BRETON

OUR LANGUAGE IS STILL

OUTLAWED

UGB
(BRETON TEACHERS' UNION)

APEEB
(PARENTS' ASSOCIATION FOR THE
TEACHING OF BRETON)

CFDT UNION OF DIWAN
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 of the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly: February, May, August and November. Contributions, letters to the Editor, and ideas are welcome from all readers and will be printed at the discretion of the Editors. Suggested deadlines for receipt of contributions for *Bro Nevez* are: January 20, April 20, July 20, and October 20.

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

Membership in the U.S. Branch of the ICDBL includes subscription to *Bro Nevez*:

- **Voting Membership:** $18.00 (calendar year)
- **Non-Voting Membership:** $17.00

Subscriptions:
- **$15.00** U.S. and Canada first class mail
- **$20.00** overseas by surface mail
- **$25.00** overseas by airmail (printed matter rate)

The U.S. ICDBL provides *Bro Nevez* on a complimentary basis to a number of language and cultural organizations in Brittany; in some instances we are also very happy to establish an exchange of publications.
BRETON: OUR LANGUAGE IS STILL OUTLAWED

A document from:

UGB (Breton Teachers' Union)
APEEB (Parents' Association for the Teaching of Breton)
CFDT Union of Diwan Employees

Editor's Note: The following texts are drawn from an English-language publication (undated) produced in February or March 1992 to present the state of the Breton language in the schools and public life of Brittany. These texts provide a very lucid account of where things stand today and what Breton teachers feel about the progress and lack of progress which has been made. Except for a few sentences where I have smoothed out the English, the texts are as originally published. Some additional documentation included in the publication--newspaper article reprints, maps and charts--have not been included here; I would be happy to provide copies to anyone interested. LK

Preface

The Breton language which is spoken by hundreds of thousands of people is nevertheless threatened to disappear from existence. It is not taught in schools, used in everyday life, or broadcast by the media (but where practically nothing can be done without the agreement of the French State). Even though progress has been made on these grounds in the last few years, the situation remains fundamentally characterized by two factors:

- the existence of Breton is not recognized by any important text of the French Republic;

- the concessions which are sometimes obtained after long and hard bargaining have often been emptied of their contents when put into practice.

During the centuries, opposition from the State to the Breton language was frankly declared (apart from a few exceptions) in the name of the "national" unit, of progress, or the superiority of French culture.

Officials dare no more to use these arguments, now at a time when France wants to be a worldwide spokesperson for the rights of Man and minorities, and the right to be different in the spirit of cultural relativity.

The attitude of the State is now officially favorable to "regional" languages and cultures. Thus, in 1951 the very timid "Delkonne" law which authorized the teaching of these languages was accepted. A hailed resistance which is not declared has replaced the frontal opposition of yesteryear. It would be tedious to enumerate the past examples; we will be content to talk about what is happening now--in particular within the field of teaching.

We ask for an elementary right--a fundamental law which recognizes the existence and which favors the diffusion and the teaching of Breton and other minority languages. We also want the authorities to act in accordance with their outspoken ideals.

The State can give us a degree of satisfaction on these two points:

- in inscribing in the next session of Parliament the bill proposed by Mr. Dollo, M.P., instead of throwing it in the bin without even debating it, as with the other 39 previous attempts.

- in doing away with manoeuvres aimed at: 1) the restriction of the teaching of Breton in secondary State schools (the "Jospin" reform project) and in universities; 2) the smothering of Diwan--especially in the area of finances; and 3) the restriction of recruitment and training of primary (IUFM) and secondary (CAPES) school teachers.
Here joined is a short synthesis on each of these points.

This is what we demand:

1 - That the bill proposed in favor of recognition and guaranteed progress for Breton teaching be placed on the National Assembly’s agenda for the next session (April 1992).

2 - In the National Education system:

The setting up of a real training scheme for future Breton teachers in the IUFM, which implies:
- grouping them together in one training center;
- allowing candidates to sit both Breton exams and some other subjects’ exams in Breton within the frame of the compulsory examinations;
- the establishment of a quota for bilingual school teachers at the examination;
- an increased number of posts opened for the CAPES (Second Level Teaching Examination);
- study grants for candidates;
- a yearly census of the demand for Breton teaching, made by the local Academic Inspectorate in all five departments of Brittany.

The maintenance and development of Breton teaching at secondary level in both public and private schools, including as a first language.

The upholding of Breton studies in universities which are threatened by the DEUG reform (first and second year).

3 - For Diwan schools:

- the extension of the agreement signed in July 1990 to Roparz Hemon secondary school teachers;
- the granting of tenure to all teachers now under contract within the next two years;
- the State’s taking financial charge of the pedagogic and administrative functioning costs in all schools;
- a clarification of the ways teachers are appointed put at the association’s disposal;
- a clarification of the schools’ status.

   UGB (Breton Teachers’ Union)
   APEEB (Parents’ Association for the Teaching of Breton)
   CFDT Union of Diwan Employees

The 40th Bill to be Proposed on “Regional Languages”: Will it Join Those Which Preceded?

Since 1870 when the first private bill was proposed to be National Assembly by Charles De Gaulle (the old President’s uncle), no less than 39 bills were written down and abandoned even before being discussed at all. Only the very timid Deixonne Law in 1951 had better fortune. Since then: nothing.

One particularly interesting bill had been drawn up in April 1981 by Mr. Le Pensec, a Breton Socialist M.P., while he still had two more months of office in the opposition. Ever since he has been a Minister, Mr. Le Pensec has never mentioned it except for acknowledging very frankly that the only reason he proposed that bill was because he then belonged to the opposition.

Another bill has just been drawn up under the leadership of Mr. Dollo, another Breton Socialist M.P. Although this new rehash is far from being revolutionary, it has the credit of being proposed by the majority M.P.s, which gives it a chance to become a Law of the Republic.

Obviously, this bill would be passed if there was a vote. Where is the obstacle then? Very simply in the fact that in order to get a vote, the bill must be put on the agenda, which falls under the exclusive competence of the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly, or the Prime Minister.
Until now Mr. Dollo and his friends have not succeeded in convincing those three of the urgency to give a status to the minority languages of France at last. If their bill is not placed on the next session's agenda (April 1992), it will join those proposed by Charles de Gaulle, Tanguy Prigent (1958), Jean Crouan and all the Breton M.P.s (1959), R. Bayou (a Socialist M.P., 1960), Hostache (Gaulists and Independents, 1960), Guy Hermier (Communist Party, 1988), Jean Briane (UDC, UDF, RPR, 1988)... in the French democracy's dustbin.

Why are we calling for a law?

A Law on France's lesser used languages would provide a legal framework essential for any further progress in various fields.

For instance, there are few Breton-French bilingual schools at primary level. There could be many more of them if they formed a self-reliant teaching system with its own budget and specific posts. It is presently very difficult to open new classes because the same rule applies to them as to the rest of the French territory: one schoolteacher for 23 pupils (average per department).

In the field of Justice, Administration and public services too, Breton is still considered as an outlaw. It has very little access to audio-visual media: less than two hours a day on the radio (in part of Brittany only) and one and a half hours a week only on television!

If a law was applied, the various cultures which coexist on the French territory could be taken into account, and specific measures could be taken to deal with specific problems. The present situation is quite the reverse: the myth of so-called equality before Law that every French citizen is supposed to enjoy allows Jacobins to deny any specific local character.

