

BRO NEVEZ

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



KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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



Editorial: Brittany and Covid-19

As is the case all over the world, Brittany has not been spared in the pandemic. However, it appears that the more rural nature of Brittany has meant it was less impacted than more concentrated urban areas. That is certainly true here in the U.S. where the more concentrated the population, the wider spread the virus has been. While numbers are always difficult to interpret and keep changing, as of June 9 statistics show that the Region of Brittany (Finistère, Côtes d'Armor, Morbihan and Ille-et-Vilaine) have had some 2,900 cases with 324 deaths. Loire-Atlantique has had 859 cases with 153 deaths. Brittany – all five departments – has a population of some 4.7 million people.

For France as a whole there have been some 154,000 cases and 29,300 deaths. Cases per 1,000 people = 2.31. For the U.S. there have been close to 2 million cases and nearly 110,000 deaths. Cases per 1,000 = 5.79.

And as is the case elsewhere, the economic impact of closing businesses and cancelling events has hit Brittany hard. Recovery will be long. With the abatement of new cases, things are beginning to open up – as they are here in the U.S. – but will tourists flock to Brittany's beaches and restaurants? Time will tell how well Brittany will fare, but Bretons are enterprising and creative people, so I am hopeful.

Lois Kuter



Virtual Festoù Noz *Fest noz du confinement*

As is the case in many countries, concerts and festivals have been cancelled or postponed as communities have worked to create the social distancing needed to stop further spread of Covid 19. In Brittany where the music scene is so lively and dancing at a fest noz every weekend is an addiction for many, the cancellation of these events has been sad and professional musicians and those associated with the music world have been financially impacted. But Bretons have found ways to keep a healthy distance and still give musicians and dancers an opportunity to get together.

Since March the organization **Tamm-Kreiz** has organized six virtual festoù noz (March 21, 28, April 11, 25 and May 9, 23 ... with more to come?) Musicians perform live on Facebook and dancers log in to participate (facebook.com/TammKreiz). This has brought performers on stage from Canada, Belgium and Japan as well as

Bretons of all ages and abilities – well known and less known singers and instrumentalists. While the visual quality is not always perfect, the music has gotten thousands of Bretons dancing. Check out the Tamm Kreiz website to learn more: tamm-kreiz.bzh.

Teaching Breton in the Public Schools of Brittany – Introductory Classes Threatened

A Statement from Kelennomp Breizh

The following report is my translation of an article of June 2, 2020, on the Kelennomp Breizh website (kelennomp.bzh). My apologies for any errors of translation. LK

There's "reuz" (calamity) in the terms set down for an introduction to the Breton language in the public schools of Finistère, the only department of Brittany to propose global terms for an introduction to Breton for students not taught in the bilingual streams.

At the beginning of the 2018 school year, nearly 7,800 students followed an introductory class in Breton in the public schools of Finistère – 29.5% of students in preschool, but just 8% of student in elementary school (levels 2 and 3).

The associations in charge of the terms (Sked, KLT, An Oaled, Mervent) with whom the agreement must be renewed at the end of 2020 with the National Education, addressed a joint letter on May 11, 2020, to Mme. Lombardi-Pasquier, director of academic services for National Education in Finistère, denouncing new restrictive rules for the establishment of introductory classes for Breton, most notably impacting Levels 2 and 3 in elementary schools.

The restrictive rules which imperil the introduction of Breton in elementary schools for Levels 2 and especially Level 3 are drawn from the 2017-072 Circular on the teaching of regional languages.

Instructions in the 2017 Circular seem to impact the conditions for teaching an introduction to Breton at the 2nd and 3rd Levels without changes at the preschool level (Level 1). In fact, the Circular stipulates that henceforth an introduction to the Breton language can only be done during the scheduled time for the teaching of foreign languages, while previously this introduction could be done at any time in the teaching schedule: "A regional language may be taught on the schedule designated for living foreign languages or regional languages."

Yet, one notes that the second part of the sentence - "the teaching of the regional language is potentially supported, depending on the school's plans, by

conducting activities in the regional language in different areas of learning" – did not seem to be taken into account in the instructions addressed to public schools of Finistère on April 20, 2020.

Although cited, the article L312 11 of the Education Code ("teachers are authorized to resort to regional language in elementary and preschools each time they can profit by this in their teaching, notably for the study of the French language") does not seem to have been taken into account either to expand a teaching of the Breton language and culture in scheduling spots other than those designated for learning foreign languages, with is English in the vast majority of cases.

It is clear that this vision of things introduces a competition between English and the Breton language to the detriment of the latter. As if it was necessary to choose between English and Breton and that teaching both was not possible. These directives risk making an introduction to the Breton language even more difficult at the elementary level where only 8% of the students take a beginning class as opposed to 27% at the preschool level.

One must remark that in these conditions it will be very difficult to obtain the objective of the linguistic plan of Finistère in favor of the Breton language which has been to "ask for the generalization of terms for all students in the framework of State missions, as already put to work in other French regions (Corsica and Alsace) The departmental political representatives will propose to other Breton collectivities to join this request."

We will equally mention what was written in the State-Region Convention on the transmission of the languages of Brittany for the period 2015-2020: "For the first steps, particular attention will be given to the possibility of offering a sensibilization to the Breton language and culture in teaching through adopting necessary pedagogical tools so that students become familiar with the regional patrimony. The progressive putting into place of an introduction to the language in the 3rd level during the regular scheduling times for classes, as is the case in Finistère for some public schools, will be encouraged."

Nevertheless, one finds in the Education Code the Article L312-11-1 on the teaching of the Corsican language in schools: "The Corsican language is a subject taught in the framework of the regular schedule of the preschools and elementary schools of Corsica." It seems that in France rules are not the same for everyone.

The president of the Regional Council of Brittany, M. Chesnais-Girard, just addressed a letter to the Minister of National Education. An earlier letter on the same theme of optional teaching of the Breton language sent in April 2018 to the Minister of National Education and co-signed by the president of the Departmental Council of Finistère,

Mme. Sarrazebolles, and the current president of the Regional Council remains without a response.

A nearly identical letter addressed in December 2016 to the former Minister of National Education, Mme Vallaud-Belkacem, was co-signed by the president of the Regional Council at the time, M. Le Drian, and the current President of the Departmental Council of Finistère. This too hasn't had the least response.

A Letter from National Assembly Breton Deputies to the Minister of National Education

My translation – LK

Monsieur Jean-Michel Blanquer
Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale
110 rue de Grenelle
75357 Paris SP 07

May 28, 2020

Re: Interpretation of the Circular No. 2017-072 of April 12, 2017

Mr. Minister,

Alerted by several associations and actors in the defense of the Breton language, and focused on the introduction of the Breton language and its placement in competition with learning English in the elementary and secondary teaching, we ask you to draw your attention to this matter.

Following on the constitutional revision of July 23, 2008, modernizing institutions of the 5th Republic and the inscription in the Constitution which prescribes that “the regional languages belong to the patrimony of France,” France must confirm its institutional will to work for the preservation and valorization of regional languages. The Peillon law of July 8, 2013, instructs in its Article 40 that the teaching of regional languages is favored. Nevertheless, it certainly seems that some Academy Inspectors haven't taken this directive of the Peillon law into account.

In fact, they draw on the Circular No. 2017-072 of April 12, 2017, which allows that the scheduling of time for the introduction to regional languages be done during the time for teaching foreign languages, and thus, English: “Thus during elementary school classes, a regional language may be taught on the schedule designated for living foreign languages or regional languages.” That which is possible is not necessarily desirable and by definition not obligatory. If we understand it correctly, the idea of the Circular is to give flexibility in teaching possibilities, but this should not be counter-productive as the will to realize it is on the part of the Academy Inspectors of Finistère for the 2020 school opening. The

bottom line is to remain practical and listen to the intentions of the parents.

This interpretation, in putting onto place competitions between English and regional languages, imperils the latter. One can easily deduce the choice of parents in case of competition. Furthermore, this interpretation, made without consultation of local collectivities and those acting locally, threatens the work undertaken for several years to establish a true linguistic plan – notably by the Department of Finistère, the Region of Brittany, and the associations teaching an introduction to Breton. In addition, the associations fear that a reduction of the number of teaching hours will force them in the future to lay off staff.

Thus, it is our honor to express our strong desire to ask you to proceed with a clarification of the interpretation of the Circular of April 12, 2017 in order to allow perpetuity and development of the introduction to Breton and to guarantee a true ambitious linguistic policy in favor of the regional languages. The problem exists also for other regions which have the same difficulties.

In expectation of your response, we ask you to receive, Mr. Minister, the expression of our sincere salutations.

