

BRO NEVEZ

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



Deborah, Gabrielle hag Maella.

Skol Diwan Landerne

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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The **U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)** was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981.

Bro Nevez ("new country" in the Breton language) is a newsletter for both the U.S. ICDBL and the newly formed Canadian Branch of the 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.

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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.

MORE BRETON STUDENTS THAN EVER IN THE SCHOOLS OF BRITTANY THIS YEAR

Lois Kuter

Each year the number of children enrolled in Breton classes in Diwan schools, the public schools of the French National Education system, and in the private Catholic schools of Brittany grows. The 1997-98 schools year shows an increase of 17.5%--a sign that there is a clear demand for Breton in the schools despite statements by French education officials claiming there is no real interest. The following charts are from Kannadig 49 (October 1997), the newsletter of Unvaniezh ar Gelennerien Brezhoneg (Union of Breton Teachers). They show that the growth is at all levels and in all departments of Brittany.

	Pre-School	Primary School	Middle School	High School	Total	Growth	%
Diwan	752	674	268	56	1753	+255	+17%
Public	581	512	149	41	1283	+133	+11.6%
Catholic	488	421	65	1	975	+204	+26%
Total	1821	1607	482	101	4011	+592	+17.5

	Finistère	Morbihan	Côtes d'Armor	Ille-et-Vilaine	Loire-Atlantique
Diwan	1135	171	274	60	113
Public	377	334	411	161	0
Catholic	401	493	81	0	0
Total	1913	998	766	221	113
% change	+20%	+15%	+10%	+37%	+29%

It is very good news that more and more students choose to study Breton each year, but this is still a very small number out of Brittany's total school population. But considering all the obstacles still in place which make it a miracle that Breton is offered at all in the schools, 4,000 is not a bad number.

WHY MORE STUDENTS DON'T TAKE BRETON CLASSES

In January 1983 four U.S. ICDBL Members published a "Fact Finding Report on the Breton Language" (Lois Kuter, Lenora Timm, Laure Fadave, Anne Habermehl). This was based on four independent trips to Brittany between July and November 1982 (a total of 122 days between us). Here is what we stated in the first introductory paragraphs to the report:

We regret to conclude with this report that despite continued promises and encouraging statements made by the current French government, serious efforts are not being made by them to insure the future of the Breton language. Inaction on the part of the government is especially critical in the realm of education and public media.

In view of all the reports I continue to read in publications and reports from Brittany, I would have to state the exact same thing again—15 years later. Interestingly enough it seems to be at the secondary school level where problems seem most persistent. Factors we noted in 1982 which limit a student's option to take a Breton class still limit students today: Breton classes scheduled at the worst times of the day (noon to 2 p.m.), students and parents not being informed by the school of any options to take Breton classes, and the inadequacy of teacher training.

A dossier prepared by François Louis for the Union of Breton Teachers and sent to Deputies of all five Breton Departments by the Cultural Council of Brittany, outlines the problems which limit students choice of taking Breton classes at the middle school and high school levels. At the high school level in particular the numbers of students are falling and at both the middle and high school levels the number of hours of Breton classes per week have been cut back in many schools.

A major problem for the growth of Breton classes is the fact that schools do not do a good job of informing parents and students of their options, and in some cases students are discouraged from taking Breton by school counselors. Students are also discouraged by a lack of continuity in Breton classes. Teachers are often appointed in August (or in some cases after the school year starts! In September) and do not have the opportunity to work to get the word out about their class (which is important since one cannot count on the school to promote it). And because they can be moved somewhere else the following year, teachers do not have the opportunity to build a reputation to attract new students or hold the loyalty of those in the program. Because teachers often teach Breton at several different schools, scheduling is very difficult and Breton classes are often put at the least desirable times of the day. At some levels, students must choose between Breton or Latin. Academically strong students are strongly encouraged to take Latin. With the growth of students taking Breton classes during the past ten years there has been no growth in the number of teachers appointed to teach. While the numbers of students grow, the hours per week offered to them drops as teachers are stretched to cover more classes.

It is shameful that in the fifteen years since the U.S. ICDBL put out its "Fact Finding Report on the Breton Language" so little has changed. French education officials continue to say nice things about Breton and the regional languages, but they also seem content to let all the obstacles stay in place so that bilingual programs will fail and students will become discouraged.

OTHERS HAVE NOTICED ALSO

The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages issued the following press release this September.

During its meeting in Dublin, 7 September last, the Board of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages acknowledged the numerous obstacles put in the way of regional or minority languages in France over the last months.

- *the confirmation by the Council of State to refuse to grant subsidies, which all French language weekly newspapers receive, to regional language weekly newspapers (July 1997),*
 - *The opposition of the Préfecture (state authority) in the Department of Finistère to let local authorities finance the associative bilingual Breton/French schools [Diwan], (August 97).*
- are the most recent examples in a long list.*

The European Bureau is concerned about this policy which results from an excessive interpretation of the laws dedicated to the protection of the French language. The Bureau asks the French government to put an end to the attacks against regional or minority languages. The Bureau calls on the French government to sign and ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages as promised by the President of the Republic and by many Ministers of the new government.

Brussels, 09-09-1997.

TAKING THINGS INTO YOUR OWN HANDS

Given a reticence on the part of those in the French government and education offices who have the power and resources to remove obstacles that trip up children interested in learning or perfecting Breton, it seems clear that Bretons must continue to take things into their own hands. And indeed, they have in creating the Diwan schools twenty years ago, and with the growth of literally hundreds of grass roots organizations to support the Breton culture. Now, to solve the problem of limited teacher training for Breton and for other languages of France, Diwan has collaborated with the Seaska schools of the Basque country, the Bressola of Catalonia, and the Calandretas of Occitanie to create an “Institut supérieur des langues de la République française.” A Breton branch of this teacher training institute has opened in Quimper with 15 students chosen from among 50 applicants. During two years of classes students study the Breton language but also the latest in pedagogical research.

PUTTING THE PRESSURE ON FOR CHANGE

Bretons have perhaps wasted some time waiting for French government and education officials to make good on promises, but they have never been timid about pressing for change. One organization which has been important in mobilizing Breton brains and talent, and in demanding change, has been the Cultural Council of Brittany (Kuzul Sevenadurel Breizh). Composed of cultural leaders representing all the major cultural organizations of Brittany (music, dance, language, history, etc.). This October the Council organized a conference (“brainstorming session”) on the topic: “What will Breton culture be in the 21st century?” This comes on the 20th anniversary of the “Charte Culturelle de Bretagne” which represented the first real recognition by the French State of the value and uniqueness of Breton culture. The signing of this Charter by Valéry Giscard-d’Estaing in 1977 provided key seed money to Breton organizations and mobilized the energy of the Breton cultural movement.

Twenty years later 300 Bretons gathered to look to the future and work on creating a plan to push ahead. In looking at the present the participants in the conference had to conclude that the Breton culture is still dragged down by a veiled hostility on the part of the French state which impedes progress in expanding bilingual education and which means that Bretons are still counting how many minutes of Breton language programming there are on the television instead of hours. The creation of Breton language and Breton content television was of particular concern and Bretons have long looked to Wales in its success in creating a television “industry.”

The conference participants also affirmed the demand voiced by Breton teachers (in Diwan, public and Catholic schools alike) that all children have the option of taking classes in Breton—by immersion as in the Diwan system, or in bilingual programs, or just introductory classes. And the importance of

having classes for adult Breton learners available was also voiced. It was noted that just because France refused to sign the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages doesn't mean that the cities and departments of Brittany cannot put it into practice. The need to have more than a token inclusion of Breton history in school curricula was also a matter of concern, with plans to develop a pedagogy that will allow teachers to do it justice.

From this gathering and discussions, a "White Paper" will be prepared and given to candidates running for office in the regional elections to be held in March 1998.

Un livre blanc sera présenté avant les élections régionales

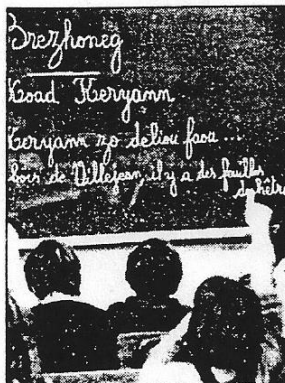
Culture bretonne: le combat continue

Le mouvement culturel breton, réuni à Rennes samedi, s'est doté d'un plan de bataille pour les dix ans à venir. Ses propositions, qui touchent la télévision, l'enseignement, la création ou l'environnement, seront réunies dans un livre blanc et soumises aux candidats aux élections régionales de mars 1998.

Vingt ans après la signature de la Charte culturelle de Bretagne par le président de la République, Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing, près de 300 acteurs de la culture bretonne se sont rassemblés samedi à Rennes pour définir les grandes orientations du mouvement à l'aube du XXI^e siècle. Neuf commissions ont travaillé plusieurs mois pour aboutir à un ensemble de propositions qui seront rassemblées en janvier dans un livre blanc. L'objectif est de voir les points principaux s'inscrire au prochain contrat de plan État-Région.

Pour les responsables, si la culture bretonne s'est épanouie en vingt ans, elle souffre toujours de l'hostilité voilée de l'État. L'enseignement bilingue manque de moyens, Diwan fait toujours l'objet de tracasseries, on compte toujours les minutes de breton à la télé. «Il est temps d'en finir avec le jacobinisme qui est un frein permanent pour notre région et nous ridiculise à l'étranger», a lancé Per Denez.

Le mouvement culturel breton appelle la France à se mettre au diapason de ses voisins allemands, espagnols ou anglais en confiant aux régions la gestion de l'éduca-

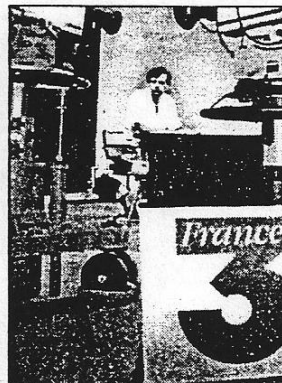


Faciliter l'enseignement de la langue bretonne, son expression à la télévision et la mise en valeur de l'histoire de Bretagne dans les classes: autant de spécificités demandées à l'État au nom de la Charte culturelle.

tion, de l'audiovisuel et de la politique culturelle. Le budget de la Bretagne est aujourd'hui de 2,3 milliards, tandis que celui de l'Écosse, est de 170 milliards.

Télé bretonne ou en breton?

