

BRO NEVEZ

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



Detail from 'View in Wales' attributed to Paul Sandby (1731-1809) from the Yale Center for British Art – see related story on page 13.

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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

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

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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. Unless otherwise noted Lois Kuter is the author of all articles in this issue. Contributions from others would be very welcome.!



Editor's Note

Readers who receive *Bro Nevez* by snail mail may not find this December issue in their mailbox until January. And those receiving it by e-mail will see it after Christmas.. My apologies for that, but it always takes longer to put things together than I foresee.

Those interested in getting *Bro Nevez* in a more timely manner, and in color, are encouraged to switch to a Pdf version sent by e-mail. But, I know that, like me, many like to have a paper document in hand to read rather than sit in front of a computer screen!



Christmas and New Year's Greetings from Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù

The Maison de Culture for the Trégor-Goëlo area puts out a regular newsletter packed with information about the many events of that region – Breton classes, concerts, festoù-noz, exhibits, children's activities, lectures and workshops, and more. It is an amazing look at how vibrant Breton culture is today. And each year the newsletter prints greetings in Breton that one can use for the holidays. Readers will receive this issue of *Bro Nevez* too late to use phrases for Christmas, but it's not too late for New Year's. Here are some suggestions – in Breton, French and English which I have added.

Nedeleg laouen / Joyeux Noël / Merry Christmas
Bloavezh mat / Bonne année / Happy New Year

Bloavezh mat ha yec'hed mat
Bonne année et bonne santé
Happy New Year and good health to you

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

Nedeleg laouen ha bloavezh mat e 2025 a hetomp deoc'h
Nous vous souhaitons un joyeux Noël et une excellente année 2025
We wish you and Merry Christmas and an excellent year 2025

Gwellañ hetoù / Meilleurs voeux / Best wishes

Yec'hed mat d'ho mignoned ha d'ho familhoù
Une bonne santé à vos amis et vos familles
Good health to your friends and your family

Bloavezh mat da beb hini
Ha yec'hed e-leizh an ti !
Une bonne année à tous
Et la santé à toute la maisonnée

A Happy New Year to all
And good health to the whole house

**Ur bloaz nevez a hetomp deoc'h
Korf e yec'hed, kalon e peoc'h !**

*Nous vous souhaitons une bonne année
Un corps en pleine santé et un cœur en paix !*
We wish you a Happy New Year
A healthy body and a heart at peace!

France's Regional Languages Still under Attack

This November French President Emmanuel Macron was quoted as saying during a speech at the Académie Française that “the regional languages are an instrument of division of the nation.” Taken out of context?? The statement seems clear enough in continuing the depiction of regional languages like Breton as a threat to the unity of France. Certainly, there was a strong reaction among the speakers of the 25 languages in France considered by UNESCO to be vulnerable or severely threatened with extinction. And the statement is in contrast to Macron's 2021 speech in Villier-Cotterêts where he said “everyone has the right to know, speak or transmit their language or languages, and this is a non-negotiable right.”

But, is there some hope for pro-Breton language government action?

This December François Bayrou was appointed Prime Minister of France (by President Macron). From Pau in the Béarn area of the Pyrennes of France, Bayrou is a native speaker of Béarn, a Langue d'Oc close to Gascon.

In the past Bayrou has been outspoken in defense of regional language and denounced the “deadly uniformization” of French culture (2013). In 2021 when the Molac law was being debated he called for a change in the French Constitution which would protect regional languages. The Constitutional language stating “French is the language of the Republic” was used at that time to block part of the Molac law when the Constitutional Council judged that immersion teaching of regional languages in public schools was anti-constitutional. (See *Bro Nevez* 158, June 2021 for background on the Molac law.)

Given Bayrou's past promotion of regional languages it is hoped that in the role of Prime Minister he may be able to make some changes in government policies. These could positively impact immersive teaching with a law to protect and encourage these models as developed by Diwan for Breton, Calandreta for Occitan, or Ikastola for Basque. There is also opportunity to strengthen linguistic rights by giving official status to the regional languages.

Major obstacles remain – the old argument that regional languages weaken the unity of France is still alive and

well among politicians, and the article of the French Constitution declaring French to be the language of the Republic still blocks the way for support of regional languages.

(Information gleaned from Agence Bretagne Presse posting December 14, 2024)

No to Radio Breizh, Breton Language Radio

As reported on the website for *Le Poher* newspaper, Arcom, France's regulatory authority for audiovisual and digital communication, has turned down a request for the establishment of a frequency for Radio Breizh on Digital Audio Broadcasting instead of FM radio. This would make the radio broadcasts audible throughout Brittany.

The five Breton language radios requesting a common frequency for Radio Breizh are certainly alive and well in Brittany but have limited geographic range: Radio Naoned, Radio Bro Gwened, Radio Kreiz Breizh, Radio Kerne and Arvorig FM. With wide public and political support, efforts by the association Brudañ ha skignañ will continue to secure a frequency for Radio Breizh. Openings are limited and Arcom decided to pass over the Breton application and give the open frequency to a jazz radio station.



**European Language Equity
Network (ELEN)**
Elen.ngo

ELEN held its General Assembly November 8-10 in Bilbao in the Basque Country. Representatives from across Europe who work for the defense and promotion of minority languages are part of this network including Bretons of Kevre Breizh and Diwan.

These two organizations presented a resolution on the linguistic rights of minorities in France and noted the challenges facing the language immersion schools of Eskolim. Eskolim (eskolim.org) is a federation of immersion schools in France: for Breton (Diwan), Basque (Seaska), Occitan (Calandreta), German and Alsatian (ABCM-Zweitsprachigkeit), Catalan (La Bressola), and Corsican (Scola Corsa).

The principal resolution of the assembly which was adopted unanimously was a call for attention to the precarious situation of the Basque language in its three historical territories – Euskadi, Nafarroa and Iparralde.

Other resolutions adopted addressed the need for official recognition of Asturian and Galician, housing crises in Wales which threaten Welsh-speaking communities, and a call to modify Article 2 of the French Constitution to protect the languages of France.

Workshops brought together linguistic experts to look at topics such as tourism and secondary residences which have a cultural impact in Cornwall, Wales and the Balearic Islands, a Welsh government report on autonomy for communities to strengthen the use of Welsh, “linguistic breathing spaces” for Basque, and finance opportunities in the European Union for language projects.

ELEN also addressed a call to the UN for expanded protection of speakers of minority language who have seen a rise in hate-speech against them. Below is a specific statement from the ELEN website to address the continued limitation of a media and public presence.

In 2025 the ELEN General Assembly will be held in Catalonia to coincide with the 50th anniversary of CIEMEN, a founding member of ELEN. The Centre Internacional Escarré per a les Minories Ètniques i les Nacions was founded in 1974 and is based in Catalonia as a non-profit working for cultural rights of minorities of Europe.

ELEN Oral Statement to the 2024 UN Forum on Minority Issues Session 2 Minority Representation in Public Spaces.

Thank you Mr. Chair, Your Excellencies. The European Language Equality Network is today the leading international organization working for the protection of European indigenous minoritized languages.

Every day we work with our members to help them in their efforts at effective language recovery and revitalization. And every day we deal with attacks and discrimination against these languages, most of which are endangered.

