

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE BRETON LANGUAGE
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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

As you will read in this issue of *Bro Nevez* the fight for the Breton language and culture goes on. But despite considerable financial challenges Bretons continue to create and to celebrate their culture. You'll read about some of that too.

Lois



Demonstration in Defense of Diwan and Breton Cultural Organizations

This spring a call went out for support of a demonstration to protest cuts in financial support for key Breton cultural organizations including those in the Department of Loire-Atlantique. These include

Dastum, Ti ar Gouren, Sonerion, Office Publik ar Brezhoneg, among others. Despite growing interest on the part of the public, these organizations are forced to cut back on staffing and programs they offer. The Coop Breizh and cultural center Amzer Nevez have been forced to close due to financial problems.

Diwan which has struggled financially for many years spearheaded the call for a demonstration, reminding us that these Breton language immersion schools created in 1977 provide a public service yet are only partially supported by the French Education system. Diwan schools include some 4,000 students in 46 pre and primary schools, 6 middle schools and 2 high schools.

The May 17 rally in Rennes drew an estimated 1,800 to 2,000 demonstrators and was supported by 30 or more associations, including the U.S. ICDBL. Some of the other organizations supporting the demonstration were Breizh 5/5, Diwan, European Language Equity Network, Kelenomp, Institut Culturel de Bretagne, Collège de l'Ordre de l'Hermine, Radio Kerne (as well as Arvorig FM, Radio Bro Gwened, Radio Breizh...)



The Statement by Diwan at the Demonstration (my translation from the French)

Today, everywhere in the world, one celebrates Brittany and what gives it its character - its language, its culture, its music.

But, while Catalans invest 200 million euros per year to train 100,000 new speakers, while the Welsh parliament unanimously adopted an ambitious law aiming to put the teaching of Welsh in all the schools of the country, here, in Brittany, political will and means can sometimes be lacking.

The support of communities for initiatives in favor of the transmission and use of the Breton language stall, as is shown in the non-respect of the Molac law on the part of certain mayor's offices when it comes to the payment of school contracts to Diwan, and as is demonstrated in the non-respect of the State-Region contract.

Worse, the communities must draw back in their support to those who work against winds and tides for the Breton language because Paris obliges them to trim their finances, and it's often cultural and linguistic politics which bear the cost. It is the associations which make up the ecosystem in which schools in the Breton language are found who are hit. Certain of them, notably in the Nantes pays will not last through the winter.

In addition to a constitutional hostility which has been denounced for a long time, the Breton language takes the brunt of budgetary austerity.

Thus, we come to learn that Radio France envisions a reduction of the number of morning broadcasts in the Breton language here in Breizh Izel, with only one airing at 6:30 a.m. instead of three.

In 2022 the French Minister of Culture admitted spending 120 Euros per year per resident in the Parisian area in contrast to 20 Euros in the Region of Brittany. Imposing tightening will accentuate this dizzying disequilibrium. The Breton language and culture must not be variables in adjustments.

We call on regional elected officials, of which the president [of the Region] had promised to act concretely so that their desire for autonomy does not remain simply an intention. This is the moment to bring this up again if we want to make decisions comparable to those of our Welsh and Catalan friends.

In the meantime we have some ideas! In less than a year municipal elections will take place. We propose to candidates, from Brest to Clisson, that they incorporate in their plans the payment of 1 Euro per year per resident on the inter-community level to support practices of transmission and use of the Breton language in day schools, leisure centers, the art and sportive and cultural practices, in the promotion of teaching in Breton, training centers and medias. Some already do this because it's legal. This would represent 5 million Euros, an addition of 38% to the regional budget devoted to languages.

We salute all the artists and workers in the entertainment industry fighting for access to all cultural practices, whatever they are, and the defense of employment. Our interests are in common.

We wish equally to reaffirm our solidarity with Gallo speakers and those who work for its conservation and promotion. But we will not accept that Gallo be tooled as a weapon against the Breton language, and vice-versa, nor by the State, nor elected officials or some troublemakers. We reaffirm the right and the necessity for the Breton language to be taught and made publicly visible everywhere in all the five departments.

Finally, we warmly thank the bagadoù and musicians who have come to play today. Several days ago, with them, we affirmed that the Breton culture in all its forms, making up a plural identity in joy and sharing, must be accessible to all Bretons, whether they be newly arrived or their families have lived here for a long time, without distinction of skin color, beliefs, or sexual orientations. No to hate, no to xenophobia.

Mersi bras deoc'h ha deomp dezhi ! Ar brezhoneg a vevo ha pep euro a gonto!

The U.S. ICDBL adds its voice

On April 28 the U.S. ICDBL sent a letter to French President Emmanuel Macron (with a copy to the President of the Region of Brittany, Loïg Chesnais-Girard) to voice our concerns. Here it is as follows with a short translation in English.

Le 28 avril 2025

M. Emmanuel Macron
Président de la République
Palais de l'Élysée
55, rue du faubourg Saint-Honoré
75008 Paris
France

Monsieur le Président de la République,

La branche américaine du Comité Internationale pour la Sauvegarde de la Langue Bretonne a été créé en 1981 pour soutenir le travail en Bretagne pour promouvoir la langue et la culture bretonnes. Nous avons suivi le progrès et les échecs pendant plus de trente ans et c'est avec anxiété que nous observons un recul certain dans le soutien financier pour les écoles et les institutions pour la langue bretonne (et gallo) et des organisations qui ont contribué à une croissance d'intérêt et participation dans la musique, dance, sports et des arts bretons.

Créé et soutenu en large part par des bénévoles pendant les années, le succès de toutes ces initiatives dépend des fonds public – de l'état, les régions (Bretagne et Pays de la Loire) et des municipalités.

Il est évident que la richesse de la culture bretonne est un trésor pour la France mais aussi pour le monde entier. Nous espérons que la France et les régions feront tout qu'ils peuvent pour soutenir le développement des institutions et des organisations vitales pour le futur de la langue et la culture bretonne. Ce futur est important pas seulement pour les Bretons et les Bretonnes, mais aussi pour les amis de la Bretagne ici aux Etats-Unis et partout au monde où la diversité linguistique et culturelle ont de la plus grande valeur.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Président, l'expression de nos salutations distinguées,

Pour la branche américaine du Comité International pour la Sauvegarde de la Langue Bretonne,

Lois Kuter

cc : Loïg Chesnais-Girard, Président, Région de la Bretagne

English language version of letter to President Macron

The American branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language was founded in 1981 to support the work in Brittany to promote the Breton language and culture. We have followed the progress and setbacks over more than 30 years, and it is with anxiety that we see a certain regression in financial support for schools and institutions for the Breton (and Gallo) language and organizations which have contributed to the growth of interest and participation in Breton music, dance, sports and arts.

Created and supported in large part by volunteers over the years, the success of all these initiatives depends on public funding – from the state, regions (Brittany and Pays de la Loire) and municipalities.

It is evident that the richness of Breton culture is a treasure for France, but also the world. We hope that France and the regions will do everything in their power to support the development of institutions and organizations vital to the future of the Breton language and culture. This future is important not only for Bretons but for friends of Brittany here in the U.S. and everywhere in the world where linguistic and cultural diversity is valued.

Response from Rodrigue Furcy, le Chef de Cabinet du Président de la République, May 2 :

Madame,

A correspondance que vous avez souhaité adresser au Président de la République lui est bien parvenue. Il m'a confié le soin de vous répondre.