Le projet le plus discuté de ces assises a été la télévision. Faut-il créer une télé bretonne ou une télé en breton? Le débat n'a pas permis de répondre samedi. Mais une chose semble acquise, c'est qu'une télé sera créée, sans doute pour quelques heures d'émission par jour au départ. «C'est le seul moyen de booster tout le reste», explique le cinéaste Olivier Bourbeillon. L'exemple du Pays de



Galles pèse lourd dans la réflexion: les Gallois ont créé deux tèles, une bilingue et une autre en gallois. Ces deux chaînes et l'industrie des programmes qui a suivi ont créé plus de 1500 emplois dans leur région.

Les acteurs culturels veulent permettre à tous les enfants qui le souhaitent d'apprendre le breton. Cet apprentissage doit pouvoir se faire par immersion totale (comme à Diwan), par immersion partielle (classes bilingues) ou par apprentissage classique. Tout adulte qui le souhaite doit également avoir accès à des cours. Le mouvement souhaite qu'une politique de développement du breton soit programmée. «L'État refuse de signer la charte des langues minoritaires. Mais cela n'empêche per-



sonne, communes, départements ou régions, de l'appliquer.»

L'histoire est aussi au cœur des réflexions: Loeiz ar Beg, historien malouin qui anime cette commission, demande que l'histoire fasse l'objet d'un enseignement spécifique, et ne soit pas noyée dans une pédagogie vague de la culture bretonne. Il propose de reconquérir les lieux historiques, et de faire notamment du château des ducs à Nantes, actuellement à peu près vide, un haut lieu de l'histoire bretonne.

Jean-Louis Latour, président du conseil culturel de Bretagne, a qualifié la journée d'«historique» et annoncé que ces assises auront désormais lieu tous les deux ans.

Jean-Luc COCHENNEC.



C'est-France
Lundi 6 octobre 1997

Evit al lizhiri / pour toutes correspondances
KUZUL SEVENADUREL BREIZH - CONSEIL CULTUREL DE BRETAGNE
7, STRAED GÉNÉRAL GUILLAUDOT - 35069 ROAZHON CEDEX - PGZ / PLR 02 99 87 17 65

AND SPEAKING OF THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL LANGUAGES

On September 25 the 2nd Chamber of the Swiss Parliament approved ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. With Norway, Finland, Hungary and the Netherlands, Switzerland is the fifth country to ratify the Charter and this fifth ratification means that it can officially be put into effect in those countries—the first time that the rights of minority speakers will be put under international review. The Charter allows legal recourse for those whose linguistic rights are abused in the areas of administration, schools, media, the courts, and participation in economic, social and cultural life. Countries have some leeway in applying the charter, but it does bring review by the Council of Europe to insure that regional and minority languages and culture are protected.

The European Council is also working on getting ratification of the "Convention-Cadre pour la Protection des Minorités nationales." This convention has a broader political element to it but would reinforce the protection of linguistic rights also. The Convention needs to be ratified by 12 member states of the Council of Europe to be put into effect and this has been secured by the most recent ratifications by Italy, Liechtenstein and Finland.

BRETONS DO NOT LACK FOR IDEAS ...

Ouest-France
23-24 août 1997

Le Conseil Culturel de Bretagne réuni à Douarnenez La culture, une source d'emplois

Le Conseil Culturel tenait jeudi conseil d'administration en mairie et se réunissait avec les députés bretons à la MJC. A l'ordre du jour : le XX^e anniversaire de la Charte culturelle et des thèmes de discussion comme l'enseignement ou la radio.

Le Conseil né en 1977, rassemble des associations des cinq départements bretons, des représentants du conseil régional, des conseils généraux, du conseil économique et social, des universités... Ses actions ? L'organisation de colloques, la publication d'études, la réflexion sur la place de la culture bretonne dans les radios locales... etc. Le Conseil prépare activement le XX^e anniversaire de la Charte. « Une célébration qui ne s'arrêtera pas aux bougies du gâteau d'anniversaire » explique, Per Denez. « 20 ans c'est un début, nous devons aujourd'hui préparer l'avenir, étudier ce qui a été fait, faire un état des lieux sans concession et prendre un nouveau départ pour préparer les années 2000. » Pour le conseil, la culture est un moteur de l'économie et un enjeu de poids. « Il y a beaucoup d'emplois à créer. » Per Denez cite le Pays de Galles « La création de la chaîne TV a généré 3 000 emplois. » Créer une telle structure en Bretagne permettrait d'offrir du travail aux auteurs, musiciens, comédiens, tra-



De gauche à droite : Jean-Louis Latour, président du Conseil culturel de Bretagne, Patrig ar Goarnig, vice-président et Kofi Yamgna, député.

ducteurs... Autre cheval de bataille du Conseil, le tourisme culturel. « Là aussi il y a moyen de créer de nombreux emplois. Offrir des produits de qualité passerait par la formation de jeunes. » Et Per Denez de citer le Festival de Lorient qui fort de ses 300 000 spectateurs, a des retombées économiques immédiates sur la ville mais aussi sur le long terme. « Le festival de Lorient a une stratégie de pénétration économique très au point, quand il fait venir le Pipe Band

du Japon où de New-York c'est essentiellement pour toucher la presse de ces pays, il véhicule l'image de la Bretagne et noue des contacts bénéfiques pour l'économie touristique... » Après la bataille pour l'enseignement du breton et en breton (une campagne de promotion est en cours), le Conseil se bat pour créer deux radios en langue bretonne. Une bataille qui pourrait être gagnée puisque le CSA a accepté les deux projets dans sa première sélection.

NEWS FROM OUR DIWAN SCHOOL

Lois Kuter

Newer members of the U.S. ICDBL and subscribers to Bro Nevez may not know that in 1992 I was asked to become the "marraine"—a sort of "god mother"—to the Diwan school in the city of Landerneau. I not only happily took on this special relationship, but I brought the entire U.S. Branch of the ICDBL into it as well. Skol Diwan Landerne has sent us some photos and a little report (in Breton and French) on the 1997-98 school year. I have reproduced (and reduced) the Breton version of the letter as well as the photos.

In summary, 63 children began the school year at Skol Diwan Landerne. Annie Corlosquet teaches 19 pre-schoolers. Luce Poho teaches 26 children in the "Big Section" which includes the ages of 6 through 8 (French levels of "Cours Préparatoire" and "Cours Élémentaire 1"). Patricia Quere-Tassel teaches 18 children from 8 to 11 ("Cours Élémentaire 2," Cours Moyen 1 & 2"). A teaching assistant, Gwenaëlle Jezequel, helps out, and the maintenance of the building and lunch service is handled by Hortense, Cécille and Christelle.

This year the Skol Diwan Landerne celebrated its tenth anniversary and you will hear more about that in the next issue of Bro Nevez.



Anna hag Ederne war an Traezh.



Yaiwenn war ar volotenn lammad.

Landerne, d'ar 5 a
ariz Du 1997.

Lois,

Setu graet an distro-skol e skol Diwan Landerne;

63 bugel devezh an distro-skol:

- 19 bugel \Rightarrow Rummad tu Re-Uihan + Rummad tu Re-Gren.
- 26 bugel \Rightarrow Rummad tu Re-Uas + ar C.P. + ar C.E₁
- 18 bugel \Rightarrow C.E₂ + C.M₁ + C.M₂.

3 sholaeréz : Luce POHO - Patricia QUERE-TASSEL.

Anna CORLOSQUET.

1 shoazellerez : Gwenaëlle JEZEQUEL + 3 implijiadez :
Hortense - Cécille ha Kristelle

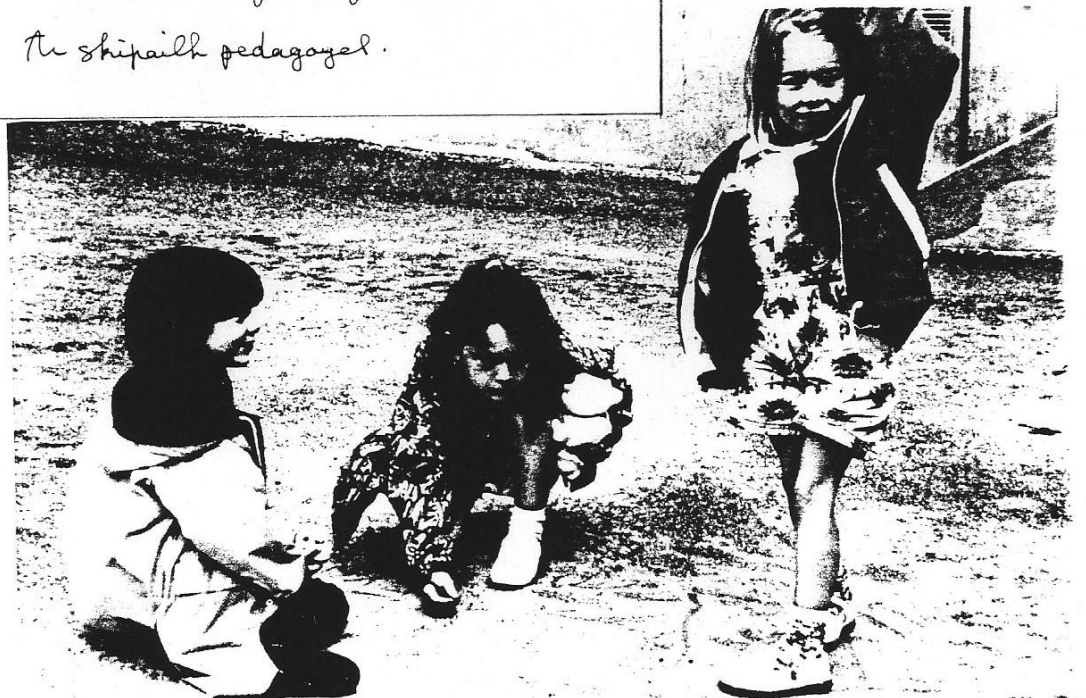
Lidet eo bet 10^{vet} deiz-ha-bloaz ar skol e Miz Even 1997.

lahaat a ran desic'h un pennad Kezetenn.

Lahaat a ran desic'h ivez un nebeut luc'hskendennoù.

A galon ganeoc'h.

An shipailh pedagogel.



Moira, Morgane ha Bleuenn.

A NEW ANTHOLOGY OF BRETON (AND OTHER CELTIC) POETRY

Writing the Wind: A Celtic Resurgence, Edited by Thomas Rain Crowe. New Native Press (Cullowhee, North Carolina). 1997. 300 pages. ISBN 1-883197-12-0.

While the Breton language has been the language of poetry and song in Brittany for centuries it has only rarely been translated into English. So, it was with great interest that I read in the pages of the September 1997 issue of Sterenn (the quarterly magazine of Skol Uhel ar Vro, the Cultural Institute of Brittany) of the publication of an anthology of poetry in the Celtic languages by an American.