Minoritized language representation in public spaces is vital in our efforts to ensure language recovery and maintenance. The aim of our organization is that we are able to live every aspect of our lives in our languages. However, these public spaces where we are able to use our languages are being constantly undermined in some States.

One example of this discrimination concerns a recent application to have a Breton language radio station. Something that you would think would be widely supported by a modern European state. Yet this was blocked last week by the French regulator Arcom. It means that there is not one single Breton language radio station on DAB in Brittany, meanwhile Arcom allowed for another French language radio station. In the same week the French President declared that “regional” languages have always caused divisions, a dangerous 19th century supremacist view that has led to long-term discrimination

against minoritized and indigenous languages and peoples, and this despite France perceiving itself as central to the European project, a project where one of the founding European Values is to protect language diversity. And a few days ago it was announced that the Corsican Assembly would not be able to use their language in their Assembly as it was “against the Constitution”.

More widely we have seen the exponential rise in hate-speech on social media directed at all speakers of minoritized languages. This has had the effect of these speakers leaving these social media spaces, in effect silencing them and meaning we have even less presence and visibility in public spaces.

To remedy this we still need clear, unambiguous language rights and legislation that will act to ensure that our languages are represented in public spaces, from the media to signage.

Therefore, we urge the UN to draft a Convention, working with ELEN, that will work to ensure the long-term protection and development of endangered, minoritized and indigenous languages.



The 8th Forum of Régions Européennes Minoritaires was held November 25-28 in the Basque Country. The gathering was organized by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) and the Basque Association of Language Industries (LANGUNE) and included political representatives and experts on the minority languages of Europe.

The focus of the forum was on the role of minority languages in a world dominated by digital technology. Discussed was how minority languages support economic and cultural development and the challenges and opportunities for innovation in the use of artificial intelligence – for example, in translation and voice recognition. Financial challenges to the development of technology and the need to make technology accessible to all linguistic groups were also addressed.

The roles played by minority languages in economic development, education, and the media were also discussed with the conclusion that languages are not simply a heritage to be protected but tools to build an economic future and innovative and inclusive cultures.

(Information drawn from Agence Bretagne Presse December 6 posting and the FUEN website, fuen.org)

Some Public Presence for Breton and Gallo on Regional Rails

This December train riders in Brittany will be hearing announcements in Breton and Gallo. This is the result of discussions between the Regional Council of Brittany and SNCF to implement these recordings on an experimental basis. To start, they would be on 20% of regional trains with the hope for expansion and the addition of a visible presence for Breton and Gallo as well.



Prizes for the Promotion of the Gallo Language

For the 8th year, the Region of Brittany has awarded the Prix du Gallo to show its support for this language which is part of the heritage of Upper Brittany. A jury put together by the Institut du Gallo selected five awards (1,000 Euros and a certificate) for the most pertinent and innovative work for the transmission and use of Gallo. The ceremony was held in Rennes and aired on TV Rennes, Tébéo and TébéSud in mid-December.

Prize for a Gallo Speaker - Réjane Rêcheux-Deluce

The awardee is the head of the association Querouézée which aims to support the use of Gallo in eastern Côtes d'Armor. She organized "Gallo en scene" to put Gallo in a public spotlight. She is also a storyteller, singer, radio presence (RCF and Bretagne 5), and Gallo teacher.

Prize for a Community – Montfort Communauté

Montfort Communauté in Ille-et-Vilaine signed the charter "Du Galo, dame Yan, dame Vère" and encouraged its staff to learn Gallo – some 50 taking a class offered by the Institut du Gallo.

Prize for the Future of Gallo – the Sainte-Anne de Romagné school

This private school in Ille-et-Vilaine has created intergenerational programs for Gallo where students and grandparents work together to create mini theater pieces and collect sayings in Gallo.

Prize for Cultural Action - Le Centre d'Action Culturelle (CAC) Sud 22

The CAC of the south of the Côtes d'Armor in the Loudeac area created a game called "l'enferluzée des tailes de lin" where players search for information in traveling to different sites and using smartphones or tablets to find clues.

Prize for a Business or Association – Bertons

Based in Guichen (Ille-et-Vilaine) Bertons creates products to show attachment to Upper Brittany and Gallo culture – t-shirts, caps, recipe books, drinks ... They will open an online shop and work with the Institut de la langue galloise for translation.

The Region of Brittany aims to increase its financial support of Gallo to expand teaching of Gallo at all levels of education and to provide activities in Gallo as well as training for teachers. There are plans also to provide more media coverage and to make signage in Upper Brittany trilingual with Gallo as well as Breton and French.

Support for Diwan

As reported in the September 2024 issue of *Bro Nevez* (171) Diwan put out a call for an exceptional show of support in view of financial challenges and the need to raise 500,000 euros.

Members of the U.S. ICDBL have made contributions to a fund we have set up to support Diwan. This has not been a huge amount of money, but we were able to respond to the Diwan call for help with a check for 1,000 euros from this fund.

Diwan's call for support did not go unheeded in Brittany and many individuals and organizations as well as government bodies contributed to meet the challenge. As noted in a thank you letter addressed to all contributors, the Region of Brittany (four departments) gave 200,000 euros and the departments of Finistère and Morbihan each gave 50,000 euros. A number of communes, businesses, organizations, and individuals also sent support totaling some 100,000 euros. The Pays de Loire Region has failed to show any support despite the strong attachment of the people of the department of Loire-Atlantique to the Breton language and culture and the presence of Diwan schools there. And this has not only impacted Diwan, but cultural organizations and festivals who have seen support from Pays de Loire dwindle or disappear.

While finances have always been a challenge for Diwan whose Breton language immersion schools receive only limited support from the French education system, Diwan will continue to grow and has plans to open new schools in Orvault (Loire-Atlantique), Tréguier (Côtes d'Armor) and in the Hennebont area (Morbihan) as well as a middle school in Ille-et-Vilaine. There is hope to develop professional and technological training programs as well.

I pass along the thanks of Diwan's president, Yann Uguen, to U.S. ICDBL members who have contributed to our Diwan fund. – Lois Kuter



Bretons Run to Support the Breton Language

Every two years a relay run called Ar Redadeg is organized to cross all five departments of Brittany

engaging people of all ages to raise money for Diwan and Breton language projects. (See *Bro Nevez* 170, June 2024 for more information).

For the 2024 run awards were distributed this November with 135,000 Euros spread between nine projects. Diwan has been the regular recipient of Ar Redadeg funds and this year received 75,000 Euros – much needed support in a time of financial challenges. Other recipients were:

Splann! – for Breton language research and publications (15,000 Euros)

Kleor – for audiobooks in Breton (3,000)

Skol an Emsav – to make the Breton language magazine Frikomeg available online (13,000)

Timilenn – to develop Breton language literature for young people (5,000)

BBDLL – to develop chess learning tools in Breton (5,000)

Dibistig – to provide a bilingual book to maternity wards (4,000)

Teatr Piba – for a theater piece in Breton (12,000)

Plum FM – for a radio emission in Gallo for the Redon area (3,000)

The next Redadeg from May 8 to 16, 2026, will start in Lannion and end in Nantes with routes crossing all five departments of Brittany to be determined.



Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, Inducted into Brittany's Order of the Ermine

Photo from Agence Bretagne Presse

Normally a slate of candidates to be nominated for the Order of the Ermine is received each year by members of the Order to choose four (sometimes five) new individuals to receive this honor, and the 2024 inductees were presented in the September issue of *Bro Nevez* (171). But exceptions can be made as was the case this November when a Breton delegation traveled to Dublin, Ireland, to present the medallion to Michael Higgins in recognition of his actions in favor of the Gaelic language and culture, including the creation of the Gaelic language TV station TG4, and for his knowledge of Breton culture and official expression of support for it.

The Breton delegation was led by Loïg Chesnais-Girard, president of the Regional Council of Brittany and Lena Louarn, Chancellor of the Order of the Ermine. They were accompanied by Stéphane Perrin, vice president of the Regional Council and Jacques-Yves Le Touze, vice president of Skol Uhel ar Vro, the Cultural Institute of Brittany. Irish friends of Brittany were also present for the ceremony: Éamon Ó Ciosáin who was inducted into the Order of the Ermine this September 2024, Anne

Gallegher, president of TG4 and Alan Esslemont, director of TG4.



Istor Breizh – A New Magazine to Present Breton History

A quarterly journal, *Istor Breizh*, has been launched to present the history of Brittany and stimulate reflection on how it is linked to Brittany's identity today.

This will be directed by Jacques-Yves Le Touze, vice president of Skol Uhel ar Vro with Ouest-France journalist Christian Gouerou as editor-in-chief. Editorial and layout work will also involve Armelle Le Guillou and Olwenn Manac'h. Like the magazine *Dalc'homp Sonj!* which was directed by Jacques-Yve Le Touze in the 1980s this promises to be rich in varied content and attractively illustrated.

The first issue of *Istor Breizh* came out in October with 120 pages and two main “dossiers” by various authors – one on the art movement *Seiz Breur* and the other on the continued discussion of the Celtic identity of Brittany sparked by the controversial museum exhibit “Celtique?” Other articles cover a range of topics.



The Breton Flag Flies Again in Nantes

On October 16, 2024, the administrative tribunal of Nantes ordered that the

Breton flag be removed from its place at the Nantes town hall where it flew beside the French, European, and City of Nantes flags. This December 6 the municipal council of Nantes approved the presence again of the Breton flag in view of the strong sense of Breton identity in this city and region as well as the role of Nantes as the ancient capital of Brittany.

Some history about the flag ...

The modern Breton flag – Gwenn ha Du / White and Black – was designed by Morvan Marchal with Ronan Klec'h (René Rychwaert) in 1923, or 1925 according to some sources. It was meant to be a modern representation for Brittany without religious or political symbolism.

The design has been said to be inspired by the American or Greek flags. The upper left corner of the Breton flag contains the “hermines” that were a heraldic symbol of Breton sovereigns for the 13th to 16th centuries. The nine lateral bands represent the pays or ancient dioceses of Brittany. Four white bands are for Lower Brittany: Léon, Trégor, Cornouaille and Vannes. Five black bands are for

Upper Brittany: Penthièvre, Dol, Rennes, St. Malo and Nantes.

Considered the national flag of Brittany, the Gwenn ha Du has been widely adopted today but went through periods in the 1930s, 40s and 50s when it was considered a seditious expression of Breton separatism. By the 1960s the flag started to become more widely flown – by cultural organizations in parades as well as at street protests. Although still considered radical, in 1965 the Gwenn ha Du was massively present at the final soccer championship game for France at the Rennes stadium. Today the flag is everywhere – at public gatherings of all kinds, protest marches, sporting events, and cultural gatherings. And its design can be found on all sorts of merchandising.

For a more detailed view of the history to the Gwenn ha Du and the many flags and banners of Brittany, the following books are recommended:

Guide des drapeaux bretons et celtes by Divi Kervella and Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez (Yoran Embanner, 2008).

Les drapeaux bretons de 1188 à nos jours by Philippe Rault (Coop Breizh 1998).



.bzh Celebrates 10 Years

Everyone is familiar with the website endings such as .com, .org, or .edu, but these markers for commercial, non-profit, and educational status have been supplemented in recent years – especially to identify country or regional origins.

To mark the Breton identity of a business, cultural organization, association, or an individual on the web .bzh was given approval by international regulator for these identifiers, the ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), with the official launch on December 4, 2014 which opened registration for the use of this extension.

This was not a simple matter, and the process to build an application for candidacy which met legal and technical requirements began in 2004. There was also an application fee of \$185,000 and the Region of Brittany contributed to meeting that payment and supporting the growth of popular support for .bzh.

By 2024 there were nearly 13,000 web domain names with .bzh – institutions, businesses, associations, individuals as well as many communes of Brittany. This has shown the pride Bretons take in their identity and the desire to show this identity on an international level.

The 10th anniversary will be celebrated in April 2025 in Quimper where the development of a Breton presence on the web and its role in promoting Breton culture and enterprise will be explored. It is hoped that the number of .bzh users will rise to 15,000 by then, making it as widely used as .scot for Scotland and .wales for Wales. And the more use made of .bzh the lower the annual cost for it will be. For more information see the website www.pik.bzh.

(information for this note was drawn from a posting by Philippe Argouarch for Agence Bretagne Presse, December 4)

Another Anniversary of Note, But Not One to Celebrate

The wreck of the Erika oil tanker off the coast of Brittany in December 1999

As a peninsula projecting west out into the Atlantic Ocean Brittany is often the victim of storms and its coasts can be treacherous. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of numbers cited for oil spills below, but Brittany's coasts had been impacted by numerous "black tides" before the wreck of the Erika in 1999.

January 1976 the "Olympic Bravery" carrying 250,000 tons of oil broke in two off the island of Ouessant. Only some of the oil reached coasts, but three months of clean-up were necessary to contain the damage.

October 1976, the "Boehlen" got into trouble off the island of Sein; 9,800 tons of oil reached the coast of Finistère.

March 1978, the infamous "Amoco Cadiz" hit rocks off of Portsall and 250,000 tons of oil polluted 360 kilometers of Brittany's northern coast. This was the sixth largest oil spill in the world to that date.

In April 1979 "Gino" collides with another ship spilling 750 tons of oil off Ouessant.

In 1989 "Tanio" breaks up off the island of Batz; 8,000 of its tons of oil reach the coast of Finistère and Côtes d'Armor.

In 1989 the "Exxon Valdez" left 44,000 tons of oil on the Alaskan coasts, giving North America a taste of the destruction of "black tides."

The following is an article prepared for *Bro Nevez* (No. 73, February 2000) by Natalie Novik, sadly passed away in 2022.

The "Erika": The Latest Oil Spill in Brittany

On December 12th the "Erika" a 25-years old tanker registered in Malta, on its way from Dunkirk to Livorno,

Italy, broke up in a winter storm south of Penmarc'h. Brittany.

The waves were 30 feet high, the winds blowing at 60-70 miles per hour, and the ship sank 40 miles off the Breton coast with 30,000 tons of heavy fuel in its hull.