A caricatured and grotesque example of this was provided when France had to ratify the International Convention on Children's Rights: the French authorities had reservations about article 30 which talks of "States where there exist ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities" which could not possibly be applied to France since it is specified in article 2 of the Constitution that France is "an indivisible, a laic, a democratic and a social Republic. (The Constitution) ensures equality in front of the law of all the citizens, without discrimination of origin, race or religion; it respects all beliefs."

We can notice that no allusion is made in the reservation to Article 30 to the linguistic minorities mentioned in the Convention. However, we form without question a linguistic minority: we have been simply stubbed out.

Following this logic, the French government, which is so sensitive when it comes to defending minorities in Croatia, should give a few tips to South Africa: "There are no Black people here, how could Apartheid exist?"

The few steps forward that were made locally over a number of years are threatened by the lack of legal protection. A last example: the reform of colleges and lycees which risks to reduce to nothing the teaching of Breton at the secondary level.

The I.U.F.M. of Brittany: The Story of a Deceit

Since the beginning of the present academic year in September 1991, future primary and secondary school teachers have been trained in the IUFM (University Institute of Teacher's Training) which have replaced the old "Ecoles Normales".

As for the teachers destined to teach in bilingual classes, plans had been made by a commission composed of representatives of the National Education system, University lecturers and old Ecoles Normales teachers: in the first year half of the training time should be taught through the medium of Breton, and three quarters of the training time in the second year.
Therefore, an acceptable framework had been set up. Although we were not entirely satisfied with it, there was good hope that Breton teaching would at last be treated seriously by the National Education authorities, and that a strong training structure would succeed the shoelace policy which had prevailed until then.

Nevertheless there remained one negative area: we were refused (apparently because it is against the law) a quota for future Breton teachers--estimated at 50 positions this year so as to answer the ever growing needs. The only concession to that request was a very vague item on the application forms to enter first year: "Are you interested in teaching Breton in your class?"

In the absence of a quota we feared irregularity in the recruitment of teachers, having as a result a sufficient amount of Breton speaking teachers some years, and far too few of them other years.

We were, however, not even close to imagining the extent of the Administration's duplicity. At the beginning of this academic year it turned out that from the forty application forms (those we could know if, in the department of Cotes d'Armor only) where the applicants declared being interested in Breton language training, hardly any had been selected by the jury. Besides, the president of the jury did not deny that the answer to that question had not been taken into account when selecting applicants.

And in the great disorder that ruled the IUFM at the time, the specialized training for bilingual teachers disappeared. Only a few courses will be organized during the year, in addition to the normal programme, with no standard request at either the end of the first year's examinations or in the final examinations.

Training in Breton is therefore penalized. Notwithstanding the fact that their training fees will not be refunded, the students will have all the less time to devote to the common curriculum which is very demanding and which will solely be taken into account.

50 hours had been eventually conceded to train beginners, and they were doubled after much protest. But, these additional hours turned out to be impossible to use because they will not fit within the timetable which had been established long ago!

There could have been one possibility left to make room for Breton: that of 'living language training, for which 200 hours a year are provided. But a circular came from the Ministry to bar the way for Breton by specifying that only European Community languages could be taught under that category. In the IUFM of Brittany it might be easier to study Danish, Italian, English or Irish than the local language!

Last but not least, Diwan trainee teachers are still not allowed to study in the IUFM.

Teachers' training is at the moment one of the major issues for the Breton language in primary, secondary, and third level education.

Without teachers' training, bilingual schools' development is at a standstill: how could new schools open if there is no teacher available?

For instance, in Morbihan, even if the local school inspectorate accepted the opening of new classes (which is far from begin granted despite a growing demand in several towns), there is no guarantee that a trained teacher could instantly be found.

Without class openings, there are no positions created either; therefore, the youth are not encouraged to start studying Breton for which teaching remains the main sector to get a job.

So it is a vicious circle: far from encouraging young Bretons to learn their language and reappropriate their culture, as it should since it played the main role in their destruction, the National Education system does its best to prevent any progress being made. Whenever it must yield, the case that is just won turns into an empty case.
Little by little since the Deixonne Law in 1951 Breton had made a place for itself in secondary schools with its status as an additional optional subject which could give a few extra points for the secondary school leaving examination (baccalaureat). This place had been enlarged in 1978 thanks to the Cultural Charter which allowed Breton to be chosen as a second or third language.

Although its position in secondary schools was still far from being satisfactory because of the shortage of teachers, the frequent administrative obstacles and the lack of efforts to encourage pupils to study it, there was some hope to see a path opening all the way up through secondary schools and the university for the teaching of Breton.

But all this is likely to be reduced to nothing due to the new secondary school reform which is to be introduced as early as the beginning of the next academic year in the last three classes of second level education (lycee) and the year after in the four post-primary classes of secondary schools (college).

The choice of Breton as an "additional option" would then disappear, and may be replaced by a "workshop", similar to a club, without any requirement for examination standard; the Breton option will still be possible to take, but it will be competing directly with foreign languages such as German or Spanish, and with biology, economics, mathematics: the freedom to choose Breton is exactly like the freedom for a hen to be in the fox's den!

This reform, if applied as it is, would have disastrous consequences on the teaching of Breton, not only in the last three years of second level education (lycee), but also before and after: some "colleges" headmasters have already told their school's Breton teacher how troublesome they found offering third year pupils the choice of Breton since no assurance was made that they could continue studying it in the "lycee". University will also suffer from this reform—will there be any young people left who will be willing to do Breton studies without any guarantee whatsoever of job opportunities afterwards?

The reform of "colleges" (first four years of second level education) which is to be put into practice in September 1993 is just as harmful for minority languages: until now, in addition to their first year, pupils have had to choose a second language (usually Spanish or German) in third year, and very often they can also start studying Breton or Latin, etc.

The reform would do away with the obligation to choose a second language, and these hours would be taken over for extra classes of French and technology. We are not questioning the validity of this reform as such; we note, however, that under purposes that may seem praiseworthy is underlying in reality the willingness to economize on language teachers, difficult as it is to recruit them, and to appoint them in the "lycees".

We also note that mostly Breton will suffer from this reform: pupils are most likely to continue asking for Spanish or German classes. Since more hours will be allocated too, it is to the detriment of the third language that the school-work burden will be reduced.

It is not at University that we will be able to assist an improvement. After obtaining a phony "licence" (degree) in 1981, we had to wait until 1989 for the first part of it, the "DEUG" (diploma sanctioning the first two years of university studies) to be created. Now that the Breton studies have started to take on a certain fullness and are attracting young people interested in a job using their language, the same as has happened in colleges and high schools may well happen at the university level; a reform threatens to come here as well to destabilize them.

The first year of university studies would be transformed into a generalistic year, a kind of "terminale-bis" (last year of high school), where specialization would be minimized.

This would be very, very grave for Breton, because this first year is a period of getting up to level. Indeed, since a very great disparity exists in secondary schools as to the paths of education in
Breton, young students arrive at the university with a knowledge of the language which varies considerably. For now, three different courses are proposed to them which are all adapted to everyone's needs, and allow a range of people to devote themselves to the study of our language. The new reform is going to destroy this, and will forbid the study of Breton to those numerous persons who had not been offered that possibility before.

With one less year of study there is a risk that the level of Breton previously attained after three years will fall.

Therefore the pace will be stopped just when at least two of the five departmental General Councils of Brittany are taking part more and more actively in rehabilitating Breton (through financial aids for publishing, radio broadcasting, and through political support for the teaching of Breton in schools and bilingual road signs). The teaching of Breton in second level education is at risk to become again what it was like before 1951, that is to say: nearly nothing.

Why Diwan?