Called Writing the Wind: A Celtic Resurgence, this collection is edited by poet Thomas Rain Crowe with the assistance of Breton poet and Celtic Studies professor Gwendal Denez and Scottish anthologist Tom Hubbard. In 300 pages, 55 Celtic language poets are included from Wales (in Welsh), Brittany (in Breton), Ireland (Irish Gaelic), Scotland (Scottish Gaelic), Cornwall (Cornish), and the Isle of Man (Manx). Each poem is in the original Celtic language in which it was first written with an English translation (often by the poet him or herself). Some of the poets are better known—Sorley MacLean, Bobi Jones or Angela Duval—but most are not known outside their own communities of Celtic speakers and poetry readers.

A one or two page introduction to each Celtic language and its poetry is included. The one by Per Denez for Breton describes very well the changes in poetic style and expression that have taken place during the past centuries, and gives a good feel for the political climate of France which means "there is something of a miracle in the very fact that we can today boast of a poetry of some value" in the Breton language. Each poet is also introduced with a short biography which includes references to their published poetry. Eleven contemporary Breton poets are included: Anjela Duval, Per Denez, Naig Rozmor, Reun ar C'halan, Youenn Gwernig, Annaig Renault, Bernez Tangi, Mikael Madeg, Lan Tangi, Gwendal Denez, and Alan Botrel. I can't claim to be any expert on poetry, but this appears to be an excellent selection.

Thomas Rain Crowe was born in 1949 and during the 1970s was part of a generation of poets in San Francisco known as the "Baby Beats." For a time he directed the journal called Beatitude and helped to create the San Francisco International Poetry Festival. He has published six books of poetry, the latest of which is called The Luagharne poems, written during stays in Wales in homage to Dylan Thomas. Thomas Rain Crowe is the founder of New Native Press which been in operation since 1979, a small poetry publishing house which has favored poets from North Carolina where it is based. In publishing Writing the Wind, Thomas Rain Crowe hopes to introduce Americans to contemporary poets of the Celtic countries as well as to the persistence of the Celtic languages as living languages of creative expression.

To order:

The book costs \$14.95 to which a sales tax of \$1.12 and postage and handling charge of \$1.50 is added = \$17.57 per book.

Checks can be made out to "New Native Press" and mailed to:

New Native Press
P.O. Box 661
Cullowhee, NC 28723

Or look for the book in any good store near you that carry poetry.

SOME NEW BOOKS FROM BRITTANY

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Daniel Appriou and Erwan Bozellec. L'Alcide, corsaire de Saint-Malo: La guerre de course et l'histoire d'une corvette de 1745 à nos jours. Spézet: Nature & Bretagne. Coop Breizh. 1997. 164 pages. ISBN 2-909924-87-4. 138 francs.

What might immediately spring to mind for an American looking at the title of this book are the words Corsair and Corvette which automobile makers have taken over to use as names for particular car models. In the dictionary "corvette" is defined as a small swift warship used as an antisubmarine escort vessel and in former times a small warship that used sail power. "Corsair" is defined as a privateer, or more loosely, as a pirate. In fact, corsairs were sailing vessels flourished in the 17th and 18th century in Europe, and by extension, the men on board them were also called corsairs. They were war ships built for speed to protect the coasts of Europe during a time when everyone seemed to be at war with each other and there was intense competition for the riches of new colonies. The royally authorized "protection" corsairs provided could be quite lucrative when enemy war ships and commercial ships in one's coastal area were captured. Corsairs and their captains had "papers" to authorize their search for enemy booty; those without papers were pirates. A maritime code was followed in the treatment of prisoners and the distribution of goods captured (including the ship itself). This new book describes this maritime period and the place of Brittany in it.

Chapters 1 and 2 give a brief history to put the development of the corsairs into historical context. Chapter 3 describes the maritime activity of five principal ports thriving in 17th and 18th century Brittany: Brest, Morlaix, Lorient, Nantes and Saint-Malo. In Chapter 4 the story of the Alcide begins with the construction of this ship in 1745. The chapters which follow describe the crew, life on board, the "campaigns" and the enemy ships captured, the last combat and efforts to return to the port of Morlaix, and final sinking of the Alcide in a storm just short of its destination in December 1747. The drama of the ship's sinking is heightened with the author's use of ship records, letters and testimony of some of the surviving crew—just 87 of 194.

While much of the book is centered on the corsairs of 18th century and the short life of the Alcide in particular, the final three chapters give an equally interesting account of the rediscovery of the sunken ship and efforts to bring its remains to the surface in 1880 and then again in 1963. The final chapter recounts several expeditions in the 1980's to study the ship's remains, giving a good idea of how complex and difficult a task such archeological research can be.

Annexes to the book include a glossary of maritime terminology, a chronology of the Alcide's campaign's and final demise, profiles of some of the ship's crew and a full listing of names, home town, occupation on the ship, age and final fate of all of the crew members. For those who want to delve further there is a bibliography and listing of archival references. An abundance of drawings, photographs and reproductions of documents also help to bring the history of the Alcide and the corsairs of Brittany to life.

While rich in detail, this book is highly readable and gives a very real sense of the life of this ship. I was delighted to find how interesting the story of the Alcide could be for someone who has never had any interest in maritime history. I enjoyed this book.

* * *

Denis Biget. Histoire des écoles de pêche maritime—Contribution à une ethno-sociologie des populations littorales. Spézet: Nature & Bretagne/Coop Breizh. 1997. 132 pages. ISBN 2-84346-002-6. 130 francs.

This is a sociological study of the development of schools to train fishermen in Brittany. The author carefully places the development of the schools in a social, economic and political context to explain their growth in relation to notions of professionalism and progress. While fishermen would continue to learn much of their trade on-the-job and make judgements "by the seat of their pants," the schools introduced a new philosophy of professionalism and provided students with practical skills (such as navigation). The schools were intended not only to give young men skills that would make them better sailors and fishermen, but they were also an effort to acculturate a population into a wider social system. Like all the schools of France, the maritime schools included lessons on morals, good hygiene (the dangers of alcohol), and citizenship.

The writing of Denis Biget is quite dense—I found it unrelentingly academic in style—but this book does succeed in his efforts to put the development of the maritime schools from the late 19th century to the present in a wider social context. This is not light reading, but an important contribution to a better understanding of maritime history and the history of schools in Brittany.

* * *

Patrick Mey. Saint Patrick (390-461), nouveau druide ou apôtre éclairé? Spézet: Coop Breizh. 1997. 156 pages. ISBN 2-909924-81-5. 130 francs.

Patrick Mey (1938-1996) provides a very interesting portrait of Saint Patrick drawn from his interpretation of two texts written in Latin by Patrick: his Confession and Letters to Coroticus. There is not much to draw on in trying to reconstruct the life and personality of someone who lived in the 5th century, and Mey tries to separate what is known from the legends that surround this saint. The exact location of Patrick's birth and childhood are debatable (the estuary of the Severn River or perhaps in Glamorgan in the south of Wales?). He grew up in a thoroughly Romanized and Christian British family. The life of relative ease in a household with servants and wealth was to change in 406 when, at the age of 16, he was taken prisoner by Irish raiders (common in those days). Held as a slave for six years in Ireland, he eventually made it back to his family and decided to enter a monastery and study for the priesthood. In 430 Patrick heads back to Ireland which was still largely untouched by any Roman or Christian influence to convert the Irish to Christianity.

Patrick Mey describes Saint Patrick's work to convert first the clan chiefs, kings and cultural leaders of Ireland (filid), aided by his knowledge of Irish and understanding of Irish culture gained during his years of captivity. Mey does his best to sort fact from fiction, but does not hesitate to present different interpretations of events in Saint Patrick's life. His account of the saint's life and work in Ireland is full of passion. If there is one fault I would find with the book, it is the unfailingly flattering personality given to Saint Patrick who is depicted as courageous, humble, patient, ever-tolerant and respectful of the Celtic culture of Ireland and "saintly" in his loving approach to converting pagans to Christianity. Mey is clearly a great admirer of Saint Patrick. And no doubt he is correct in attributing the success of Saint Patrick's work in Ireland to his ability to tolerate a certain amount of pagan belief and mysticism that was not in conflict with early Christianity.

Patrick Mey's account of Saint Patrick's life and work is interesting reading, giving insight into Ireland of the 5th century as well as the early Christian missionaries. Many will also find it quite inspirational.

Joseph Vendryes. La Religion des Celtes. (Preface, notes and bibliographical additions by P.-Y Lambert). Spézet: Coop Breizh. 1997. 149 pages. ISBN 2-909924-91-2. 134 francs.

This is the re-edition of a work first published in 1948 by Joseph Vendryes (1875-1960), one of the big-name scholars in Celtic studies. As Pierre-Yves Lambert, points out in the preface, there is still a lot to be debated about the religion of early Celts, and this is an area of study which still has more hypotheses than facts today. Vendryes work is a classic that serves consideration in the debate.

The work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter reviews the sources used to study the religion of early Celts, the difficulty of interpreting this material, and some of the analyses made by other scholars. Chapter 2 focuses on Celtic gods and their relation to Roman gods—a study of names and qualities attributed to the gods. Chapter 3 looks at the clergy and organization of Celtic religion—druids and various priests as well as the religious calendar. P.-Y Lambert has added nearly 20 pages of additional notes which point the reader to newer archeological discoveries and studies published in more recent years. An index of names, places, gods, and themes is also included and is indispensable to the use of such a work. A bibliography of Vendryes detailing his many publications is also included, along with a short bibliography.

This is not a book for the casual reader, but it is a classic whose annotated reedition is very important in the continuing study of Celtic religion.

* * *

A.J. Raude. L'origine Géographique des Bretons Armoricains. Etudes et Recherches no. 4. Lorient: Dalc'homp Sonjl. 1996. 170 pages. ISBN 2-905929-10-3. 125 francs.

This is another book that is not for the casual readers. As the author states in his conclusion the book is a study of who the people were and where in Britain they came from when Brittany (then Armorica) was settled in the 5th century. Raude argues that this was not so much a migration of settlers looking for a new life, but a movement of people (with their families) that was part of a military and political strategy to secure three peninsulas (Wales, Cornwall and Brittany) from attacks first by the Irish and then the Saxons. The book is a detailed analysis of names—both of places and of people (early saints and missionaries) in Britain and in Brittany. And in the analysis of places and people, Raude makes an important contribution to a better knowledge of events in early Celtic history.

I can recommend this book only to serious scholars who enjoy following complicated linguistic trails in history, and who already have some grounding in early Celtic history. It is clear that there is still a great deal to be discovered of the past, and that scholars like A.J. Raude have an important role to play in this discovery.