The 21 Asian crew members – unaccustomed to Breton waters and storms – were rescued from the wreck by French and British Navy helicopters, and the French Navy immediately towed the rear half of the boat away from the coast, to let it sink at sea with half the load still in its hull. Efforts were made immediately to deploy booms to contain the fuel which had escaped from the prow of the ship, but fiercely stormy seas prevented their deployment.

The remaining 10,000 tons started a slow drift southward, while the French Navy, assisted by an international flotilla, tried to pump and eliminate fuel at sea. However, the viscosity and thickness of the fuel kept clogging the equipment. That's when a hurricane force storm hit the area on December 24th with winds clocking at 110 mph; the drifting fuel broke into smaller plates that landed on shore. Over 300 miles of coastline, from Penmarc'h in Brittany to the Vendée area south of the Loire River have been hit by gooey pellets or plates, particularly difficult to extract from rocks or clean off beaches.

Just after the ship sank, its captain was detained in Brest for about a week to testify. It appears that he thought all the certificates confirming the ship was seaworthy were in good order. However, early February [2000] the insurance company, RINA, finally released its paper trail which shows the ship underwent heavy but incomplete repairs in 1998 in Yugoslavia, had been reinspected by RINA in September, and given authorization to navigate only until January 2000. It is not clear whether the insurance company limited or defined the type of cargo the ship could carry during this time. From the deposition of the captain, it also appears that he had no clue he was headed for a force 9 gale; when the ship started breaking up, he first sent a request for assistance to the CROSS (a rescue headquarters) in Brest which he canceled after temporarily correcting the list of the tanker. Nevertheless, six hours later, the ship broke in two, and the crew was rescued in very dangerous conditions. Most of the rescuers were Breton with a vested interest in preventing this tragedy.

The French Navy sent remote-controlled robots to inspect the sunken hull, check if any fuel is leaking, and fix the wreck to prevent further escaping. However, as of this writing [February 2000] the fishermen in the St. Guenole area confirm that they find traces of leakage at sea. The French government has placed the responsibility of pumping the remaining oil on the shoulders of the company TotalFina. However, pumping operations will not start before the spring, perhaps even summer.

The fuel released by the tanker is classified as Fuel No. 2, a heavy type of fuel used for power plants. While a laboratory in the south of France claims that the fuel is toxic and that volunteers should stop the clean-up until they have sufficient protection, its toxicity is denied by the oil company. It belongs to TotalFina, the largest oil company in France, who has pledged to pay for the damage. The three areas affected so far by the spill – Brittany, Pays de la Loire (part of Brittany, but not recognized as such) and Vendée -Poitou – are filing a class action suit against the owners of the tanker, the oil company, and the insurance company. They held a meeting in mid-January with the President of TotalFina, Thierry Desmarests, who lectured those attending on his company's excellent environmental record, promised to help, but refused any dialogue and left before the regional representatives could get answers to their questions.

Thousands of volunteers showed up to help clean up the shores. The fuel sticks like peanut butter to everything it touches. While the beaches are now relatively clean, the rocky coast is still a problem, and new arrivals of fuel are still reported daily along the coast. For example, on February 2nd the coasts mostly spared near Carnac (Locmarquer, Saint-Philbert and Trinité-sur-Mer) faced the arduous task of shoveling up the oil. On February 7th the Larmor and Ploemeur beaches near Lorient faced a second arrival of globs of oil. While army troops have been called out and local fire companies have gotten the brunt of work to shovel up the oil, it has been primarily volunteers who have descended on the coasts of Brittany after each arrival of oil. This is indeed a disheartening task. The volunteers lack proper protection, and equipment is not always adequate. The recuperated oil is sent to retreatment to Donges, near Nantes.

Several oyster parks have been contaminated, but overall, the oyster producers guarantee that the oysters on the market are totally safe. The media have naturally sensationalized the spill and most agencies in Brittany and Vendée are trying now to reassure the public in order to attract visitors to the area this summer and keep selling fish and seafood from the area. However, so far, 35,000 oiled birds have been found. Since this spill affects migrating birds at sea, and most of them probably drown, the real total could be somewhere between 150,000 to 300,000 birds. The French government also issued a decree on January 10th forbidding any fishing from shore and digging for clams along a 200 mile stretch in Brittany.

One million dollars was released by the French government on January 11th to be paid to the fishermen, oyster cultivators and other victims of the spill. A generous Breton donor gave five million dollars to clean up the three islands (natural preserves) most hurt by the fuel, Belle-Ile, Houat, and Hoedic. And on February 4th

the French government released \$25 million to provide additional assistance to the clean-up efforts.

This latest spill comes after a dark series in the 1970s and 80s when six major oil spills hit Brittany, the largest one being the Amoco Cadiz in 1978, which spilled over 253,000 tons of fuel. Amoco finally paid after a lengthy lawsuit that lasted over ten years.

On February 5th, 30,000 people demonstrated in Nantes against the laxness of the authorities in checking the certification of offshore registered ships, and against the arrogance of the oil companies who show little or no concern to the polluted region and its inhabitants. In early February, a delegation from Alaska (the Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, based in Valdez) visited with the Syndicat Mixtes in Brittany, and saw for themselves the devastation in Belle-Ile Island and several harbors. They discussed the need to create similar citizens' committees in Europe, and to coordinate international information and action in order to prevent such disasters from happening again.

The above information has been retrieved on the Internet from the following sites:

www.ifremer.fr/cedre

www.france-ouest.com/nauffrage-erika

The website for the newspaper Le Télégramme (like that of Ouest-France noted above) also has a good supplement to chronicle the oil spill:

www.bretagne.com/supplements.

Some Basic Numbers about Brittany from NHU.bzh

Ni Hon-Unan ("Ourselves") was created in 2025 to provide a space to publish news and basic background articles on a range of topics – economy, politics, environment, history, culture, sports, inter-Celtic relations and more. The French language site is full of information with new articles published all the time. There is also an English-language site – nhu.bzh/nhu-brittany – which has a good introduction to NHU as well as some articles. Lack of English language writers and/or translators has limited the development of this site.

An article on the French part of the NHU site published on September 22 has basic information about Brittany – all five departments included. I have summarized some of this below but readers are encouraged to visit the site to find more details. – LK

Brittany is a peninsula sticking out westward from Europe into the Atlantic Ocean. The longest distance from east to west across Brittany (Ouessant to Vitré) is about 300 kilometers. The longest distance north to south (Cancalle

to Bernerie en Retz) is about 200 kilometers. Including all five departments, Brittany's area is 34,018 square kilometers. This compares with Wales at 20,735 square kilometers, Ireland with 84,412, and Scotland with 77,910. Brittany is about the same size as Taiwan (36,188) and larger than Belgium (30,688).

The population of Brittany as of January 2023 was 4,819,006 – about the same as New Zealand or the Republic of Ireland. [An INSEE figure recently showed a population of 4,899,156].

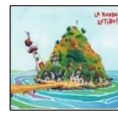
The gross domestic product of Brittany is about 143 billion Euros, a little less than Ukraine and slightly more than Kuwait.

