home and he learned English when he went to school. He also spoke French and Breton. He earned a degree in journalism in Cardiff and served as editor for *Yr Aelwyd* in Aberystwyth and then *Y Cymro* in the 1960s. He was employed by BBC Cymru in 1969 until his retirement. He also worked with the Welsh youth organization Urdd Gobaith Cymru. He contributed numerous articles in Welsh, many translated then into English, to different journals and newspapers.

His travel to and love for Brittany spanned many years. He served as the Welsh representative for the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language for over 30 years. He was active with the association Cymru-Llydaw/Breizh-Kembre and wrote for its journal *Breizh Llydaw*.

Gwyn Griffiths should be a name familiar to readers of *Bro Nevez* since we have reviewed several of his books and just a year ago congratulated him for being awarded the 2017 Translation Prize at the Ostana Minority Languages Literary Festival (*Bro Nevez* 142, June 2017). A review of *The Old Red Tongue – An Anthology of Welsh Literature* (co-edited with Meic Stephens) was reviewed in *Bro Nevez* 141 (March 2017) and a review of *The Turn of the Ermine – An Anthology of Breton Literature* (with Jacqueline Gibson) was reviewed in *Bro Nevez* 98 (May 2006). U.S. ICDBL member Robert Roser contributed a review to *Bro Nevez* 77 (February 2001) of Griffiths's *Llydaw: Ei Llên a'i Llwybrau* (*Brittany: Her Lore and Her Pathways*), a Welsh language guide to Brittany

and its language and culture. Griffith's first book about Brittany was *Crwydro Llydaw* (Brittany Rover) published in Welsh in 1977. Among other writings linked to Brittany was the translation (with Rita Williams) of two theater pieces by Tangi Malmanche into Welsh – *Ar Baganiz / YDryllwyr* and *Arzhur / Y Weddw*.

Gwyn Griffith is perhaps best known in Brittany for his research and writing on the Breton onion sellers who travelled to Wales (where their Breton language was well understood) as well as to Scotland and England. He presented for himself his book *Goodbye, Johnny Onions*, for *Bro Nevez* 26 (February 1988) – a translation of an earlier book in Welsh. "Gwyn winwns" was honored by the onion growers and sellers of Roscoff in Brittany and he was made a member of the Confrérie de Oignon de Roscoff in 2013. Both his research and books as well as work to help establish Roscoff's onion museum were much appreciated.

He was a true friend of Brittany, much deserving of induction to the Order of the Ermine this year.

* According to the jacket cover biography for *The Turn of the Ermine* Gwyn Griffiths was born in 1941.

Claudine Mazéas (1926-2018)

Inducted into the Order of the Ermine in 2006, Claudine Mazéas passed away this January. Knowing a bit about her parents is important in understanding the path her life took. She was the daughter of Goulven Mazéas, a potato seed merchant in Guingamp. He was one of the founders of the Groupe Régionaliste Breton and its journal *Breiz A'tao* in 1919. A pacifist and federalist, he would become a member of the Parti Autonomiste Breton in 1927 and when this split in 1931 he joined the more moderate branch, the Ligue Fédéraliste de Bretagne. Goulven Mazéas married Denise Weill, of Alsatian Jewish origins and the household welcomed music and was the site for many gatherings including fellow Guingamp resident Polig Monjarret who was at that period collecting traditional music and working on the creation of Bodadeg ar Sonerion.

In 1943 Denise Weill, her mother and the two children Daniel and Claudine, were denounced as Jews and arrested and transferred to Drancy, the last stop for Jews before being sent to German concentration camps. Through work of her husband Goulven Mazéas and other Breton nationalists, the family was able to get liberated in 1944 just days before departure for German.

In the post war period Claudine would begin to engage in collection work to record traditional song. With access to a professional tape recorder and working with musicians Étienne Rivoallan and George Cadoudal who could assist with introductions to singers, she would record a number

of masters (made accessible in the Dastum archives). Claudine worked with a number of record companies active in this period when the fest noz was being revived, and cercles celtiques and bagadoù were exploding in number. She had a wide network of friends in the Breton music scene but was also interested in classical music, singing in a Renaissance choir. She is remembered as a generous mentor who fostered performances and the first LP recordings by young singers such as Anne Auffret, Erik Marchand, Yann Fañch Kemener and Denez Prigent.

Deep inside a Breton skull 56 – The triple core of Breton identity

By Jean Pierre Le Mat



What is French identity? Let's start by removing what the French themselves removed.

For a long time, the French language has no longer been the language of France alone. Many peoples can claim it as their property. Without being as global as English, the French language is not a specificity of France alone.

What about French culture? At the time of classicism and until romanticism of the XIXth century, things were well identified. Today, it is difficult to say how and why a masterpiece would be French. Only a few artists claim such an identity. Most want to be global, unclassifiable, unique, or members of a school without borders. The only cultural domains still claiming a French identity are gourmet dishes, luxury items and popular songs.

Nevertheless, the French identity exists. It evolved, weighing down over the centuries. There are needs for representation. Competition. Political affirmation on the European scene, then worldwide. Its nucleus is constituted by this affirmation "I am French", which cuts across the administrative affirmation "you are a French citizen".

Identity truth drowned in the official truth.

Words or periphrases cover everything with an appearance of moral values: "our good king Saint Louis", "Joan of Arc", "France is one and indivisible", "secularism", "citizen". The French references, Corneille, Robespierre, Victor Hugo or de Gaulle, were frozen by the school of the republic in hieratic poses. They were disinfected, beatified, lifted and re-lifted, cryogenised, pantheonized. To be French is to recognize oneself in mummies.

The Breton identity cannot be compared to this French identity, and will never be comparable. We built dolmens,

menhirs, cathedrals, calvaries. Never pyramids. And we do not have enough mummies for a museum.

Our identity is triple core.

The first core concerns Breton language and music. Our language is not a language of international communication, but a means of recognition. Breton music: same stuff. Passwords. Language, whether spoken or not, music, whether played or not, are related to the ear. Breton language and music create an identity based on listening, immediate communication, sharing sensations.

The second core of our identity is culture, or rather written culture, to differentiate it from language and music. Culture is not a privilege of the rich or scholars. Those who seek it can catch it. Whoever suspects its existence always finds it. It's something more. In our world of interbreeding and communication, it is not only the differences but also the "something more" that create identities. Written culture is related to sight. It allows perspective. Perspective sends us into the future. An identity settled only on listening does not allow that.