* * *

Hazel Mary Martell. Que savons-nous des Celtes? (Translated from the English by Aude Le Dubé. Spézet: Coop Breizh. 1997. 45 pages. ISBN 2-909924-94-7. 98 francs.

This book about the early Celts is much more my style! Abundantly illustrated with photos, maps and colorful drawings, this book for children is perfect for those of us who are not Celtic scholars. While this is not where you should stop in learning about the Celts, it is a good start, with lots of information for the beginner.

The first chapter describes who the Celts were: sorting out Gauls and the different periods of early Celtic history (La Tène, Hallstatt). A wonderful time-line shows what was happening at different periods and in different parts of Europe (central, eastern and western) and the world in general from 800 BC to 400 AD. From the basics of history, you move quickly to the stuff likely to be of most interest to children with chapters on what the Celts ate, how they went shopping (money), the family and pets, houses and furniture, what you did for a living (and what slaves did), international trade, clothing, games and sports, religion, funerals, friends and enemies of the Celts, art, literature, transportation, armies, and “where are the Celts now?” Each chapter is just two pages with a paragraph or two on different topics and pictures to illustrate the information.

This is an attractive and informative book to be enjoyed by children and adults alike. For those who might like to look for the original English language version, it was published in 1993 by Simon & Schuster Young Books.

* * *

GOUEL AN ERMINIG – New Members Inducted into the Order of the Ermine

Each September four new individuals are inducted into the Order of the Ermine. Founded by Breton Duke Jean IV in 1381, this honorary order was unique in Europe for its election of women and commoners to its ranks in recognition of their service to Brittany. At that period this service was mostly in defending the then-independent Brittany from invasion by France. Although the Order died out when Brittany lost its independence in the 16th century, it was not forgotten. The Order of the Ermine was brought back to life in 1972 by CELIB president Senator Georges Lomard to honor his predecessor in that post, René Pléven. In 1985 the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel are Vro) instituted a yearly ceremony to honor people who have served Brittany as leaders in arts and culture as well as business and industry.

This year's ceremony took place in the town of Quintin, and inductees included **Raymond Lebossé**. Born in 1923, he is a “retired” business leader who has served as the Municipal Counselor and Mayor of Erbray. Since 1976 he has served on the General Council of Loire-Atlantique bringing to it issues related specifically to Breton culture. He represents Loire Atlantique at the Cultural Institute of Brittany, is Vice-President of the ATR, and is a member of the administrative councils of the Cultural Council of Brittany and of Amzer Nevez.

Jean L'Helgouac'h, born 1933, is a renowned archeologist who has directed a number of major digs in the west of France. He teaches prehistory at the University of Nantes and is the founder and director of the Laboratoire de Préhistoire Armoricaïne at that university, and also founded the Association d'Etudes Préhistoriques et Historiques des Pays de la Loire. He has participated in many conferences and published many studies on the prehistory of Brittany.

Jean-Jacques Hénaff, born 1938, has a long list of diplomas for advanced studies in economy and business (and he spent some time at the University of Oregon). Since 1972 he has been at the head of Jean Hénaff SA canned foods and has been a member and director of numerous Breton and French business and agricultural industry commissions.

Dodik Jégou is from the Bigouden country, but since 1956 has been part of the life of Saint-Malo. She is an artist who works with ceramics and has used her art to illustrate Breton legends, ballads, and folk tales. In 1990 she opened the “International House of poets and writers” which, through her guidance, brings together not only poets and writers but also theater people, musicians and artists of Brittany and the world.

- ER FOUILHEZ GWECHALL (1992), 118 pajenn 60,-00 F 30, 00 F
Istor buhez Ivonig Pikard hag un dtab eus e varzhonegoù, gant skeudennoù.
Biographie et choix de poèmes d'Ivonig Pikard, de La Feuillée. Illustré.

- DANEVELLOÙ IWERZHONEK (1992), 110 pajenn 65,-00 F 32, 00 F
Istoriñ kaer eus Iwerzhon gozh, kontet brav gant Roparz Hemon.
Quelques beaux récits de l'Irlande antique.

- DANEVELLOÙ KOZH DANVEZ BREIZH (1992), 164 fajenn 80,-00 F 40, 00 F
An danevelloù kozh eus Breizh a adkaver e yezhoù all : gant Roparz Hemon int bet lakae e brezhoneg.
Les anciens récits bretons, conservés dans la littérature européenne, traduits par Roparz Hemon.

- MARVAILHOÙ AR VENGLEUZ (1992), 164 fajenn 85,-00 F 42, 00 F
Danevelloù kriz a-walc'h uet diwar kembraeg Dik Trevan gant Fañch Elies-Abeczen.
Sombres nouvelles de la dure vie des mineurs gallois. Traduites du gallois de Dik Trevan.

- JOSEPH ROUSSE, POËTE BRETON (1995), 148 pages 70,-00 F 35, 00 F
*Poète du Pays Nantais, Joseph Rousse a su chanter la Bretagne et sa liberté.
Biographie et choix de poèmes par Jakeza Le Lay.*



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Textes de Rezo Gabriade, auteur de théâtre géorgien, traduits par Anna Mouradova.

- EUS AN TU ALL, (1983), 62 bajenn 25,-00 F
Romanig gant Yann-Fañch JACQ.
Roman de Yann-Fañch JACQ.

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The Coop Breizh (1957-1997)

At the Heart of Breton Culture for 40 Years

We have briefly mentioned the 40th anniversary of the Coop Breizh in past issues of Bro Nevez, but a more complete introduction to this remarkable enterprise is merited. The following is a translation and synthesis of a brochure from the Coop Breizh. I would be happy to photo copy the original (in French) for anyone interested. LK

1957-1970 –The Militant Years

The militants of Kendalc'h, a confederation of cultural groups founded in 1950, began plans to put a cooperative structure into place in order to sell books, magazines, newsletters, recordings, musical instruments, prints, photographs, calendars, and other literary and artistic materials to its members. Included as well would be traditional regional costumes and all other materials of importance to the folkloric, artistic and cultural work of the Celtic Circles and organizations of Kendalc'h. In purchasing or producing these things itself, the cooperative would create publishing operations, manufacturing, and purchasing, as well as sales in large or small quantities, by correspondence or on site with the creation of stores or distribution sties. And its services would be offered in support of and in the context of folkloric, artistic and cultural activities in Brittany.

On November 30, 1957, the formative meeting was held in Vannes of the General Assembly of the "Société Anonyme Cooperative Breiz" (called today "Coop Breizh"). The first administrators were Pierre Mocaër, President of Kendalc'h, Jean Guihard, Treasurer of Kendalc'h, Loeiz Ropars, and Christian Hudin.

The first members of the cooperative were Kendalc'h and the groups which made up this federation. Notes from the council meetings of 1959/60 note the presence of administrators from groups such as the "Cercle de Poullaouen," the "Cercle de la Baule," the "Cercle de Quimper," the "Association Kendalc'h," and the "Amicale Ar Roue Gradlon."

The Administrative Council expanded little by little to include other militant members of Kendalc'h and closely related organizations. Names of early leaders include Robert Le Grand, who was named Director in February 1960 and served in this role for 20 years. Also active was Jean Sicard (better known by his pen name, Yann Brekilien) who took over the presidency of the Administrative Council from Peirre Mocaër and served from 1960-69. Another key leader was Pierre Roy, who was president from 1970 to 1976.

1965 marked a first step in the economic life of the little cooperative when its sales—especially by correspondence—were opened to the public and no longer limited to coop members. The "Service librairie Breiz" became the "Coop Breiz," and the catalog of titles available expanded rapidly. Based in Rennes from 1957 to 1960, the office was transferred to La Baule in February 1960, and remained there for 23 years.

The 1970s and 1980s – The Public Years

Under the presidencies of Per Roy (1970-76) and Jean-Pierre Vincent (1977-78), the Coop Breizh continued expanding its services to the public. Its first store in La Baule in was opened in 1966, followed by a store in Paris in the Centre Elysées-Bretagne in 1971 (with a second Paris store in 1973 at 10 rue du Maine, the same year a fire destroyed the store at the Centre Elysées-Bretagne). Thanks to the Cercle Celtique of Rennes a third store opened in November 1976 at 17 rue de Penhoët.

The Coop Breizh understood well that to really reach a wide public it needed to work with structures already in place—especially other stores. A number of them had already been visiting the Coop Breizh stores in La Baule, Rennes and Paris in search of books on Brittany. In order to reach other distribution points, the Coop Breizh integrated a distribution enterprise created in 1972 by Yann Goasdoué in Spezet, and Diffusion Breizh was born. The new sales director was hired in February 1977 along with his travelling salesman Yoran Delacour.

1980-1997 – Culture is Linked to the Economy

The beginning of the 1980s was marked by growth. The small cooperative was becoming an enterprise, and in the process experiencing some crisis. The store in La Baule had to be closed in 1985. The coop's administrators proceeded with caution in order to meet goals and intensify growth. Yann Jamet, the first salaried administrator of the Coop Breizh (since March 1958) quickly became a volunteer again as an administrator and then as President of the Administrative Council from 1979 to 1982. Besides the director, Robert Le Grand, just one salaried position was responsible for all the administrative work during over ten years of the Coop's existence. During this "great époque" everything counted on Micheline Lalande who retired in 1983.

During the 1980s the staff of Coop Breizh grew in one single leap. Added to two salaried staff in place at the beginning of the 1970s were numerous seasonal staff and full-time employees in the stores of La Baule, Paris and Rennes as well as in Spezet. By the summer of 1980 there were 16 fulltime and temporary staff on the personnel records.

Under the presidency of Yann Jamet and then Yvonig Gicquel (starting in 1982) the Coop Breizh took off, and its capital went from 53,170 francs to 461,580 francs in ten years. In 1986 the Cooperative Breizh occupied 600 square meters of space and increased its investments in personnel and material. Its sales exploded from 3 million francs in 1977 to 14 million in 1987.

In Spezet where general operations were based, the Administrative Council created two new sectors: publishing and production. 39 people (14 temporary) were on salary in 1996, assisted by a number of artists and volunteers who carry on in the spirit started by Kendalc'h.

The Coop Breizh concept of linking culture with economy has been reinforced in the 1990s. The pioneering spirit of Kendalc'h continues, but the Coop Breizh sustains itself as an enterprise. Since 1989 profits rose by 6%. Acts of patronage could follow, including the awarding of literary prizes and support of organizations such as Diwan. Sales continue to increase and there are now over 20 full-time staff.

The store in Paris (10 rue du Maine), operating independently since 1985, continues to be a center of attraction for Breton emigrants. The store in Rennes (17 rue de Penhoët), with three full time staff and catalog sales, continues to grow. A new store was opened in Lorient (60 rue du Port) in 1997.