The length of the Breton coast is around 2,700 kilometers, roughly equal to that of South Africa or Ukraine and more than Peru, Egypt, Germany or Portugal. Brittany possesses the largest seaweed fields of Europe and the 10th largest in the world.

New Music from Brittany – Albums, Books and a Documentary Film

Information for these notes has been drawn from reviews in *Musique bretonne* 280 (Nov. 2024), *Ar Men* 262 (Sept.-Oct. 2024) and *Ar Men* 263 (Nov.-Dec. 2024) as well as various website notes, including reviews on culture.celtie.fr.

New albums



La Banda Latira. *La banda ... latira !*

This group of five musicians provide 11 selections of arrangements and compositions drawn from Brittany and

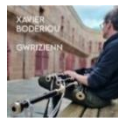
Asturias. Musicians providing this festive mix with song and instruments are Diego La Camiña (percussion), Floriane Legros (accordion), Rodrigo Joglar (gaita), Marta Gonzalez (percussion) and Nicolas Radin (baritone sax).



Bertolino-Le Gac. *Dour Andon.*

Breton flute player Gurvan Le Gac joins Pierre-Laurant Bertolino from Marseille who plays vielle à roue (hurdy-gurdy). They

perform compositions of an acoustic and electric combination drawn from traditional melodies and rhythms as well as jazz improvisation. The duo addresses a range of environmental and social justice issues in their songs.



Xavier Boderiou. *Gwrizienn.*

This is the third album of solo piping (Scottish bagpipes) by Xavier Boderiou with 11 selections of traditional Breton, Scottish and Irish melodies and dances as well as some of Boderiou's own compositions.



The Celtic Social Club. *Inventory*. Aztec Musique.

This is the 12th album by this inter-Celtic group of musicians from Ireland and Brittany/France. They have here a hefty selection of 20 compositions of tunes and songs rooted in traditional melodies and rhythms but set to rock and pop rhythms. Newest to the group is singer Taylor Byrne who joins Pierre Stéphan (violin), Richard Puaud (bass), Ronan Le Bars (uilleann pipes), and drummer Manu Masko.



Duo Fagon/Hellard. *Le Krign était presque parfait*. BiZis Productions.

This is an album with 13 selections of various Breton dances drawn from all parts of Brittany – compositions as well as arrangements of traditional dances. Franck Fagon provides alto sax and clarinet in pair with Jean-Sébastien Hellard on accordion and cornet.



Dylan and Mike James. *Dyma*.

Dylan James (born in Brittany) and father Mike James (originally from Wales and London) pair up with 10 ballads and songs – primarily in English – from Ireland, Cornwall,

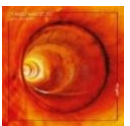
Wales and England. They provide notable vocal harmonies and solos with support of accordion, harmonica and bass fiddle. Included also is a French language ballad of Brittany and a lively suite for the dance ridée.



Krenadenn. *Kren*. Coop Breizh/Arfolk

Krenadenn is a project spearheaded by singer and trumpet player Erwan Burban.

This album has 11 compositions and arrangements of Breton traditional dances including laridé, plinn, scottish, fisel, kas-a-barh and others. Songs are in Breton, French and Gallo, with a variety of instruments giving an electronic groove to the performances.



L'Haridon-Nedelec. *Ar galv*. Musiques Têues.

This is a new release from bombard-biniou duo Yann-Ewen L'Haridon (who also sings) and Youenn Nedelec with a selection of traditional marches, dances and melodies and some compositions of a traditional style. They are joined for several selections by Alan Le Bozec on drums and Sylvain Barou on flutes.



Clarisse Lavanant. *Kan ar Yezh*. Label Mas'Irisi

This is the 13th album by Clarisse Lavanant with 18 songs in the Breton language, 12 of which are her own compositions. Other selections are drawn from Breton or Irish tradition or other composers for a mix of styles on themes of love of

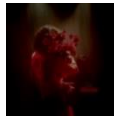
the Breton language, nature and threats to the environment, the beauty of Breton countryside and a call for the reunification of Brittany. Lavanant is accompanied by Philippe Guevel on keyboards and vocals who also did sound mixes and arrangements.



Arnaud Le Gouëfflec. *Comme Kafka*.

L'Église de la petite folie

Le Gouëfflec is an artist of *bandes dessinées* as well as a composer. This CD is an eclectic mix of styles and themes – from “easy listening” style music to electronics, jazz, and pop. He is accompanied by guitarist and composer Mocke, singer Claire Grupallo, and producer and musician of various electronic instruments Thomas Poli. The CD includes 9 song texts by Le Gouëfflec set to music by Mocke.



Moone. *Gri*. Mille et une lune/Arfolk

First album for singer and song composer Moone who accompanies herself on bouzouki and guitar for 12 selections in French and

English. She is joined by Hibu Corbel (drums), Fred Lucas (bass), Léopold Riou (guitars), Mathilde Chevrel (cello), Robin Foster (guitar), and Ronan Le Bars (uilleann pipes). Music is of various styles described as trip hop and electro pop with other influences as well.



Nij. *Les Orbes de Cristel*. La Compagnie des Possibles.

This is a CD of 13 selections described as a combination of ancient rhythms with futuristic sound. Performers are Maël Lhopiteau on electric harp and song with Tristan Le Breton on drums and electronics.



Kaolina. *Pilhoù*.

First album by this group of five women based in the Monts d'Arrée of central western Brittany with song compositions paying homage to women of note in Brittany and elsewhere – from Anne de Bretagne to Laura Jane Adams. Pilhou were women of Brittany who collected old clothing and rags and in the process fostered an oral tradition of storytelling.



Didier Squiban. *Nina*.

This is a selection of 15 compositions recorded live and in studios by pianist Didier Squiban. Described as jazz, Squiban draws from a number of influences. While the piano is center stage, he is accompanied for some selections by nine other musicians and a string quartet.



Robbe/Gloaguen. *En Concert*. Mazeto Square

This is a duo of Fabien Robbe on piano and Jérôme Gloagen on percussions with 11 selections recorded live. Influenced by jazz and blues the performances have an improvisational style.



Alan Stivell. *Liberté-Roazhon*. Verycords. For nearly 60 years Alan Stivell has been creating innovative compositions inspired by Breton traditional music, music of the Celtic world, and music from all over the world. He was one of the pioneers in the introduction of electric instruments for Breton dances and melodies and has never stopped creating new music. This double CD album is drawn from live performances at the Liberté in Rennes and Pleyel in Paris in 2022. Some sixty musicians are on scene including the Orchestre National de Bretagne, a bagad, soloists and rock ensembles. This is not a compilation of greatest hits or remix of Stivell's *Symphonie Celtique* but a selection of musical elements of meaning to Stivell over his long career – a “tour de propriétaire.”



Rozenn Talec – Yannig Noguét. *Melezour*. Arfolk. This is the fourth album for this duo with 12 selections – song texts by Rozenn Talec and music composed by Yannig Noguét. While Talec normally sings in Breton and has a presence especially at festoù-noz here she also sings in French with topics addressing a number of social issues. Noguét is a master of diatonic accordion and has performed with a range of Breton and other musicians and groups.