The third core irritates and worries our neighbors. It seems nevertheless inoffensive. It manifests itself in music festivals, political or sports events, on the internet forums. It is Breton flags, waved anonymously. Tiny reproductions, that the baker is planting on his cakes. On the forums, when the question arises to know what Brittany is, or to be Breton, or why I love Brittany, the answers fuse. Beauty of the landscapes. Nice people. My native country, the crepe with sugar, the few words of Breton that flourished on the lips of my grandmother... Behind the apparent banality of these answers there is a paradoxical vacuum. Vacuum because it is undefined. Paradoxical because it creates intense heat.

This third core is worrying, indeed. This is undoubtedly where lies our incomprehensible permanence, our proverbial stubbornness. Why did the Breton identity survive? Of course, we put forward our language, our music and our written culture. But we feel confusedly that these reasons are not enough. There is something else.

Brittany appeared at the end of the Roman Empire. Europe was redrawn under the chaos of invasions. The mysterious force that presided over the birth of Brittany is still here, or, perhaps, is here again. This barbarous core speaks little, reads little, writes little. It waves flags. It draws funny sentences on T-shirts. This core identity uses other senses than the first two ones. It touches, smells, tastes. There is also premonition, the famous sixth sense.

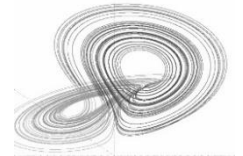


The ear-core and the eye-core are close to each other. They agree on the symbol of the BZH sticker. The third core has found its own symbol, the small hilarious bigouden of *A l'aise Breizh*.

As long as Europe is under construction, the first two nuclei will justify the Breton will, thanks to men of reason and culture. But other scenarios can no longer be neglected.

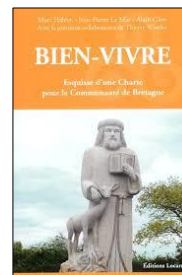
Money is now less available for collective action. The State engine is coughing. If the machine of France has failures, new leaders will rise for Brittany. They will be less knowledgeable, but more charismatic than the good people who guide us today.

In the case of a prolonged crisis, these new leaders will be able to make the third core of the Breton identity what mathematicians call nicely, in the theory of chaos, a *strange attractor*.



New Books from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter



Marc Halévy, Jean-Pierre Le Mat, Alain Glon. *Bien-Vivre – Esquisse d'une Charte pour la Communauté de Bretagne*. Editions Locarn. 2017. 123 pages. ISBN 978-2-9559677-1-3.

The co-authors begin this book with a survey (noted as being unscientific) to see how people perceive the "Breton soul." The responses include many of the stereotypes one has seen about Brittany and Bretons as mystical Celtic people with granite in their souls, rooted in land and the maritime environment, open yet conservative, independent ... and all the things tourists seek to find. The authors also explore directions a Breton future could take. It could build on the sea, the development of sustainable energy and maritime resources. And it should preserve identity and a unique culture while not shutting off the rest of the world.

The authors propose a charter to guide Bretons in building a community. This is a moral rather than legal document to direct people in serving their community – the community of Brittany. There is a focus on solidarity and work on a human local level where financial gain is not the focus. There would be autonomy to take

responsibility for one's own decisions rather than automatically bowing to the demands of France. The charter proposes how to get to such aims – how to “live well” or “bien vivre.” What does living well mean? “The ‘live well’ focuses on the joy and accomplishment of every individual, conjointly and harmoniously on four dimensions – material, relational, intellectual and spiritual.”

At the center of this book – literally – is the proposed charter for the community of Brittany. This defines what makes up this “community,” how “membership” works, and how representative of “member communities” (individuals, groups, towns, organizations ...) participate in furthering projects to foster all areas of the community - economic, environmental, cultural, etc.

Whether people of Brittany buy into this charter remains to be seen, but the authors certainly make a convincing argument for serious consideration. In the third section of the book they look at history and contemporary events to examine Brittany's place in France and Europe (and the world). To truly understand the arguments put forward in this section it is necessary to be well versed in contemporary history and current events – something American news media does not foster! I admit to getting a bit lost in the discussion of economic matters, but the authors make it clear that France's highly centralized regulations and taxing system stifles Brittany's (and other areas of France's) ability to thrive economically.

American readers may not feel they have a role to play in the strategies outlined to take charge of Brittany's future, to “live well,” but this book should serve to spark some action on the part of Bretons who want to truly participate in building a thriving community of Brittany.



Yannik Bigouin. *Nous te faisons [autrement] Bretagne – Réflexions, Témoignage.* Yoran Embanner. 2017. 211 pages. ISBN 978-2-36785-002-3.

As the subtitle notes, this book presents the reflections and personal witness of the author Yannik Bigouin. While fully

aware of all the challenges facing Brittany – economic, political, environmental and cultural – here is one Breton ready to work for positive change. One might consider his vision for Brittany a bit utopic, but why shouldn't one strive for the best, working to change models that are not healthy and strengthen ones that are working well.

Like the authors of *Bien-Vivre* reviewed above, the vision here is of a world that is not dominated by the race to get rich. Here the economy would be based on solidarity and collective work, where small enterprises would create employment and support local communities rather than a model where massive companies damage the

environment. New energies to be developed would be ecologically friendly and sustainable. People would be rooted in and proud of their history and culture, allowing them to be respectful and open to all others. People would participate in the culture rather than consume it – music, dance, theater and literature would bring people together.

Bigouin eloquently presents the challenges of living in a France which has belittled and denigrated the “provinces” and done its best to stifle the unique language and cultures which have miraculously survived outside of Paris. From a negative identity of the early 20th century Bretons have slowly shed their sense of shame to embrace their languages and traditions. Having learned Breton with his grandparents, Bigouin is well aware of the wealth one has in knowing more than just French and he has worked to promote Breton in a number of ways through his life. This includes participation in the Breton language theater troupe Ar Vro Bagan and support of Breton in the schools (his children attend a Diwan school). As president of the organization Livre et Lecture en Bretagne which promotes not only publishing but the role of libraries and bookstores as meeting places, he has seen how important social opportunities are in learning and exchanging ideas.