Attentif à votre démarche, le Chef de l'État tient à vous assurer qu'il en a bien été pris connaissance.

Je vous agréer, Madame, l'expression de mes hommages.

Rodrigue Furcy

The gist of this is that the French President has received our letter and will consider our concerns.

Planning for the Future of the Breton Language

The following is a summary of an 8-pronged plan to address the future of the Breton language generated using artificial intelligence by Philippe Argouarch and posted on Agence Bretagne Presse on May 25.

It includes all the suggestions and pleas that Bretons have been making for years. In some cases some action recommended in this plan has been taken, but needs to be greatly expanded.

1. Official recognition for Breton on the model of the co-official languages in Spain. Legal status would give some concrete standing instead of Breton designated in the French Constitution as being "part of the patrimony of France."

2. Education on a mass scale with strong expansion of the public and Catholic bilingual programs as well as Diwan. This would include reviewing Diwan's statute, supporting adult classes, proving university training for Breton speaking teachers, making teaching of Breton obligatory in all primary schools with an introduction to Breton at minimum. Needed is an augmentation of financial support of Diwan and sanctions for communes who refuse to provide support legally due for students who live in their area.

3. Public presence. Augment bilingual signage and use of Breton in local public services, tourist offices, mayor's offices and transportation. Create "Maisons du breton" in all areas to support families and Breton learners.

4. Media. Creation of a public TV channel in Breton, support for creators of podcasts, videos, apps and games in Breton. Translation of digital tools into Breton.

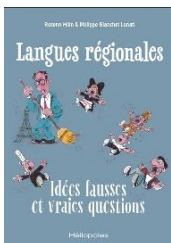
5. Cultural visibility in everyday life. Have an annual day for Breton on the regional level, integrate Breton into cultural events such as festoù-noz, sports and associations, create a mentoring system for new speakers of Breton.

6. Reinforce the Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg. Triple or quadruple the budget financed by the Region of Brittany. Give the Office more responsibilities to coordinate actions, evaluate initiatives and take legal action.

7. Communicate with a wider public to change the image of Breton. Have a modern and positive campaign on social media and other public spaces. Target youth, urban families, and those newly arrived in Brittany. Keep messages simple like “Breton, it’s useful, “Breton, it’s the future.”

8. Political pressure on the State. The Regional Council must insist on adherence to the State-Region plans for education, financing and linguistic rights. This would include demanding the full application of the Molac law.

A New Book to Counter Misinformation about the Regional Languages of France



Rozenn Milin & Philippe Blanchet Lunati. *Langues Régionales – idées fausses et vraies questions*. Héliopoles. 2025. 192 pages.

This new book aims to counter stereotypes and misinformation about the regional languages of France which include Breton and also Alsatian, Basque, Corsican, Catalan and Occitan. The false ideas about these languages are often used to block financial and political support of them.

There are four main areas addressed:

1. The idea that regional languages are not “true” languages is countered by a description of their history, grammar and structure and rich literatures.
2. The role of France in the decline of these languages in linguistic policies and the exclusion of the languages in schools is outlined.
3. The idea that regional languages are not “useful” is countered by showing their social, cultural and economic usefulness.

4. Regional languages are dangerous to the unity of the Republic. Arguments here counter the idea that using these languages is a sign of disloyalty to France.

The authors are well suited to authoritatively address these issues. Rozenn Milin is a historian and sociologist with an expertise in linguistic diversity. She has recently published the book *La honte et le châtement* which explores the impact on children who were forbidden to speak anything but French in school and punished for this. Philippe Blanchet Lunati is a professor at Rennes 2 University and a recognized expert on sociolinguistics and linguistic politics.

Prizioù 2025 for the Breton Language

For the 28th year, France 3 Bretagne and the Office Public de la Langue Bretonne (Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg), awarded prizes in various categories for innovation and action to promote the Breton language. This was held in Plouguerneau on March 18. This annual event shows off the determination of Bretons to make the Breton language a part of everyday life and creative culture.

Here are the winners and runners up:

Kevredigezh / Association

1. Diwan Breizh for the establishment of a program for professional training
2. The Support Committee for Diwan Saint-Breuc for the creation of a bilingual lexicon for parents of its students.
3. CLAJ (Culture, loisirs, animation, jeunesse) of Carhaix for its programming in Breton

Levr faltazi / Fiction book

1. *Va Zammig seiZenn ruZ*, by Paskal Hervio.
2. *Kali Torrdent*, by Loeiza an Duigoù.
3. *Tan ha distan*, by Paol ar Meur.

Strollegezh / Communities

1. Morlaix for its establishment of a plan for the use of Breton
2. Quimper for its creation of a guide to the use of Breton for the city
3. Trévé for its opening of a bilingual stream in its public school

Oberenn kleweled / Audiovisual work

1. *Tomaz, Frankiz hag ar mor bras*, a 52 minute documentary by Ronan Hirrien (France 3 Bretagne).
2. *Naig ha me*, a 52 minute documentary by Claire Villalon (Internep - Le Cercle bleu - France 3 Bretagne – local television of Brittany and Brezhoweb).
3. *Reizh Direizh*, a series of seven 7-minute episodes by Anne Gouerou (Tita B Productions - France 3 Bretagne).

Embregerez / Enterprise

1. Apizee - the translation of technical documentation in Breton
2. Nat B. Good – website and social media network in Breton which offers training
3. Nerzh Glas, a chimney sweeping service which has a website and options to communicate in Breton

Pladenn kanet e brezhoneg / Album with song in Breton

1. Pilhoù for their album *Kaolila*.
2. Rozenn Talec & Yannig Noguët for their album *Melezour*
3. Jakez ar Borgn & Typhaine Corre for their album *Reuz e Brest*

Brezhoneger.ez ar bloaz / Breton speaker of the year

1. Gweltaz Duval-Guennoc, who developed a place for Breton in computer science and artificial intelligence
2. Thomas Godin, painter and engraver who has made Breton known world-wide.
3. Géraldine Beaumont, author of a do-it-yourself manual in Breton



KEAV Skol hañv Summer Camp for Breton

For 77 years (since 1948) the Kamp Etrekeltiek Ar Vrezhonegerion (KEAV) has organized a summer camp for the Breton language. During two weeks classes and activities are conducted entirely in Breton, so participation requires one to have a good base of Breton.

This year the camp will take place in Châteaulin from July 6 to 12 and 13 to 19, and five levels of classes are offered. But besides classes participants can take part in theater, song, or writing workshops, and the practice of Breton is continued over meals and evening activities. There is also an option for children 6 to 17 for daytime activities also conducted entirely in Breton.

The fee for adults including lodging and meals is 350 Euros or 300 Euros for students and those seeking employment.

For the details:

KEAV, 22 hent Mouliouen 29000 KEMPER
Postel : keav@keav.bzh / Lec'hienn : keav.bzh

Breton Learning Opportunities for Adults



A great place to start to explore options for learning Breton is the website of Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg (<https://www.fr.brezhoneg.bzh>).

Besides information on all aspects of the Breton language the site includes maps to pinpoint locations for longer range learning (3 and 6-month intensive study), weekly classes and conversation groups, and summer workshops. Clicking onto a location brings up contact information for those organizing the course.



A Survey of Breton Identity in the Loire- Atlantique

As reported by Rémy Penneg on the Ni Hon Unan website (NHU.Bzh) the magazine *Bretons* reported in its May 2025 issue that 79% of people in Nantes felt themselves to be Breton. This survey conducted by *Bretons* (of some 500 people) between March 31 and April 6 points to a strong Breton identity for people of the Loire-Atlantique Department – another argument in favor of reuniting this department with the four others that make up the official Region of Brittany. Yes, this is not a massive number of people surveyed, but still shows a strong Breton sentiment for this area of Brittany.