Music: From 45 rpm discs to compact disc

Since its first years, the "Cooperative Breiz" has shown an attachment to this "new" media—the record—in distributing the first 45 rpms produced in Brittany.

In 1977, with its integration of the distribution structure created by Yann Goasdoue, all the young recording studios of Brittany could be found in the catalog of Coop Breizh (Kelenn, Droug, Nevenoe, Velia). An important turning point came with the purchase of the Arfolk and Escalibur record labels from Georges Gragnic in 1985; the distributor Coop Breizh then had its own production sector. The first recordings came out in 1987. The choice was eclectic: Diaouled ar Menez, Busy Fingers, Patrig Sicard, and Glemor came out on 33 rpm records and cassettes. That same year, the first compact disc produced by the Coop Breizh was that of Gwerz.

In 1992 a new label, Gwerz Pladenn, was created, involving musicians such as Jacky and Patrick Molard and Jacques Pellen, and technicians such as Philippe Terasse.

The 1990s confirmed the Coop Breizh's integration into the heart of Breton music with 15 titles released each year (some co-produced with the artists) and a catalog including 1000 titles available through the Coop.

Coop Breizh productions have been regular prize winners. The Arfolk label had the honor in 1996 with the Grand Prize of the Académie Charles Cros awarded to Roland Becker's "Jours de fêtes de nuit" (CD 436). The Diapson d'Or was awarded to Erick Falc'her-Poyroux's "Musiques et musiciens d'Irlande" (CD 439), and the 4 Clés Télérâma was awarded to the Bagad de Lann-Bihoué's "Glann Glaz" (CD 440).

The arrival of musician Jean-Louis Le Vallégant at the head of the production sector of Coop Breizh in 1996 shows its commitment to the intensification of its work with music recordings.

In 1997, on the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the Coop Breizh created a musical prize. An independent jury of actors in Brittany's music world (Alan Stivell, Michel Rostain Alain Le Buhé, André Le Meut, André Georges Hamon, Gwenaél Dayot, and Yann Le Meur) awarded the "Coop Breizh Prize "At the Heart of Breton Music"" to a recording inspired by the instrumental or song tradition of Brittany. This distinction went to Annie Ebrel and the group Dibenn.

Publishing: An Area of Full Growth

In its early years the Coop Breizh worked as a publisher in collaboration with Kendalc'h, producing the magazine Breiz and the Breiz Hor Bro series.

The creation of two literary prizes in 1982, named for the first presidents of Kendalc'h and the Coop Breizh, gave a new dimension to the involvement of the Coop. Sponsored by the Coop Breizh, these prizes are awarded each year by the Association of Breton Writers. The Prix Peirre Mocaër is given for a work about Brittany in French, and the Prix Per Roy is given for a work in Breton. In 1982 the Coop Breizh created a third prize to recognize Breton language writers. Called the Prix Roparz Hemon, the award winner for this distinction is selected by Kuzul ar Brezhoneg.

To live "at the heart of Breton culture" means that decisions need to be taken about Breton identity. In 1984 the General Assembly decided that "books and products which voluntarily and systematically exclude Loire-Atlantique from Brittany cannot be published or sold by the Coop Breizh."

That same year the Coop Breizh integrated "Nature & Bretagne." Under the direction of Yann Brekilien this collective of authors/publishers was dissolved and it became a Coop Breizh label. 1988 marked the beginnings of a true editorial policy with the appearance of Gwenc'hlan Le Scouezec's "Guide de la Bretagne," an updated and augmented edition of the "Guide de la Bretagne Mystérieuse" coedited by the Coop Breizh and Beltan.

In 1994 a Committee of Readers was put into place (9 members in 1997) to select manuscripts to be published. The last few years have confirmed the Coop Breizh's vocation as a publisher with more than 20 titles published each year and a catalog with over 100 authors. Special collections have been created such as the indispensable little guides on themes as varied as whiskey or Breton music, or the series of short story collections.

The publishing initiative of the Coop Breizh has been strengthened by the creation in 1995 of a graphics workshop, and the initiation of an editorial office in 1996.

Coop Breizh editions have received awards on a regular basis. In 1996 the Prix littéraire du marron de Redon was awarded to Claire Arlaux's "L'étonnante amazone de Menez Kamm—Véfa de Saint Pierre" (co-edited with Keltia Graphic). The Prix Camille Lemerrier d'Erm (given by the Association of Breton Writers) was awarded to Jean Yves Barzic's "L'Hermine et le soleil," and the Grand Prix des Ecrivains Bretons was given to Audé Le Dubé's "La mer intérieure."

And Tomorrow?

The Coop Breizh—in its project of enterprise and development—intends to continue serving innovation and creativity through all areas of its work (publishing, recordings, performances and sales) to successfully link historical roots to a technological future.

Today there are still more technological advances to be made, and Coop Breizh includes CD-ROMS in its catalog of recordings. Several co-edition projects are underway such as an encyclopedia of Breton music under the direction of Roland Becker and Laure Le Gurun.

Through the Internet the electronic letter box is in service (breizh.coop@hol.fr) and the Web site will soon be accessible (<http://www.coopbreizh.com>).

Tomorrow, just seconds after each new edition, one will be able to see and hear the cultural products of Brittany throughout the world, and Coop Breizh will contribute to this world distribution.

The following are some examples of new publications and music recordings planned which are rooted in Breton and Celtic identity: the reedition with critical commentary by the historian Jean Kerhervé of the "Histoire de Bretagne" published in 1582 by Bertrand d'Argentré (1520-1590), the publication of a work including all the maps of Brittany edited before 1789, and a co-edition with Ar Men of a work by Erick Falc'her Poyroux on Irish music.

* * *

To Discover More ...

As a long-time customer, I hope the Coop Breizh will celebrate many more years of service to Brittany and the world in its pioneering work to bring the best of Breton writing and music to us.

If you travel in Brittany or to Paris, be sure to visit one (or more) of the Coop Breizh stores (called "Librairie" in French—not to be confused with "library" in English):

In Rennes

17, rue de Penhoët
35000 Rennes
tel: 2 99 79 01 87
fax: 2 99 79 43 52

In Lorient

60, rue du Port
56100 Lorient
tel: 2 97 21 22 17
fax: 2 97 21 23 18

In Paris

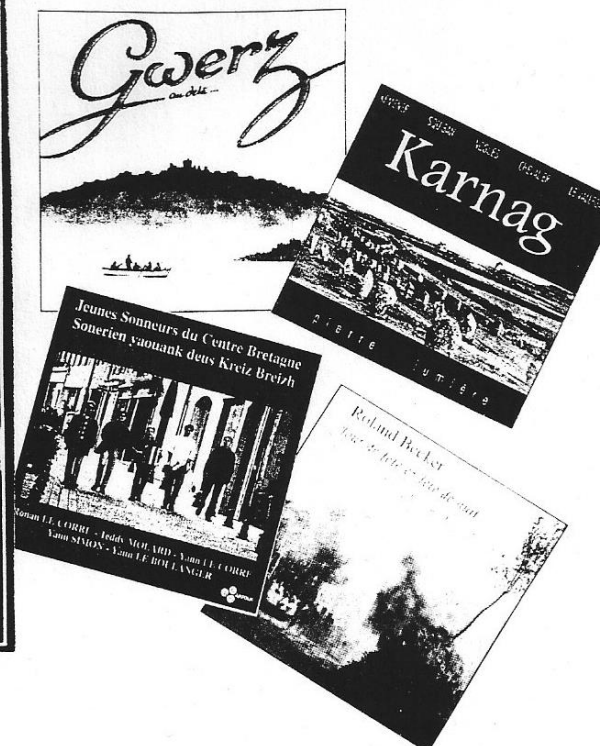
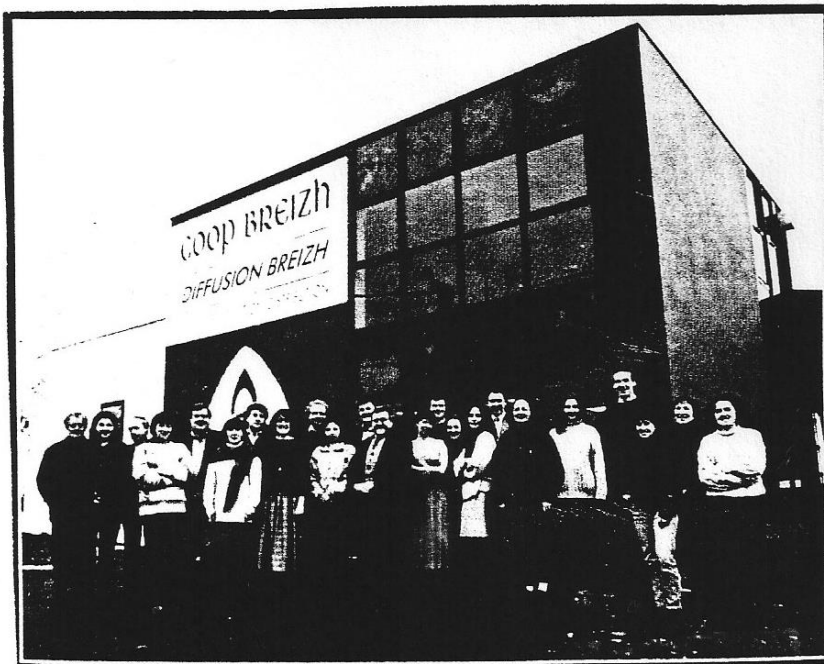
10 rue du Maine
75014 Paris
tel.: 1 43 20 84 60
fax: 1 43 21 99 22

While shopping first hand is always great fun, the store in Rennes will take orders by mail and can handle credit card orders. You need to specify authors/artists and titles and provide a 16-digit credit card number and expiration date when you place the order. Shipping costs will be added.

To contact the main office of the Coop Breizh, here is the address you need (they do not take individual orders, but would welcome contact with any potential U.S./Canadian distributors):

Coop Breizh
Kerangwenn
29540 Spézet
tel.: 02 98 93 83 14
fax: 2 98 93 87 97

Press agent for books: Anne-Cécile Le Daniel
Press agent for recordings: Olwenn Manac'h



YANN-FAÑCH KEMENER CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SONG

Lois Kuter

It is common for Breton bands to throw a big party when they hit a 15, 20, or 25-year milestone in performance. This offers the excuse for an exceptional fest noz which will inevitably include the best Breton music to be heard. The 25th anniversary of performance by traditional singer Yann-Fañch Kemener has a slightly different significance. When Yann-Fañch first emerged in public with his wonderful voice and long gwerzioù he was a rarity ... a twenty-year old who was already a master of traditional ballads and kan ha diskan singing. Many people in Brittany simply assumed that this was an art to expect only from older singers like the Goadec sisters or Morvan brothers. Singers like Kemener not only brought the power and passion of a young voice to traditional song, but he also brought the idea that kan ha diskan and long Breton language ballads were music for young Brittany to enjoy. Today, young traditional singers seem to abound, and sometimes they even have an adoring following of "groupies".