In 1977 at Lampaul-Ploudalmezeau, a small parish of North Finistere, a handful of families created "Diwan" ("seed" in Breton), and opened a nursery school in the Breton language, inspired by the "Ikastolak" (Basque) and the "Meithrin" schools (Welsh).

Today there are 39 classes (23 nursery schools, 21 primary schools and one college), 832 pupils in an academic cycle which aims to produce bilingual students, mastering oral and written Breton and French by their entry into "college". In 1988 the "college Roparz Hemon" was opened in Brest.

Diwan exists because the French State has refused up until now to recognize the legitimacy of the Breton language as a teaching language and a matter of public interest, and to ensure the promotion of it within the public service of education. From non-recognition, mistrust and reticence at the start, the local authorities have passed to moral support and adhesion, and some of them have even gone further to show an exemplary financial support. Thus, the Regional Council, the General Council of Finistere, as well as that of Côtes d'Armor, have opened ways to collaborate which are very interesting. Some conventions have also been signed with some municipalities.

The relations with National Education have been formalized by a convention in July 1990. The State took into its charge 51.5 teacher positions (nursery and primary), and placed them under the status of contracted teachers. There was then put into place a commission whose aim was to see what could be done in these fields: a) the conception, elaboration and uses of educational materials and programs; b) the training of teachers (initial and continuing); c) the evaluation of the teachers and of the principal educational methods.

512 teachers obtained the status of substitute teachers (the first rung of the ladder in the national education system). The convention foresaw that a way would be studied for teachers who were to be admitted to the recruitment exam, enabling them to have access to training permitting them to hold the position.

To this day, three teachers out of 51 have been admitted to the exam for the year 1991-92. No proposition was made in 1990-91. Teachers have demanded that those on contract be given a permanent post by September 1993, and that their administrative title to the schools where they work be clearly defined. As a matter of fact, they are presently "sports teachers"--ghosts in different "colleges" in Brittany!

This means a juridical recognition of the schools, which, in the eyes of the law do not exist, thus giving certain local authorities a good excuse to refuse to put to their disposal service staff, and to let families benefit from academic grants.

At the time of the July 1990 agreement, the college had not been taken into consideration at all. Since this date, it has developed considerably, and weighs on Diwan's budget: 1,300,000 francs for 1992. It evidently and logically continues from nursery and primary schools, and it must be as well an
object of agreement. Another demand by Diwan employees is the extension of the 1990 convention to the teachers of the "college Roparz Hemon".

There are other sectors that the State ignores at the moment. The replacements are assured by Diwan at its expense; all the educational training as well is financially in their charge because future teachers are not admitted in the IUUF. And finally, Diwan had to elaborate on educational materials considerably to cover the needs from nursery school to the end of college (they are now preparing high school)--materials which could serve equally the State schools but which are prohibited to them by the will of the authorities to not recognize any of the work done by Diwan.

On these last two points, the work of the commission prepared for by the Convention of 1990 has been totally ignored.

**Bilingual Classes in State Education**

The "Savary" edict (then Minister of Education) on the 20th of June 1982 gave the potential of creating bilingual classes in State schools. In Rennes, parents had not waited for the publication of this edict and took it upon themselves to start this type of class for their children, and in the school year starting in 1983 parents from Lannion and then Pontivy undertook the same course.

The big difference with the Diwan schools (besides the fact that the wages of the teachers and the "administrative machine" are entirely in charge of the State) lies in the educational methods of bilingualism. Instead of being "immersed" in the language for any length of time, the pupils pass from one to another. Also, the apprenticeship of reading is obligatory in French only. It is at this stage that the amount of Breton is most reduced. Nevertheless, it cannot go below twelve hours a week (50% of the academic schedule) and at other levels it can be up to two thirds of this schedule.

Being a bilingual teacher is not at all an easy task. It is required of them that they practice the educational methods adapted to bilingualism, even though no training in this area is given to them. The elaboration of the educational material stays in their charge; very often they are responsible for "multi-level classes" (which can mean pupils from nursery schools to CM2 (the last year of primary school!!)). Nevertheless, there is no special stature in existence recognizing their capacity to teach in both languages and guaranteeing them rights to measure the supplementary efforts which are asked of them: like other teachers, they have to take into their charge classes of 23 pupils (on average) and do not receive financial compensation for this service.

**Bilingual Classes in Catholic Schools**

The confessional private education system has cast itself into bilingual teaching. Two years ago a class started at Vannes with 28 pupils. At the beginning of term in September 1991, there were 42, and a second class had been formed. In the North Finistere, three public schools also formed bilingual classes.
This map was not part of the report *Breton: Our Language is Still Outlawed*. It shows bilingual schools where classes are taught in both French and Breton (including Diwan schools, public schools and Catholic schools). It does not show the many schools where students can take a Breton class.

---

**Enseignement bilingue breton-français**

**Année scolaire 1991-1992**

(Filières Diwan, Public, et Privé Confessionnel)

---

- Ecoles maternelles Diwan
- Ecoles primaires Diwan
- Collège secondaire Diwan
- Classes maternelles et primaires Publiques
- Classes secondaires Publiques
- Classes bilingues Catholiques

Cette carte concerne l'enseignement totalement bilingue c'est à dire, dans les deux langues, et non les seuls cours de langue bretonne, qui sont dispensés dans de nombreux autres établissements publics ou privés.

---

In the News

The following notes are drawn from newspaper clippings received from C.R.I.B. (Centre Régional d'Informations Bretonnes) in Rennes, as well as from individuals in Brittany.

MAIL ADDRESSED IN THE BRETON LANGUAGE

from: Ouest France, April 24, 1992

The Conseil d'Etat of France has ruled that the PTT (Postal and Telephone system of France) is not obligated to deliver letters addressed in Breton. This decision was made in response to a protest by a Breton that PTT directors in Loire-Atlantique and Finistère refused to deliver letters addressed in Breton—names and terms not found in the French postal code or in the international nomenclatures for foreign countries.

BRETON PLACE NAMES

from: Ouest France, April 24, 1992

In Europe the doctoral thesis is usually a crowning point of years of research rather than a starting point of a scholar's career (as is the case in the U.S.). Erwan Vallérie has studied Breton place names for 20 years and recently completed his doctoral thesis for the University of Rennes on this subject. He studied the different forms of 10,000 place names used in Upper and Lower Brittany between the 10th and 17th centuries to trace changes in the Breton language and its dialects.

BRETON LANGUAGE FESTIVAL

from: Ouest France, April 24, 1992

Each year Brittany holds a festival where the Breton language is celebrated in music, literature and theater as well as information stands. This year Gouel Broadel ar Brezhoneg is held in the town of Spezet on June 5, 6 and 7. The festival starts in Carhaix on the evening of June 5th with a concert by the Chorale Sant Karanteg. A highlight of Saturday, June 6th, in Spezet, is a concert by Alan Stivell followed by a fest noz with some of the best traditional singers and musicians of Brittany. On the 7th festival participants can visit stands with information on Breton cultural organizations, or they can watch a soccer match, Breton wrestling and other sports—all conducted in Breton. The evening includes a concert with Roland Becker, the bagad of Quimper, EV, Dibenn, Rêve de Gosses, Shannon, Klig ha farz and Teatr Speled. This is capped with another fest noz with even more great music and dancing.