Here are some of the results:

For the Inhabitants of Nantes

You feel yourself to be first of all:

Of Brittany	41%
Of Nantes	37%
Of France	20%
Of Loire-Atlantique	1%
Of Pays de Loire (region)	1%

Do you feel yourself to be Breton?

Yes, completely	64%
Yes, mostly	15%
No, mostly not	7%
No, not at all	14%

Is the Loire-Atlantique Breton?

Yes	79%
No	21%

Breton sentiments were even higher for those from other parts of the Loire-Atlantique department who were surveyed.

You feel yourself to be first of all:

Of Brittany	54%
Of Nantes	24%
Of France	14%
Of Loire-Atlantique	7%
Of Pays de Loire (region)	2%

Do you feel yourself to be Breton?

Yes, completely	75%
Yes, mostly	12%
No, mostly not	6%
No, not at all	6%

Is the Loire-Atlantique Breton?

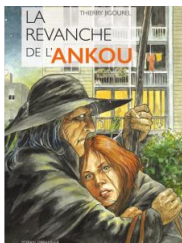
Yes	87%
No	13%

Note that the Region of Brittany has a population of 3.4 million with an area of 27,208 square kilometers. With the Department of Loire-Atlantique reunited Brittany would have a population of 4.9 million and an area of 34,018 square kilometers.

New Breton Books with a Celtic Theme

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

The following four books graciously sent to me by Yoran Embanner all have Celtic themes – works of fiction as well as history and linguistics. They complement each other nicely to answer questions and to raise others. I started with the novels.



Thierry Jigourel. *La revanche de l'Ankou*. Yoran Embanner. 2024. 274 pages. ISBN 978-2-36785-076-4.

This fictional work features the Ankou, Brittany's version of the Grim Reaper, in an unlikely pairing with a young woman named Ninog. Also featured is

Ninog's best friend Klervi and a cast of hundreds of characters from the human world and the Other World. The epic begins in the wee hours of Sunday, November 1 – Toussaint – as Ninog returns home from a fest-noz. She picks up a beautiful red apple and is drawn to wander the streets of Lannion where she meets the Ankou in a dismal apartment building. She flees this encounter only to meet up with him again and join forces in a quest to find believers who will perpetuate his existence.

The account of their adventures is not without humor as in the case of the Ankou's "interview" with Madame Le Gall at an employment center. Questions about his professional experience make no sense to the Ankou but it is determined that "transport" might be an area for him. The Ankou collects Mme Le Gall's soul. After her funeral Ninog again encounters the Ankou who explains that Mme Le Gall was due to die from a disease.

Ninog agrees to travel with the Ankou in his squeaky cart drawn by three black horses with his assurance that she is too young to die. She meets two other occupants of the cart – Sant Erwan ar Wirionez and La Groac'h – two of many beings from the Other World to be encountered in the story. As they travel the cart is pulled over by gendarmes – another humorous episode of this book. The gendarmes ask for papers and chastise the Ankou for not having reflectors on the back of his cart and for exceeding the speed limit, recently changed from 30 to 20 km/hr. Papers are presented – the magical Agrippa – which transforms the gendarmes into apologetic morons who wish the travelers well, even shaking hands with the horses.

They are on the way to the marshland of Yeun Ellez in the Monts d'Arrée – the entryway to the Other World where they will meet up with hundreds of beings to come up with a plan to save themselves from oblivion as the human world under the pressure of Christianity and modern greed forgets them. They stop at an old inn to wait for the evening and Ninog will later spend the night at this inn where she is transported back to the 1970s.

The night's gathering of hundreds of different supernatural beings was a highlight of the book for me. Dozens of beings from Breton and other Celtic traditions emerge from the underground to gather on Menez Mikael. They include La Groac'h and Sant Erwan ar Wirionez as well as korriganes, folliques, bugel noz, leprechauns, teuz and even Ahès-Dahud who attacks the negative depictions of her in literature. All these characters are nicely described and the Devil in particular is targeted as a bit of a buffoon. A glossary at the back of the book fills in some details about them too.

This gathering offers the opportunity for militant statements against the French government and modern life which has driven the Ankou and other supernatural beings underground. Some "speeches" throughout the book on this topic seem a bit long, but one can certainly have sympathy for this colorful world which seems due to die – like Tinkerbell – if no one believes in them. "New gods have replaced ours: first the State and at present Internet, Facebook, Tweeter, MacKinsey, Pfizer." "We are nothing more than evaporating shadows, vague memories. Already most men and women of our country no longer speak our language, but that foreign one of a

State that has decreed that richness is in uniformity and diversity is impoverishment.”

Back at the inn Ninog discovers that it is 1974. Those who were part of events in Brittany in the 1970s will feel some nostalgia with the evocation of the poster Job Lak e Bars, the man who drinks faster than his shadow. I remember seeing that during my time in Brittany in the late 1970s. But the stay in 1974 at the inn where other unworldly beings gather and join in nightly bombings to attack symbols of French domination offers the opportunity to bring up the history of the FLB and hopes for Breton independence. There is also the incident where the Ankou liberates the druidess Velléda and naiades, sea sirens, from paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts in Quimper. They make a dramatic appearance at the inn. Xavier Grall, poet/bard famous during that period, is arrested for the vandalism after witnesses describe a tall gaunt man passing through that night. The ankou and otherworldly beings liberate him.

Xavier Grall is just one of many names dropped throughout the book – figures of history like Pontcallec, Jean de Montfort, Sebastien Le Balp, Constance Markievicz or the Bonnets Rouges. And names from the literary world – some castigated for their less than favorable depictions of Breton lore and others lauded for their defense of Breton and Celtic culture. These include Anatole Le Braz, Emile Souvestre, Ernest Renan, Anjela Duval, Emile Souvestre and William Butler Yeats among others. There is also some name dropping of more contemporary people from the musical world: Glenmor, Plantec, Pascal Lamour and Clarisse Lavanant.

Those with some knowledge of Breton history and culture will perhaps appreciate the name dropping and very short references to specific historical events. These did not always add to the storyline and at times seemed a bit preachy in tone. But the descriptions of human and other worldly beings is rich in character and provides vivid images to savor.

From a stay in the 1970s Ninog wakes up on the morning of November 1, 2022, back home. There is a surprise ending – or perhaps not so surprising given the romantic relationship that grew between Ninog and the Ankou. I would think a sequel to carry the tale further would be welcome.



Jean-Loup Princelle. *Enora, Fille-Druide Vénète* / Livre 1 – *Ciaran & Aouregan* ; Livre 2 – *Morgann*. Yoran Embanner. 2025. 576 pages. ISBN 970-2-36785-077-1.

This is a hefty historical novel about Enora, a 16 year old who is taken prisoner by the Romans after the

defeat of the Gauls at Alesia in 52 BC. The story follows her as she travels with other prisoners and develops relationships with Romans who recognize her exceptional skills as a Druid in training and healer.

Enora's account is parallel to that of Caesar of this period when Rome invades and defeats the varied peoples of Gaul – Celts, Belges and Brittons – who are challenged to build alliances to both defend themselves from political domination, but also to build lucrative trade relationships.