There is much reason to celebrate in Brittany today – not only the 25 years of wonderful song from Yann-Fañch Kemener, but also the fact that young singers continue to follow in his footsteps, dancers recognize the incredible power of young and old traditional voices, and teenagers sometimes take Breton language classes because they want to understand the words of the wonderful songs they hear at festoù-noz.

On November 29 Yann-Fañch Kemener celebrates (or has already celebrated ... depending on when you get this newsletter!) his 25 years of song in Kemper. Joining him for what is rightly called THE EVENT are singers Erik Marchand, Marcel Guilloux, Ifig Troadec, Annie Auffret, Valentine Colleter, Patrick Marie, the Morvan brothers, and Kanerien Pleuigner. But that's not all since a number of Brittany's top performers and bands will also be there: Kristen Noguès, Didier Squiban, Ar Re Yaouank, Strobinnell, Kern, Gwenfol, Hastan, Storvan, Tan Ba'n, Spontus, and Carré Manchot. And I wouldn't be surprised if a few pipers and other guests showed up as well. What a party! If anything ever tempted me to jump on an airplane and go to Brittany it has to be this event.

But, for those of us who aren't very spontaneous about travel, there is a superb recording to celebrate Kemener's 25 years of song. I enthusiastically second Natalie Novik's very positive review below.

Yann-Fañch Kemener. Kan ha diskan. Coop Breizh CD 445. 1997. 61'13.

Reviewed by Natalie Novik

This extraordinary compilation was recorded in October in Brittany by Yann-Fañch for his 25th anniversary. For the occasion, he invited la crème de la crème of the diskanerioù: Erik Marchand, Valentine Colleter, Marcel Guilloux, Claudine Floc'hig, Ifig Troadeg, Annie Ebrel, and Patrick Marie. The recording quality is superb, and the selection of tunes features all the classics ("Ar Serjant major," "Ar verjelenig," "Ar c'hozh paotr yaouank"), but also new ones like Valentine's composition on the 1987 hurricane ("Ar Gorventenn").

If you like kan ha diskan singing, this CD is a must. If you don't know it, it is the best way to discover it. The rhythm is absolutely incredible, and you feel the oneness with the singers when they perform. The recording includes some short interviews by Yann-Fañch, in French and Breton, and the CD jacket is in three languages: Breton, French and English (but mostly French). The words to most of the songs as well as his own story are available in a book just published by Skol Vreizh entitled Carnets de route de Yann-Fañch Kemener – Kanouennoù Kalon Vreizh (which also includes a CD of music).

OTHER NEW RECORDINGS FROM BRITTANY

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Coop Breizh. Au coeur de la culture bretonne – 40ème anniversaire. 1997

To celebrate its 40th anniversary the Coop Breizh has released a compilation of artists who have recorded on its three record labels: Arfolk, Escalibur, and Gwerz Pladenn. And the 13 selections on this CD present well the diversity and high quality of music performed in Brittany today and available on CD thanks to the Coop Breizh which not only produces recordings, but distributes a large range of Breton labels. Today it is easy to find Breton recordings in shops throughout Brittany, but this is in large part thanks to the pioneers of the Coop Breizh who worked hard for the past 40 years to create and build markets for Breton music and books. In the late 1950s you didn't go into the business of selling Breton books and records to get rich! You did it because you loved your cultural heritage and wanted to help give artists – known and unknown – the chance to make themselves heard (or read). Jacket notes to the CD give just a summary of the Coop Breizh and note a few of its achievements and awards given to recordings and books it has produced in recent years.

Artists on this sample of Breton music recorded on Coop Breizh labels include traditional singers-- Eugénie Goadec and Louise Ebrel, Annie Ebrel, and the Kanerion Pleuigner-- and a variety of soloists and groups: the Bagad Lokoal Mendon, Gwerz, Djiboudjep, the trio of Yann Fañch Kemener with Didier Squiban and Kristen Noguès (voice, keyboard and harp), the Trio Roland Becker (binioù, bombarde, drum), Band ar Jazz (with saxophone dominating), Jean Michel Veillon and Yvon Riou (flute and guitar), Jean-Michel Alhais and Jean-Pierre Rolland (bombarde and organ), Soig Siberil (guitar), and Jacques Pellen and Riccardo Del Fra (guitars and bass fiddle). With just 13 cuts on the CD, you can't do much better than that to present the diversity of musical styles and the high quality of performance to be found in Brittany today.

* * *

Pierre Le Menach. "Je vais vous dire..."—Chants traditionnels du Pays Vannetais. Par Les Chemins de Rencontre. CR 9701. 1997. 56/79.

In the letter sent along with this compact disc featuring his grandfather Pierre Le Menach, Jacques le Tallec noted that he thought I would appreciate this recording and the fact that it has stimulated other older singers to record some of the rich heritage they have kept in their families. While these are not the voices of an Eric Marchand, Yann Fanch Kemener or Annie Ebrel, these singers have a wealth of stories and sounds to share with younger generations of musicians and singers. And indeed, I appreciate very well the importance of recording some of the wonderful music of Brittany's older generations—music still being passed down through a healthy oral tradition, but which can be made accessible to an even wider number of listeners when captured on CD. In creating the organization called "Par les Chemins de Rencontre" Jacques Le Tallec and friends have refused to allow the wonderful songs and stories of their parents and grandparents to simply slip away. As has been the case with all the collection work encouraged by the organization Dastum, the work of Par les Chemins de Rencontre will surely put some young people on a "Road of Encounters" where they discover the wealth of knowledge to be inherited from older generations of their family and neighbors. And no doubt there are many like Pierre Le Menach who can share a true joy for life as well.

Jacques Le Tallec recorded his grandfather ten years ago when Pierre Le Menach was 82, a man with a repertoire of over 150 songs and tunes. Just 33 short selections are found on the CD—including seven songs in Breton and three tunes on the harmonica. Pierre Le Menach was a farmer living until recent years in Baden (just to the southeast of Auray), and song was a part of rural life. You sang while you worked or just for fun in the evening among family and friends. It is clear from this CD that Pierre Le Menach loved to sing, and laughter is very much present on the CD. The field recordings made in 1982 have been cleaned up a bit in the studio, but the sounds of the immediate environment—clocks, kitchen noises, laughter—have been kept and give lots of life to this CD.

This is a recording that is first and foremost a treasure for Pierre Le Menach's 12 children and 30 grandchildren who love him and take pride in his musical talents. It is also a source of tunes and songs for younger musicians who may or may not be part of the family. And it is a wonderful documentation of how joyfully music has been incorporated into rural Breton life.

Anyone interested in more information about the work of "Les Chemins de Rencontre" or who wants to purchase a copy of the CD featuring Pierre Le Menach (120 francs) is welcome to contact:

Jacques Le Tallec
Les Quatre Cheminées
56400 Pluneret
Brittany

* * *

Jo Fe Ro. An Dirlipenn. Escalibur CD 873. 1997.

While we're on the topic of older generations, here is a new sound for Breton music fans in the U.S. In fact, this is an older sound from three remarkable musicians of central western Brittany who have been in the music business for over 50 years. "Jo Fe Ro" is a trio made up by Job Guégan (piano accordion and drums), Félix Guégan (also piano accordion and drums), and Robert Le Buhan (saxophone and clarinet). As the CD notes describe, all three are from the town of Plounevez-Quintin in the Pays Fañch. The father of the Guégan brothers was a well known kan ha diskan singer, so it is not surprising they would take up music, beginning by playing music for weddings in the 1940s—using the traditional treujenn gaol (clarinet) and adding accordion and a drum set to accommodate to the popular tastes of the times. In the 1950s when the pairing of bombarde and biniou braz (Scottish style bagpipes) was in style, out went the treujenn gaol. Like any professional musician of Brittany, Félix and Job Guégan and Robert Le Buhan had a foot in the traditional music world, but had no trouble adapting their musical skills to new tastes and new instruments. They were welcome at the dances and weddings of Central Brittany for many years, and in 1978 when the "bal rétro" or "bal à papa" came into style (alongside the revival of the fest noz) the band Jo Fe Ro was formed. They have been active ever since performing at retirement communities and for Sunday afternoon dances for those who have followed their career for decades.

Much of the repertoire of this trio is characterized as a style called "musette" but it also includes a number of Breton traditional dances—including on this CD fañch, fisel, an dro, kost er hoët, scottische, hanter-dro, gavotte pourlette, pach pi, and laridé. Also included are some more recent dances such as the Bal d'Erquy, mazurka, and waltzes which have been thoroughly "Bretonnized." Younger generations may not find the style of this music very "hip," but age has not slowed down the Jo Fe Ro trio. Their style bears no resemblance to the frantic energy of young bands who perform at festou noz

today, but Jo Fe Ro has its own energy and their music is thoroughly danceable. This is music that is to be enjoyed by all generations, as shown by the participation of some of Brittany's best known younger talents in a few of the cuts on the CD: Dominique Jouve (clarinet and fiddle), Laurent Bigot (abandoning the pipes for a trumpet), Olivier Urvoy (saxophone), and Annie Ebrel and Erik Marchand on a delightful duet in Breton called "Joli Coucou" (a "polka mod kozh").

Old fashioned? Yes, but this band still has a loyal following and they still know how to make you dance.

* * *

Christian Duro. Sonneur Fisel. Escalibur CD 872. 1997.

The short title to this CD, "Sonneur Fisel," goes a long way to explain the music of Christian Duro. I have always been uncomfortable in translating "sonneur" since it refers to those who play not only biniou koz, biniou, braz, or the bombarde, but also those who play the clarinet (and probably most other wind instruments in Brittany). Christian Duro is recognized to be a master of the clarinet, known also by the name of treujenn gaol (Breton for "cabbage stump"). From a family of singers and clarinet players in the Bro Fisel where the clarinet has a particularly strong hold, it is only natural that he would take up this instrument. But Christian Duro widened his horizons as a young musician to also learn the bombarde which he played in pair with his brother who took up the biniou braz (Scottish style bagpipes). As noted in the review above, this pairing of bombarde and bagpipes was quite popular in the 1950s and sixties threatening the place not only of the older biniou koz, but also the clarinet. But the displacement was just temporary as the little high pitched biniou has regained a following with more sonneurs than ever, and the clarinet has also gained the favor of new generations. Indeed, in the mid 1970s Christian Duro was a founding member of the organization called Paotred an Dreujenn-Gaol which continues to organize a very interesting international festival of clarinet players each year.