A DATA BANK ON BRETON LANGUAGE ORGANIZATIONS

from: Ouest France, April 18, 1992

The European Community is now in the process of documenting the language of Europe. A database on public and private organizations to teach minority languages now includes 225 organizations found in 15 regions of Europe, and work continues to build the information base. The Cultural Council of Brittany will coordinate work in Brittany to document Breton organizations which support teaching and offer classes for Breton.
AMOCO CADIZ

from: Ouest France, April 25, 1992

On March 15, 1978, the oil tanker Amoco Cadiz ran aground off the northern coast of Brittany causing an unprecedented oil spill—230,000 tons of oil spread on the coast of Brittany from Conquet to the Bay of Saint-Brieuc. Court proceedings against Amoco Corporation (then Standard Oil of Indiana) began in 1982 with proceedings in Chicago. After years of court proceedings and appeals, the case is now closed and Amoco Corporation has agreed to pay damages of 935 million francs to France and 208 million francs to the Breton communities represented in court who claimed damages. The tenacity of Breton mayors and government officials from the towns devastated by the oil spill who traveled to Chicago to fight for compensation has been important in getting the high level of damage payments from Amoco, although this does not begin to compensate the fishermen and shell fish cultivators.

BRO NEVEZ IN THE NEWS!

from: Ouest France, May 6, 1992
Le Telegramme, May 6, 1992
La Liberte du Morbihan, May 6, 1992

Editions of three newspapers in the Lorient region noted our feature on the work of Emglev Bro an Oriant in the February issue of Bro Nevez.
The following description (translated from French) of the Cultural Institute of Brittany gives a very good impression of this organization in supporting Breton culture.

The Cultural Institute of Brittany is a tool of the Regional Council of Brittany and the General Council of Loire-Atlantique serving literary life and publishing in Brittany.

Since its creation in December 1981, the Institute has helped in the publication of nearly 600 books (since 1983 the budget to assist publishing projects has risen to 12 million francs). It has also given its support to the production of recordings, traveling exhibits and more than 60 films and other audiovisual productions. It has given 30 grants for creative arts or research and has launched several major projects, such as an inventory of all the archeological sites in the five Breton Departments.

By means of the Cultural Institute of Brittany, the Regional Council of Brittany is able to insure the presence of Breton publishers each year at the Salon du Livre in Paris, the Foire du Livre in Brussels, the Salon du Livre et de la Presse in Geneva, and at the international book fair of Frankfurt.

As a correspondent with the Centre National des Lettres, the Cultural Institute of Brittany is responsible for maintaining an office for the Commission Régionale des Lettres which comprises representatives of different professions related to books, and which gives help to literary magazines and supports numerous activities to promote literary life in Brittany.

The Cultural Institute of Brittany is a meeting place, coordinating and centralizing work in common, open to all interested in the culture of Brittany. An Association under the 1901 Law (equivalent to our non-profit status), it brings together nearly 700 participants in Breton cultural life: writers, university professors, researchers, librarians, archivists and museum curators, architects, and directors of cultural and scholarly associations in the five departments of Brittany.

This Institute has supported a wide diversity of cultural productions by Bretons and gathers the cream of Breton scholarship and artistic production. It was truly very flattering to find the U.S. ICDBL and Bro Nevez cited in the "Faites et Projets" column of the inaugural issue of Actualités Culturelles de Bretagne (No. 0, novembre 1991), a bi-monthly newsletter in Breton and French, produced by the Cultural Institute of Brittany.


**Bretagne des Livres**

*Bretagne des Livres* is a meaty bi-monthly magazine produced by the Cultural Institute of Brittany under the direction of Bernard Le Nail. The 18-page, March 92 "numéro spécial" includes just about everything one would want to know about books in Brittany--including a large number of addresses for book stores, publishers and literary magazines, as well as a calendar of literary prizes given for Breton writing (fiction and non-fiction, Breton language and French language). The articles in this special issue are particularly good introductions to various aspects of Breton books:

- Thierry Guidet, "Les écrivains—la production littéraire en langue française dans les années 80/90 en Bretagne" (an overview of the most noted writers and their works)
- Annaig Renault, "La littérature bretonne contemporaine" (a very brief summary of Breton language literature including a chart showing the number of books published per five-year period since 1945)
- Michel Tréanton, "Le livre d'enfants en langue bretonne" (an excellent history of the production of children's books in Breton)
- "Les bibliothèques de Bretagne" (the state of libraries in Brittany)
- Bernard Le Nail, "Les éditeurs en Bretagne" (a brief history of printing and publishing in Brittany)
- Alan Bougent, "Où en est la librairie en Bretagne" (book stores in Brittany and their fragile economic hold)

This informative bi-monthly magazine in french—usually 8 pages—is available by subscription for 80 francs (for 6 issues). Readers are invited to use the form below.

---

**"BRETAGNE DES LIVRES"**

*L'abonnement pour 6 numéros est de 80 Frs. Des conditions préférentielles sont offertes pour des abonnements en nombre : 10 F par abonnement supplémentaire.*

---

**NOM : ........................................ PRENOM : ........................................ ADRESSE : ................................................................. .................................................................

**Souscription à : UN ou PLUSIEURS abonnements. (rayer la mention inutile) Nombre d'abonnements supplémentaires : ..................................**

À Retourner à : Institut Culturel de Bretagne, BP 66A 35031 RENNES cedex
THE BRETONS: A New Book on Breton History

Editor's Note: It is quite a challenge for Americans to locate anything at all written about Brittany in the English language. Indeed, one must have access to a good university library to find anything in any language about Brittany. The lack of good reading material in English is particularly frustrating for those who want to read more about the history as well as contemporary culture of Brittany, but whose French is non-existent or rusty after many years of neglect since a smattering of high school or college studies. Thus, several U.S. ICDBL members were quite excited to learn of a new book called The Bretons which promised to offer a solid introduction to this country and its people. "Solid" is the key word for this heavy-duty work on Breton history, as you will see in the reviews which follow.

The title The Bretons is deceptively broad; this book is a history of more ancient times, produced by two scholars who have a reputation for their excellent research of early and medieval periods: Patrick Galliou is a Reader at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale (Brest) and has published a great deal on the Iron Age and Roman Brittany. Michael Jones is a Professor of Medieval French History at the University of Nottingham and editor of Nottingham Medieval Studies.


Reviewed by Javan Kienzle

The Peoples of Europe Series is described by the editors as being "about the European tribes and people from their origins in prehistory to the present day...provid(ing) a comprehensive and vivid picture of European society and the peoples who formed it." The Bretons is the fourth and most recently published in the series, the previous volumes being The Mongols, The Basques, and The Franks. Volumes in preparation include The Celts, The Irish, and The English.

I opened this volume with a great deal of eagerness, but immediately discovered that this is a book for the scholar, not the lay reader. It is replete with all manner of Latin and French words, phrases and references that even to those with a passing knowledge of those two languages, tend to the recondite. I would find no fault with this had the authors provided a glossary. As it is, the lay reader has no choice but to repeatedly refer to French and Latin dictionaries—or to pretend that the unexplained words don't matter.

The scholar, the researcher, the academic will dive happily into this volume, from the opening chapter (Early Armorica), which states that "Brittany, like Cornwall and Wales, is a land of old rock," and goes on to tell more than you ever wanted to know about fish-salting and fish-salting tanks, to the opening sentence of the concluding chapter: "A local Savonarola, Brother Pierre Morin of Guignen...whilst castigating his fellow Bretons at the height of the 1487-91 war for their moral failings, including a love of luxury which he said would one day lead them to wear on their heads what they ought to use for footwear and vice versa, more presciently predicted that before long 'the king of France and the duke of Brittany would sit in the same saddle and ride the same horse.'"