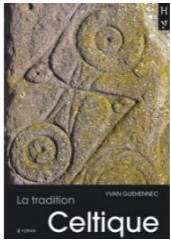
While this is a novel and many of the characters are fictional, one is provided with a great deal of history of this period and an introduction to Celtic beliefs and religion through a wealth of details. This is especially true if you delve into extensive footnotes and take advantage of appended maps and lists. The lists include Celtic gods and goddesses referenced in the tale, sacred trees, the Celtic calendar and seasons, and numbers and measures from both the Celtic and Roman worlds. A list of cities and geographic features noted in the book are also identified as they are known today. Hundreds of books are referenced as well as scholarly journals and studies, films, websites and other materials about this period. Princelle has clearly delved deeply into the history of the confrontation of the peoples of Gaul and Rome, and succeeds in bringing ancient society and diverse cultures to life.

I have to admit that even with the listings of individuals who appear in the book, it was difficult to keep track of which were actual people in the history of this period and which were created by the author. There were many complex relationships and characters who come back from the afterlife and others who reenter the life of Enora after years of absence. Added to the mix are gods who make contact in visions, voices, and through the bodies of people.

My confusion does not matter and perhaps it is not important to sort out the “real” people from the fictional ones. The story of the Roman invasion of Gaul and the Celtic world from 58 to 51 BC is told both through the chronicles of Julius Caesar and the eye-witness accounts of Enora. The style of a novel makes this an engaging read – full of drama and personalities to guide one through ancient history.

One can simply enjoy this compelling tale but one can also delve into a wealth of detail to come to an understanding of this period and the different peoples of Europe who fought each other, enslaved each other, traded with each other, and lived in varied spiritual worlds. At times the characters – younger and older – seem unrealistically beautiful, handsome and courageous, but the lively style of this account definitely

keeps you turning the pages to see what happens next. A third and fourth book will continue the story.



Yvan Guéhenneec. *La Tradition Celtique*. Editions Yoran. 2023. 399 pages. ISBN 978-2-36747-105-1.

This book distills elements of ancient Celtic culture as it evolved from Indo-European roots – religion, languages, gods, druids, bards, the cosmic world, symbols, plants and animals, social structure and world view. This is done through an analysis of language, tracing meanings of words and names from the earliest texts to more recent times, showing that even as words may change, ancient meanings specific to the Celtic world have been carried along in some way.

This book will be a delight especially for those with an interest in linguistics and etymology as it delves into Indo European roots with Sanskrit and comparisons of Old, Middle and modern Celtic languages with a particular focus on Irish, Welsh and Breton. But, the book is written for everyone who has a curiosity about Celtic languages and the persistence of Celtic thinking.

Guéhenneec draws on hundreds of texts including ancient mythologies, histories and key scholarly works on Celtic languages to present basics about the ancient Celtic world. What is interesting is that this is not a history of that world, but a presentation of concepts – who druids were, their relation to kings, ideas about gods, sacredness, the seasons, day and night, plants and animals, directional orientations, colors, the importance of naming people and places, the significance of fire and water, a number of symbols, the art of speaking, and the role of silence. ...

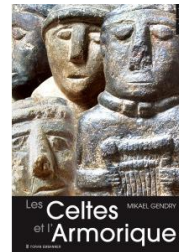
In covering a wide range of topics words from the Celtic languages and short texts are compared to show meanings and their evolution over time. The book's title and subtitle "The Celtic Tradition: through language and texts, Brittany in the Celtic tradition" sums it up. But while Breton language and traditions are a focus, a large amount of attention is given to Irish and Welsh. Certainly those who speak a Celtic language will fully appreciate the analysis of Celtic tradition based on those languages and texts. But, as someone with only a minimal introduction to Breton (and even less to Irish), I was not intimidated by the wealth of information and appreciated explanations directed to those of us who do not have an in-depth knowledge of Celtic languages or ancient mythology.

Yvan Guéhenneec is perhaps uniquely qualified for this exploration of Celtic language and traditions having studied in the Celtic Section of the Université Rennes 2 as well as University College of Llanbedr Pont-Steffan in

Wales. He has a specialty in ancient Celtic languages – especially Old Breton and Old Irish – and has studied Welsh and Irish mythology. He maintains a link with Wales through work with the Association Bretagne-Pays de Galles / Kevredigezh Breizh-Kembre.

Guéhenneec ends the book with an optimistic appraisal of the place of Celtic languages and traditions today (my translation):

The Celtic tradition, an hengoun keltiek, such as the transmission of the druids, bards and storytellers isn't a marginal tradition. The Celtic languages are not any more mysterious or difficult than those of their neighbors, especially for those truly inheriting Celtic cultures who make an effort to reclaim them. In no way isolated, the Celtic world, ar bed keltiek, in all its aspects, is part of the vast dynamic Indo-European universe. And Celts along with the druids, their ancient language and culture, are the branch of the far western point of Eurasia in Penn ar Bed.



Mikaël Gendry. *Les Celtes et l'Armorique*. Yoran Embanner. 2024. 199 pages. ISBN 978-2-36785-059-7.

In the wake of the controversial exhibit "Celtique?" at the Musée de Bretagne in 2022, this book will serve as a reminder as to how complex the definition of "Celtic" can be. A

bibliography of references for hundreds of books and articles allows further exploration, and this includes over a dozen references to articles related to the 2022 "Celtique?" exhibit. Numerous maps, drawings and photos of archeological materials and site plans are welcome additions throughout the text.

The first part of the book focuses on material evidence of the presence of Celtic peoples in ancient Europe and their movement especially in developing trade and a need for metals. Archeological studies of pottery styles and funeral practices and burials as well as more recent genetic studies provide clues. But the examination of all this is very complex and there is certainly disagreement in interpretation.

Also examined are the layout of housing compounds and roads, and fortifications which show an interchange of styles and materials across a wide geographic range. Newer studies from 2018, 2020 and 2021 add to the wealth of analysis from earlier decades. The author also looks at styles of iconography over space and time including coins and other imagery. Written accounts by Greeks and Romans of Gaul and its religious and political structure are also compared.

A second part of the book focuses on the arrival of Christianity in continental Europe in the 5th century and writings about this from the 9th to 12th centuries – genealogies, legends and histories. Changing use of languages in the 13th to 15th centuries is also explored as Latin and French are used by different levels of society replacing Celtic language. In the area of religion, the identification of what is “Celtic” is definitely complex and scholars disagree as to what was unique in church practices and organization – looking for example at setting the dates for Easter or the use of hand bells associated with certain saints. And what about King Arthur? An actual figure in history or purely a fictional character?

Gendry is a professor of history and secondary school teaching specialized in the study of architectural patrimony with a focus on Breton migrations and the early Middle Ages with the founding of bishoprics in Brittany.

There's a lot to consider in this book. The author makes it clear that what is meant by “Celtic” has changed over time and space. As new archeological evidence is found and scholars continue to delve into old manuscripts, it is inevitable that there will be differences in opinion as to what aspects of early Celtic culture remain today.

Are claims that Brittany is Celtic merely fantasy or wishful thinking? Gendry ends on a positive note: *The term “Celts” has changed in meaning depending on the epoch, society and locations. It is a heritage still very much alive.*

Some Websites to Explore Breton History



Histoiredelabretagne.bzh

This is a new website put together by a team of historians directed by Rozenn Milin. The idea is to address the lack of knowledge on the part of Bretons about their own history. And given the little place in schools given to Breton history it is no surprise that many know nothing or little about it.

The site is addressed to younger generations with a colorful design and information is written for a general public. It also serves as a reliable source of information for teachers and journalists.