Paul Molac, Deputy of Morbihan
Jean-Charles Larsonneur, Deputy of Finistère
Thierry Benoit, Deputy of Ille-et-Vilaine
Yannick Haury, Deputy of Loire-Atlantique
Sandrine Le Feur, Deputy of Finistère
Nicole Le Peih, Deputy of Morbihan
Hervé Pellois, Deputy of Morbihan
Yannick Kerlogot, Deputy of Côtes d'Armor
Erwan Balanant, Deputy of Finistère
Yves Daniel, Deputy of Loire-Atlantique
Sandrine Josso, Deputy of Loire-Atlantique
Marc Le Fur, Deputy of Côtes d'Armor
Gilles Luron, Deputy of Ille-et-Vilaine

Gallo, the Other Language of Brittany

The following is my translation of an article posted on the Agence Bretagne website (May 14, 2020). This was written by Erwan Le Garlantezec on behalf of the Association de Lutte Contre les Violences Faites aux Bretons (Association for the Fight Against Violences Done to Bretons). – Lois Kuter

The EMSAV* must also defend the Gallo language tooth and nails.

Brittany is a nation with a people, two languages, a territory, a culture, a history and values. Breton and Gallo are distinctive living languages and not “patois.” They are an integral part of the immaterial patrimony of Humanity and of Breton identity.

It is important to emphasize that a hierarchy cannot exist between the Breton and Gallo languages. Often stricken

by the Stockholm Syndrome, sometimes the EMSAV behaves too happily to try to save one of these two languages, resolving to abandon the other to its sad fate.

I hope for recognition of Breton and of Gallo as official languages. The EMSAV must support the opportunity for our children and adults to learn Breton and Gallo. It must work to put into place the use of trilingual signage in public spaces. Finally, it is necessary to create true Breton medias.

The first written traces of Gallo date to the 12th century. Gallo is a Romance language, its lexicon and grammar coming in large part from Latin,

It is primarily spoken in Ille et Vilaine, in Loire Atlantique, and in the eastern part of Morbihan and Côtes d'Armor, from a linguistic frontier going from Plouha to Guérande.

8% of the inhabitants of historic Brittany say they can understand Gallo very well or well enough. This statistic is very close to the percentage of Breton speakers.

Gallo is today classified by UNESCO among the languages seriously endangered.

Unanimously, the Regional Council of Brittany officially recognized Breton and Gallo as "languages of Brittany, besides the French language" in 2004. The General Council of Ille et Vilaine also publicly supported Gallo. In contrast, in Loire Atlantique no official position-taking for Gallo has been done, the elected officials of the Regional Council of the Pays de Loire being ideologically opposed to any trace of the millenarian Breton past of this department.

On the national level, Gallo has no official character since France recognizes only French as its language. Nevertheless, Article 75-1 of the Constitution, voted in 2008, opened a door in affirming that the regional languages belong to the patrimony of France. To this day, Gallo is equally recognized as a "regional language" by the National Ministry of Education.

The Breton Cultural Charter signed in 1977 by the State and Breton territorial collectivities marked a change in the perception of the languages of Brittany. In fact, the Charter stipulates for example that it is necessary to secure for the Gallo and Breton languages the means necessary for their development, including in education and radio-television.

Teaching the Gallo language and culture has thus been proposed in certain primary schools of Ille et Vilaine. The association Dihun Breizh has also put a similar system in place in primary Catholic establishments in Morbihan.

At the secondary level the Academy of Rennes has proposed Gallo as an optional selection in the general and technical baccalaureates since 1984.

Finally, since 2008 the Université Rennes 2 has offered an option for Gallo of three hours per week over a three year period.

In Loire Atlantique, a department which signed onto the Breton Cultural Charter, teaching Gallo is not offered in any scholarly establishment unfortunately.

For all that, Gallo remains one of the regional languages of France which is taught the least – less than Breton or Alsatian for example.

Associations like "Bertègn Galèzz," founded in 1976, are working on the collection of the patrimony of the language in all areas of Gallo existence and have put together a data base.

Other organizations like "Maésoe" have specialized in toponymy or like "l'Epille" in traditional song.

Some associations edit journals written in Gallo. "Bertègn Galèzz" thus publishes "Le Liaun," a journal edited since 1978 with numerous articles in Gallo. In 2014 a weekly web-journal called "Runje" was created which is entirely in Gallo. Finally, since 2005 articles in Gallo have appeared in the Breton language magazine "Ya!" edited by the association "Keit Vimp Bev."

Gallo is sadly not very visible in the traditional regional media.

On the internet the site Agence Bretagne Presse transmits articles in Gallo. The information site "7seizh.info" also regularly publishes articles in Gallo on international news and sports.

Since 1996, one has been able to hear broadcasts in Gallo on the airwaves of "France Bleu Armorique." "PlumFM" is a radio which also presents several emissions, totalling 11 ½ hours of programming in Gallo each week. "PlumFM" also partners with "Radio Bro Gwened" with which it exchanges programs in Gallo.

Finally, regular emissions in Gallo are broadcast by other radio stations such as Radio Rennes with its program "Chemins de Terre."

In conclusion, the survival of Gallo and Breton are unhappily on a razor's edge. France has been, in fact, working to eradicate them for several generations thanks to leveling at the base and a politics of burnt earth.

** EMSAV covers pretty much the entire Breton Movement – cultural and political organizations and individuals working in support of Breton culture and identity.*

Resources for the Breton Language and Culture: Ar Falz and Skol Vreizh

Ar Falz was founded in 1933 with the aim of publishing a journal and resource materials for public school teachers who wanted to teach the Breton language and include Breton culture and history in the classroom. Besides publishing valuable resources Ar Falz, founded by Yann Sohier, has been active in speaking out for the Breton language and in defense of the Breton culture and justice for all. It has participated in demonstrations, taken a stand against the amputation of Loire-Atlantique from Brittany, and worked to insure Bretons have access to education about their heritage. Besides organizing Breton language classes, Ar Falz has put together conferences on Breton history and culture.

Skol Vreizh was created in 1965 to expand publications, and since then has published over 250 books, most of which are still accessible. Check out the website skolvreizh.com.

Central in its publishing has been a series of five volumes on Breton history, first published in the 1970s and updated and re-edited sixteen times since. It is now one 800+ page volume called *Toute l'histoire de Bretagne – des origines à nos jours*. Richly illustrated with photos, drawings and maps, this is a valuable introduction for those just discovering Breton history especially.

Also excellent as basic introductory material is the “Blue collection” of 84-page paperback books covering a range of topics, including language and literature, art, ethnography, geography, cuisine and history – all written by experts in their field. Also richly illustrated, the over 60 books in this series offer an encyclopedia of information.

Ar Falz and Skol Vreizh have as priorities the teaching of Breton history and culture – both to children and adults. And in defending the Breton language and culture they are supporting a regional identity which is important to the Breton economy.

Komzoù brezhoneg

skolvreizh.com/komzoubrezhonegmenu

The Skol Vreizh website provides access not only to a catalog of hundreds of its publications, but it hosts komzoù brezhoneg, a project by Loris Jouin to collect video interviews with native speakers of Breton from different areas of Brittany.

You can find 60 four to five-minute interviews so far which give the sound and “swing” of the Breton language as spoken by those for whom it has been a first language since childhood. And you get a nice introduction to the personality of these dozens of Breton speakers as well.

Included is the option to see a transcription of the interview which is very helpful for those learning a more standardized Breton as a second language.

Loris Jouin is a singer who is a master of kan ha diskan singing for dance as well as the gwerz, long dramatic ballads in Breton. He has also collaborated with a number of musicians in some very creative performances and recordings.

Prizioù Dazont ar Brezhoneg / Prizes for the Future of the Breton Language.

Prizes for the Future of the Breton Language are organized annually by France 3 Bretagne and the Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg. The prizes recognize creativity and initiative in the use of Breton in a variety of categories. This year the winners were as follows.

Associations / Kevredigezhioù

1 - Mignoned ar brezhoneg.

Friends of the Breton Language launched a website and app allowing you to geolocate businesses and professionals who use the Breton language.

2. Festival du chant de marin de Paimpol.

The Maritime Song Festival of Paimpol issued tickets in Breton, produced a trilingual maritime vocabulary list, included Breton on its website and produced bilingual signage for the festival, giving a larger and larger visibility to the Breton language.

3. Keit Vimpe Bev.

The publisher Keit Vimpe Beo created the magazine *Toutouig*, designed for very young readers, adding to *Rouzig* and *Louarnig* already published for older children.

Public Communities / Aozadurioù publik

1 - Mairie d'Hennebont.