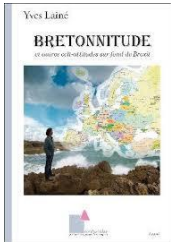
Born in 1970, Bigouin could not fail to be impacted by the explosion of Breton dance, song and festivals in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Rooted in the Pagan country of northwestern Brittany (and living in Plouguerneau where he has been associate mayor since 2014) Bigouin has also been marked by the wreck of the Amoco Cadiz oil tanker in 1978 just 20 kilometers from his home. His consciousness of the need to fight for the environment of Brittany was also shaped by the massive demonstrations in Plogoff in the late 1970s against the implantation of a nuclear power plant.

Bigouin draws from his personal experience of Brittany and the changes he has seen during his lifetime for this book of reflections and ideas for the future. The experience also includes service as a Regional Councilor of Brittany from 2010 to 2015 – and his experience in politics and understanding of the factions of political parties and elections might explain his faith in the power of grass-roots associations and organizations where cooperation to achieve a goal are most important.

But Bigouin's ideas about new economic and social models for Brittany are not based solely on his personal experience and opinions. He cites hundreds of books, articles and conference reports from which he has drawn ideas. And, he has looked around to see that there are towns and cities in Brittany and elsewhere experimenting and succeeding with new models to manage environmental risks and promote economic development. While this book is certainly one man's vision for a better

future, the ideas it puts forth should not be dismissed as unrealizable dreams.

Enhancing the text of this book are 22 photos by Bruno Ansker, an organic farmer of Ergué Gabéric, which capture Bretons in ordinary life at festivals, markets, political demonstrations, or simply enjoying the natural landscape of Brittany.



Yves Lainé. *Bretonnitude et autres celt-attitudes sur fond de Brexit.*

Ecrituriales. 2017. 181 pages. ISBN 978-2-929125-99-9.

The departure of the United Kingdom from the European Community – Brexit – provokes this book about the future of Europe. Does Brexit threaten the unity of Europe, or is this the opportunity to rebuild a better federation of European peoples where “regions” and not centralized states will forge a cooperative future? And do the Celts in particular have a positive role to play based on their strength of identity and values.

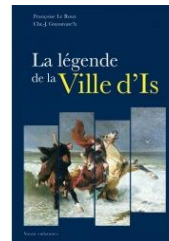
This book explores basic characteristics of European populations – Greco-Latin, German-Scandinavian, Slavic, and Celtic – to compare basic values and visions in the areas of governance, social relations, religions, law and rights, the home, family, relationship of men and women, nature, attachment to one’s land, arts and aesthetics, economy and money, and politics. This is all painted with a broad brush – sometimes seeming stereotypic – but the idea is to provoke thought and not to come to hard and fast definitions. There are as many question marks as there are periods at the end of sentences throughout the book.

In looking at the role of a European union, the relation of Brittany to France is compared to that of other Celtic countries and their relation to European unity and to the states in which they are embedded. Celts were not supporters of Brexit and Scotland and Wales have managed to obtain an autonomy that Brittany can only dream of. Comparisons of “regions” within Europe is interesting in showing how diversely countries like Spain, France, Germany, Italy and Great Britain define them and govern them.

I found the style of this book sometimes difficult to follow – requiring some “reading between the lines” that might be beyond an American’s knowledge of Europe. One sometimes had the sense that the author was setting down ideas as they jumped out at him, sometimes noting “I’ll get back to that later” (which he did). But the book is not just a jumble of idle musings. Lainé draws from a variety of sources for ideas and questions to be explored. And he draws on his own travels in Europe, including periods of residence in Paris, Germany and Belgium.

One may or may not conclude that Bretons and Celts have the self-confidence, values, creativity, and pride in identity that will be key in rebuilding a European unity, but this book does convince one that “Bretonnitude” and “Celt-attitudes” are very real (and positive) values.

Yves Lainé is uniquely positioned to probe this topic. Born in Nantes, he has been an outspoken proponent for the reunification of Brittany, helping to launch B5 in 1972. He served on CELIB (Comité d’Études et de Liaisons des Intérêts Bretons) which was very influential in strengthening the Breton economy and linking it to other social and cultural concerns in the 1950s to the early 70s. He worked in maritime affairs, serving as the director of the port of Saint-Nazaire and helping to launch Brittany Ferries where he worked for twelve years. He served as president of the Association des Écrivains Bretons and is active with Skol Uhel ar Vro (Cultural Institute of Brittany). For his lifetime of work for Brittany he was inducted into the Order of the Ermine in 2012.



Françoise Le Roux and Christian -J. Guyonvarc’h. *La légende de la Ville d’Is.* Yoran Embanner. 2017. 392 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-98-6.

The publishing company Yoran Embanner has republished (revised) works by two of Brittany’s Celtic scholars: Françoise Le Roux (1927-2004) and Christian -J. Guyonvarc’h (1926-2012). Le Roux was a co-founder of the Celtic studies journal *Ogam* with a specialization in the history of religions. Guyonvarc’h was a professor of Celtic studies at the Université de Rennes II and specialized in medieval Irish texts. Both had a solid knowledge of both ancient and contemporary Celtic languages (as well as Latin, Greek, German and French) which they felt critical to any scholarly research of early Celtic civilization. See *Bro Nevez* 137 (March 2016) for notes on their works *La civilisation celtique* and *Les fêtes celtiques* and *Bro Nevez* 140 (December 2016) for notes on *La société celtique* and *La souveraineté guerrière de l’Irlande – Mórrigan – Bodh – Macha*.

This book focuses on the legend of the City of Is (Ys) which is perhaps the best known tale of Brittany. Very briefly summarized, the city of Is is submerged under the Bay of Douarnenez due to misbehavior of Dahud, the daughter of King Grallon. Grallon flees before the rising sea waters and is saved by the intervention of Saint Gwenole (or Saint Corentin). Dahud becomes a resident of the sea. As the authors show, this is no simple fairy tale, but is rooted in early Celtic mythology. They provide a detailed analysis of all the transformations the tale and its characters have gone through.

In the first chapter they look at the theme of the woman from the Other World in Irish legend – the banshee –

through three medieval Irish legends: The Adventures of Conle, the Death of Muirchertach, and the Sickness of Cúchulainn. The authors look at the characteristics of the Other World woman in each of these tales, noting how Christian reinterpretations has impacted their depiction as well as that of Dahud, a Breton woman from the Other World.