Featured are:

- Important figures in Breton history
- Key dates
- Different historical periods

An interactive map of historic sites
And quizzes to test one's knowledge

Different levels of information will allow one to delve into more detail on any particular subject.



Istorbreizh.bzh

In the March issue of *Bro Nevez* we presented the new biannual magazine/book called *Istor Breizh*.

The publishers have set up a website to introduce the publication. This includes excerpts from articles and well as links to newspaper articles in Ouest France and Le Télégramme – fully accessible only to those who subscribe to those papers, however.

One can expect that as this site is developed it will open up more information to readers.



Bretagne Culture Diversité

Bcd.bzh

This organization has a site with a number of resources to learn about Brittany including the Bécédia (bcd.bzh/becedia) which has posted a number of articles on ancient and contemporary history of Brittany and a range of other topics.



Breizhia.org

As noted in the March issue of *Bro Nevez* Breizhia.org is a website created by Jean-Pierre Le Mat which uses artificial intelligence to allow readers to explore a range of topics related to Breton history and identity and history of the Celtic nations. And this can be done in English.



Central Brittany Journal's final issue

With No. 250 (April 2025) the 21 years of *Central Brittany Journal* comes to an end as the Editor Gareth Lewis retires. The idea behind this magazine was to provide an English language publication focused on central western Brittany which would provide practical information to those from the British Isles living in or traveling to Brittany. The initial focus was on the Callac, Carhaix and Huelgoat areas with expansion outward. From a home-produced publication, the magazine grew to a professionally produced printing as demand grew.

Contributions from readers make up the content covering Breton (and French) history, legends and culture, interesting places to visit, birds, plants and gardening, and practical information on computers, French business practices, taxes, etc. Regular features have been recipes, events (concerts, book sales), church locations, limericks on different themes, games and puzzles, popular sayings, photography, sports and Tim the Gardener's advice on small scale farming.

The publication has been supported by paid advertisements which can take up to one-third of page space. These include building and property care, pet services, moving and storage, tech service, language services, and restaurants, cafés and tea shops where British specialties can be found – everything an English-speaking household newly established in Brittany might need.

One could argue that the CBJ might have done more to introduce the uniqueness of Breton culture, but the journal has not tried to provide a British cocoon for its readers. Readers have been introduced to Breton history and culture, and in the first issue I received, No. 10 of April 2005, a short article presents the Breton language closing with the following paragraph:

What is the point of learning Breton? Whatever the future might hold for the Breton language, it is still the language of Brittany: place names are derived from the Breton language, it is the language best suited to describe the Breton countryside; Breton proverbs illustrate Breton life; and it is the original language of a rich wealth of local stories and folklore. It makes sense for anyone who has decided to move to Brittany or who has bought a house here and who wants to feel at home in their new country to learn at least a little of its language.

One might lament that CBJ only rarely included notes in or about the Breton language that might aid those interested in learning a few phrases. But, it was a magazine directed to English speakers who would have a higher priority to master the French needed to adapt to their new environment.

As I know from editing *Bro Nevez* where there is no team of professional journalists, content is limited to the voluntary work of individuals able and willing to research and write articles. *Central Brittany Journal* has benefited from a number of contributors during its many years providing articles on a wide range of topics

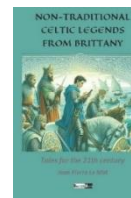
During its 21 years of publication the *Central Brittany Journal* has provided British residents and English language visitors with an interesting and useful introduction to Brittany.

Deep Inside a Breton Skull – Back in Book Form from Jean Pierre Le Mat

Readers of *Bro Nevez* enjoyed a series of 74 short essays by Jean-Pierre Le Mat printed from 2004 to 2023. Forty-seven of these are now available in book form (and on Kindle) via Amazon where Le Mat has published a number of other works on Breton and Celtic nationalism, identity, philosophy and history.

The Deep inside a Breton Skull series covers all those topics with a large dose of Le Mat's philosophical musings and a taste of his sense of humor.

Here are the collections of *Bro Nevez* essays in two new books:



Non-traditional Celtic legends from Brittany – Tales for the 21st Century. 2025. BreizhMem. ISBN 978-2-9589046-4-7. 100 pages.

This book contains 14 essays originally printed in *Bro Nevez* drawing on Breton legends and lore. The description on the book cover conveys well the spirit of the collection: *This little book explores how the collective imagination might reproduce in the future. Ancient writings tell us that King Arthur is not dead. His magical sword Excalibur could be nowadays a mysterious hash code capable of neutralizing hostile forces. In the Celtic countries, which stretch the European continent toward the open sea and towards other worlds, anything is possible.*



A Celtic-oriented guidebook to Brittany – Meeting the Celts nowadays. 2025. BreizhMem. ISBN 978-2-9589046-6-1. 199 pages.

This is not your usual tourist guide. As described on the back cover of this book: *In this guidebook, you'll see Brittany through the eyes of a native and you'll dive deep into a Breton skull. It will introduce you to unusual places, incredible historical figures, bizarre customs and an age-old hope for freedom, once borne by ancient prophecies.*

Here you will find 33 essays divided into five areas. In the first section Deep Inside a Breton Skull you meet some legendary figures and tales from Brittany's past – including heathen and Christian heroes, ghosts and the Ankou, Paolig the devil, and the ermine. Section two introduces "A few things to know before venturing here" including Breton rain, cooking, pigs, costume, architecture. Section three on Weird Breton Places takes you to some specific sites and associated legends and tales. Section four, Meeting Figures of the Past, has a focus on history and key figures and events. In the last

section, What is Brittany, the issue of Breton identity is addressed.

Losses for Brittany and its Music

Henri Morvan (1931-2025)

This April Brittany lost the last of the Morvan Brothers, renowned singers of the kan ha diskan style for Breton dance. In his posting of April 13, 2025, for Agence Bretagne Presse Philippe Argouarch paid tribute to Henri Morvan which I have provided here, translated from the French.

The last of the Morvan Brothers passes

It's an emblematic voice of kan-ha-diskan, the traditional response style song of Brittany which has been silenced. Henri, last of the famous Morvan Brothers, died Saturday April 12, 2025, in Saint-Nicodème in the Côtes d'Armor at the age of 93.

With his brothers François (1923-2012), Yvon (1934-2022) and Yves (1919-1989), Henri formed a legendary trio from the village of Botcol which would make its imprint on six decades of Breton music. Their unique voices, checkered shirts, and caps fixed on their heads, and their faithfulness to the traditional repertoire made them icons of festoù-noz. They sang on all the stages of Brittany, from small rural rooms to the Vieilles Charrues where they performed in 2009 with the Tambours du Bronx.

In October 2019 Henri and Yvon said goodbye to performing during a fest-noz in Paimpol. Yvon died in 2022. With the loss of Henri it's an entire page in Breton popular culture which has been turned.

The Collar of the Order of the Ermine, a major Breton recognition

In 2012 the Morvan Brothers received the Collar of the Order of the Ermine, a distinction conferred by the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro) on those who have worked in a remarkable manner for the language, culture, and Breton identity. This Collar is considered one of the highest symbolic recognitions in Brittany. It underlines the importance of their role in the oral transmission and attachment to traditional song in its liveliest form. Henri Morvan also received with his brothers the title of "Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres" in 2019, a national recognition that adds to their unwavering Breton rootedness.