The Mayor's Office of Hennebont has supported and multiplied bilingual programs in the schools and middle schools, and created a game called “Choari mar plij” for new Breton language learners.

2 - Quimperlé Communauté.

The Community of Quimperlé was noted for its bilingual signage, support of professional training in Breton, and theater in Breton, among other initiatives. It also created a committee to followup on projects.

3 - Mairie de Quimper.

Mayor's Office of Quimper for its support of the family of Fañch seeking official recognition of ñ, for its establishment of a new bilingual school program, augmentation of bilingual signage, and the integration of Breton into its municipal magazine.

Businesses / Embregerezhioù

1 - UJAP Quimper 29.

Union Jeanne d'Arc Phalange of Quimper, a basketball club which promotes Breton with game play commentary, a bilingual lexical guide, partnership with the Diwan middle school, among other projects.

2 - Biocoop Douar Nevez Karaez.

A health food store in Carhaix whose signage is entirely bilingual.

3 - Roudour.

The organization for adult learning Roudour for its launch of "Ambroug," a new long distance learning option for Breton on the internet, adding to its more classic classroom style of teaching.

Fiction Books / Levrioù faltazi

1 - *Beuzet diwar ar pont bras... ha danevelloù all*, a collection of short stories by Yann-Fulub Dupuy (Ed. An Alarc'h Embannadurioù).

2 - *Chuchumuchu*, a novel by Erwan Hupel (Ed. Al Liamm).

3 - *Lucio e-kreiz K.*, a novel by Annie Coz (Ed. Al Liamm).

Audiovisual / Kleweled

1 - *Yann-Fañch Kemener, tremen en ur ganañ / Yann-Fañch Kemener, passer en chantant*. A documentary film by Ronan Hirrien about singer Yann Fañch Kemener. (52 minutes, France 3 Breizh).

2 - *Tro Baz Alan Abgrall, l'Infirmier de l'île de Batz*. A documentary film by Sébastien Le Guillou about Alan Abgrall, a doctor for the Ile de Batz. (26 minutes, France 3 Breizh).

3 - *Skiantoù sichant // Les sciences en s'amusant*. A series by Julien Posnic and Pierre-Yves Le Du of short films presenting science in a fun way. (JPL Films).

CD Sung in Breton / CD Kanet e Brezhoneg

1 - *Dindan Dilhad Dindan*, Talec-Noguet Quartet (Coop Breizh).

Group composed of Rozen Talec, Yannig Noguét with Julien Padovani and Timothée Le Bour (see Bro Nevez 149, March 2019 for short note)

2 - *Eben*, Eben (Coop Breizh).

Three young singers, Sterenn Le Guillou, Enora Jegou and Marine Lavigne, compose and perform Breton language songs (see Bro Nevez 152, December 2019 for a short note)

3 - *Ebel Elektrik*, Ebel Elektrik (Autoproduction).

Rock-blues band composed of Florian Ebel, Basile Tauden and Germain Velut.

Breton Speaker of the Year / Brezhoneger ar bloaz

1 - Solena Raynaudon. A therapist who offers memory training in Breton for older clients.

2 - Perynn Bleunven. Singer, producer, and actress who uses Breton in her songs as well as audiovisual creations.

3 - Roderic Halleguen. Through his character Lors Jereg, Roderic Halleguen has developed humorous programs in Breton for the internet.

Breton Language Films

BreizhVOD - O tont bremaik – I'll be back

www.breizhvod.bzh

BreizhVOD is a video on demand online service with feature films, documentaries, and animated films in the Breton language. You can watch a video online, stream it, or purchase a DVD. There is a fee for the service but what better way to support audiovisual production in Breton. And this is certainly an enjoyable option for Breton learners.

Movies include some produced in Brittany or about Breton people and history (Marion ar Faouet, Glenmor ...) but also films produced elsewhere like *Paddington Bear*, *The Runway*, and *Terminator 2 – Ar Varn Ziwezhañ*. Dubbed by the Breton organization Dizale, Arnold Schwarzenegger is taken on by actor Tangi Daniel. "O tont bremaik / I'll be back."

Documentaries take you traveling all over the world, to discover nature, music, history, culture and people. TV shows are less plentiful, drawing from those produced in Brittany but also including Perry Mason. One of the larger areas of selection is cartoons where you find Asterix, the Gruffalo, Spot the Dog, Lucky Luke, Caspar the Friendly Ghost and Garfield among other other characters all speaking Breton.

Dizale

Dizale.bzh

As described in English on their Dizale website: "Dizale is a non-profit organization founded in 1998 supported by the Regional Council of Brittany. It is based on a pool of professionals who are all highly trained in the field of dubbing (voice-overs) all kinds of audiovisual material into Breton. Its broader objective is the scriptwriting, subtitling and also act as producer. Since its foundation in 2000 Dizale has dubbed over 350 hours of cartoons and over 100 hours of film or series. Dizale is a member of Films en Bretagne and the Cultural Council of Brittany."

This organization has been important not only in providing audiovisual materials in Breton, but also in training Breton speakers in film and audiovisual production.

Geobreizh.bzh Website Returns

The following introduction by Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez presents the relaunching of this website which is loaded with maps and useful and interesting geographical information. My apologies for any errors in translation – Lois Kuter.

The website Geobreizh.bzh was launched in 2005 by Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez and Divi Kervella[†], authors of *L'Atlas de Bretagne* and numerous other projects linked to Brittany: flags, heraldry, Breton language, geography ...

The initial idea for the internet site was to bring a rich and detailed content on the geography of Brittany to web users. Two directions were thus developed:

- The first consisted in offering a large array of geographical maps, reusable on the network to show Brittany in its historical configuration. The Nantes Pays is systematically included since showing Brittany without Nantes is like a hand without a thumb – useless.
- The second axis was from the beginning to give priority to the Breton language in posting information. In this way the website was enriched with numerous facts, a database for the 1,500 communes of Brittany, lists of geographical vocabulary, often with assistance of the Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg.

In these past few years internet technologies have evolved a great deal. Our site could not endure since in ten years the tools used to make it function were outdated. We were thus obliged to put it on stand-by.

We are now ready to launch a new Geobreizh.bzh adventure. For our great pleasure and for yours, we hope. This site will be developed gradually. We present it here:

- Maps of Brittany, coming for the most part from the Atlas de Bretagne;
- Maps free of copyright protection that you can use as you wish in your internet sites;
- Bases of maps that can be used by teachers and students in their work on Brittany (bases in image format, vectoral or shapefile for geometricians);
- Original data on the geography of Brittany, giving privilege to the Breton language;
- And always the opportunity to order original posters of Brittany, peoples of Europe, or the world through a store created by us that allows printing at your convenience.

Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez

The best way to get an idea of the wealth of information on Geobreizh.bzh is to go on line and explore it. Besides lots of maps showing various aspects of geography, political and cultural divisions, history and economy, the site includes lots of statistical information: the highest elevations with French and Breton names of each “peak” and its elevation in meters, principal rivers and their lengths in kilometers, forests with size in hectares, and the population of principal cities and towns of Brittany.

One can also find the names in French, Breton and Gallo for close to 800 towns. Thus for Nantes you find Naoned and Nauntt, for Lodeac you find Loudieg and Lodeyac, and for Guérande you find Gwennrann and Géraundd. You can also learn about etymologies for town names and the link of a particular town to traditional “pays”, historical provinces and current commune groupings.

Maps that are free for use include those showing rivers, wooded areas, highpoints and elevated areas, points of interest (mountains, bays, islands ...), and various divisions such as traditional “pays,” communes, parishes, voting districts. These are more spartan than the main section of maps, but of great value for those seeking an accurate map.

Have fun with this site and take advantage of the wealth of information to be found.

Losses in the Breton Family



JEAN-YVES VEILLARD (1939-2020)

Natalie Novik

Born in Rennes in 1939, Jean-Yves Veillard starts in life as a staunch supporter of the Breton cause, at a time when it was not the “in” thing. He was the founder of the Breton Democratic Union (UDB) back in 1964, and became the first editor of its newsletter “Le Peuple Breton”.

As a historian though, he is hired in 1967 to be the director of the Art and Archeology Museum in Rennes. His life becomes intimately linked to the transformation of a dusty old 19th-century style museum into a place where the cultural identity of Brittany is recognized.

By 1976, the newly created Museum of Brittany, separate from the Arts Museum, makes under his direction a resolute step towards his goals: he opens an eco museum in 1987 in the nearby countryside, and he moves the Museum to the Champs Libres in Rennes in 2006, where he re-imagines ways to reach a large public. Collecting traditional furniture and housewares, farm implements, Breton costumes, but also films, videos,

photos, books, anything that can bear testimony to the brilliance of Breton culture, he invites the public to look at Brittany and see its magnificence.