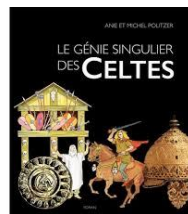
In the second chapter, texts from Ireland, Wales and Brittany are compared, showing how the women are linked to the theme of submersion of a city. Chapter three looks at the traces of the mythology in folklore – as collected by Anatole Le Braz, in the hagiography of the life of Saint Gwenôle, and in a folk theater piece about Gwenôle. The authors show how the telling of the submersion of Is becomes a tale of punishment for sins against the church. The focus is on the miraculous intervention of saints and Dahud as a woman from the Other World disappears.

Chapter four looks at literary interpretations of the City of Is. The authors decry how far this has taken this tale from the myth of the woman from the Other World, and how poor in quality the literary work of the past few centuries is compared to the earlier legend. They also lament a lack of true scholarly analysis of the legend of the City of Ys: “One can hope that folklore will not be mistaken for myth, that hagiography will not be mistaken for folklore, and that Celtomania will not take the place of authentic Celtic studies.”

In a final short chapter the authors come back to Dahud and various interpretations of who she is. They lament how the retelling of the tale of the City of Is has misunderstood her role as a woman from the Other World who is at home in the sea (water being the passage to the Other World). But they concede that even through literary and hagiographic deformation, Dahud has endured and is shared in a myth common to Ireland, Wales and Brittany.

In their analysis of themes, the authors summarize the texts consulted and provide some translations in French. But, half of this book is made up of Annexes with three texts in Breton with French translations, which allow anyone interested to do their own analysis. These are *Livan Geris / La submersion de la Ville d'Is* from Hersart de la Villemarqué's *Barzaz Breiz* (with commentary), *An Buhez Sant Gwenôle / Mystère de Saint-Guérolé* translated from Middle Breton in 1716 by Dom L Pelletier, and a popular theater piece *Buhez Sant Gwennole* published in 1898.

This is not a casual read, but certainly interesting in showing how ancient Celtic myth has been reworked in modern interpretations and an overlay of Christian moralizing.



Anie & Michel Politzer. *La génie singulier de Celtes – Une aventure humaine en Gaule au 1^{er} siècle avant J.C.* Yoran Embanner. 2017. 112 pages. ISBN 978-2-36747-013-9.

In its size and colorful format, this book seems destined to young people (teens or pre-teens), but for those overwhelmed by the scholarly details in studies of early Celtic civilization, this is a welcome “beginner’s guide” to the early Celtic world (set in the first century B.C.)

I found the maps of all the different Celtic peoples of continental Europe particularly helpful and interesting. But the bulk of the book takes you on a visit to learn about basic daily life – trades, village structure, the agricultural cycle, religion, and warfare in the face of Roman invasion. Some 50 short chapters introduce you to the people who foster arts, trades and economy in an easy to read (French) text that spans just two pages. Colorful illustrations taking up at least one-third of the pages directly support the text and give a bird-eye view of activity described.

The authors are scholars of Celtic history and archeology who understand well how to communicate an immense amount of information to a younger audience, and to an adult audience appreciative of a basic introduction. The book is not intended to say it all, but to spark an interest in further exploration.

Breton Recipes

Natalie Novik

These recipes come from Breton music specialist Simone Morand, who was collecting songs and dances in the villages of Brittany in the 1930s. As she recorded songs, she also gathered local recipes and published them. Some are very simple and rely on the tasty natural ingredients available in Brittany. Other are more complicated and, without the benefit of today’s gadgets, require a lot of work by hand and slow cooking, sometimes for hours. These translations are done keeping in mind that in today’s America, most people will prefer easier recipes, given in ounces and pounds, and without the use of ancient utensils that may no longer be available. Whenever possible, I indicated equivalents for products that cannot be readily found in the U.S.

[Editor’s Note: Please try these recipes and let us know how they work out! If you have a favorite Breton recipe that is well suited for American ingredients, we’d love to hear from you.]

1. Pork roast

Preparation: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 to 25 minutes per pound of roast

This recipe calls for an oven clay dish. If you don't have one, a stoneware dish might work as well.

Ingredients: 3 lbs. of pork roast, 3 pounds of apples (preferably Reinette, but if you can't find them, Pippin might work – slightly tart, and smallish apples), salt and butter (you can use President butter, it comes in both salted and unsalted versions and is made in Brittany – here you will use the salted version).

Warm the oven to 420 degrees. Place the roast in the oven dish, surround it with the apples. Salt only the meat, and spread a little butter over both roast and apples. When the pork is half-cooked, take it out of the oven, and mash the apples with a fork. Put it back in the oven, and the apples will flavor the meat, and the meat will flavor the apples as well. Check the temperature regularly, and when it is right for pork, serve in the cooking dish, right out of the oven.

2. Breton pound cake with almonds

Preparation: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 20 to 30 minutes

Ingredients:

1 cup of wheat flour, 1 cup of unsalted butter (left out of the fridge to soften it), ½ cup of sugar (or substitute), ¼ cup of finely chopped almonds, 2 egg yolks, 1 whole egg, a few pieces of vanilla or a spoonful of vanilla powder, ½ teaspoon of orange blossom extract (optional, but highly recommended for the flavor).

Warm up a large bowl, mix the butter in it till it turns into a cream. Continue to mix it, while adding the eggs and the orange blossom extract. On a pastry board, pour the flour and add the sugar, the almonds and the vanilla. Make a dip in the middle and place the butter in it. Mix the butter in with the flour mix, work on the dough till it is homogenous. Put it in a rectangular cake mold. Brush the top with a yolk. See that it is thoroughly cooked by poking it with a knife and checking that the blade comes out dry. The top can be covered with foil if the center takes longer to cook.



From: *Gastronomie bretonne d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*
Simone Morand, 1965

Heard of, but not heard - 19 new CDs from Brittany

Notes for the following were drawn from reviews in *Ar Men* 223 (mars-avril 2018) & 224 (mai-juin 2018) and *Musique Bretonne* 255 (avril/mai/juin 2018) as well as from the Coop Breizh website and websites "googled" for some of the performers noted below.