Photo by Philippe Argouarch and printed with his permission. From left to right, inductees into the Order of the Ermine in 2012: Albert Bouché, Yves Laine, Yvon Morvan, Henri Morvan, Ivonig Le Merdy



A strong commitment to the Breton language

Beyond music, the Morvan Brothers were fervent defenders of the Breton language in which they have always sung and communicated, refusing to separate it from their art. Their bearing was both down to earth and profoundly political as demonstrated in their cultural testimony published in 2020. *

With the loss of Henri Morvan Breton popular song lost an authentic voice, but the echo of Botcol will continue to be heard for a long time in festoù-noz and in memories.

* Editor's Note: The Morvan Brothers gave a fiery speech at a demonstration in Carhaix in November 2013 in support of the Bonnet Rouges movement which mobilized thousands of Bretons in opposition to an ecotax on roads and economic policies detrimental to Brittany. See *Bro Nevez* 129, February/March 2014 for a presentation of this protest movement. The Morvan brothers were also known for the contribution of their concert earnings to Diwan.



Soïg Siberil (1955-2025)

Brittany lost a master guitarist and important creative force with the passing

of Soïg Siberil at the much too young age of 70.

I first met Soïg when he toured in the U.S. with Kornog, a band formed in 1981 with Jamie McMenemy, Christian Lemaitre and Jean-Michel Veillon. They made stops in Philadelphia (near me) in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 and were back again in 2000 but with Nicolas Quemener on guitar for that tour. Soïg was back in February 2000 as part of the Celtic Fiddle Festival where he performed with the amazing trio of fiddlers Kevin Burke, Johnny Cunningham and Christian Lemaitre.

Soïg would embark on a solo career but was also part of a number of definitive Breton groups for concerts and recordings. Among others these would be Gwerz, Pennoù Skoulm, Den, Kemia, PSG (Pellen-Siberil-Guichen), Orion and Ours du Scorff. He would also pair up with notable singers and musicians as reflected in the partial listing of albums below.

Solo albums:

Digor (Gwerz Pladenn) 1993
Entre ardoise et granit – Maen glas (Gwerz Pladenn) 1996
Gwenojenn (Coop Breizh) 1999
Gitar (Coop Breizh) 2001
Digor – du côté chez Soïg (Coop Breizh) 2003
Lammat (Coop Breizh) 2006
Botcanou (Coop Breizh) 2009
Tamm ha tamm – 30 ans de scène (Coop Breizh) 2012
Dek (Coop Breizh) 2014
Habask 2017
Les sentiers partagées, 2022 (with a number of partners from all his collaborations)

Some other albums include:

Tan dehi with Lors Jouin, 2002
Red ar Vuhez, with Nolwenn Korbell, 2007
Duo Libre, with Cédric Le Bozec, 2011
Celtic Guitar Journeys, with Dylan Fowler and Ian Melrose, 2016
La Tempête, with Etienne Grandjean, 2016
Back to Celtic Guitar, with Jean-Félix Lalanne, 2019

In recognition of the impact Soïg Siberil has had on the Breton music scene, The Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient is initiating a Trophée Soïg Siberil in partnership with Maton Guitars. While not a traditional instrument of Brittany, Breton music can boast of a number of masters of the acoustic guitar, so this contest should be a highlight of the Lorient festival.

Like many others who had the privilege of meeting and listening to Soïg, I will remember him not only for his musical genius but for his amazing smile.



Alan Stivell Honored in Carhaix

This June 6 & 7 Alan Stivell was honored by the town of Carhaix with the inauguration of a statue by sculptor Elisabeth Cibot in recognition of his work since the 1970s in stimulating a renaissance of Breton music as well

as for his ardent defense of the Breton language and culture. (photo from Breizh-info.com)

In drawing on the music and languages of other Celtic countries – Wales, Scotland, Isle of Man, Ireland – he also served as an ambassador for these cultures. He brought recognition of the creativity of the Celtic world to an international audience.

Festivities also included a gathering and parade of bagadoù (Bagad Karaez, Bagad Cap Caval, Bagad Osismi Speied). While known for his performances on the Celtic harp, Alan Stivell was also a master of bagpipes and bombard and active at an early age in the bagad, the uniquely Breton ensemble combination of bagpipes, bombards and percussion.

The celebration also included a concert by Stivell on the public square of Carhaix and, as all good festivities close in Brittany, a fest-noz followed.

The inauguration of the statue can be seen in a YouTube video posted on Agence Bretagne Presse:
<https://abp.bzh/-carhaix-alan-stivell-entre-dans-le-pantheon-breton-71712>.



Gouel Breizh – May 16-25

This is a ten-day festival held throughout Brittany and in Breton communities elsewhere in the world. It includes music and dance, workshops, art and photography exhibits, traditional Breton sports and games, storytelling, parades and films. Embedded within this period is Gouel Sant Erwan on May 19.

The Ni Hon Unan website – NHU.bzh - (and Wikipedia) provide a bit of history about Gouel Sant Erwan and its evolution. An earlier precedent was the Fête Nationale de la Bretagne launched in May 1932 by the Gorsedd de Bretagne and Federation of Cercles Celtiques in Nantes who set the date as May 19. The Fest Yves / Gouel Erwan was launched in 1997 in Nantes by the Agence Culturelle Bretonne de Loire-Atlantique. It grew to include participation of a number of organizations and was called Saint-Yves / Gouel Sant Erwan.

With an interest in making this a more secular event the name was changed again to Fête de la Bretagne / Gouel Breizh and organized by the Regional Council of Brittany since 2009 when a ten-day festival was started.

One might compare Sant Erwan to Saint Patrick for Ireland or Saint David for Wales, but Sant Erwan is not celebrated as a *national* symbol for Brittany as part of Gouel Breizh. Nevertheless the ten days of events show off the rich heritage of Breton culture. More can be found on the Region de Bretagne website Bretagne.bzh



BZH New York (bzh-ny.org) organized several events as part of Gouel Breizh featuring the launch of the project “Celts of New York” inspired by Dan ar Braz’s “Heritage des Celtes.” This project engages nine musicians and singers who gave a concert on May 18. Although the Bagad New York was

noted on the poster for Celts of New York, I could not find clear identification all of the musicians/singers of this project.

On May 19 BZH New York presented the theater piece “Vous n’aurez pas la Bretagne!” by Alain Péron. This tells of the confrontation between Anne of France (daughter of Louis XI) and Anne of Brittany who tried to keep France from annexing Brittany in the 16th century. This play toured for three years in Brittany and Paris before arriving in New York for a performance at the Cultural Center of the Lycée français de New York.



Breizh Amerika chose to celebrate Gouel Breizh with a May 17 event in Duscon, Louisiana (just to the west of Lafayette). Food and drink as well as music and dance were offered to celebrate Louisiana’s participation in the 2025 Inter Celtic Festival of Lorient. Breizh Amerika has organized Sant

Erwan celebrations since 2015 and has fostered cultural and economic exchanges between Louisiana (and other parts of the U.S.) and Brittany. Check out their website for news: Breizh-amerika.com

New Music from Brittany

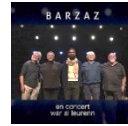
Notes for the following were drawn from *Musique Bretonne* 282 (April 2025), *Ar Men* 264 (January-February 2025), 265 (March-April 2025) and 266 (May-June 2025) as well as Culture-Celtie and various other websites.