The book is dotted with nuggets (the four pages on the Breton Language are particularly interesting) but since this is a chronological overview, an account of dates and facts, the many fascinating figures of Breton history unfortunately
remain for the most part one-dimensional. Obviously, the authors have done a great deal of research and work in putting this volume together. I myself, however, would have preferred a volume focusing on and fleshing out some of the main lights in Breton history, with an introductory expository chapter, to this umpteen-course meal, of which none of the courses seem that toothsome. After all, the point of being Celtic, the point of being Breton or of learning about the Celts/Bretons, is to sense and feel the passion behind the events.

And while there is mention of murder, hostility, broken treaties and smoldering resentment, the height of passion is when, "On 19 December 1490 Wolfgang von Polheim, symbolically placing his bare leg in the duchess's bed, confirmed (the) proxy marriage (between Anne and Maximilian)." However, on the theory that one should not call a good thing bad because it isn't better, The Bretons does provide enough of a taste to whet one's appetite; the interested reader will want to delve more deeply into histories and biographies of the various eras.

Among the interesting figures mentioned are Conan I, Charles de Blois, Jeanne de Penthièvre, Jean de Montfort, and Pierre Mauclerc, "without doubt one of the most colourful princes the Bretons ever had." (It is noted that Pierre's son Jean—who as Jean I reigned for almost 50 years—in 1240 anticipated the action of Spain's Queen Isabella by some 250 years, by issuing an ordonnance expelling the Jews from Brittany.)

I leave it to readers—both lay and scholarly—to judge how well or whether the authors have captured the soul of Brittany when, in the book's concluding paragraph they state "Most modern manifestations of Breton 'nationalism' now take on folkloric rather than political form." In view of the contemporary struggles of many Bretons to retain their Breton identity and language in the face of the French government's recalcitrance, this statement would seem to relegate Breton patriots to the category of people living in a stargazer's mist. Indeed, the authors conclude by referring to Brittany as "standing at the crossroads of space and time."

In any case, possibly this book should be titled, An Introduction to the Bretons. For those seeking a concise history of Brittany, I recommend it; those seeking to know the Breton soul must look elsewhere. The Bretons is for the reference shelf rather than for fireside reading.

Reviewed by James W. Kerr

If you want to get a fast but solid picture of whence we came, how we got where we are, and all the assorted baggage we carry, this book will be just fine, if you read fast. If, on the other hand, you pause to cross-check footnotes, citations, etc., etc., it will take you forever, and you will hate it unless you love us all and Breizh especially.

So then, if you really want to get into it all, prepare yourself for some linguistic acrobatics. No, no, naturally you must be solid (or at least O.K.) in French, Latin, Old French, maybe Saxon, Greek—all that is taken for granted. What your really need is English.

Truly now, this reviewer is closer to a century in age than most readers will hope to become, with a flock of degrees and a few decades of diplomatic/military experience, but a good dictionary is essential for any normally fast reader, and we don't mean just the technology of, say, archeology—these two authors use their own technical language where it is needed, and it works. Just don't leave your Webster too far away.
This is a sensitive book. I enjoyed every minute of reading, though I did fall asleep twice in the three weeks it took to give it justice. Alors, I fear I am scaring off good guys (male and female) who will love this neat volume. Let us reassure you by quoting a passage that seems to epitomize their approach—not merely for the particular Chapter cited here, but for the whole book.

(The Civil War, 1341-65 — Chapter 11)

... The political, economic and social consequences of the war were of fundamental importance in shaping the history of the province and its people during the rest of the Middle Ages. In this chapter a brief outline of the reasons for the conflict will be sketched, together with an outline of events. In the next some of the longer-term ideological, political and institutional results of the war will be described following victory for the Hontfortist faction.

Solid pedagogy, that. Tell us what they are going to tell us, and why; then they do it, and well.

Those who might be interested in the contemporary history of Brittany should take note that the last chapter of this book, "Brittany and the Bretons since 1491" is only eight pages long.

* * * * * *

A FEW OTHER BOOKS ON BRETON HISTORY ... IN ENGLISH

While I am not aware of anything in English available from Patrick Gaillou (who has numerous publications in French), the co-author of The Bretons, Michael Jones, has published a number of articles and books on Breton history:

Jones, Michael
1981  "The defence of medieval brittany: a survey of the establishment of fortified towns, castles and frontiers from the Gallo-Roman period to the end of the Middle Ages." *Archeological Journal* 138: 149-204.
1982  "'Bons Bretons et bons Francoys': The language and meaning of treason in later medieval France" *Royal Historical Society Trans.* 32: 91-112.
Each year during the summer in Brittany there are several intensive Breton language classes. Since 1947 Bretons have also organized a summer "camp" which is conducted through the Breton language. Since 1977 this has been held in Skaer (near Rosporden) during the second half of July.

Participants must have the equivalent of at least one year of study of Breton and can participate for one week or the two of the camp. Since all activities are conducted through the medium of Breton this is an excellent opportunity to get an intensive dip into using Breton.

KEAV Skol-hañv Brezhonek


Er Skol-se e vez degemeret kement hini a fell dezhañ studiañ ha komz brezhoneg e-pad eizhtez (kentañ pe eil sizhun) pe e-pad pemzektez.

Ret eo koulskoude gowzout un tamm brezhoneg, bezañ studiet ar yezh e-pad bloaz da vihanañ, rak ne vez graet nemet gant ar brezhoneg e KEAV.

Efédus eo an doare, pa vez gwellet kalz brezhoneg ar studierien, ha gantañ eo deuet brud ha berzh KEAV: kalz a gelennerien brezhoneg hiziv zo bet stummet er skol-hañv.

N'hallomp nemet aliañ skol-hañv KEAV, eta, d'ar re a glask kaout ur stummadur e brezhoneg pe d'ar re a fell dezho mont war-raok gant studi ar yezh en un endro brezhonek.

Soñjit eta abred a-walc'h er skoazell a c'hall KEAV reif d'an deskidí da beurzeskiñ ar yezh; bep bloaz e rankomp dinac'h tud.

Evit kaout diskleriadurioù skrivañ da:

KEAV
22 hent Mouliouen
29000 KEMPER (Quimper)
FOLLENN DITOUROU

(Leugnt ar folleñ-men ha kasit anezhi en-dro a-benn ar Meurzh 30 a viz Mezheven d’an diwezhatañ d’ar chomlec’h-men :)

K E A V 22 hent Mouliouen 29000 KEMPER

ANV .......................................................... regany ..........................................................
Chomlec’h ..........................................................
Pellgornz .......................................................... oed .......................................................... micher ..........................................................

BEZ E VIN ER ‘CHAMP

☐ ar sizhunvezh kentañ ........................................ (eus a ............ betek a .............)
☐ an eil sizhunvezh ............................................ (eus a ............ betek a .............)
☐ an div sizhunvezh ............................................ (eus a ............ betek a .............)

LIVE BREZHONEG

1- Kompren a ran :
   un tammig ☐
   madik ☐
   met-tre ☐

2- Komz a ran :
   un tammig ☐
   madik ☐
   met-tre ☐

3- Lenn a ran :
   un tammig ☐
   madik ☐
   met-tre ☐

4- Skrivañ a ran :
   un tammig ☐
   madik ☐
   met-tre ☐

5- Emaon o teskiñ abaoe ar bloavezh 19............. gant ar c’helennner ..........................................................
   gant al levr ................................................. eru on gant ar gentel ..........................................................

6- Bet on e devezhiou-studi-men (stajou) :
   ............................................................... e 19......
   ............................................................... e 19......
   ............................................................... e 19......