Sylvain Barou and Ronan Pellen. *The last days off fall.*

This CD features 12 selections with Sylvain Barou on flute, uilleann pipes and tin whistle, paired with Ronan Pellen on cittern. Veterans of the Irish music scene,

10 of the 12 selections are drawn from Ireland with two slow airs, a slow reel, slip jigs, slides, reels, and hornpipes. Yes, the title on the CD jacket really reads "the last days off fall."



Bretagne: *Les meilleurs chansons bretonnes.* Coop Breizh.

For those new to exploring Breton music, compilations can provide a great introduction to the diversity and quality of performers. This is a 3-CD set including a variety of singers (and instrumental performers) of traditional and contemporary song compositions in Breton and French (with a few in English). This is a great sample of well known singers and groups of Brittany.

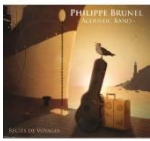


Léonie Brunel – *Chanteuse du pays de Ploërmel.* Grands Interprètes de Bretagne 8. Dastum and L'Épille.

This CD features one of the singers found on Dastum's 2016 CD focused on the Pays de Ploërmel who merits her own album. Léonie Brunel grew up with music as part of daily life – singing while watching cows, at work gatherings, marriages, and other village events. She would later participate actively in festivals and events such as the Bogue d'Or, Fêtes de chant de Bovel and the Assemblées du pei de Piérmé. During the past 30 years she has been active in performing songs – ballads and songs for dances – and has generously shared her knowledge with younger generations.

This CD includes 29 selections of songs recorded at a variety of events between 1984 and 2013. Included are songs for dances (ridée and guedillées) as well as ballads, marches and songs related to the celebration of Saint-Jean and Easter. As is always the case for a Dastum CD this CD comes with lots of information - a 72-page booklet with a biography, analysis of Léonie's style and repertoire, and song transcriptions and notes.

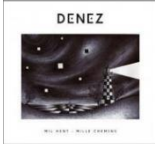




Philippe Brunel, Acoustic Band. *Récits de voyages*.

This CD features 12 compositions taking one to ports of call around the world, starting in Saint Nazaire and including

Barcelona, New York, Havana, Port-au-Prince, Dublin, Acapulco, among others.



Denez . *Mil hent, Mille chemins*.

This is the ninth album for Denez Prigent with 13 selections of Breton language song compositions (one in French) with a mix of acoustic and electronic instrumental

backing. Denez is a master of traditional Breton song, but has explored electronic sounds for a long time, and on this CD he also adds spoken texts and sounds of nature in his interpretation of song rooted in Breton tradition and theme. He collaborates on the album with Yann Tiersen, guitarist Jean-Charles Guichen, accordionist Fred Guichen, uilleann piper Ronan Le Bars, fiddler Jonathan Dour, harpist Maëlle Vallet and James Digger on electronics ... among others.



Fest-Noz: *Les meilleures musiques pour danser en fest-noz*. Coop Breizh.

This is a 3-CD set of performers recorded on the Coop Breizh label during the past few decades. A wide variety of styles and

traditional dances are represented performed by bagads, traditional singers of kan ha diskan, sonneurs de couple, and groups. This is a great compilation of the best of fest-noz performers.



Sylvain Giro. *Les Affranchies*.

Sylvain Giro is a traditional style singer who is a specialist of the Nantes region. But, here he sings eleven "letters"

composed to express a variety of emotions

and ideas on contemporary issues. He also plays fiddle and shruti box, and is accompanied by Erwan Martinier on cello and Julien Padovani on keyboards.



Fred Guichen. *Dor an enez*. Paker Production.

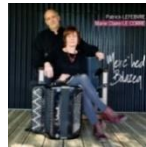
This CD features diatonic accordion master Fred Guichen with 14 selections of Breton inspiration with a few tunes taking one to

Ireland. A host of seasoned artists collaborate on the album: Donal Lunny, Jacques Pellen, Sylvain Barou, Sylvaine Guichen, Erwan Moal, Youenn Roue, Lionel Le Page, Pierre Muller, and Yann Pellilet, adding bouzouki, guitar, fiddle, flutes, bombarde, and bagpipes among other instruments.



Hellzeimer. *Not my wars*.

This is the first CD by the heavy metal rock band Hellzeimer which has been based in Nantes since 2009. The 9 titles on the CD were recorded "live" in their Nantes studio.



Marie-Claire Le Corre and Patrick Lefebvre. *Merc'hed Bolazeg*.

This is the first recording by this duo – Marie Claire Le Corre on vocals and Patrick Lefebvre on accordion – for

selections of dances and ballads drawn from the Monts d'Arrée. They are joined by Rozenn Derriennic on saxophone.



Ffran May and Joël Guena. *Cwm Teilo*.

Ffran May has been living in Brittany for some time but brings the heritage of her native Wales to this CD with 14 of her compositions in Welsh as well as Breton.

She is accompanied by pianist Joël Guena for traditional style airs which combine a Celtic, jazz, pop, and classical feel.



Jacky Molard Quartet. *Mycélium*.

Innacour 15417.

This CD features 7 dances and melodies inspired by Brittany but also other parts of the world that these musicians have

explored. The quartet is composed of fiddler Jacky Molard, sax player Yannick Jory, bass fiddle player Hélène Labarrière, and accordion player Janick Martin – all with considerable experience in a number of groundbreaking groups of Brittany. They are joined by guest artists François Corneloup (baritone sax), Jean-Michel Veillon (flute), Christopher Marquet (drums), Serge Teyssot-Gay (electric guitar) and Albert Marcoeur (vocals and percussion).



Nâtah Big Band. *Caméléon*.

This group started as a six-member fest noz band centered on the brothers Clément and Gabion Dallot. They have expanded from years of fest noz and festival performances

to a "big band" with sixteen members (still including the Dallots). Instruments include accordion, bombard, flute, electric and acoustic guitars, saxophones, trumpets, trombone, keyboard and percussion. This CD includes 11 selections of dances including plinn, tour, bourrée, rond de Saint-Vincent, kas a bar, hanter dro, rond de Loudéac ...



Duo Picard-Vincendeau. *Nevolen*.