Baliskis. *Eus en eil d'eben.*

This is the first album by a trio formed in 2018 and well known for fest-noz performances in central Brittany. The group is made up of Katell Kloareg and Anne-Cécile Poyard with song, accompanied by Grégoire Pluet on accordion. They are joined here by Gwenn Danigo on clarinet and Solenn Lasbleiz on flute. Songs are poetic works by

women from the early 20th century to the present in Breton and French, including Philomène Cadoret, Anjela Duval, Valentine Colleter, Thérèse Dufour, to name just a few. Texts are used in kan ha diskan style for plinn, gavotte, an dro, hanter dro and ridée dances with three other songs just for listening.



Barzaz. *En concert / War al leurenn*

This is a new double CD recorded live at several concerts by the reunited group which began in the 1980s as the Brazaz Trio with flutist Jean-Michel Veillon, singer Yann Fañch Kemener and guitarist Gilles Le Bigot. This quickly expanded with the addition of David Hopkins on percussions and Alain Genty on bass guitar. With the passing of Yann Fañch Kemener in 2019 the “new” Barzaz pays homage to him with this recording and the addition of singer Youenn Lange who was a mentee of Kemener.



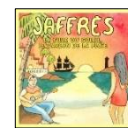
Dorcha Cobs. *Live – un festival de légende, Roi Arthur*

Aztec Musique. This group was formed in 2021 and this album is a recording of a live performance at the Roi Arthur festival. Included are 14 songs – compositions mostly in English – with titles ranging from “Jesus on a motorbike,” “Welcome to Uranus,” and “Only greed” to give just a sample.



Hip-Noz. *Naoned*. ACB XD 1153.

This is a duo of Frédéric Bouley on violin and Gwenaël Kivijer with song and chromatic accordion with 15 selections. They draw on their long experience and a repertoire from festoù-noz performances. The title hip-noz hints at the swing to be found. They are joined by a number of guest artists for song, piano, percussion, guitars ...



Gérard Jaffrès. *La fille du soleil, le garçon de la pluie*

Kelou Mad. This is the 14th album by Jaffrès who has been on the music scene for some fifty years. Included are 15 songs in French, all but one composed by him. He is accompanied by a number of musicians on guitars, violins, keyboard, drums, flute and vocals.



Jean-Claude Le Ruyet. *Inizi ar Mor-Bihan*

Le Ruyet is a Breton language writer with articles, poetry, and theater for children in his repertoire, as well as a scholar of the Breton language. Here he shows off his compositional skills and creative arrangements of other songs set to melodies and dances. Included are 19 selections and some dozen singers and musicians of Brittany with vocals (solo and in chorus), harp, clarinet, guitars, uilleann pipes and flutes. Themes cover a wide range of topics including

ecological and political issues. The CD is accompanied by a 35 page booklet which includes French translations of the texts.



Elouan Le Sauze. *Ar Mesaer*.

This is an a-capella solo performance by Elouan Le Sauze of 13 traditional Breton language songs from the Vannetais area – a demonstration that younger Bretons are

carrying on the song tradition.



Madelyn Ann. *Lies*. Aztec Musique CM 5040.

This is the second album by the pop-rock group led by singer Madelyn Ann who composes and sings in Breton, and for this

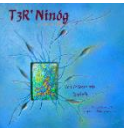
album, also in French and English. Eight selections touch on a range of topics – issues faced by women and wider societal woes. She is accompanied by Olivier Le Hir, Brendan Costaire and Gaëtan Fagot on guitars, percussion and keyboards.



ModkozmiK. *Volume II*.

Founded in 2017 by Clément Dallot this group includes Louri Derrien and Yann-Even l'Haridon with accordion, binious and bombard, and kan ha diskan singing. The

album includes 12 selections of dances including kas a-barh, gavotte, mazurka, plinn and others.



Miss Ninóg. *T3' Ninóg. En tir na nòg*.

Production Goûtenotes.

Miss Ninóg is a singer and accordion player with roots in traditional Breton music and influences by years spent in Ireland. Songs

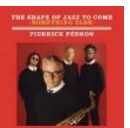
are of her composition and the album features Breton dances from the Vannetais region. She is accompanied by Étienne Callac on electric bass and Élise Rens on alto 5-string violin.



O'Tridal. *Live*. Paker Production

This is a recording from live performances of O'Tridal at the festival Roi Arthur in

Bréal-sous-Montfort held in the summer of 2024. Included are nine selections, five of which are their compositions. The group is made up of Yeltaz Guenneau on flutes, Thibault Niobé on guitars, and Kentin Juillard on percussions. The music is rooted in traditional Breton music with a mix of jazz, rock and folk styles and African and Asian influences.



Pierrick Pédrón. *The Shape of Jazz to Come (something else)*. Continuo Jazz CC777.761

Inspired by the 1959 album by Ornette Coleman, *The Shape of Jazz*, introducing a

free jazz style, this adds to the title *To Come*. Pierrick Pédrón leads the quartet on saxophone, with Élie Martin-

Charrière on drums and Carl-Henri Morisset on piano, and Thomas Bramerie on bass.



Petra Neue. *Al Liamm / Le Lien #2*.

Dastum and Plescop.

The association Petra Neue has a collection of hundreds of recordings of traditional singers of Plescop, an area near Vannes on

the border of Breton-speaking and French-speaking areas. This selection of 24 songs features both languages and older and younger singers. An accompanying booklet gives transcriptions of songs and translations as well as photos and notes on the singers and songs.



Planchée. *II*. La Compagnie des Possibles. CP0012

This is the second album by this trio and features dances of Gallo Brittany. The group is made up of Emmanuelle Bouthillier

on violin and song, Dylan James on bass fiddle and song, and Yannick Laridon on accordion. Invited guests are Cécile Delrue-Birot on hurdy-gurdy (vielle à roue) and Éliisa Trebouville on banjo. While dance is the focus, each instrument and voices have their movements to show off.



Trio Pêr Vari Kervarec. *Barzaz Breizh, la mémoire d'un peuple*. Mibien Kerne.

This trio interprets songs from the famous Breton language song collection, the *Barzaz Breizh*. Pêr Kervarec provides

vocals and bombard, Brieuc Colleter plays bagpipes, biniou and low whistle, and Tony Dudognon provides organ. They are joined by Caroline Faget on piano.



Tri Yann avec l'Ensemble Vocal Marie Nodier. Marzelle / Aztec.

The legendary group Tri Yann took a final farewell / kenavo tour in 2021 after 50 years of performance. Here they reappear with an

album with the Ensemble Vocal Marie Nodier from the Jura region of eastern France – a choir of 32 members. The CD includes 15 selections of classics as well as lesser known titles arranged by Jean-Jacques Dorier, the choir director. The core trio of Jean-Jacques Jossic, Jean Chocun and Christophe Peloil is joined not only by the choir but a number of other musicians with flutes, whistles, bass fiddle, guitars, cello, harp and other strings and percussion.

And a song collection and murder mystery ...



Nolwenn Korbell. *Kan Awenou*. Coop Breizh.

This is in fact a book collecting 55 song texts composed by Nolwenn Korbell in Breton, her maternal language, as well as

English and French. Songs address a range of topics and troubles, and love, beauty and anger. With some 20 years of performance Nolwenn Korbell is a major force on the Breton music scene.



Georges Epinette. *Mort en gamme ... non tempérée – un polar en mode biniou.* (via Amazon or Kindle)

Who better to write a murder mystery featuring sonneurs de couple (paired bombard and biniou players) than a master of these instruments, George Epinette. One is plunged into a world where making music becomes deadly and there is a truly sinister side to Breton biniou and bombard players.