7- Lennet er eus al levrio-men :
   ............................................................... e 19......

8- Lenn a ran ar c’helaouennou-men :
   ............................................................... e 19......

PREST ON

☐ da ober ur gaczeadenn diwar-benn :

☐ da ziskouez ur film diwar-benn :

☐ da gas en-dro un abacellen (kan, dañs, c’hooziva)

Karout a raññ kaout ur gambr e kér ☐

18
NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSEMBLY
AND THE IRISH LANGUAGE

On April 6-8, 1992, a Northern Ireland Human Rights Assembly was held in London to draw attention to human rights abuses and to better organize the variety of individuals and organizations who would like to air grievances in an international forum. During three days of hearings, 252 submissions were made to the Assembly and a report based on these is in the works.

Of particular interest to those concerned with languages like Irish Gaelic and Breton were 27 submissions to Commission 12 of the Assembly on "the right to participate in cultural life". I have received a list of these and copies of three of the 5 to 6 page submissions which provide a very clear and concise overview of the situation of Irish in Northern Ireland, Irish language schools, and work on a European level to draft a charter for minority languages. I would be happy to send a copy of any or all of these three submissions to anyone interested (a small contribution to cover photocopying and postage would be appreciated).

Submission from the CAJ, Committee on the Administration of Justice, Belfast (general situation of Irish in the media, public life and schools of Northern Ireland)

Submission from Gaeilgeoireanna (excellent overview of Irish language schools)

Report from Dónall O Riagáin, European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, "Irish, Northern Ireland and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages" (good report of current activities on the European level for minority languages)

For more information on the Northern Ireland Human Rights Assembly and Commission 12 which focused specifically on language issues, readers are referred to:

Féilim O hAdhmaal
Coordinator, Commission 12
ni Human Rights Assembly
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
127 Ormeau Road
Belfast BT7 1SH Northern Ireland

* * * * * *

Books and Recordings from Corsica: A Messagera

I have received several detailed catalogs from A Messagera, a mail order house for books, magazines, records, cassettes, CDs, videos, posters and cards from Corsica. Like Brittany, this is a unique cultural region found within the borders of France which has its own non-French language. The annotated catalog listings include books in Corsican as well as French on all subjects: Corsican language and culture, history, art and architecture, food, nature and children's books.

I would be happy to loan the catalog to anyone interested in learning more about this rich culture.    L.K.
Congratulations to the group Diaouled ar Menez who celebrate 20 years of music-making this year. In 1972 this innovative group brought attention to the fact that traditional Breton dance could be done not just to unaccompanied song or the paired biniou and bombarde, but to a more electric mix of guitars, accordion, bombarde and fiddle (and other odd instruments from time to time). They were certainly not alone in attracting young Bretons to the fest noz which had been brought back to life in small villages of western Brittany in the 1950s, but they were one of the best of these new bands.

During 20 years Diaouled ar Menez has not recorded much, but why should they? This has always been a band for live music—memorable for each performance not because of sound alone but because they were an integral part of a social event. The electricity of their performance cannot be found on recordings but must be recreated in the memory of the thousands of people who have been levitated by their music. "Devils of the Mountains"—not a bad choice in a name for this magical group.

A festival worthy of this group's contribution to Breton music took place on May 1st and included an incredible line-up of the best of traditional and less-traditional music in Brittany. This event was held in the town of Spezet, and was organized by the book and record distributor Diffusion Breizh which has long been linked to the Diaouled through its leader Yann Coasdoue, one of the founding members of the band.

Starting at 3 in the afternoon with a fest deiz and music in the cafés of Spezet, a highlight of the celebration was a concert by the group Gwerz—reuniting Youenn Bihan, Bruno Caillat, Alain Genty, Erik Marchand, Jacky Molard, Patrick Molard and Soig Siberil for the occasion. The list of musicians for the afternoon and the fest noz which followed the concert by Gwerz reads like a "who's who" of Breton music for the past 20 years: Ar re yaouank, Jean Baron & Christian Anneix, BF 15, Laurent Bigot, Nolwenn Le Buhé, Roland Becker, Gilbert Bourdin and Christian Dautel, Carre Mancho, Ronan Le Corre, Dancing Feet, Gerard Delahaye, Dir ha Tan, Frères Flajeul, Job Fulup, Pascal Le Coz, Marcel Guillou, Yann Goas Jr., Ronan Guédelez, Pol Huellou, Laurent Jouvlin, Koverion Sent Yann, Frédéric Lambierge, Eliane Lancot, Frères Lochnek, Frères Morvan, Teddy Molard, Penou Skoull, Yann Puillandre, Youenn Peron, Alain Rouquette, J.-Y Le Roux, Yann Simon, Skolvan, Sohier-Minioù, Stervinou, Sonerion Du, Jean-Claude Le Vallegant, and no doubt others.

The only consolation for missing such an event is the idea that the 25-year celebration will be even better. (Note that some of the proceeds of this event go to the Diwan schools.)

10 Years of Breton Cinema

A celebration was held in April for another medium of Breton culture: cinema and audiovisual. The organization Daoulagad Breizh has worked for ten years to promote this medium in Brittany and has served as the office for the "Comité Breton de l'Association du Cinéma et de la Télévision des Pays Celtiques" (Breton Committee of the Association for Cinema and Television in the Celtic Countries) which helps organize an annual inter-Celtic film festival. Daoulagad Breizh publishes a quarterly newsletter called "Skram", and hopes to open a vidéothèque (film library) where visitors can view recent Breton films and video productions.
4th International Gathering of Clarinet Players

For the fourth year the organization Paotred an Dreujenn-Gaol (clarinet players of Brittany) will host a major international festival focused on this instrument. The following press release—which I have translated and modified slightly—presents the scope of this five-day event held May 27–31 in the towns of Berrien and Glomel.

From India to Brittany, by way of central Europe, the clarinet has known a growing popularity. During the first three festivals for folk clarinet, Breton players of this instrument welcomed clarinetists from Greece, Martinique, Italy, India, the Basque country, Turkey, Bulgaria, Brazil, Spain and jazzmen. Many of these groups where the clarinet has ceter stage as a solo instrument have been heard for the first time in France at this festival.

The 1992 edition will once again have an international representation with groups from Italy, Rumania, Madagascar, Martinique, and Auvergne (France)—some of whom have never played before in Western Europe.

In central Brittany the clarinet has a primordial place in traditional instrumental music. Well rooted in the southern part of Côtes d'Armor, the truejenn-gaol has seen a revival of interest in the Monts d'Arrée. Fifty clarinet players making up the group Paotred an Dreujenn-Gaol (PDG) have blown new life into this instrument. Besides this annual international gathering the PDG participates in numerous events throughout the year and organizes classes to help in the transmittal of this tradition and the initiation of new creations.

The success of past festivals has shown how popular this type of musical and social gathering is for people in Brittany. The knowledge of this instrument which is a part of their festivities and traditions allows the local population of Berrien and Glomel, where the festival is held, immediate access to the other cultures represented.

Throughout the festival musicians will give workshops, lunchtime concerts, and gather informally for what are called "Boeufs"—closely akin in spirit to the Irish "session". Festival goers will be introduced to the countryside, architecture, and cultural activity in and around Glomel through walking tours and various exhibits and activities held throughout the town.
The groups which headline the festival are as follows:

**Duo Esbelin-Pouget**, from Auvergne
A pairing of cagrette—a bagpipe traditional to the Massif Central area of France—and clarinet.