He also invents new approaches like staging in the courtyard of the Museum before Christmas time a "Pig Slaughtering" event (with no pig killing), where the visitors can weigh for themselves the importance of pigs (and associated pork products) in Breton traditions.

Besides his work as museum director, Veillard was also a prolific writer, publishing numerous books about the Rennes region, the Seiz Breur artistic movement in between the two World Wars, and very importantly, a Dictionary of the Breton patrimony, together with Alain Croix, considered to be one of the most important works regarding Breton culture. While it was not part of his family's heritage, he even learned Breton. He retired officially from his position in 2000, but continued to contribute towards the opening of the Museum of Brittany, while writing several more books. He died on March 25th, 2020, after a long illness.

Please go visit the Museum of Brittany and the EcoMuseum Farm in La Bintinais when you are in Rennes, Brittany, to measure and enjoy the legacy of this remarkable Breton.



LOUISE EBREL (1932-2020)

Natalie Novik

After Yann-Fanch Kemener last year, another great Breton voice has gone silent: Louise Ebrel, daughter of Eugénie Goadec (one of the Goadec Sisters) died in her sleep on March 20th at age 87.

Her life is a link between the old generation of singers and today's generation. She grew up in Tregor, in a family of famous singers, and liked to sing herself, but at first it was in French and the tunes of the time. But she moved with her husband at the end of the 1980's to Loctudy, she started dancing Breton dances, and being familiar with the entire repertoire of the Goadec Sisters, took to singing kan ha diskan herself, with partners as Roland Péron and Ifig Flatrès.

She had the rhythm well in control, with a sonorous voice and excellent delivery in Breton (Tregor is said to speak the purest Breton), so, as her relatives, the Goadec Sisters, aged and disappeared one after the other, Louise found her place in festou-noz. She befriended Yann-Fañch Kemener and Dennis Prigent, but interestingly enough, she thought she should try something different and started performing with the punk group Les Ramoneurs de Menhirs, and Red Cardell's rock group.

Her repertoire also included "gwerziou", long and often sad complaints, which she carried with a great sensitivity. Louise was on stage in numerous festivals in Brittany and elsewhere, always smiling, always interacting with the public.

Dancing when she was singing was such a pleasure, because her sense of rhythm was impeccable whoever her partner was. I remember spending an evening with her in Quimper a few years ago, backstage at the local theater. She was waiting for her turn to perform, and we had a long conversation about what was happening to traditional music, how it was evolving and conquering new generations. She was always so easy to talk to, so caring, without any sense of being a celebrity, but a simple Breton woman. Which, actually, is saying a lot.

Louise, we are not about to forget you....

Gwriziou : chants à danser et mélodies de Bretagne, 1994. (Arfolk / Coop Breizh)

Gwerz ha Kan a boz, 1995. (Kerig / Coop Breizh)

Tre Tavrinn ha Sant Voran, 2004. (Coop Breizh)

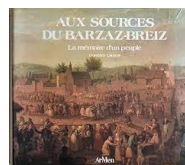
Ma zad ma mamm, 2010 (L'OZ Production / Keltia Musique)

DONATIEN LAURENT (1935-2020)

Lois Kuter

The important role Donatien Laurent played in the study of the Breton oral tradition is reflected in the number of tributes that appeared in March upon his death at the age of 85.

With family roots in Brittany it was in Paris where Donatien Laurent spent most of his youth and he and his siblings were immersed in the very active Breton community of Paris. His father was especially engaged in his Breton heritage and the family had a rich library of books which were much appreciated by Donatien. He would learn Breton and study Breton history at Ker Vreizh and with his siblings he would be active with the Bleimor scouts and the Bleimor bagad. He would rub elbows there with other key figures in the renaissance and evolution of Breton music – Alan Stivell, Gwennole Le Menn, Alan Le Buhé, Herri Léon – and he would master the biniou koz and cornemuse (Scottish style bagpipes). With Herri Léon he would be one of the first Bretons to get a diploma for study at the College of Piping in Glasgow (1956).



Donatien Laurent completed university studies in Celtic languages and literature, linguistics and ethnology. He is perhaps best known for his study of the notebooks of Hersart de la Villemarqué, 19th century author of the famous Barzaz Breiz, a collection of Breton language songs. Through years of work, Donatien Laurent was

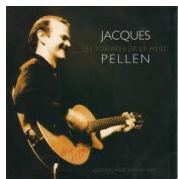
able to show that the song texts were not the fabrication of La Villemarqué as many believed. Although enhanced by La Villemarqué, the songs were in fact from Brittany's rich oral tradition. This study formed the basis of his doctoral thesis completed in 1974 and published in 1989 – *Aux Sources du Barzaz Breiz*.

Donatien Laurent published many articles including analyses of the Breton gwerz of Skolvan and Louis Le Ravellec. He would continue to combine in depth research of written documents and fieldwork meeting with singers and storytellers. After employment with the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Paris, Donatien Laurent would become a researcher and professor with the Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique created in 1969 at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Brest. He would become its director in 1987 until retirement in 2001.

His research would also include a study of the Grande Troménie of Locronan, an ancient pilgrimage completed every six years to sacred sites of Brittany. He would also examine ancient Celtic conceptions of time and space in a study of the Coligny calendar.

Donatien Laurent will be remembered for his love of Brittany and its music and oral traditions, and his impeccable scholarship.

Information gleaned from biographical information on the Centre de Recherches Bretonne et Celtique website, the blog Langue-bretonne.org by Fañch Broudic posted March 31, and the homage posted by Michel Treguer on the Agence Bretagne Presse website April 7. Any misinterpretation of information is entirely my responsibility.



JACQUES PELLEN (1957-2020)

Lois Kuter

At the age of just 63 Jacques Pellen fell victim to Covid-19 this April.

Born in Brest he studied classical guitar as a pre-teen and was at ease in both the world of jazz and Celtic pop/folk. He started his music career with eh groups Galarn and Bleizi Ruz in Brest in the mid-1970s. He worked with a range of master musicians in the jazz world including Riccardo Del Fra, Kenny Wheeler, Peter Gritz and Henri Texier. He would bring his improvisational skills to collaborate with the best in the Breton music world including Melaine Favennec, Gérard Delahaye, Didier Squiban, Manu Lann-Huel, Soïg Siberil, Alain Genty, Jean-Luc Roudaut, Eirk Marchand, Annie Ebrel, Gilles Servat, Fred and Jean-Charles Guichen, Jean-Michel Veillon, Dan ar Braz, Jacky and Patrick Molard, and harpist Kristen Nogues who was his companion until her early death in 2007 at the age of 55. That is certainly

not an all-inclusive list but one which reflects the range of Pellen's impact and ability to work with musicians of many different styles.

Jacques Pellen touched nearly every corner of the very rich and diverse music world of Brittany, adding his genius to dozens of performances and recordings. His guitar work can be found on nearly fifty records and CDs recorded between 1976 and the present. Below are the albums on which he is featured as a solo creator, or in duo, trio or quartet:

1990 - *Jacques Pellen with Riccardo Del Fra, Peter Gritz, Kenny Wheeler*
 1993 - *Celtic Procession*
 1993 – *Triptyque*, with Jacky Molard and Patrick Molard
 1996 – *Sorserez*
 1998 – *Condaghes*, with Eirk Marchand and Paolo Fresu
 1999 – *A Celtic Procession Live*, Les Tombées de la Nuit
 2003 – *Ephémère*
 2007 – *Lament for the Children*
 2011 – *Offshore*, with Karim Ziad and Étienne Callac
 2013 – *Quiet Place*, with Erick Barret
 2014 – *Morenn*, with Xavier Boderiou and Sylvain Barou
 2017 – *Shorewards*, with the Offshore Quartet
 2018 – *A-hed an Aber*

Information drawn from Wikipedia, France-Bleu and Le Télégramme websites, Jazz Magazine website obituary, April 21

JEAN LE DÛ (1938-2020)

Lois Kuter

Jean Le Dû, Emeritus Professor of Breton and Celtic languages at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Brest, was an internationally recognized scholar of linguistic geography and dialectology.

From Plougrescant in the Côtes d'Armor he grew up in Dieppe where the story goes that one day he decided he would only talk to his parents in Breton. He studied English at the Université Rennes II and did his doctoral thesis on the Breton language of Plougrescant which would lead to the publication of a Breton-French and French-Breton dictionary in 2012 (*Le Trégorrois à Plougrescant*).