**A Breton Festival in Minnesota
Breizh Fest (breizh-fest.com)**

Breizh Fest was created in 2021 by two enthusiasts of Brittany living in Minnesota – Claire Corvaisier who was developing her business Oh Crêpe, and Natalia Karczmarszuk who was working at the Alliance Française of Minneapolis/St. Paul.

2025 is the fifth year for the festival held this year on Friday May 30 from 4 to 10 pm at the Minneapolis Cider Company. The Cider Company is one of the festivals organizers along with Oh Crêpe, Monark Productions and the Alliance Française of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The Région Bretagne is noted as a supporter.

Partners noted on the website are the Celtic Junction Arts Center in St. Paul (which has a focus on Irish culture), The Center for Irish Music (which teaches Irish traditional music), Irish Fair of Minnesota (which is held in Minneapolis/St. Paul in August), Bienvenue en Bretagne (a cosmetics company, in Brittany?), and BCD Sevenadurioù Breizh / Bretagne Culture Diversité (which is based in Lorient and is active in a number of educational and cultural activities in Brittany).

One can get lots of good information about Breizh Fest on its website, breizh-fest.com, as well as a very brief introduction to Brittany. Personally I found it strange that the Breizh Fest logo and information has the description “A festive celebration of French Brittany.” Using the adjective “French” for Brittany will certainly make those Bretons who identify as “Celtic” wince. But, given the fact that most Americans confuse Brittany with Britain, I can understand a need to identify Brittany as being part of France. This adjective, however, seems unnecessary given the website’s description of Brittany. Besides identifying its location geographically, the website notes:

“It [Brittany] is famous for its natural beauty, delicious food, rich history and culture full of traditions. It has its own language - Breton - and a strong Celtic heritage, which is reflected in its music. This contrasts with the predominantly Latin roots of much of France. *Bretagne*, in Breton *Breizh*, has its own flag called the Gwenn-ha-du, which means white and black in the Breton language.”

Nevertheless, based on the program presented for this 2025 Breizh Fest, it is indeed a festive celebration of Brittany. Performers on the program are as follows:

The BreTones, a trio of Laura Mackenzie, Tom Klein and Bob Walter on wind instruments, cittern and guitar and accordion.

Jim Sherman a bagpiper, whistle player and composer.

The Bagad New York – Pipers, bombard players and percussionists from the northeast of the U.S (see below for more about this group)

Greenvale Manitou, a project of Cedric Briand, singer and guitarist and expatriate of Brittany, accompanied by James Bannon on violin and Eric Duclos on electric guitar. They are “to perform some of the most notorious songs from famous Breton artists.”

There will also be sea shanties, Breton dancing and kids’ activities. Food and drink are featured at this festival with crêpes, mussels and oysters, kouign-amann, ice cream sundaes, cider cocktails, wine, and juice for kids.

An exhibit from Bretagne Culture Diversité with Pays du Centre Ouest Bretagne presents photos by Éric Legret highlighting elements of Breton culture (sports, dance, language, food ...).

“La Bretonne,” a woman in a “Breton” costume complete with tall coiffe, is also a presence at the festival. While not entirely authentic, this introduces festival-goers to some elements of Breton costume.

Congratulations to Minnesota Breizh Fest, one of the very few festivals in the U.S. to highlight Breton music.



**Donation request to assist the
Bagad New York in travel to the
Inter Celtic Festival in Lorient**

I am passing along the following call for support from Bagad New York – LK

Bagad New York is a Breton bagpipe band started as a project among fellow pipers, drummers, and bombarde players in New York 16 years ago as a way to share our

passion for Breton music. Since that time, we've learned a lot about Breton music, invited instructors to the US for workshops, and performed a lot (nearly 100 times) - from producing our own events in New York, to being invited to Minneapolis, and even Alaska!

We are undertaking our biggest project yet this summer by participating in the Festival Interceltique de Lorient, in Brittany, France this August. The Festival Interceltique is perhaps the biggest Celtic music festival in the world, with over 5000 musicians performing at this summer's event, and an anticipated 1 million attendees!

Please access our fundraiser here to donate or share!
<https://www.zeffy.com/fundraising/donate-to-help-send-bagad-new-york-to-the-festival-interceltique-in-lorient-2025>

Saint Yves as described in a travel account from 1930

*This key saint of Brittany has been noted in two places in this newsletter – as Sant Erwan ar Wirionez in the review of the book *La revenge de l'Ankou* (page 7) and as Sant Erwan in a note about the Gouel Breizh festival (page 12). Here is presentation by American author **Amy Oakley** from her book ***Enchanted Brittany*** (The Century Co., NY) published in 1930.*

Pilgrims have for centuries poured to Tréguier. A proud episcopal city from the year 855 until the Revolution, Tréguier was built upon the site of the Monastery of Trégor, from which the region takes its name, the Pays de Trégor. Devout and idealistic, even beyond the high average of the Celt, the Trégorois, like their brothers of near-by Léon, are proverbial for their piety. The outlying village of Minihy has produced the greatest of all the galaxy of Breton saints and the only one, so I am told, canonized at Rome: Saint Yves, the incorruptible judge of Rennes who became a parish priest.

We read some of his attributes, upon the wall of the church at Minihy, the former chapel of the manor of Kermartin, where Yves, who came of a noble family, was born in 1255:

Mirror of Chastity
Defender of the Helpless
Protector of Soldiers
Tutor of Orphans
Advocate of Widows
Refuge of Sinners
Father of the Poor
Model of Priests
Salvation of Mariners
Patron of Advocates

A popular couplet apropos of Saint Yves reflects the attitude of the Breton peasant toward the legal profession: "Advocate and not thief, thing worthy of the admiration of the people." The saint is familiarly represented, as at Minihy, standing between the prosperous man, who is richly clad and carrying a bag of gold, and the poor man, whose cause Saint Yves is customarily expected to uphold. On every hand are representations of Yves the venerated, in wood, in stone, or even in fresco. Few ancient houses at Tréguier are without a shrine to the local patron and most families include a son who bears the name of Yves.

The rite known as the adjuration of Saint Yves has, happily, fallen into disuse as a means of settling a quarrel. The aggrieved one, in times past, was wont to make a pilgrimage to a chapel of Port-Bihan since destroyed in an effort to stamp out this pagan ceremony. There, before the statue of the saint the irate one would declare: "If the right is on his side condemn us; if on our side condemn him – cause him to die within the year." Thus, by a strange perversion, the benevolent saint became a personification of vengeance, a veritable Kali.

How different is the story which has come down to us of Yves's actual way of life! Le Braz tells in "The Pardon of the Poor," the scene of which is Minihy, of an episode in the life of Yves the Good. On a stormy night when the wind and rain beat against the venerable manor of Kermartin, the servant had gone to bed without the usual preparations for unexpected guests. Then it was there came a rap upon the door and a man entered who announced that he was a juggler by profession. He was followed by his wife, on whose merits and accomplishments he expatiated, and by his two sons, whom he described as paragons of virtue, and finally by his daughters whose estimable qualities he was about to extol when Yves cut him short and made him welcome.

"You are at liberty to remain as long as it pleases you," said Yves.

When death overtook the saint, eleven years later, the juggler and his family had not yet departed!

Every year, on the nineteenth of May, hordes come as of old to the manor, and soup is doled out in the name of the saint, while pilgrims are given shelter in the outbuildings. Opposite, in the churchyard, is the Gothic table-like tomb of Saint Yves, beneath the arch of which his devotees feel constrained to crawl. This, in the mind of the people is *the* tomb – not that in the cathedral at Tréguier which contains some of the sacred relics.

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