This CD features Steven Vincendeau on hurdy-gurdy (vielle à roue) and Willy Picard on accordion. They provide a high energy interpretation of dances (waltz,

bourrée, rond de Loudéac, maraichine) as well as calmer melodies. 11 of the 12 selections are their own compositions for this first album. They are joined by Erik Marchand for the title song "Nevolen" and by François Robin on veuze for several other selections.



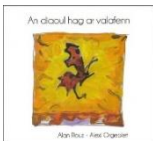
Maria Prat. Beilhadegou Treger – Les Veillées du Trégor.

The performance troupe Beilhadegou Treger began in 1959 and performed for nearly 30 years in the Trégor area of northern Brittany. Initiated by Roger Laouénan, Maria Prat would take on a leading role. From the Lannion area, she created Breton language theater sketches, songs, poems and stories for the group. The group performed over 350 evenings in small towns of the Trégor – supporting creativity and engagement in the Breton language. This CD includes 23 selections of stories, skits, poems and songs performed by Maria Prat, Tinaig Perches, Roger Laouénan, Jean Derrien and Amédée Prigent.



Red Cardell. Courir.

This is the 20th album for 25 years of performance. A well-loved rock band, they go back to a style of their first albums with a rock/folk/pop sound for 11 selections.



Alan Rouz and Alexi Orgeolet. An Diaoul hag ar Valafenn.

This CD features song with Hawaiian guitar in 9 selections (8 in Breton and 1 in French). Included are new compositions

as well as their own interpretations of well and lesser known traditional ballads and songs for Breton dance. Alexi Orgeolet has training in jazz and classical music of Northern India which he applies to the Hawaiian guitar. Alan Rouz is a well known traditional singer of kan ha diskana of central western Brittany.



Teir (Marthe Vassallo, Noluen Le Buhé, Annie Ebré). Paotred.

This is the second album by the *a cappello* voices of three of Brittany's masters of traditional Breton language song: Marthe

Vassallo, Noluen Le Buhé and Annie Ebré. They here include 14 selections (nearly 60 minutes) of ballads and songs for dance where each voice has its solo moments, but in a style not traditional to Breton song, they introduce polyphony.



White Elephant. Exile.

This CD is by a band from Nantes with an electric edge – described as trip-hop, rock, pop-rock. They include 7 selections evoking exilement. The band was founded in 2014

by Amine Gousta with musicians Steve Leveiller, Marylou Carnouet and Stéphane Rama.

An American Account of Brittany in the late 1920s

Enchanted Brittany, by Amy Oakley with illustrations by Thornton Oakley (New York, The Century Co.), 1930



The better known of this team of wife and husband who collaborated on a number of travel books is Thornton Oakley (1881-1953). He was a noted artist who studied with Howard Pyle, founder of the Brandywine School in Pennsylvania. Thornton Oakley taught at the Philadelphia Museum of Art's School of Industrial Art and during World War II he was commissioned by National Geographic to do 48 paintings of war plants and other industries. He married Amy Ewing (1881-1963) in 1910 and she provided the texts and he the illustrations for books which included *Enchanted Brittany* as well as *Hill Towns of the Pyrenees* (1923), *Cloud Lands of France* (1927) and *The Heart of Provence* (1936).

The following is Chapter XI – The Bay of Douarnenez

Zola in comparing the Bay of Douarnenez to the Bay of Naples has stolen the thunder of all who follow him. The thought springs spontaneously to being, especially if your first glimpse of the bay be from the beach of Morgat, whence, seen across blue waters, the cloud-capped Ménez-Hom does indeed suggest a smoke-crowned Vesuvius. Proud of having found the apt comparison, on putting it in words you are irritated by being told, "Yes, as Zola has well said."

On crossing the bay one is surprised to find that the inhabitants of the tiers of whitewashed houses rising so delectably above the shipping of the harbor of Douarnenez do in some respects resemble the Neapolitans. Here, as in Naples, an impasse has been reached between the ardent adherents of the Catholic Church and the Communistically inclined. Nowhere else in Brittany are faces ravished by poverty and drink more apparent. In their despair at ill luck many fishermen, finding life unendurable, have turned to rioting and talk of revolution. That all well-being – health, wealth, and happiness as opposed to starvation and disease, untold misery – should depend upon so fickle a creature as the sardine ... is this not enough to turn men, hungering for the good things in life, into scoffers?

Douarnenez, it must be known, is the chief sardine-fishing port of France, not even excepting Concarneau. Its docks are enlivened with red-clad fishermen, flaming

as the flags of Socialism. Boisterous are they with song and robust oaths. Seen against the intense blue of the waters, the subtler blue of the sardine-nets that dry from mastheads blowing in the breeze, the population of Douarnenez – men reckless and swaggering as pirates of old; women aging early, it is true, but one and all transfigured by captivating bonnets – intoxicates the artist. Like bees to honey, painters wing their way from far and near, unheeding Communistic strikes, unsavory odors at low tide, the all-penetrating smell of sun-dried fish. Has not the sardine brought Douarnenez (whether Douarneistes or no) are called *têtes de sardine*, for they are the workers in the sardine factories where, swifter than guillotines, their knives decapitate their palpitating victims.

The fishing fleet numbers almost a thousand boats. Remember that sails are ruddy in hue and that every craft carries blue nets. The delicate filets give an added grace to the boats of Douarnenez and Concarneau not to be found in lobster-fishing ports such as Camaret, for example, or the Ile de Sein. Dock walls as well as mastheads are festooned with nets; nets hang limply from second-story windows or flutter from poles beneath the dormers of the Rue Sainte-Hélène. The return of the fleet, often in early morning, is the event of the day. Women, commissioned by the sardine canneries, vie with one another in shouting bids for the catch as the boats near port. The gleaming fishes are poured into awaiting baskets. The sabots of the *sardinières* are heard on the cobbled ascent to the town as their laden owners trudge to packing-rooms. Do not, O fastidious housekeeper, be put off with Portuguese sardines but demand the choicer variety from the coast of Brittany.