Jean Le Dû directed the publication of the *Nouvel Atlas Linguistique de la Basse-Bretagne* in 2001, a two-volume work with some 600 maps. He served a director for Celtic languages for the *Atlas Linguarum Europae* and also published a linguistic atlas of the Creole of the Lesser Antilles. Fluent in Irish (as well as other languages) in 2010 he published his translation from the Gaelic of *Une vie irlandaise du Connemara à Ráth Chaim, histoire de la vie de Micil Chonrai* (by Conchur O Giollagain). He published a number of articles in *Brud Nevez* as well as collections of Breton proverbs and expressions.



With his colleague Yves Le Berre, Jean Le Dû organized colloquiums on sociolinguistics and published the journal *La Bretagne Linguistique* which he directed from 1985 to 2011. In 2019 they published *Métamorphoses – Trente ans de sociolinguistique à Brest* covering scholarship from 1984 to 2014.

Described as affable and warm by colleagues, there certainly have been others working in various areas to promote Breton language education and media who felt less kindly towards Jean Le Dû for his sometimes disdainful dismissal of what he called “revivalists.” But as a scholar, Jean Le Dû unquestionably made an important contribution to the study of the Breton language.

Information drawn from: *Le Télégramme* website article of May 7, *Blog langue-bretonne.org* note by Fañch Broudic of May 6.

ERWAN EVENOU (1940-2020)

Lois Kuter

Born in Algiers, the maternal side of the family had lived in Algeria since the 1840s – France invaded Algeria in June 1830 and held it as a colony until 1962. The paternal side of the family was Breton and his grandfather (whom he did not know) was a writer and colonial officer who militated in favor of decolonization of Algeria.

Erwan Evenou spent much of his early childhood in Constantinois and was a witness to the repression which followed the first nationalist insurrection in 1945. Returning to Algiers at the age of six he attended public school side by side with Arab, Kabyle, and Israelite children. He attended a high school which was made up of youth from all origins of the Algerian population of the time.

The nationalist rebellion launched in 1954 would force the Evenou family to flee three years later to France – a foreign country for them. Erwan would become a citizen of Brittany and begin a study of the Breton language. He began a career as a teacher in 1961,

In 1967 Erwan Evenou began his activity as a cultural and political militant. He ran for office as a candidate for the Union Démocratique Breton and was instrumental in launching GALV in 1969 which included the UDB, Ar Falz and JEB students working for the Breton language.

Erwan Evenou would be drawn back to Algeria where he taught, taking his family with him. His Breton speaking children would also learn Arabic. Radical Islam and civil war forced the family to return to Brittany in the early 1980s.

Erwan then taught Breton in the middle school of Faouet and earned a CAPES in Breton in 1986 – the first year it was offered – completing a doctoral thesis at the Université Rennes II on the Breton language of Lanvéneën (*Description phonologique du Breton de Lanvéneën*, 1987).

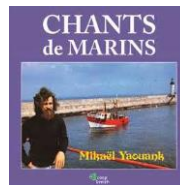
While he wrote numerous Breton language articles for *Al Liamm* and *Le Peuple Breton*, he also published a collection of poetry (*Benn gouloù-deiz*, 1972) and two novels which drew on his experiences as a Pied-Noir: *Nikolazig ar broioù tomm*, 1991, and *Bugale milliget ar baradoz kollet*, 2018. He would also draw on this experience for a book in French – *Le Coq, l'Hermine et le Croissant* in 2012. A third novel of a police crime nature, *Pardon Sant Fiag*, was published after his retirement from teaching in 1999.



Upon retirement Erwan Evenou also published *La langue bretonne en quête de légitimité dans l'éducation et la vie publique* (2000) – a critique of French policies which limited the advance of Breton in education and public life.

As well as being an ardent defender of the Breton language, Erwan Evenou was also active as a supporter of *gouren*, Brittany's Celtic style of wrestling.

Information drawn from: *Lec'hienn Erwan Evenou* website and an article by Jean-Jacques Monnier for *Le Peuple Breton* (“Erwan Evenou 1940-2020 – Pied-Noir, Algérien et Breton”)



MIKAEL YAOUANK (1947-2020)

Lois Kuter

This June Brittany lost a master of maritime song Mikael Yaouank to cancer at the age of 73. With a memorable low voice he is linked inseparably with the group Djiboudjep which he founded in Lorient in 1970 with Michel Tonnere (who died in 2012). The group recorded a number of albums and their compositions and arrangements of traditional maritime song such as “Quinze marins,” “Les filles de Lorient,” “Nous sommes marins,” or “Les trois caps” - to name just a few – became classics.

They were regulars at festivals such as the Festival du Chant de Marin of Paimpol or the Fêtes Maritimes of Brest. But they were especially appreciated in Lorient as regulars at the Inter Celtic Festival of Lorient where they performed for 49 years. The 2020 Festival (normally in August) was to mark the 50th anniversary of their performances as well as the 50th anniversary of the Lorient Festival. The celebration and the festival has been put off until 2021 and will certainly include a tribute to Mikael Yaouank and his contribution to maritime song.

Deep inside a Breton skull N° 63

Thinking like a mountain

Jean Pierre Le Mat

One of the early promoters of nature protection was an American forest engineer, Aldo Leopold (1887-1948). He wanted everybody to "think like a mountain". Everybody in the world, not just the Americans! I believe that Bretons are concerned, too...

We don't have very big mountains in Brittany, but we have sacred ones. Their thoughts illuminate us. I know quite well three of these sacred mountains: the Menez Bre, the Tuchenn Kador and the Menez Hom. I climbed their slopes. I thought about them. I may have thought like them. I may have thought with them.

The thought of Menez Bre, not far from the city of Guingamp, is that of a hot-tempered entity. Fifteen centuries ago, somewhere there, the bard Gwenc'hlan was buried. To the Frank chief who punctured his eyes, he prophesied his terrible revenge:

- Old sea crow, tell me: what are you holding there?
- I'm holding the head of the Chief of Army; I want to get his two red eyes.
I'm tearing out both of his eyes, because he tore yours from you.
- And you, fox, tell me, what are you holding there?
- I hold his heart, which was as false as mine.
Who wanted your death, and made you die long ago.
- And you, tell me, toad, what are you doing there, in the corner of his mouth?
- I am waiting for his soul.
It will stay into me as long as I live, as a punishment for the crime he committed
Against the Bard who no longer lives between Roc'h-Allaz and Porz-wenn.



The Menez Bre also inspired Saint Hervé, whose chapel rises on the top. The saint was born blind. He was never a consecrated priest, but he was a renowned exorcist. His companion was a wolf. The thoughts of Saint Hervé, sweet for

his friends, were merciless for his enemies. It was on the Menez Bre that Saint Hervé convened a great council a long time ago. Prince Konomor was cursed there and the other princes of Brittany were summoned to go to war against him.

The gales on the Menez Bre bring me the moods of Gwenc'hlan and Saint Hervé.



The Tuchenn Kador conveys a mysterious authority. In the Breton language, *Kador* can be translated by "throne" or by "warrior". The Tuchenn Kador is the *mound of the throne* or the *mound of the warrior*. At

the top of it, no chapel, but a strange block of granite rising from the depths of the earth. Walkers are rare there. Nearby, I perceive the presence of the korrigans who dance at night in the moonlight. These mischievous goblins sing "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday..." indefinitely, in Breton of course. They force lost travelers in their dance which mixes time and space, material and energy. A quantum dance. The authority of the Breton korrigans on lost travelers has never been explained.

From the summit of Tuchenn Kador you can see the Botmeur marshes. My mother told me that, in this place, the parish priest of Saint Vougay, the village of her childhood, came to drown the dogs in which he trapped the infernal spirits who tormented his parishioners. Then, many priests knew how to fight against demons. The old knowledge may have been lost; or maybe the priests have become more restrained. In any case, we no longer know what is going on in the Botmeur marshes. The Tuchenn Kador dominates our world of appearances and the shadowy world underground.



From Rosnoën, near my village of Ar-Faou, I see another of our sacred mountains, the Menez Hom. When the sky is sunny, I can see it in all its majesty. The thoughts of Menez Hom always seemed to me to shine on the Crozon peninsula. The Menez Hom overlooks the bay of Brest in the North, the bay of Douarnenez in the south. Near the

summit, prehistoric men, probably my ancestors, erected a circle of stones. They scattered standing stones on the slopes, for good reasons I presume. A bronze statue of Brigit, the Celtic goddess, was also found there. This statue is twenty centuries old. Perhaps the worship of the goddess is related to the fires that were lit on the mountain in ancient times.

On the slope of the mountain was built a chapel dedicated to a woman from Palestine who could be a Celtic goddess as well, Saint Mary, God's mother. The pilgrimage to the chapel, Ti ar Werc'hez, is very popular among the locals.