**Carlo Actis Dato Quartetto**, from Italy
A new jazz ensemble from Italy known for teatrical flair and a sense of comedy; draws on popular traditions of the Mediterranean, Middle East, Africa and Italy, using clarinets, saxophone, bass and drums.

**Quintet Clarinettes**, from Brittany
Five of the best young clarinet players of Brittany: Michel Aumont, Dominique Le Bozec, Dominique Jouve, Erik Marchand and Bernard Subert. All are at ease with traditional clarinet styles as well as more innovative compositions.

**Bemiray**, from Madagascar
An ensemble of three clarinets, two drummers (aongas) and three trumpet players whose music for festivals and ceremonies in Madagascar is inspired by Indonesian and African traditions.

**Le Taraf de Caransebes**, from Rumania
An ensemble of five Gypsy musicians, with clarinet, trumpet, saxophone, accordion, bass, and the "taragot", a hybrid clarinet with the fingering of a saxophone found in Rumania and Hungary.

**Martinique**
Three clarinet players represent this island, including the first woman clarinetist to be invited to the festival. This group is part of an ongoing exchange of clarinetists for international festivals in both Martinique and Brittany.
Record Notes

Lois Kuter


Finally! Breton music accompanied by the words "rock" and "blues" that truly deserves such adjectives. There are a number of musicians in Brittany—singers and instrument players—who have endured for decades, not because they are stubborn, but because their music has gotten better and better.

Bernez Tangi came into view in the late 1970s with the group Storlok—the first "rock" group using the Breton language to gain some recognition in Brittany. They were noticed not because they expressed themselves in Breton, but because their sound was good and because the songs they sang were interesting—bitting comments on the good and bad in the world that literally struck a chord in quite a few of us. Bernez Tangi had a lot to do with that.

Like most Breton bands, Storlok disappeared, but its musicians did not. Some are back with Bernez Tangi in this 1990 "solo" cassette: Abalip, Yan Gouez, and Gildas Beauvir. "Solo" is hardly the right word for this recording, however, since the musical accompaniment is critical in bringing Tangi's texts alive. From electric guitars to clay drums and uillean pipes, the musicians accompanying Tangi are masters of many styles. Besides veterans of Storlok (and a few other bands since), you hear on this recording Patrig Collet, Fairid Ait Siameur and Papy Stacatto (of the group Penfleps), Jean-Louis Vallégant (with the group Zap), and Harri Perche, Jari Perche, Laurent Gippay and Gweltaz Adeux (of the Finno-Breton group called E.V.). Bro Nevez readers will know the name Patrick Nolard (piper extraordinaire) who is also found on the recording. The variety of styles these musicians have mastered means that each song on the cassette has a different rhythm—a swing of North Africa or American blues.

Being surrounded by great musicians is one thing, but it is the way the music supports each song rather than just accompany it that makes the music work. Bernez Tangi is a singer with a powerful voice that draggs you into the text. I particularly liked "An Ti E-kreiz ar Mor" with its reference to the universally understood tale of Ker-Iz (Ville d'Ys) where a sparse accompaniment brings out the best of Tangi's voice. But Bernez Tangi is a poet who delivers images and ideas. It can be the rage of poverty and racism or an illusive search for justice, youth, or love—hitch-hiking in the 90s or traveling by horse or on foot in another century. Bernez Tangi knows how to use the Breton language and he knows how to use music to bring his poetry to life.

(A collection of his poetry has been published: *Fulen moù an tantad*. Skrid, 1987. 103 pages. Available from Editions Hor Yezh/Skrid, 1 place Charles-Peguy, 29260 Lesneven)


The music of Roland Becker is not easy to label because it grows from a number of different influences. Becker is Breton—a bombarde and sax man who has worked with the Kevrann Arle for years—but he is a man of the world. "Jazz" is a strong influence and perhaps best describes the way Becker goes about composing.
Bagpipes, synthesizers and lots of saxophone and reeds are found in Becker's music which might not immediately please those who like more traditional sounds. But, Becker is a skilled musician and composer, and his focus on the megaliths of the Morbihan bay leads to interesting music—certainly not "easy listening music" but music worthy of a good listen.


Focused on popular and traditional songs of the port of Brest composed in the past 100 years, this new recording celebrates a living tradition in this city where song can still be found in bars and cafés where mariners gather. Nineteen songs are performed by groups (Cabestan, Djiboudjep, Echo, Long John Silver) and individuals (Laurent Barray, Paule Chamard, Yvon Etienne, Lucien Gourong and Panch Le Marrec) who guarantee quality and an interesting variety of styles.

Chants de marins nantais. (Le Chasse-Marée/Ar Men. 1991. Cassette and CD)

In the 19th century Nantes was a major port and this importance is reflected in the richness of the maritime oral tradition. The following is how this recording is described by its producers, Le Chasse-Marée and Ar Men:

"Nantes, Paimboeuf, Saint-Nazaire and other harbors of the Loire River estuary have a rich and complex maritime history. In the 19th century, an intense period of activity, these ports saw all sorts of navigation side by side and the celebrated Posse Port of Nantes is the rendez-vous for sailors of all origins and social levels. The oral tradition of people of the sea reflects well the richness of this universal cultural crossroads in France: the songs refer to Nantes and the popular compositions linked to its maritime history are abundant."

"In contrast to other coastal regions, collection of the maritime repertoire of the Loire estuary began very early: a work song was noted in 1853 and writings of ocean sailing ship captains, research by local scholars, and recordings done in the last 20 years from old sailors of Nantes have allowed the participants on this recording to collect nearly 250 songs related to the sea. The 22 songs selected represent the finest flowers of the poetry of sailors."

La Manie Vielle en Bretagne. Produced by: Cinématèque de Bretagne (Le Forban, 4 rue Chalutier, 22190 Plépin). Videotape, 100 francs (plus postage).

Filmed in 1984, this video production by Mathilde Valverde is now available to those who are interested in the tradition of the vielle à roue (hurdy-gurdy) and the Breton artists who represent the best in its ongoing performance. Masters of the instrument found on the video include Jean Gaucon, Joseph Quintin, Victor Gautier, Louis Morin and his accordion partner François Lefevre. The musicians are found in their "natural habitats"—cafés, dances, and the homes of musicians. This is not a cold ethnographic documentary, but a personal look at the people who make music and pass it along to the next generation.

(Note that the video format used in France is different than that of the U.S.—you can't purchase a video and plug it into your VCR, but there are places where foreign formats can be reformatted).
Brittany and Its Byways:
Travel Notes from 1869

Lois Kuter

In my ongoing research of 19th century travel literature about Brittany I have found that writings vary considerably in style and quality. Sadly, some travel accounts offer very little substance, but there are always a few interesting descriptive details to be extracted. Such is the case of Mrs. Bury Palliser's 1869 travel book, Brittany and its byways: Some account of its inhabitants and its antiquities; during a residence in that country (London: John Murray).

Most of the 300 pages of this book are composed of historical anecdotes--the sayings and doings of innumerable English, French and Breton Dukes and Duchesses, Kings and Queens, who passed through Breton history--no matter how briefly. Mrs. Palliser's visits to a church or chateau offer the perfect opportunity to include anecdotes which jumble centuries of history into a few pages.

Interspersed with the historical notes are brief descriptions of countryside or buildings and rarer descriptions of people and their activities. It is perhaps just as well that the comments about people Mrs. Palliser meets are kept to a minimum, since her characterization of Bretons is on the whole unflattering.