While Monsieur busied himself unnoticed with sketch-books – artists are tolerated as harmless cranks, at Douarnenez – I caused more remark, owing to my apparent lack of occupation. I felt tempted to set up an easel and so to pass unobserved. The women felt sure that I wished to see the sardines split, dried, plunged in oil, or boiled in tins, though nothing was farther from my thoughts. The old salts sitting on the stanchions or on coils of rope surmised I was looking for a boat. One old codger in a dory caught my eye by a fancied resemblance to old Father Neptune rising from the sea; exchange for trident the oar which he held upright and the picture would have been complete. So insistent was he that I was to go with him to the Isle of Tristan that I yielded ... putting myself completely in the power of this fiercely bearded Poseidon and trusting that he had complete command of his element.

“For fifty years,” said he, gruffly, running bronzed fingers through bushy locks, “I’ve cheated Ankou, so you needn’t fear to step into my boat.”

As I seated myself at the bow he took a minute béret from his pocket. Worn over his shaggy hair it resembled a

coronet. Installed at the stern, he began to waggle a solitary oar after the manner of Breton fishermen, who maintain that it is sheer madness not to see where you are going.

“Hauling nets is for the young,” said he. “I had my share of it, fifty seasons come New Year’s. I leave it to my sons and their boys; there are enough of ‘em.”

Asked whether his were a rewarding calling, he gave me a searching look with eyes still penetrating enough to discover a distant sail.

“It’s a hard life,” said he, “the life of the seafaring man. First I served my time in the navy. Many’s the year that’s gone since I first crossed the line and got my ducking; old Neptune’s no easy master and yet I’d change him for no other. If you mean money ... on a good year we’d clear around four thousand francs for the three months of the season. The sardines come north about June and sometimes linger in these parts till December. But there’s more than the sardine to reckon with ... and they’re fickle as hussies ... there’s the porpoises, the dirty beasts, plow clean through your nets and ruin ‘em.”

“And the storms?” I suggested.

“Oh yes,” the old fellow admitted, “we get our share. If there’s a God, it must make him sick to hear some men pray when they think their last hour’s come. There’s nothing they couldn’t promise then.”

“And you,” I said, “do you pray?”

“I’m a Mason,” he responded. “Ask the Catholics what that is,” drawing his beard to a Mephistophelian point, “and they’ll tell you it’s the devil’s own child.”

“In my country,” I said, “being a Mason implies belief in a Creator.”

“Pshaw!” said he, “not so with us of the Grand Orient de France.”

I remembered the words of an elderly Breton priest who had said: “On this point we share the opinion of our enemies – namely, that the struggle between Catholicism and Freemasonry is a struggle to death, without truce or mercy.”

Launched on the sea of controversy, we had come in reality, almost unawares, to our desired goal, the island of Tristan.

“It is a tale for old wives,” my skeptic announced. “What’s more, you can read it all in books; but I’ll tell you this: there was once a Saint Tutuarn, a Welshman, who lived here. Tutuarn-Enez, the place was called or, as we say now, Douarnenez.”

After parting from my ancient mariner I took the old pagan's advice and read what I could find "in books" about the Ile Tristan. Legend has it that here dwelt Sir Tristan of Lyonesse, lover of fair Iseult. As though to substantiate the case, near by, at Plomarc'h, certain remains are said to be those of King Mark's palace. Known in Breton as Marc'h, the unfortunate monarch is said to have had horse's ears. So eager was he to guard his secret that his barbers were invariably put to death. What was the life of a plebian in those days compared with the pleasure of the king? But one barber plead to be spared and pledged himself to keep the secret. Yet so intolerable did the knowledge become that to relieve his torment he cried aloud to the sands beside the sea: "Marc'h, the King of Plomarc'h, has horse's ears!"

Immediately a couple of reeds cut and left in that place by a passing bard echoed: "Marc'h, the King of Plomarc'h, has horse's ears!"

Saint Ronan, one of the most picturesque of the Celtic saints, came to Brittany at the end of the fifth century and settled in Cornouaille. He tarried first near Brest (the town bears the French version of his name, Saint-Renan) and later came to dwell as a hermit in the neighborhood of Douarnenez. So dynamic was he throughout his life, and far from easy to satisfy, that after his death it was a problem to know where he would wish to be buried. The bishops of three dioceses – Vannes, Léon, and Cornouaille – who coveted the honor of possessing his tomb, decided to let the saint himself indicate his choice. Therefore they had the body placed on a cart drawn by oxen and decided to abide by the stopping place thus revealed. The oxen, turning away from the coast, bore their sacred burden to the dense forest which at that time mantled the "mountain" of Locronan. Trees crashed miraculously to let them pass and when at last the oxen came to the site of the present-day Locronan, the place of Ronan, they stopped. Here, it is said, the interlacing branches became arches of granite and the body of the saint was likewise changed to stone as well as the bier on which it rested.

Ronan, far from being a likeable individual, was feared more than beloved during his lifetime. His power over the elements seems to have been supreme. A virago by the name of Kébèn was his chief reviler. She even went to the point of slaying her own child in order to accuse the hermit of the deed: but Ronan, taking the maiden by the hand, brought her back from the jaws of death – to the amazement of the spectators and the confusion of Kébèn. So virulent was the woman's hatred that when the body of the saint, drawn by the team of oxen, passed by her dwelling, with muttered maledictions she struck the lifeless upturned face. As was to be expected, vengeance was swift. The earth opened where Kébèn stood and engulfed her struggling form. To this day, therefore, the women of the neighborhood show their devotion to

Ronan's memory in touching fashion. On days of pardon, young and old alike stoop to kiss the left cheek as they pass the recumbent effigy on the tomb ... seeking thus to obliterate the scar caused by the act of Kébèn. This tale was in our minds as we gazed upon the strange ceremony in the chapel erected in Ronan's honor by command of Anne de Bretagne.

Locronan's square, with its massive fifteenth-century church and Renaissance houses of the sixteenth century, is perhaps the most remarkable setting to be found at a Breton pardon. No modern note jars the harmony of the ensemble. The whole is enhanced by the background of the hill of Locronan, fringed with rugged pines. Into this typical Breton place every year, on the second Sunday of July, crowds pour. Every seven years comes the Grande-Troménie in which all Cornouaille shares. Our visit was on the day of the more local gathering.

As we approached the village, men and women, girls and boys wearing the costume of the environs of Quimper (Saint Ronan does not seem to appeal to the *sardinières* of near-by Douarnenez) were approaching afoot, by the green lanes – hedged paths between fields where ripe rye and scarlet poppies glowed. Along the highway they gathered in laughing groups, singing and calling as they came, or rode in carts driven by men in pale-blue jackets and velvet hats, the women's minute caps and fluttering cap-strings enlivening their more somber costumes; tiny maidens dressed like their mammas were doll-like and demure. Likewise by motor and even by bicycle they continually came.