Deep inside my Breton skull, my brain waves synchronize with the waves of the Menez Hom. I bathe in its vibratory field which envelops me. I put myself "on the same wavelength" as the Menez Hom. Scientists tell me it's not possible to be on the same wavelength as a mound. But they cannot explain the synchronized movements of jackdaws in the sky of my village of Ar Faou. They cannot

explain the schools of mullets I see in the harbor water nearby. Nevertheless, our jackdaws and our mullets are surely together on the same wavelength. Why not a synchronization between the Bretons and their sacred mounds? I think that scientists don't know everything.



I read in the newspapers that, in the year 2017, a legal personality was attributed to Mount Taranaki by the government of New Zealand. There, just at the antipodes of Brittany, there are also sacred mountains, mountains

which think! There must be a terrestrial axis, which enters Brittany to come out in New Zealand, and around which revolves the thoughts of mounds and mountains of the world, and maybe also the thoughts of rivers, seas, valleys and forests...

Heard of, but not heard – 10 New CDs from Brittany



Acoustic Lady Land. *Crazy little thing.*

This trio is composed of Melina Etna, lead singer, Charlotte Le Calvez on guitar and vocals, and Eva Montfort with Bass fiddle and vocals. Based in Lanleff, they focus on a folk-pop-funk-blues repertoire drawn in large part from the U.S. This new album includes 12 selections including classics such as "You can't hurry love," "Girls just want to have fun," "Ain't no sunshine," and "Crazy little thing called love" which gives the name to the album.



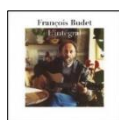
Atlantyka. *Si tu crois.*

Launched in 1993 Atlantyka is a rock band based in Douarnenez. Their compositions- in French – evoke a range of topics including their love for Brittany and recognition that the Loire-Atlantique is part of Brittany found in the song on this new album "Oh hé Gwenn ah Du."



Boann. *The two sisters – De Två Systarna.*

This new group is described as having a Celtic and Nordic source of inspiration with a British folk and medieval sound. The group is composed of Jean-Luc Lenoir (crwth, hammered dulcimer, lyre, kantele, guitar), Eléonar Billy (alto and tenor nyckelharpa), Gaëdic Chambrier (guitars, bass, mandolin, mandole, percussion), and Joanne McIver (vocals, whistle, flute, Scottish smallpipes). A unique sound is found in the group's use of less commonly heard stringed instruments.



François Budet. *L'ntégral.*

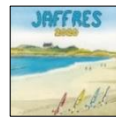
This is a five-CD set with 92 songs by guitarist-singer-songwriter François Budet recorded between 1968 and 2016. A 100-page booklet provides all the texts (in French) of the songs.

Budet is perhaps best known for the very popular song "Loguivy de la Mer."



Alain Genty. *Instant space.*

Electric bass guitarist Alain Genty has been part of a number of musical collaborations and has produced several solo albums. Here he takes center stage and is joined by Nicolas Giraud on trumpet, Christophe Saunière on harp and Annouck Eudeline on horn. Genty provides vocals, keyboard, electronics, fretless bass and guitars. His compositions are described as being in a space somewhere between Pink Floyd and Miles Davis.



Gérard Jaffres. *2020*

In pop-rock styles of the 70s and Celtic/French song of the 80s and beyond, Gérard Jaffres recounts stories of people of his native Léon area of Brittany and elsewhere. The CD includes 14 compositions in French.



Liamm – Xavier Boderiou, Sylvain Barou, Antoine Lahay.

This is a trio of multi-instrumentalists with Xavier Boderiou on bagpipes of various models, Sylvain Barou on flutes, duduk and biniou, and Antoine Lahay on guitars. The CD includes 12 selections of melodies and dances inspired by Brittany, Scotland and Ireland.



Pemp Biz. *Taol biz troad.*

This CD includes 11 compositions in Breton in a blues, rock, folk style on a range of topics – love, travel, adventure, death, and craziness. The group is made up of Abalip, Gildas Beauvir, Yon Gouez and Bernez Tangi – names fans of the former band Storlok will recognize.



Pinc Floyd. *Give us peace.*

No, this isn't *the* internationally famous Pink Floyd but a Breton duo composed of Ronan Pinc on fiddle and Arthur Pinc on guitar. This second album is described a "bretonno-celtico-irlando-balkano-swing."



Youhadenn. *Poatr an Tour Tan.*

This is a trio from the Trégor with their second album. The group is made up of Hug Beco on guitar, Olivier Adelen on accordion and keyboard, and Louis-Jacques Suignard with songs ranging from kan ha diskan to contemporary compositions. Inspiration is drawn from Brittany, Ireland, Wales and Scotland with a folk-jazzy feel. Guest singer Annie Ebrel and flute player Erwan Menguy enhance the creation in several selections. The CD includes 14 selections with dances and songs in Breton, Welsh, English, Gaelic and French.

And a new book ...



Gwenola Roparz. *Telenn Vreizh – Musiques traditionnelles bretonnes arrangées pour harpe celtique.* Edition Buissonnières. 82 pages.

Celtic harpist and harp teacher Gwenola Roparz has put together a collection of melodies, marches, children's songs, cantiques and dances from the Breton tradition arranged for Celtic harp. Transcriptions are accompanied by texts which show off Roparz's in depth knowledge of traditional Breton music.

Pardons and Troménies now part of France's national inventory of immaterial cultural patrimony

Brittany has been reputed to be the most Catholic area of France and Catholicism is part of the cultural and social heritage of Bretons who practice it and those that do not. One of the most visible ceremonies of Brittany's Catholic heritage has been the "Pardon" – a one or two day celebration of a saint which includes both church services and processions as well as a secular fair with carnival rides and games. "Troménies" are not focused on a church or village but are pilgrimages taking participants to different sacred sites. The best know of these is the Troménie de Locronan.

The organization Bretagne Culture Diversité has been working to inventory and document the rich history and current practice of pardons and troménies in Brittany and estimates some 1,4000 pardons existent in Brittany. While many of these draw a village or town together for an annual celebration, larger pardons draw from a wide area. Bretagne Culture Diversité was successful in its request that France add the pardon and troménies of Brittany to its national inventory of immaterial culture (in the category of "rituals"). The next step is to build a case for recognition by UNESCO.

The Pardon has always been a draw for tourists to Brittany and is documented frequently in travel literature of the past two centuries. The spectacle of religious processions and the festive carnivals that are part of a pardon are definitely a draw, but it is the gathering of Bretons in their finest costumes that is most often noted by travel writers. Certainly of major influence in the early 20th century was the book by Anatole Le Braz, *The Land of Pardons*, translated by Frances M. Gostling with a first edition in 1906 (fifth edition 1924). The original French book *Au Pays des Pardons* was published in 1894. One can assume that some description of pardons in early 20th century travel accounts by American or British writers are drawn from Le Braz's work rather than being first-hand accounts.

A View of the Pardon in 1912

The following article about Breton pardons was written by Anita MacMahon (also spelled McMahon), a journalist born in Cork. She would work in London but travel to Achill in 1911 to learn Irish at the Scoil Aclé Summer School. She was active in rallying support for poor and elderly of Achill and also supported the movement for Irish independence as a member of Cumann na mBan. She was arrested in September 1920 for carrying seditious documents and sentenced to six months of prison. I could find no record of birth or death dates nor much else about this journalist who translated an Italian

novel and wrote articles of a non-political nature for a number of journals of the day. Her commentary in "The Pardons of Brittany" takes us well beyond a tourist account of picturesque customs.

The magazine *The Catholic World* in which her article about pardons was published in 1912 was founded in April 1864 and was published by the Paulist Press which was based first in Manhattan and then in New Jersey. It was intended to be an intellectual magazine with a Catholic perspective on a variety of topics and included commentary on literature, poetry, politics, and news of religious events. *The Catholic World* ended publication in 1996, but the Paulist Press continues to publish books and audiovisual materials for adults and children.

"The Pardons of Brittany" by Anita MacMahon.
The Catholic World, Vol. 95, No. 569, August 1912.

All the old chroniclers of Brittany write as though this province were an island, "*bois au milieu mer alentour*," and even to-day the national stamp is still so strong that one receives the impression of a land surrounded and protected by the sea.

This effect is particularly striking if, instead of landing at any of the populous seaports, the stranger sails up one of the lovely rivers which form a natural roadways leading into the heart of the country, where a Celtic people have retained their language, their customs, their costumes, and their Faith.