Most unflattering is her feeling for the Catholic Church, summed up here: "Throughout Brittany the priesthood are low and ignorant. Like the Irish, the Breton farmer's great ambition is to make his son a priest. In no part of France are they more uneducated than in Brittany" (page 104). It is important to keep this characterization in mind in interpreting the following excerpt which is set in (or near) Morlaix. This is the sole reference to be found in Mrs. Palliser's travel account to the Breton language. These three pages from her book convey very well the style of Mrs. Palliser's writing which jumps quickly from one observation to another--and from one century to another.

Pages 100-102

The Bretons are brave soldiers and good sailors; their disposition is hasty and violent, and even ferocious in anger. When the people of Nantes rose up in rebellion against Duke Francis, his brother-in-law, the Comte du Foix, sent to pacify them, said to him on his return from his mission, "J'aimerais mieux être prince d'un million de sangliers que de tel peuple que sont vos Bretons" -- Brittany has always been the theatre of great virtues and Great crimes.

On Sunday we went to the Welsh Baptist Chapel, to hear Mr. Jenkins preach in the Breton language. He has been there thirty years zealously labouring among the peasants, to convert whom he was sent by the Welsh Baptist Missionary Society. From his thorough knowledge of the French and Breton languages, he is eminently fitted for the task. He travels about the surrounding country preaching, and establishing schools, and has revised the Breton (By Légonedec) translation of the New Testament for the Society, and circulated, by means of colporteurs, from wight to nine thousand Bibles, besides above 100,000 tracts. The task of acquiring the Breton language is less difficult for a Welshman, for the similarity between them is so great that the two people are able to make themselves understood to each other. The labours of Mr. Jenkins have lately awakened
the attention of the Breton Roman Catholic clergy, who have publicly denounced him from their altars, but without causing him to slacken in the good work he has undertaken. Persecuted by a tyrannical priesthood, who hold dominion over a peasantry bigoted in proportion to their ignorance, his position is one of difficulty and danger; but he goes on with undrooping energy, convinced that, though the progress is slow, the good seed has not been sown in vain, and will, in due time, bear fruit, though those who first sowed it may have passed away. There were about a dozen Bretons at the evening service; they seemed to be constantly going in and out, as if unable to keep up their attention to so long a service. There are also English Protestant chapels at Morlaix and Quimper, and French at Brest and Lorient.

We saw a christening in the cathedral, of a child about eighteen months old; the mother wore a wonderful conical cap of lace.

A few houses from our hotel a ball was going on, given every week for the workpeople of the town. The clatter of their iron-pointed wooden shoes seemed to quite drown the music.

Next day we walked to the Fontaine des Anglais, so-called from the slaughter of a body of English at that place. Jealous of the prosperity of Morlaix, Henry VIII sent a fleet up the river to attack the place, and the commander, being informed by a spy of the absence of the chief nobles at Guingamp, and of the townsmen at the fair of Pontivy, landed with a force which entered Morlaix, burnt it, and returned laden with booty to their boats. Six or seven hundred men, who were intoxicated, fell asleep in the wood, where they were attacked by the nobles, who had hastened from Guingamp to the assistance of the town, and were all massacred. The neighboring fountain, said to have been tinged with the invaders' blood, received in memory of the event the name of "Fontaine des Anglais." It was on this occasion the town of Morlaix added to its arms, a lion (emblem of vigilance), encountering a two-headed leopard (for England), with the punning motto, "S'ils te mordent, mors-les" (Morlaix).

Emile Souvestre, author of 'Le Foyer Breton,' and 'Les Derniers Bretons,' the ablest portrayer of Breton manners, customs, and superstitions, was a native of Morlaix; he died in the Protestant Communion, 1854.

We were recommended to sail down the Morlaix River to its mouth, as the scenery is very picturesque, but we had not time to effect it ...

In studying travel literature about Brittany, I have been especially interested in descriptions of Breton music and dance. These topics are most often found when a traveller describes the events of a wedding, and Mrs. Palliser offers two such descriptions. In the first description, set in the town of La Roche Bernard (in southeastern Brittany), she seems to propose that the Scottish received their piping traditions from France.

The evening of our arrival (in La Roche Bernard) there was a wedding supper given at our hotel, the grand dinner having taken place elsewhere. The bride wore a white sash, with wreaths of white flowers round her Nantais cap. After supper the party danced Breton "ronds." The dancers form a large ring (grand rond), holding each other's hands, which they swing violently as they sidle round in a kind of hop-skip-and-a-jump step, accompanied by singing in a most monotonous tone. This went on
until midnight. This kind of dance dates, they say, from Celtic times. The
music consists of the biniou or bagpipe, and the flageolet or hautboy,
sometimes with the addition of a drum. The biniou, cornemuse, or bagpipe,
is the national instrument of western and southern France. How it came to
be introduced into Scotland and expel the harp—which was as much the
original music of Scotland as of Wales and Ireland—is a mystery. But,
as in the sixteenth century the harp went out and the bagpipes came into
fashion, it may be surmised that it was brought in, with other French
novelties, on the return of Queen Mary, perhaps by the Queen herself, or,
maybe, some itinerant player of the cornemuse may have accidentally been
in her train, and his music set a fashion which has now become national.
(pages 248-249).

Mrs. Palliser's second description of music and dance in Brittany is situated in
Le Faouët, a small town of southwestern Brittany.

There was a wedding at Le Faouët during our stay there. Guests, invited
from all quarters, to the number of 250, arrived in their gala costumes,
some of them magnificent: one woman wore a gown entirely of gold tissue;
it was her wedding-dress. The musicians, with biniou and hautboy, went round
to summon the guests. We saw the procession going to church. The bride
was prettily dressed, with a high cap, beautifully "got up," pointed in form,
and trimmed with lace, and embroidered; a muslin apron, also lace-trimmed,
and a double muslin shawl, similarly trimmed, the lace beautifully plaited;
a violet silk dress, white moire sash, and a small bunch of white flowers.
The bridegroom was "en bourgeois." Outside the church door were tables,
laid out with cakes; after the service the bride and all the party took
each a cake and put money in the plates, as an offering for the poor. They
next adjourned to the Place, where they danced three "gravottes" under the
trees. The ceremony of stealing away the bride then took place; that is,
she was chased by some dozen of the youths of the company, and he who had
the good fortune to capture her she treated to a cup of coffee at a café.
Dinner followed, and then they returned to the interminable gavotte. They
hold each other's hands "en grand rond," then wind themselves round the
centre couple, executing most elaborate steps, and uncoil again to return
to the grand rond. We counted as many as thirty couples in one gavotte.
These festivities last two, or sometimes three, days, during which time
all the wedding party are entertained free of expense. (pages 288-289).
CONTENTS

Breton: Our Language is Still Outlawed
    UGB, APEEB and CFDT Diwan 2-8


In the News – notes from Breton Newspapers 10-11

Skol Uhel ar Vro / Institut Culturel de Bretagne 12

Bretagne des Livres 13

The Bretons: A New Book on Breton History 14-16

Kamp Etrekeltiek Vrezhonerion 17-18

Northern Ireland Human Rights Assembly and the Irish Language 19

Books and Recordings from Corsica: A Messagera 19

20 Years of Music from the Devils of the Mountains 20

10 Years of Breton Cinema 20

4th International Gathering of Clarinet Players 21-22

Record Notes:
    Bernez Tangi, Kest al Lec'h 23
    Roland Becker, Gavr'inis 23-24
    A Brest la jolie--Chansons de ports 24
    Chants de marins nantais 24
    La Manig Vielle en Bretagne 24

Brittany and its Byways: Travel Notes from 1869 25-27