White Oak Standing. *Acoustic Session*. White Oak Production. This is a collaboration of singer Stefanie Theobald and Jonathan Dour with 10 texts by poetess Sarah Schein (alias Blueink Ditty). Theobald and Dour are joined by singer Mara Devaux for compositions described as a cross between acoustic folk-pop and neo-classical sound with a touch of gypsy flavor. Instrumental accompaniment includes guitar, piano and cello.

And some new books

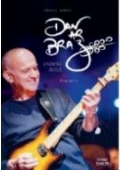


Hugo Aribart. *Ah, restons-y à table !* Les Cahiers de Chanson du Pays Nantais, Vol. 1. Le Chant du Lièvre. 75 pages. Hugo Aribart is employed at the Dastum 44 branch and has become an expert on the repertoire of the Nantes area and more widely Loire-Atlantique and francophone

traditions of France. This is the first of a series of collections of songs on various themes – this one with 20 song texts that would be sung at a gathering around food where different singers would offer up a selection during or after a meal. These are drawn from the Dastum 44 archives and accessible via Dastumedia. The publication includes details about different versions of each song, where it was collected, the singers, and other information about the context of song.



Bernard Lasbleiz. *War don – catalogue des timbres des chansons et cantiques en langue bretonne (XVIIe-XXe siècle)*. Dastum, Presses Universitaires de Rennes. Collection Patrimoine oral de Bretagne. Coming out in January 2025, this is an important catalogue of melodies used for Breton language songs and cantiques (hymns) from the 17th to 20th century. Bernard Lasbleiz is a scholar of Breton music and song collectors and music in the past centuries.



Frederic Jumbon. *Dan ar Braz, chemins bleus*. Coop Breizh. 320 pages. Dan ar Braz should need no introduction as a master of electric and acoustic guitar who has been on the music scene for some 60 years. He has played backup with Alan Stivell, the group Fairport Convention and other stars of the Celtic world. In more recent decades he has made a mark as a soloist and composer.

And a documentary film



Dastum, la maison des sources. This 52-minute documentary was produced by Giuseppe De Vecchi to present Dastum's “raison d’être” and history. The work of Dastum has been presented many times in the pages of *Bro Nevez* but this visual and audio testimony is certainly welcome. The

film was shown at several festivals of Brittany – Bogue d’Or, Yaouank and NoBorder – and shown on France 3 Bretagne on November 14. It also aired on TéléSud and TVR and can be found on the France 3 website: France.tv.



City of Breton Music

This October the creation of the “City of Breton Music” was announced. In Breton: Keriadenn muzik Breizh, in French: Cité de la musique bretonne, and in Gallo : Ôté de la muziQue bertone.

A collective composed of Ti ar Vro Treger-Goueloù, Dastum Bro-Dreger and performers active in the north central coastal area of Brittany worked for two years to plan this center for Breton Music. It will include exhibits, an interpretive center, a space for research and teaching, and performance events.

The former convent of the Soeurs du Bon Saveur in Bégard was identified as a site, and the project to create a cultural center which would boost economy and attract tourism was supported by the town of Bégard and the Guingamp-Paimpol Agglomeration.

The partners organized a public visit to the site on October 5 to present the project and exchange ideas with visitors. Alan Stivell agreed to be the “parrain” (“godfather”) for the project. His many years of performing Breton music and his outspoken support for Breton culture make him an idea sponsor for this important project.



The Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient 2025

Since 1994 the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient has featured a different part of the Celtic world, and for 2025 (August 1-10) “Cousins of America” will be featured. This does not mean that programming will be dominated by musicians and singers of Canada and the U.S., but those performers will be given a prime spot. While the festival is still being lined up for 2025 so far the “cousins” are being represented by Solas, an Irish-American band, and Vent du Nord from Quebec who will perform with the Orchestre National de Bretagne.

Others on the preliminary list of performers include Calum Stewart & Celtic Odyssey #4, Talik, and the Red Hot Chili Pipers from Scotland. Brittany will have strong presence with the ever innovative Alan Stivell, Nolwenn Korbell, ‘Ndiarz, Élodie Jaffré, Startijenn, Hamon-Martin Quintet, and Red Cardell. With some 5,000 performers and over 190,000 visitors this is a huge festival with concerts – both grand and informal - as well as parades, festoù-noz, workshops, art exhibits, conferences, master classes for song and various instruments, and sports to pack the ten days and nights. And a highlight is the championship of the first level bagadoù as well as other competitions for pipers. Pulling all this together is only possible with the work of some 1,700 volunteers.

While the festival in recent decades has also included strong participation from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Galicia, Asturias, and less strong presence from Cornwall and the Isle of Mann, Celts in other parts of the world have not been forgotten. Acadia was highlighted in both 2004 and 2012 with participation by Edith Butler and La Bottine Souriante (who were also at the 1986 festival). Australia was featured in 2006 and 2016. And 2011 highlighted the “Celtic diaspora.”

In looking back through years of newspaper clippings and brochures I have collected, Americans and Canadians had a presence in other years as well. This is by no means a complete view of North-American performers for the festival, but in 1994 there was a Cajun Country Night as well as a Country Music Night (American Country?) on the program lists. In 2002 the band from Texas called Clandestine performed at an America-Australia-Ireland

Night and there was an Acadian Night with Grand Derangement, Celtitude and fiddler Dominique Dupuis. In 2016 Joan Baez was present to perform.

To keep up with 2025 plans go to the website festival-interceltique.bzh.

The Yule Log in Brittany

The following information is drawn from a note on Christmas customs in Brittany posted on *Le Trésor de breton / Teñzor ar brezhoneg skrivet* (the treasure of written Breton) from December 22. This is the blog of Bernez Rouz and is published – in Breton and French – as a compliment to his column *Chronique brezhoneg* published on Sundays in the newspaper *Ouest France*. As is the case for all entries on Rouz’s blog this includes a wealth of details on the Breton language as it is found in various written publications which are cited in the blog. Readers are encouraged to explore the website for articles on a wide range of subjects: tresor-breton.bzh.

The following is my translation of the blog by Bernez Rouz on Christmas customs – my apologies for any mistranslation from the French to English. The Breton of the original has been kept – LK

The Yule log has been a tradition shared in most countries since the Middle Ages. In his column “Korn er brezhoneg” for *Ouest Éclair* in 1937, Loeiz Herriou provided several words to call it: **E Breizh e reer ag an tamm koed-se hervez ar c’hornadoù, etev, kef, skod, tosen, chouch an Nedeleg**. (In Brittany, depending on the territory, one gives this bit of wood the names of **Etev** (embers), **kef** (trunk), **skod, tosen** (heath stem/stump), **souche**).

In our Catholic country, custom dictates that the log is blessed before lighting it on fire: **A-raok debriñ e veze dav d’ar mestr lakaat an etev en oaled hag her bennigañ get ur barr lore ha dour benniget, kent lakat an tan e-barzh**. (Before the meal, the master of the house must put the log on the hearth and bless it with a laurel branch before lighting it on fire).