Part of Brittany has of course long been gallicized, and it is only in *Basse Bretagne* – and especially in the department well named *Finis-terre* – that life still has that distinctive individuality which is fast disappearing from the world of to-day, where no spot, however secluded, is safe from the descent of the tourist in his motor-car. A line drawn from Plouha, on the English Channel, to the estuary of the river Vilaine, on the Atlantic coast, would mark the division of the language: all the country to the west speaks Breton, all the country to the east French.

Where the Breton language has held its own, we find, as a rule, that the people have successfully resisted all foreign influence, and if old King Grallon, looking down from the porch of Quimper Cathedral, could take note of what passed beneath him, he would have no difficulty in recognizing his people in the Bretons of to-day.

The pardons begin in March and end in October, the vast majority coming between Easter and Michaelmas. During this period it would be difficult to pass a week in any part of *Basse Bretagne* without witnessing one of these fêtes, which are often held round shrines of Druidic origin, as ancient as the race – as in Rome the pagan temples were converted into Christian churches. The pardons vary in minor points of ceremonial in each diocese, and even in each parish, but the chief traits are everywhere

the same. The lighting of a bonfire on the eve of the pardon generally announces the beginning of the fête, which always lasts two days: the first devoted to religious ceremonies, and the second to popular amusements. The pardon is, however, essentially a religious fête, to which people come to obtain an indulgence or ask some grace or blessing, and if on the morning of one of the celebrated pardons one could obtain a bird's-eye view of the country around, one would see on all sides streams of people moving towards the church, as though drawn by a magnet. Delegations are sent from all the neighboring parishes, and these march, banners flying and pipers playing, with the parochial cross at the head of the procession. The pilgrims proceed to their destination with the utmost gravity, reciting the rosary or litanies until they come in sight of the church spire, when they kneel to salute the patron saint they are coming to visit, and then resume their march, intoning a canticle. Many of the pilgrims come barefooted in fulfillment of some vow of thanksgiving, and when the shrine is a famous one they begin to arrive at nightfall, and spend the night in or about the church, unless they are lucky enough to have a friend at one of the farms around, where the women folk have been busy for days beforehand getting provisions ready.

The Masses begin at dawn, and the day is occupied by High Mass, vespers, and the procession.

The procession is, in some ways, the most attractive feature of the pardon, for all can take part. It would be difficult to imagine a more impressive sight than one of these sacred pageants - such as that of the Pardon of Notre Dame de la Palude, or that of the Pardon of St. Yves at Treguier. By their antique splendor they recall the frescoes of the early Renaissance painters. A joyous carolling of bells, answered by all the churches in the neighborhood, announces the departure of the procession, which winds either through gaily decorated streets, or through country lanes and fields, where nature supplies a still more effective *mise-en-scène*. The musicians - fifers, drummers, and pipers - usually precede, the sailors of the French navy, who take a prominent part in Breton pardon, lining the aisle during High Mass and vespers, and carrying a little frigate gay with bunting, at the procession. The real éclat of the procession, however, comes from the Breton costumes, which are then seen in their full splendor - these gala dresses, so stiff with silver and gold embroidery that they stand upright if placed on the ground, are veritable heirlooms, and are laid by in tissue paper and lavender for the rest of the year. At all times much of the charm of Brittany lies in the survival of the national costume, which gives a touch of mediaeval picturesqueness to the ordinary routine of every-day life, and, like everything else that is distinctively Breton, this too has a Catholic stamp. The white *coiffes* and stiff-goffered collarettes of the women give them quite a nun-like appearance. This is heightened by the conventional sobriety of the long-waisted, pointed bodice with hanging sleeves, and

pleated skirt bound with bands of velvet and embroidery. In the beautiful Breton embroidery, as in the old Breton furniture, some sacred emblem is usually interwoven with the arabesques and garlands, showing us in yet another instance how the spiritual fervor, which found its most striking expression in the symbolism of the calvaries and shrines, really pervaded the whole of Breton life.

There is a noticeable difference between the pardons of the Spring and those of the Autumn, and it is necessary to witness both if one would understand the Breton character. In Brittany the Spring has a peculiar charm, a freshness and delicacy of coloring only to be found in humid countries. The sky is veiled in a sort of luminous mist, and the gorse and broom are spreading over the land. From the first days of March when, according to the picturesque Breton expression, "the heavens expand," it is as though the face of Mother Nature softened into a tender smile, and the Breton is too true a Celt not to respond. The first volley of bells ushering in the pardon season seems to set a world of unsuspected sentiments vibrating in the heart of the people, and the Breton ordinarily so grave, becomes gay and *insouciant* as a child. The young girls take out their most delicate *coiffes* and ruffles, their gayest ribbons and aprons, and all their silver finery. The young men - not a whit behind the girls in their naïve vanity - don their velvet suites, their embroidered vests, and their summer hats of white felt, adorned with silver buckles and long velvet streamers. The roads become crowded with all sorts of conveyances and pedestrians, and after the long silence of the Winter there is everywhere a revival of hope and energy, which gives the pardons the nature of a *fête champêtre*, especially as at this season they are often held in some tiny oratory in the heart of the country instead of in the parish church.

This Spring blitheness rises in a sort of crescendo up to Midsummer-Day, when the fête of the Summer solstice is celebrated with ardor throughout Brittany, where it would be difficult on St. John's Eve to find a village or even a farm, in which the symbolic bonfire (the *Tantad*) is not kindled.

After Midsummer-Day there is a noticeable change in the pardons, which begin to lose their festive character just as, by a curious coincidence, the sombre note of the heather becomes the distinctive color of the landscape. As the momentous question of the harvest begins to preoccupy the people, the joyousness of the Spring disappears, and the Breton resumes his habitual gravity.

The two great pardons in honor of *Saint Anne* are grave in character. Ste. Anne d'Auray is entirely a religious fête, a pilgrimage rather than a pardon, and it is justly called the *Lourdes* of Brittany. And despite the magnificence of the procession at Ste. Anna de la Palude, of which mention has already been made, the general impression is melancholy owing to the tragic evidence of the havoc

wrought by the sea during the year, which is presented by the mourning groups of widows and orphans of shipwrecked sailors and fishermen, and by the pathetic remnant of "survivors" – a special feature at this pardon – who follow the procession clad in the weather-stained clothes they had on at the time of the catastrophe.

To a population which mainly draws its living from the sea, the stormy Winter months are typical of danger and want, and as the Autumn advances the shadow of coming disasters seems to cast a gloom over the pardons; until these, having begun in the Spring when everything was full of joy and hope, come fitly to a close on All Soul's Day, well placed by the Church in the season of the year when nature speaks of the ultimate decay of all things terrestrial, and in Brittany grey skies and rolling mists seem to enclose the land in a perpetual twilight.

Such is the Breton Pardon – the fervent religious pilgrimages and fêtes in honor of a patron saint. It is the expression of the highest aspirations of a people, and occupies in their national life an importance beyond that of the fêtes of any other country.

Such is the Breton Pardon; but now, alas! one is obliged to make the melancholy admission that it is extremely doubtful whether it will be possible ten or even five years hence to say the same.

It is always perilous to generalize about a country, and this is particularly true of Brittany, where the old Celtic individualism still survives, giving each commune its own peculiar characteristics, so that in one village will be found all the old religious fervor; in another a strong anti-clerical element; in another indifference – hence the conflicting accounts of the Bretons given by tourists according to the part of Brittany visited.

Taking, however, *Basse Bretagne* as a whole, it must be evident to any close observer that though the pardon still flourishes, though the framework is still intact, the fine spirit which created it and gave it its vitality is dying out. For the last ten or twelve years, owing to a variety of causes which will now be briefly indicated, an insidious change has been working beneath the surface of Breton life, undermining the whole structure, and now only a resolute and unified effort on the part of all people of good-will can save Brittany from the modern blight of scepticism and materialism – a truly lamentable fate for a race which remained tenaciously faithful to its old traditions throughout the turbulent period of the Revolution.

Brittany has suffered the usual fate which overtakes picturesque counties where the national life has been maintained. Artists, flying from the horrors of our spurious civilization, discovered a veritable *el dorado* in this primitive country, peopled by simple folk with beauty in

their lives: a beauty which is never found in non-Catholic countries, as an artist (not of our faith) observed to the present writer in a little out of the way Breton village. These colonies of artists made little difference at first. Workers themselves, and generally impecunious, they gladly adapted themselves to life around them. There as elsewhere, however, they were placed in the unfortunate position of being obliged "to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs." These artists had to paint in order to live, and by the pictures which brought them fame they revealed the beauties of Brittany to the wealthy tourist, who promptly proceeds to destroy the picturesqueness and simplicity he has ostensibly come to admire.