This CD features not just the clarinet and bombarde playing of Christian Duro, but his collaboration with a number of other fine musicians of Brittany who share his love of the traditions of the Fisel country. The unique style of paired clarinet playing which parallels that of biniou and bombarde and kan ha diskan singing is well illustrated on the CD where Christian Duro plays in pair with Jean-Claude Le Lay, Dominique Jouve, and Erik Marchand (better known for his voice, but no slacker on the clarinet). But Christian Duro also pairs up with jazz clarinet player Louis Sclavis and Rumanian taragot player Constantin Olan (of the Taraf de Caransebes) for some more unusual arrangements of traditional Breton songs and dances. Added to the variety of music found on the CD is the pairing of clarinet with the accordion of Jean-Paul Guyomarc'h for a lovely dañs 'dro and its pairing with the saxophone of Olivier Urvoy for a polka plin. Also represented is the "bal rétro" style (like that of Jo Fe Ro reviewed above) where Christian Duro pulls out the bombarde and is joined for a dance by Manu Coatmellec on saxophone and Antoine Le Saux on piano accordion--all members of the 1970s band called "Les Papillons Bleus." Putting the clarinet down for a moment, Christian Duro also shows his mastery of the bombarde with a duo with Patrick Molard on biniou braz for a melody and a dañs fisel. The CD is not only a presentation of Christian Duro and his collaboration with a number of musicians, but it also gives a portrait of music of the Fisel country. This includes song and story telling and you hear Christian Duro tell a short tale in Breton, and he sings two songs--one with his mother Catherine Duro and another in pair with Erik Marchand.

The notes to the CD give not only a very nice biography of Christian Duro and his musical career, but also include excellent notes for each selection and six photographs which help to bring the musicians to life.

This CD is a wonderful addition to the limited number of recordings featuring treujenn gaol, including traditional dances and melodies as well as less conventional arrangements by Christian Duro and friends. It is a fitting tribute to a master of the musical traditions of the Fisel country – a “Sonneur Fisel” passing along a rich musical tradition to new generations and continuing to create new music.

* * *

Louis Capart. Rives Gauches de Bretagne et d'ailleurs. Keltia Musique KMCD 80. 1997.

Louis Capart is one of a number of Breton singers who have spent a significant part of their lives outside of Brittany who bring the experience of emigration to their songs. And it seems that sometimes the experience of emigration gives such musicians an ability to express most eloquently what it means to be Breton. Louis Capart is what we might describe as a “singer-songwriter”—a “chansonnier”—born in Paris with family roots deep in the maritime heritage of the Island of Sein. The hard life of fishermen and women of Sein is evoked in his song “Marie-Jeanne-Gabrielle” written 15 years ago, and still a classic in his repertoire.

On this CD Louis Capart interprets a number of classic songs made well known by Breton and French singers. And it takes some nerve to reinterpret songs which are often intimately linked to their original creators. But Louis Capart has the voice and flair to make these familiar songs his own. And this is possible because the emotions and stories told in the songs are ones with which he can personally identify (changes in the maritime industry of Brittany which forces Bretons to emigrate, for example). And many of the songs are universal in emotion. Besides one song of his own, Louis Capart interprets five classic Breton songs: Gilles Servat’s “Je dors en Bretagne ce soir,” Claude Besson’s “Kérouze,” Jean-Michel Caradec’s “Ma Bretagne quand elle pleut,” François Budet’s “Loguivy-de-la-mer,” and Glenmor’s “La rose.” And, although originally composed by Phil Coulter, Tri Yann’s interpretation of “La ville que j’ai tant aimée” is also included. Like most Breton musicians, Louis Capart chooses to perform a repertoire that goes beyond the borders of Brittany and on this CD are classic songs by Alain Aurenche, Léo Ferré, Félix Leclerc, Bernard Haillant, Louis Aragon, Michèle Bernard, Georges Brassens and Danielle Messia.

If you already like popular French “chansons” or you want to discover some of the best of French and Breton “singer-song writers,” this is a good collection of great songs interpreted with passion and beauty by Louis Capart. Texts for nine of the fifteen songs are included in the jacket notes.

* * *

Michel Tonnerre. Douce barbarie. Keltia Musique KMCD 78. 1997.

Like Louis Capart, Michel Tonnerre can be described as a “singer-songwriter” but there is a world of difference in style. From Capart’s rich and tender voice and songs with a strong dose of nostalgia and melancholy, we move to a very different mood. Michel Tonnerre’s voice is hard and gravelly—not at all unpleasant, but there’s nothing sweet about it. Like Capart, Tonnerre’s songs are in French and are rooted in Brittany’s maritime heritage, but they are more complex—death seems always near to love, and life is violent and stormy. Tonnerre challenges the listener to think a bit. Whether simply acoustic guitar or a complex mix of electric guitars, keyboards, percussion and electronic sounds, the accompaniment enhances each song. The whole thing gels, including the jacket design and art in the notes, and the photo of Michel Tonnerre. The jacket notes include the texts to all the songs—and since song is really a form of poetry, the texts are quite helpful for those not fluent in French.

Michel Tonnerre is famous in Brittany for his "chants de marins" which have become classics in the bistros of ports like Brest or Lorient. These are not "sea chanteys" but songs that work best in dark and smoky bars—perhaps they are best described as "maritime blues." They may not be "pretty" but they pack a wallop. This new CD could never be described as "easy-listening music" but Michel Tonnerre is always worth a listen.

* * *

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND ...

Editor's Note: The following CD was reviewed in Bro Nevez 63 (August 1997), but it never hurts to have a second opinion! Matt Cosgrove didn't see my review of Skeduz, but as you'll read, we both agree that this is a great band.

Skeduz. Rag ar Plinn. Keltia Musique KMCD 72. 1997. 37 minutes.

Reviewed by Matt Cosgrove

Skeduz is one of the best of the "new generation" of Breton fest-noz groups. Unlike some other currently popular young groups which have opted for—as E. Le Dissez succinctly puts it in the August issue of Musique Bretonne—loudness rather than finesse, the music of Skeduz (like that of Storvan or Skolvan) is not only innovative and irresistibly engaging, but also faithfully respects traditional styles, rhythms and tempos.

At the heart of Skeduz is the bombarde/biniou duo of Yvon Lefèbvre and Dédé Thomas. Both are extremely experienced "sonneurs" (Dédé in particular is one of the finest biniou players in Brittany and has won innumerable music competitions). It is their masterful playing which anchors the group's sound. Yvon and Dédé are also talented composers and they have contributed several of the most striking tunes (a march, a slow air, several ridées and dañs plinn) found on this CD.

The other musicians—all very fine artists and ex or current members of such groups as Koun, Dibenn and Arcady—include Nicolas Quémener on guitar and flute, Ronan Pellen on cistre (a sort of bouzouki) and cello, and Laurent Dacquay on violin. If Yvon and Dédé are the group's heart, then Nicolas, Ronan and Laurent are it's flesh and blood—the rhythmic interplay of the guitar and cistre and the contemporary melodic voices provided by the flute and violin round out and support the dynamic, strident sound of the biniou/bombarde. This combination of "sonneurs" and "strings" is unusual in Breton music—but there's no denying that in this case it works extremely well!

As for the repertoire, it's composed largely of attractive and well-chosen dance tunes. Represented are suites of ridées, plin, gavottes des montagnes, gavottes pourlet, ronds de St. Vincent and kas a barh, with, in addition, an inspiring march and two beautiful slow airs. The arrangements are spare and extremely tasteful (with the possible exception of the introductory rhythmic accompaniment to the suite of gavottes pourlet—guys, what were you thinking!). All of the tracks are outstanding and it would be difficult to single out any of them as better than the others. However, it's perhaps worth calling attention to the excellent suite plinn—Dédé Thomas is a specialist of this region of Brittany and the style and choice of tunes on this track are exemplary.

It's nearly impossible to find fault with the music on this recording; virtually the only "defect" is the somewhat uninspired cover art. It *could* be more colorful—but unless you're buying this CD to hang on your wall, you won't be disappointed. This is an exceptionally fine first release which should be in every collection of Breton music!

AN "OLDY BUT GOODY"

Padrig Sicard. Savet diouz ar mintin (I got up in the morning) Escalibur (lp: BUR 819, 1987)

Reviewed by Natalie Novik.

I only found a cassette for this one. But what a cassette! It does not even say who performs with Padrig Sicard, but they are all first rate. Breton dances alternate with Celtic songs. The instruments are brilliant, the singing is solid; even if we have heard these tunes a million times before (either performed by the Sicards or by Stivell), Padrig Sicard's interpretation is so rapturous we feel we are rediscovering them. He launches himself in an interesting "blues" entitled "Savet diouz are minitin" which starts hauntingly with the bombarde in a traditional Breton style. He sings the first sentence in Breton and then suddenly, there are a few guitar chords, and he starts the tune again in English with a definite Deep South color! The only shortcoming in this song is that his English is rather grating, but you end up forgiving him. The cassette was produced by Escalibur at a totally unknown date, with no explanation whatsoever on the jacket. A deep, but very enjoyable, mystery!

Mystery solved by Lois Kuter

I happen to have the lp version of this 1987 production, and share Natalie's frustration that reissues on cassette or CD sometimes never give any hint as to when the original recording was produced. And it is shameful that the artists on the recording are not listed on the cassette version of Savet diouz ar mintin, because as Natalie noted, they are all first rate, including Dan ar Bras, (guitars), Ronan Sicard (keyboard), Youenn Kergoat (percussion), and Paul Durand (bass). Padrig Sicard handles song, fiddle, bombarde, tin whistle, keyboard and bouzouki. While just a bit more information on the notes to the cassette seem merited, it is good to know that this fine recording is still available on cassette!

HEARD OF, BUT NOT HEARD

Information on the following new CDs has been pulled from reviews which appeared in Ar Men nos. 88 (september 1997) and 89 (novembre 1997), Musique bretonne no. 145 (septembre/octobre 1997) and Armor (October 1997).

La Godinette. Jeunes filles et conscrits. Epona Production/Pluriel NL 350 132. 1997.

La Godinette includes four excellent veterans of the Breton music scene: sonneurs de couple Jean Baron and Christian Annex on bombarde and biniou, fiddler Pierrick Lemou, and accordion player Patrick Lefèbvre.

Hervé Dréan. Couleurs de nuit. Self-production (Kersauvage, 56130 Fréhel). 1997.