Once a year this sleeping town – in centuries now fled famous as the home of skillful weavers, whose prosperity dated from the fabrication of sail-cloth in demand all along the Breton coast – stirs and, waking from somnolence, comes to life. Let no man judge Locronan unless he has seen issue from the portico of its weathered church resplendent prelates, banners of red and gold, parishoners in all the splendor of their surviving medieval fine array. The hill of Locronan sings that day with color as the cortège wends its way, mounting steeply between crazy-quilts of fields to a point overlooking the Ménez-Hom and the vast sweep of the Bay of Douarnenez.

No narrow literalism should prevent the enjoyment of the tales told everywhere in Brittany ... the land where imagination runs riot to the confounding of the practical-minded. Once, and there is a notary's testimony that this is true, the priests decided to postpone the customary procession, owing to the rain. At the appointed hour – this scene witnessed by many reputable citizens – the doors, locked by the verger, were thrown open and the velvet banners, upheld by an invisible host, issued forth into the raging storm; as the ghostly marchers tramped mountainward a hole of blue sky hovered overhead, and

never a drop of rain fell along the route where the sun-tipped pennants were borne aloft.

Continuing our journey around the bay beyond Locronan we come to Saint-Nic – named, I surmise, for the good Saint Nicholas in his role of protector of seafaring men and not the children’s patron – the kind bishop who, so runs the tale, on three successive nights tossed a purse of gold in at an open window as dower for three penniless maidens of noble birth ... whence grew the legend of Santa Claus.

Guide-books are rather terse when speaking of Saint-Nic, which is merely mentioned as being a “sixteenth century church and calvary with personages.” Remembering the neglected cemetery of Plogonnec, recently seen, we were attracted by the contrasting charm of the blossoming churchyard and well-kept chapel at Saint-Nic. Although the road had been inundated with tar, we found a way to enter. Picking our steps, we approached by an allée of cypresses, pausing to admire the primitive “calvary with personages” and the Gothic side porch, and finally reaching the main portal at the end of the nave.

The door stood open. Looking from daylight into the dim candle-lit interior, we saw a white-robed nun, in exaggerated coif, carrying tall branched flowers wrought to resemble gold. We watched her genuflections as she stepped from the chancel with her golden sheaf. Her face was still unseen, veiled in shadow, but her every motion suggested harmony with her surroundings, peace. Saint-Nic was otherwise deserted. Outside, in the churchyard, doves were cooing.

Ménez (the Breton word for mountain) appears frequently upon these tombstones: Ménez-Stum, Ménez-Damoy, Marie Anne Ménez. So rooted are the inhabitants of the region to their hills that they seem even to have taken the mountain’s name. Our drive led us to the hamlet of Sainte-Marie de Ménez-Hom, situated in a high rural district. A herd of cows had been admitted to the welcome shade around the church and was grazing while their guardian told her beads as she knelt at the foot of the calvary, motionless as one of the stone figures. Shortly after Sainte-Marie we left our car by the roadside and started to trudge to the top of the Ménez-Hom. The insignificant altitude of this hill is forgotten because of the magnificence of its position, rising like Fujiyama from the sea. Partly, perhaps, because of the remembrance of the days of yore, the hills of Brittany are still known locally as mountains, even as titles still serve as a mark of respect when one addresses the ancient nobility of France.

The twenty-first of July, which it happened to be, was one of those heaven-sent days when the atmosphere is clear enough to make the horizon plainly visible, yet with suggestions of clouds in the blue haze of distance. As we trod over the prickly close-cropped gorse toward the central and highest mound of the three rounded knolls

that crown the mountain we met tandem carts, gorse-laden, careening like prairie-schooners. As we neared the top the land was abloom with heather. A cairn has been set up, in Celtic fashion, and from this viewpoint, incontestably the finest in all Brittany, a bit breathlessly we surveyed the landscape.

On one side rose the rolling hills – Mont-Saint-Michel the highest, with its suggestions of a peak – the rounded hilltops of the ranges of the Monts d’Arrée and Montagnes Noires. Hills and the sea! At our feet the intense blue of the Bay of Douarnenez, dotted with tiny winged craft, stretched from the headland of the Cap de la Chèvre beyond which rose high whitish cliffs and, yes, the Tas-de-Pois! The roadside of Brest glimmered in sunlight, there lay the peninsula of Plougastel and far-distant Brest. We spied the top of the new bridge from the headland of Crozon to Châteaulin; and beyond, the woodland of Landerneau with its enchanted oaks, still known as Arthur’s forest.

As we faced the sea, where nestles Douarnenez, we were astounded by the numberless patches of the fields; never before had we seen such variety of color, rye, wheat, and oats, all golden on this summer’s afternoon, the peach-bloom pink of clover, plowed earth, the vivid green of grass, and, at our feet, the unforgettable purple heather from which arose the drone of bees. The spire of Ploaré was lifted in austere grandeur, the curtains of pines that screen Locronan contrasted with the gleaming wheat-fields.

Aloof, above the world, we lingered, dreaming dreams, saturated with the unearthly beauty of sky and sea, the illusive unreality of earth itself. Permeated with the peace and tranquility of the place, we had no concern with the strife of Catholic or Freemason. Pilgrims to Ménez-Hom, seekers after truth, we cried, do you not lay hold of a mystery older and more far-reaching in its appeal than Christianity itself; the spiritual oneness of man and his Creator? The uplifted hills, the reflecting waters of the Bay of Douarnenez, blue as the Mediterranean, spoke the answer with the voice of silence.

Editor’s Note: The “Communist strifes” to which the author alludes was a 46 day strike in 1924 by workers in the sardine factories for higher salaries and better working hours ... which were conceded. This was not the first strike for workers, but the largest with 21 factories involved. Douarnenez was the second city of France to elect a Communist mayor – Sebastien Velly in 1921. In 1925 Joséphine Pencalet, a leader in the 1924 strike, was elected to the municipal council. Her service lasted just six months until the Conseil d’État invalidated it. At that time women could not vote or be elected to a public office.

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