To supply the tourist with the luxuries he requires, the whole life of the country is disorganized, and monstrous hotels, fitted with all modern requirements, soon replace the old-fashioned inns. Even in more sophisticated countries every year brings fresh evidence of the deteriorating effect which the introduction of a visitor's season has on simple village folk. Among primitive people like the Bretons the advent of the tourist bids fair to rub all the bloom off the native life. The short tourist season, with its extravagant prices, upsets the economic conditions, and introduces the fever of money making among the people – and the evil is increased by the ill-judged lavishness, or ostentation, of the tourist, who scatters coppers about and then declares that all Bretons are beggars. The result is that in many of the well-known resorts the natives regard the tourists simply as "purses," out of which they try to get enough during the Summer season to support them for the rest of the year.

How would it be possible for the people to remain simple and unaffected when they find their whole life – their religion, their amusements, their costumes and customs – regarded as a curious survival of archaic days by a host of inquisitive strangers? Tourists crowd to all the pardons, where, as a rule, their attitude is either one of contemptuous superiority or of indulgent amusement. They smile discreetly at the air of grave *recueillement* with which the peasants accompany their parochial cross in the procession. They endeavor to secure snapshots of the most striking incidents, that is, of the most solemn moments of the ceremony. Some of them "vote the whole thing delightfully quaint," and the people "dear simple creatures;" others "find the show over-rated," and observe with a certain indignation that "when you have seen one pardon you have seen them all." Others again, and happily these are numerous, behave in a manner creditable to their intelligence and breeding – to one and all the pardon is simply a spectacle.

Besides the tourists a large number of natives also attend the pardons as *spectators*, estranged from the Breton spirit by education, residence in the larger town or absence from Brittany. Such people think it "the correct thing" to treat the pardon as a *partie de plaisir*, arriving in *char-à-bancs* and motors to picnic *al fresco*, and amuse

themselves at the expense of the simple villagers. Naturally the result is that, except at the lesser pardons which by their obscurity have preserved their original character, the Bretons are gradually giving up many of their most touching pieties – delicate flowers of devotion which have withered under the inquisitive gaze of the spectators.

There is indeed danger that all the beauty of Breton life will be destroyed as the modern spirit, with its false ideals of culture, advances into Brittany. All the characteristic features of Breton fêtes are now threatened by some modern innovation: the *biniou* and *bombarde*, by the pianola or the concertina; the *gavotte* by the valse; the folksongs by dubious music-hall ditties; the national costume by the latest Parisian mode; the bard with his *gwerz* by a sensational newspaper. In this arcadian land, until quite recent times, important national events were made known by wandering bards, and even to-day at the pardons an attentive crowd always gathers to listen to the rhymed tale of any dramatic occurrence.

The position of the Breton pardon is therefore, as can be imagined, seriously imperiled, but real irreverence – except that caused by drunkenness – is still happily very rare, and though there is a decided and annually increasing leakage in the ranks of practical Catholics, there is on the other hand no country where one can find examples of a more perfect Faith. At pardons, in the churches, by the wayside calvaries, one sees immobile figures absorbed in a very ecstasy of prayer; men and women lifting up their hearts in supplication or thanksgiving, with an absolute confidence in the power of the almighty to work miracles for their sake.

In spite of the ravages caused by alcoholism – the curse of Brittany – the people have not yet degenerated in physique, and, except in certain unhealthy districts, the Bretons, men and women, are fine types of humanity. Among the women one frequently sees types full of mystical charm; the men, well-grown and muscular, have a real dignity of carriage, and express themselves with a grave courtesy.

As to the excellence of the material from the moral point of view, one cannot do better than quote a non-Catholic writer, the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, who writes thus of the Bretons: "Christianity – that is Christian morality – has steeped their lives in its principles. There is drunkenness; it is almost their only vice. Their religion has made them honest, God-fearing, tender-hearted, and leading pure lives."

In considering the causes which are undermining the religion of the Bretons – chiefly the anti-clerical war waged by the government, the demoralizing influence of the tourist and the spread of alcoholism – it is scarcely necessary even to allude to the efforts of Welsh Non-conformist ministers, and others, to substitute some form

of Protestantism for the national faith. They have not, and never can have, any success, though their charitable gifts of fire-wood, remedies, and linen are naturally very acceptable to the poor, with whom they are able to establish an unusual intimacy, owing to the close affinity between the Welsh and Breton languages.

The Breton will be Catholic or nothing. Religion to him is the Catholicism which is interwoven with the web of Breton life; the Faith he may be said to imbibe with his mother's milk. It is fortunate, therefore, that the clergy have realized in time the danger of exalting distant places of pilgrimage, as the Breton is much attached to his national saints, whose intercession he usually implores with a touching humility as though feeling himself too unworthy to address himself directly to the Almighty.

The extraordinary increase of temperance in Ireland shows, however, what *can* also be done in Brittany to eradicate the evil of intemperance, and in this, as in everything else, we must place our hopes for the future of Brittany in the success of the Celtic renaissance now stirring throughout the land.

Brittany was made part of France in 1532, but was practically independent up to the Revolution, when all her privileges came to an end. From this on the French Government systematically endeavored to destroy the spirit of local patriotism under the mistaken impression that by ceasing to be a Breton one would become a better Frenchman. All the ancient divisions were broken up, and the country divided artificially into *départements*, confusing the different dialects and uniting quite different peoples – in short, pursuing that disastrous system of centralization which necessarily creates a race of *déracinés*.

In spite of all repressive measures, the limits of the two languages have changed little since the sixteenth century, and Breton is still the ordinary vehicle of speech with one million two hundred thousand people in *Basse Bretagne*, though owing to its exclusion from the school curriculum it has in many places assumed a corrupt form. In the churches Breton necessarily continued in use for sermons, confessions, and catechisms in spite of a law – which remained a dead letter – ordering that no language but French should be used in the pulpit, and when M. Combes, who fully realized the advantage the Church gained by the use of the national language, tried to enforce this law the Bretons raised such an agitation that the Government had to yield. Since the separation of Church and state the clergy are of course free to do as they please.

In France, even more than elsewhere, political differences impede all progress, and there again, but for the example of Ireland, one would despair of the possibility of getting all to work together for the common good of the country. At the present union is rendered

impossible by the intransigent attitude of the Royalist party, which, in the opinion of the present writer, works incalculable harm to the Catholic cause. The Republic is fixed in France, and, instead of wasting time in chimeras of a restored monarchy or empire, all should unite in endeavoring to make the Republic worthy of a great people, with a fine history behind them and, let us hope, a glorious future.

Even in Brittany the old attachment to the monarchy is dead, and the mass of Bretons are republicans, so that they are placed in a most awkward dilemma at elections, where the only choice is between a royalist candidate and a supporter of the government's anti-clerical policy, which, as Catholics, they of course condemn. If, on the other hand, all the Catholic votes went together, a far greater number of deputies of moderate views could be returned. In the same way the position of Catholic functionaries, a numerous class in Brittany, is made peculiarly difficult: on the one hand they are threatened by the government (directed by the small section which has unfortunately obtained control in France), who declare that no good republican can be a Catholic, and on the other hand they are attacked by the royalist party, who are equally vehement in declaring that no good Catholic can be a republican. Thus all the Catholic employees of the government are deprived of the support of the wealthy and influential Catholic families, who stand aloof from the life of the country, and by their avowed anti-republican propaganda furnish their enemies with a pretext for their policy of tyranny and persecution – which they could hardly wage in the name of Liberty, Equality, or Fraternity!

The masonic system of espionage is too well-known to need description here, but it may just be mentioned that to the personal knowledge of the writer, not content with stationing emissaries at the church doors on Sundays to note down the officials who attend Mass or who permit their families to do so, they also introduce themselves into private dwellings, and question the *concierges* as to the newspapers taken by the occupants, their mode of life, their visitors, etc., etc.!

Brittany has an association similar in idea to the Gaelic League, *L'Union Régionaliste Bretonne*, founded in 1898 for the reconstruction of Breton life in all its forms: artistic, literary, linguistic and economic, and here all political opinions are supposed to find place, the one point in common being that all demand that the government should raise the interdict against the language in the State Schools. *L'Union Régionaliste* issues many Breton publications, arranges exhibitions and fêtes, and organizes the representation of Breton mystery plays, notably that of *Nikolazig*, now given annually at Auray during the Pardon of Ste. Anne, but it cannot be said that it has as yet reached the mass of the people, and many of those most interested in the language have never even heard of the *Union*, which is confined to a few centers.

The wonderful Celtic renaissance which has transformed Ireland during the last ten or fifteen years, expanding the life of the people physically and intellectually, has yet to take place in Brittany, and it remains to be seen whether there too the movement started by a cultural group will finish by gaining the popular classes.

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