The ashes have several virtues: protection from lightning, fires, serpents, etc. The longer the fire burns the more magical powers will the ashes have, creating a race to get the largest yule log, as recounted in a tale by F. Jaffrez: **Etev Nedeleg ar mesaer** (The yule log of the shepherd): **N’hon eus etev Nedeleg ebet er bloaz-mañ; c’hoant am eus da c’houlenn ar piltos evlec’h a zo aze war ribl an hent digant Aotrou ar Maner** (We did not have a log that year; I would have asked for the large stump of the elm along the path). Facing the refusal of the lord of the manor, one needed a strategy; bewitch the stump and get the authorization to burn it.

Another interesting text published in 1934 in the journal *Kannadig Gwalarn* informs us of another belief; the Yule log brings a divine surprise: *Nag a flammou o tont er-maez eus an etev. Sell, emañ o terriñ! emañ un dra bennak o kouezhañ dioutañ! pezhioù moneiz! pezhioù arem, pezhioù arc'hant, pezhioù aour! Un teñzor kuzhet en etev* (What beautiful flames come out of the log. Look, it breaks apart and something falls from it! Coins of bronze, silver, gold! A treasure hidden in the log!)

With the introduction of charcoal, stoves and gas burners, the tradition of the log on the hearth gave way to a symbolic log on the table in the 1950s. It sometimes replaced the traditional cake of Christmas (**Gwastell Nedeleg**), described as a round and firm cake made of fine flour, butter and raisins.

Nedeleg laouen d'an holl (Merry Christmas to all).

A Christmas Tale

From *Du coq à l'âne – Traditions populaires de Bretagne* by Daniel Giraudon (Yoran Embanner, 2013)

The following is my translation primarily from the French of a tale collected by Daniel Giraudon in Plouguiel in the Tregor aera of Brittany. I have kept the Breton of the tale (in italics).

Daniel Giraudon has published a number of books on Gallo and Breton language folk tales, songs, sayings and beliefs, including ones focused on lore related to birds, trees and plants, insects, and sea life. The book from which this tale is drawn covers a full range of beliefs and tales related to a many animals: domestic and wild birds, horses, goats, pigs, snakes, amphibians, wolves, foxes, rats and mice, among others, including the ass of the title (l'âne).

The idea that animals can speak at midnight on Christmas eve is not unique to Brittany but found especially in Europe and dates to medieval times if not before. While this and other Breton versions are on the dark side, animals in other tales are simply paying homage to Jesus who was surrounded by animals when he was born in a manger.

Recommended for more examples of beliefs about animals regaining the gift of speech on Christmas night In Brittany and elsewhere is the article by Daniel Giraudon, "Merveilles de la nuit de Noël – la prophétie des animaux" (*Ar Men* 155, Nov.-Dec. 2006, pp. 28-33).

If you happen to be awake at midnight on any Christmas eve see if you hear any conversations among your pets or other animals you may encounter. But, be warned, you may not like what you hear.

Noz an Nedeleg / Christmas Night

One knows that on the night of Christmas no one sleeps other than man and the toad: *Da noz Nedeleg ne gousk ken / 'met an tonseg ha mab an den*. Farm animals hold a vigil. That's why before midnight mass, they are given a second ration of fodder, *adkoan*, to spend one of the longest nights of the year. It is claimed that, on this same night of Christmas, the beasts find again their voice, lost a long time ago.

But misfortune comes to the curious who attempt to overhear their conversation. A peasant who didn't take this belief seriously climbed one evening up to the hayloft above the stable. The twelve strokes of midnight had barely finished ringing when he heard his oxen conversing between themselves.

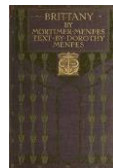
Para ez d'ober warc'hoazh ma far ? What will you be doing tomorrow my companion?

Kass hon mestr d'an douar, taking my master to be put in the ground, replied the other.

Start eo! That's hard, replied the first.

N'eo ket, peogwir eo komandet gant Doue. No, since it is God who has ordained it.

It is told that the terrified man then jumped into his bed to immediately sleep. The next morning he was dead as foretold; he was driven to the cemetery by his oxen.



A View of Brittany from 1905

Brittany with illustrations by Mortimer Menpes and text by Dorothy Menpes, 1905, 1912, London: A & C Black

Mortimer Luddington Menpes (1855-1938) was born in Port Adelaide in southern Australia. He would emigrate to London with his family when he was in his early 20s and study art to become a well-known painter and engraver. While on a sketching tour in Brittany he met artist James McNeill Whistler and would study under him. He was the illustrator for the book *Brittany* for which his daughter Dorothea Whistler Menpes (1883-1973) provided the text. Dorothy was the second child of Mortimer Menpes and fellow Australian Rosa Mary Grosse (1857-1936) and Whistler was named her godfather.

The following is drawn from their book *Brittany*. As is the case for most travel accounts from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this includes some interesting observations but a very romanticized interpretation of people and events. There are plenty of stereotypes but not the negative depictions of Breton people and culture

one finds in many travel accounts by British and American tourists.

Chapter XXI – A Romantic Land (pages 241-251)

Brittany is essentially a romantic country. It is full of mysteries and legends and superstitions. Romance plays a great part in the life of the meanest peasant. Every stock and stone and wayside shrine in his beloved country is invested with poetical superstition and romance. A nurse that we children once had, nineteen years of age, possessed an enormous stock of legends, which she had been brought up to look upon as absolute truth. Some of the songs which she sang to the baby at bedtime in a low minor key were beautiful in composition – ‘Marie ta fille,’ ‘Le Biniou,’ amongst others.

The village schoolmaster, who was our tutor, during our long afternoon rambles would often make the woods ring as he sang ballads in his rich, full voice. The theme changed according to his humor. Now the song was a canticle, relating the legend of some saint, or a pious chronicle; at another time it was of love he sang, generally ending sadly. Then, there was the historical song, recounting some sombre, or touching, or stirring event, when the little man worked himself up to a high pitch of excitement, carrying us children open-mouthed to gory battlefields and the palaces of sumptuous Kings. One quite forgot the insignificant schoolmaster in the rush and swing of the music.

There are many Breton ballads. The lives of the people are reflected truthfully in these compositions, which have as their themes human weakness, or heartache, or happiness. The Breton bards are still a large class. In almost every village there is someone who composes and sings. Each one holds in his or her hand a small stick of white wood, carved with notches and strange signs, which help towards remembering the different verses. The Gauls called this stick, the use of which is very ancient, the alphabet of the bards.

Mendicity is protected in Brittany. One meets beggars at all the fairs, and often on the highroads. They earn their living by songs and ballads. They attend family fêtes, and, above all, marriage ceremonies, composing songs in celebration. No Breton will refuse a bard the best of his hospitality. Bards are honoured guests. ‘Dieu vous bénisse, gens de cette maison,’ says one, announcing himself. He is installed in the ingle-nook, the cosiest corner of a Breton kitchen; and after having refreshed the inner man he rewards his host with song after song, often giving him the last ballad of his composition. When he takes his leave, a large bundle of food is slung over his shoulder. Unless you live for years in the same village, as I have done, sharing the joys and sorrows of the people, you can gain very little knowledge of the tales and songs and legends. The Breton is reticent on the advent of the stranger; he fears ridicule.