This CD includes interpretations by Hervé Dréan and Rachel Goodwin of a dozen songs collected from the traditional repertoire of the area of La Roche-Bernard.

Tan Ba'n Ty. Tomm Ruz. Ar Vilin 1010. Diffusion l'Autre Distribution. 1997.

This is the first recording by a young band of the Pontivy area. The band includes Régis Huiban (piano accordion), Grégory Le Lan (bombarde), Frédéric Miossec (bagpipes and biniou), Yves le Gal (guitar), and Julien Le Mentec (bass).

Kevrenn Brest Sant Mark. Live—XII Mezinardni dudacky festival Strakonice 1996. Mega Music 1004-2931. 1997.

This is a live recording by the ever-innovative bagad Kevrenn Brest Sant Mark, made at the international bagpipe festival held for the past 30 years at Strakonice in Czechoslovakia. They arrange traditional Breton cantiques and newer compositions of a religious theme in performance with classical music students from the Ceske Budahovice conservatory of music.

Diwall. Dansall ha nijal. Diwall SNC 35706. Distribution Sergent Major Cy Ltd. 1997.a

This is another newer band off to a great start, fostered by the wealth of festoù noz in Brittany. The CD includes a variety of dances.

Reuz a Brest Mem'. EOG 103. 1997

This is a compilation of fest noz bands and singers, including Forz Pennaos, Klaskerien, Padellec & Pronost, An Hejer & Al Lae, Diduell, and Distro.

It appears that there are quite a number of other CDs to be or already released this fall, including another collection of traditional songs and music put out by Dastum--this time featuring the area of Pontivy, Baud and the Pays Pourlet. Dan ar Bras gathers 70 musicians from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Galicia, and Brittany for a CD called Finisterres—perhaps another blockbuster hit like his l'Heritage des Celtes. Musicians and singers of Brittany are gathered for a two-CD set in celebration of Diwan's 20th anniversary, and one can expect those CDs to include a wonderful sample of the best of traditional and less-traditional styles, with the participation of Diwan kids as well. Harper Gwenola Ropars has a new CD called Baradoz (featuring cantiques), the band BF15 is to release a CD called Primeur, and pianist Didier Squiban salutes traditional Breton music with a CD called Molène.

So it looks like you can look forward to lots more music reviews in the February 1998 issue of Bro Nevez!

Brittany this Fall: A Traveler's Report

By Natalie Novik

I was in Brittany for a very short visit mid-October. My goal was to visit some aging relatives, as I live far away (Alaska) and always fear it will be the last time I see them. Actually, I found them doing better than I expected--perhaps a little less feisty, but still very witty and full of "joie de vivre."

Ten years exactly after an unprecedented hurricane cut a wide swath through fields and forests in western and central Brittany, wrecking boats, uprooting trees, blowing away the harvest, crashing church steeples, and leaving Mt. Frugy above Kemper looking like Bald Mountain, the landscape has healed, but the wound is still present in the people's mind. A song was even composed by a famous kan-ha-diskan singer, Valentine Colleter, about this incredible catastrophe, totally denied by the French government who called it a windstorm and refused to compensate the farmers and fishermen. At the time, I took pictures of boats thrown hundred of yards on land, huge apple trees lying on their side, broken 12th century glass windows in the Kemper cathedral... Today, the weathermen are better equipped and also more sensitive to erratic climate patterns, and people hope that when it happens again they will not be caught by surprise.*

I traveled for four days all around Finistère in a tiny rented Twingo (the French idea of an accordion on wheels). The smaller roads are well-maintained, and although narrow, they are a better way to see the country than the highways where speeding is the rule (80 miles an hour is considered slow). An entire network of highways has been built all across Brittany now, and the locals love dashing from one point to another, often commuting from rural areas where the younger generations dwell in rehabilitated farms to cities like Kemper, Brest, or Lorient where there are more jobs than in the villages. Many people under 50 have moved back to Brittany from Paris and larger cities and have found work. The unemployment rate is not as high as in the rest of France, and Brittany is certainly today one of the economic locomotives of Europe.

Everywhere you go, agro-industrial complexes have developed, large corporations have settled in, and small business is booming. Brittany is the first region in Europe for agriculture (they even make more Swiss cheese than Switzerland), but because it can boast of a large percentage of its population with higher education, it attracts other businesses—particularly high technology.

This same educated population is probably what is pushing the Breton identity forward. The moment you cross into Brittany, you start seeing the Breton flag and Breton signs, the scenery changes radically with the blue slate roofs and the hedges around the fields, and by the time you arrive in Kemper (also known as Quimper), you know you are no longer in your average French town! The proliferation of signs in the Breton language is striking: it is obviously no longer meant for tourists (who can barely read let alone understand what they say, since the old “Ty Mor” and other barbarisms have practically disappeared). Kemper is funding a sign campaign to the tune of 25 million francs to replace all the signs in town with bilingual ones starting in 1998, and also to have enough in reserve to keep making more bilingual signs as needed (Carhaix, in contrast, never thought of funding new signs, and now they have half the city with older bilingual signs, and half with new French-only signs).

And the use of the language, you will ask? Officially, there are about 250,000 users of the Breton language. But, I believe we are seeing the first signs of progress, particularly with the influence of Diwan, in that a larger proportion of youngsters are recorded as Breton speakers. I asked Anna-Vari Chapalain, one of the founders of Diwan, what she sees. “I am convinced the young generation under twenty is more motivated than the generation which immediately followed us, those who are today thirty-something. The young ones, and I am not talking only about the Diwan students, don’t go to nightclubs—they come to the festoù-noz, and it seems to have a very deep meaning for them.”

Anna-Vari is today the assistant of the Kemper Mayor, and while she is very conscious of the obstacles created even at the local level by French centralism and the old generation of Gaullist politicians, she is convinced that the time is near when a new generation with a strong sense of its identity as Bretons will be ready to take over.

There is still a lot of work to be done. Anna-Vari recognizes honestly that Diwan still has a long way to go: the baccalaureat (the final high school exam) is still in French, and many new schools cannot be created because of a lack of funding. But the bilingualism of the Diwan students is a plus; the first wave of students graduated with a 100% success rate on the baccalaureat. And just recently, a group of Diwan 9th graders who were tested in math for the Brevet (a minor test) decided to write their answers in Breton. ... All of them... Upon seeing this, the teacher in charge of the test panicked and contacted his superiors, who contacted the region, who

contacted the Ministry in Paris. the answer from Paris: find someone to correct the test in Breton and put a lid on it...

But Paris is far away, and the thick-headed Bretons are not impressed. The cultural tradition is alive and well, thank you. Yann-Fañch Kemener is going to celebrate his 25 years of kan ha diskan with a big bash in Kemper on November 29th, and I did not have a chance to go to a fest-noz simply because I did not spend the weekend in Brittany. Otherwise, on any Saturday night, a dozen festoù-noz can be chosen by dancers, old and young alike.

One fest-noz was featured on CNN Europe for a short two-minute stint the week of October 12th. The topic was the disappearing languages of Europe, and the program showed the persistence of tradition in Brittany through some short takes of that fest-noz and interviews with the Diwan middle school students and Radio-Bretagne Ouest. The conclusion was that there was this stubborn small ethnic group in a remote area of France, with quaint ancient traditions, but their language was doomed anyway...

A few days in Brittany at this time of the year is like a speeded-up trip through time and space. One morning the fog lifted on the beach at Sainte-Anne La Palud, a place full of history and memories, and I saw out at sea, not one mile from the beach, seven or eight super-equipped trawlers emerging slowly from the mist, bristling with the latest telecommunication and radar technology, hauling in tons of fish in an area I believed had been completely overfished.

Some days it rained, and driving slowly on the winding roads covered in cow dung and mud, it seemed like things would never change. And then the clouds lifted, the coast appeared, and I was facing a totally renovated Pointe du Raz. This westernmost Cape of Brittany was threatened fifteen years ago by a very Parisian project to blow it up to build a nuclear plant. The locals in Plogoff and neighboring villages organized a protest, the French sent in police and then the army, but the local women, children and dogs won the day (with the support of all of Brittany).

The Cape was saved, but it is a powerful tourist attraction. From the tip you can see first the Ar Men lighthouse (the second most powerful in the world after the Creac'h in northern Brittany), and beyond that you see the legendary Isle of Sein (Enez Sun), believed to be the resting place of King Arthur. A two-story hotel was built a long time ago right on the Cape, and was surrounded by cheap tourist shops. However, a year ago, a new tourist site was developed one mile away from the tip of

the Cape; the old buildings were torn down and replaced by a low, almost underground, tourist center with a museum, stores and restaurants, and a parking lot also hidden from view by small stone walls. A well-maintained path leads to the end of the Cape, and several other paths run around the area. The next problem to be solved is the erosion created by tourists trampling the site, and it was being remedied while I was there by spraying mud over the most barren areas (and over some of the curious onlookers too!). The mud contains other elements that will help heather, goss and other local plants take root when they are planted. The same program will be applied to other capes in Brittany like Cape Frehel.

Then I had a refreshing experience called "thaslassotherapie" or sea healing. The idea was initiated by a retired sports champion who opened a spa in southern Brittany just after the war. The idea blossomed, and numerous spas exist today not only in Brittany but all over the French coasts. I visited one in Treboul, near Douarnenez, and was greatly impressed. The idea is to pump sea water into a building equipped with a large heated pool, private jet rooms, and many other uses for sea water and sea products like mud or seaweed wrappings. The personnel is highly trained for rehabilitation and rejuvenation programs. The center itself is state-of-the-art with a stunning view of the bay, and the cost for one week (including room, meals and treatment) is around \$800 per person. I spent only a few hours in the pool (access to outsiders is feasible for a small fee) but I will be back!

Overall, I must say that I found prices to be still very reasonable; granted the summer season was over, but the cozy hotel room with bath in medieval Locronan was \$45 per night, and an average meal of krampouez (crêpes) was about \$7. Splurging in grand style was still affordable at about \$30 including drinks. Brittany needs visitors in the winter, and if, like me, you are tired of shoveling snow by January, its mild climate and romantic mists have their charms. Some of the best pictures I took of northern Brittany were actually around the New Year.

That's all folks. I will be glad to answer any question anybody might have, either if you ask them in the next issue of Bro Nevez, or if you send them to me by e-mail at alyaska@alaska.net.

* See Bro Nevez 24/25 (August/November 1987) where the storm is a cover feature. See also *Ar Men* 88 (septembre 1997) which includes a very interesting article by François de Beaulieu, "La forêt, dix ans après l'ouragan," describing reforestation work in Brittany.

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