Then again, a child can always wriggle itself into the hearts and homes of people. Setting aside all racial prejudices and difficulties of languages, a child will install itself in a household, and become familiar with the little foibles of each inmate in a single day, whereas a grown-up person may strive in vain for years. I, as a child, had a Breton *bonne*, and used to spend most of my days at her home, a farm some distance from the village, playing on the cottage floor with her little brothers and sisters, helping to milk the cows, and poking the fat pigs. This, I think Mother could scarcely have been aware of; for she had forbidden Marie to allow me to associate with dirty children, and these were certainly not too clean. One day I was playing at dolls with a village girl under the balcony of Mother’s room. Suddenly, on looking up, I found her gazing at me reproachfully.

‘O Mother,’ I hastened to explain, pulling the child forward by the pinafore, ‘she are clean.’ We children were familiar with everyone in the village, even bosom friends with all, from stout Batiste, the butcher, to Lucia the little seamstress, and Leontine her sister, who lived by the bridge. If a child died we attended the funeral, all dressed in white, holding lighted tapers in our hands, and feeling important and impressive. If one was born, we graciously condescended to be present at the baptismal service and receive the boxes of dragées [candies] always presented to guests on such occasions. At all village processions we figured prominently.

When I returned to Brittany, at the age of ten, I found things very little changed. My friends were a trifle older; but they remembered me and welcomed me, receiving me into their midst as before. My sister and I took part in all the *pardons* of the surrounding villages. We learnt the quaint Breton dances, and would pace up and down the dusty roads in the full glare of summer sun hour after hour, dressed in the beautiful costume of the country – black broadcloth skirts, white winged caps, and sabots. Often we would go with our *bonne* and our respective partners into some neighbouring *débit de boissons* and drink *syrops* in true Breton fashion. At one *pardon* we won the *ruban d’honneur* – a broad bright-blue ribbon with silver tassels worn across the shoulder, and presented to the best dancer.

The Breton gavotte is a strange dance of religious origin. The dancers hold hands in a long line, advancing and retiring rhythmically to long-drawn-out music. Underneath an awning sit the two professional *biniou*-players, blowing with all their might into their instruments and besting time with their feet to the measure. The *sonneur de biniou* is blind, and quite wrapped up in his art; he lives, as it were, in a world apart. The *Joueur de biniou*, the principal figure, reminding one of a Highland piper, presses his elbow on the large leather air-bag, playing the air, with its many variations, clear and sweet on the reed pipe.

Brittany is the land of *pardons*. During the summer these local festivities are taking place daily in one village or another. The *pardon* is a thing apart; it resembles neither the Flemish *kermesse* nor the Parisian *foire*. Unlike the *foires* of Paris, created for the gay world, for the men and women who delight in turning night into day, the *pardon* has inspiration from high sources; it is the fête of the soul. The people gather together from far and near, not only to amuse themselves, but also to pray. They pass long hours before the images of the saints; they make the tour of the 'Chemin de la Croix,' kneeling on the granite floor.

Still, it is a joyous festival. The air is filled with shouts and laughter. For example, in Quimper, at the Feast of the Assumption, the Place St. Corentin is crowded. People have come from the surrounding towns, all dressed in the characteristic costume of their vicinities. Pont-Aven, Pont L'Abbé, Concarneau, Fouesnant, Quimperlé – all are represented. You see the tight lace wide-winged cap of Douarnenez women, hats bound with coloured chenille of the men of Carhaix, white flannel coats bordered with black velvet of the peasants of Guéméné, the flowered waistcoats of Pleavé; the women of Quimper have pyramidal coifs of transparent lace, showing the pink or blue ribbon beneath, with two long floating ends.

The great square in front of the cathedral is a jumble of gold and silver, embroidery ribbons, muslin, and lace – a joyous feast of colour in the sun. The crowd moves slowly, forming into groups by the porch and round the stalls, with much gossip. The square and the neighbouring streets are bordered by stalls trading in fabric and faiences, gingerbread, sweets, lotteries, cider, and fancy-work of all kinds. Young men and girls stop in couples to buy mirrors or coloured pins, surmounted with gold, that jingle, to fasten in their caps or in their bodices. Others gather round the lotteries, and watch with anxious eyes the wheel with the rod of metal that clicks all the way round on its spokes, and stops at a certain number. "C'est vingt-deux qui gagne!" cries the proprietor. A pretty little peasant woman has won. She hesitates, wavering between a ball of golden glass and a vase painted with attractive flowers. The peasants laugh loudly.

There are all kinds of attractions and festivities at the *pardons* – hurdy-gurdies, swing-boats, voyages to the moon, on which you get your full and terrible money's worth of bumps and alarms; for not only are you jerked up hill and down dale in a car, but also, when you reach the moon, you are whirled round and round at a tremendous rate and return backwards. There are side-shows in which are exhibited fat women, headless men, and bodiless girls, distorted thus by mirrors, the deception of which even we children saw through plainly. There are jugglers and snake-charmers.

It is not always in large towns like Quimperlé that *pardons* are held. More often they are to be witnessed in the country, perhaps miles away from any town, when the

people flock on foot. There you see no grand cathedral, no magnificent basilicas and superb architecture, but some simple little gray church with moss-grown walls and trees growing thickly about it. The rustic charm of the *pardons* is impossible to describe. Round you are immense woods and flowered prairies; in the woods the birds are singing; a mystic vapour of incense fills the air. Peasants gather round this modest house of prayer, which possesses nothing to attract the casual passer-by.

...

One must be a Breton born and cradled in the country in order to realize the important place that the *pardon* of his parish occupies in the peasant's mind. It is a religious festival of great significance; it is the day above all others on which he confesses his sins to God and receives absolution. Throughout his life his dearest and sweetest thoughts cling round this house of prayer and *pardon*.

Here it is generally that he betroths himself. He and the girl stroll home together when the sun has set, walking side by side over the fields, holding each other by the little finger, as is the Breton custom. A sweet serenity envelops the countryside; darkness falls; the stars appear. The man is shy; the girl is at ease. When nearing home, to announce their arrival at the farm, they begin to sing a song that they have heard from the bards during the day. Other couples in the distance, hearing them, take up the refrain; and soon from all parts of the country swells up into the night air a kind of alternate song, in with the high trebles and the deep basses mingle harmoniously. As the darkness deepens the figures disappear and the sounds die away in the distance.

The Saturday before the first Sunday in July is a fête-day in most towns. Pilgrims fill the towns, which are packed with stalls for the fair. There are sellers of cider and cakes, amulets, and rosaries. A statue of the Madonna surrounded by arch-angles against a background of blue is situated at the church door to receive the homage of faithful pilgrims. When night falls the door of the porch is flung open, and a long procession of girls, like an army of phantoms, advances, each penitent holding in her hand a lighted torch, slowly swinging her rosary and repeating a Latin prayer. The statue of the Virgin is solemnly carried out on the open square where bonfires are lit and young folk dance to the accompaniment of the biniou.

In some places the dances are prolonged for three or four days. The Bretons like songs and dances and representations; they like the heavy pomp of pilgrimages; they believe in prayer, and never lose their respect for the Cross. They are a fine people, especially the men who live by the sea, sailors and fishermen – well-made, high-strung men, their faces bronzed and stained like sculptures out of old chestnut, with eyes of clear blue, full of the sadness of the sea.

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