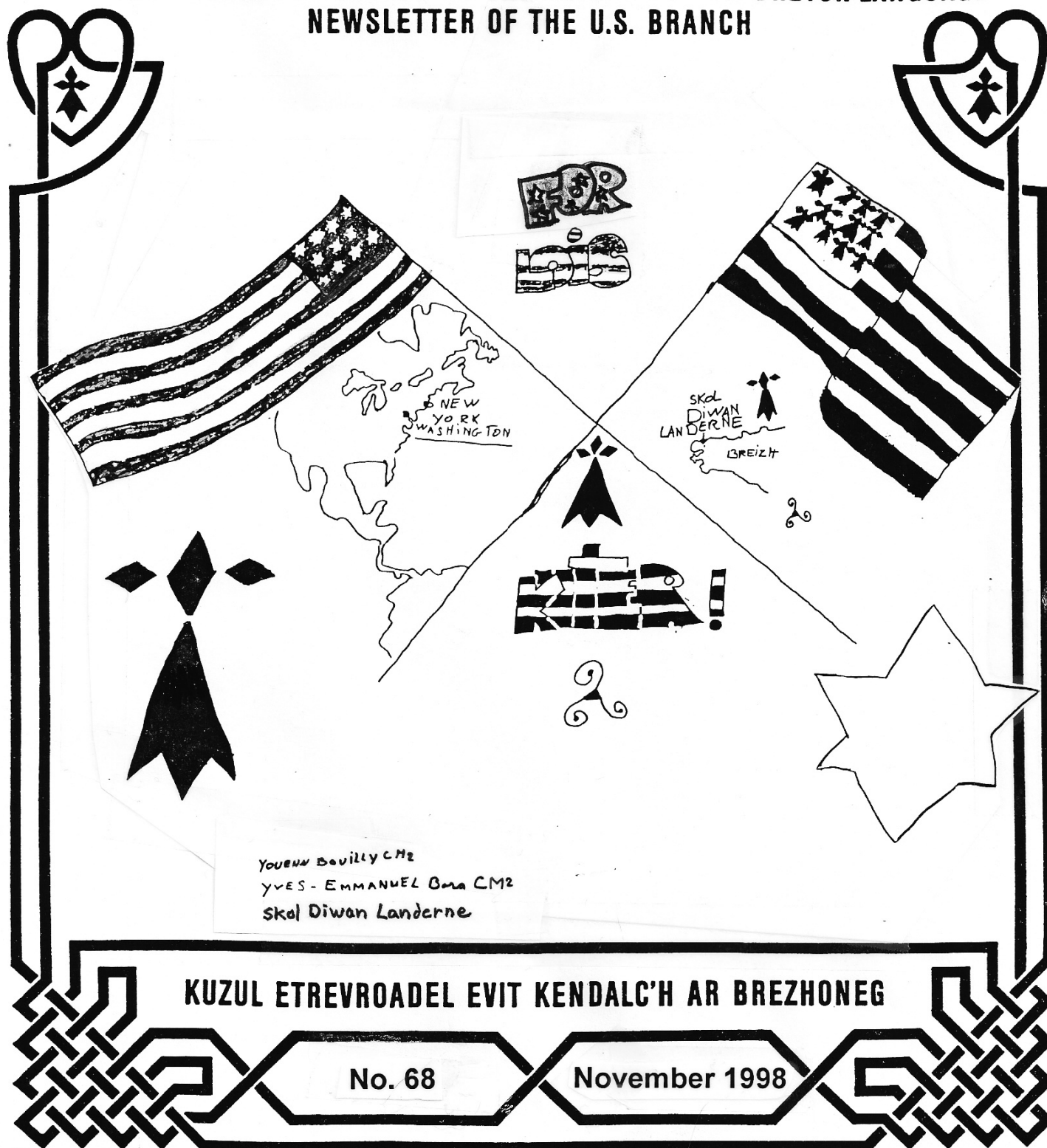


# BRO NEVEZ

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



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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.

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

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

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	\$20.00 overseas by surface mail
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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.

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The **Canadian Branch of the ICDBL** was relaunched January 1998. That branch of the ICDBL publishes a newsletter called Brittany (trilingual in English, Breton, French). Canadian Membership including Brittany is \$15 (Canadian dollars). A Canadian Membership which includes both Brittany and Bro Nevez is \$30. A subscription to Brittany without membership is \$10 for the U.S. and Canada and \$20 by surface mail elsewhere. Contact: Jeffrey D. O'Neill, 58 Century Drive, Scarborough, Ontario, M1K 4J6 CANADA (e-mail: jdkoneill@sympatico.ca). Telephone: (416) 264-0475.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

You may notice that this November newsletter is really a *December* newsletter. My apologies for the delay in getting it out, but I had a very good excuse. As you will read later in this issue of Bro Nevez, this November I had the opportunity to spend a little over two weeks in Brittany. Not only did this offer me the chance to see some old friends I haven't seen for three or more years, but I also had the opportunity to make a few new friends and enjoy a few beautiful little country roads I've traveled on before (and there are many yet to enjoy). But, on this trip I had relatively little time for sightseeing. One week was reserved for intensive Breton language classes organized by the organization called Roudour ... the first step in a more serious effort on my part to get back to learning the Breton language. Indeed, with each new trip I take to Brittany I feel more and more uncomfortable when Breton speakers switch to French (or English) for my sake. And then there are all the books and magazine articles to read, and the songs, theater and poetry to enjoy ... I've got a lot of work to do!

This newsletter is not only late, but you will notice that it is a bit thinner than usual. This is not because there is a lack of information to pass along to you, but because I simply ran out of time (and the ICDBL budget for 1998 is just about out of money!). With this issue of Bro Nevez you will find a membership/subscription renewal slip. And, I have also enclosed a second one for you to give to a friend. I hope you will renew your membership/subscription and help us find new supporters. We do not have any money for advertising, so I count on you to spread the word in any way you can and thank all those who have printed notes in various newsletters. Keep in mind that your membership covers not only the cost of your own subscription to Bro Nevez, but also a subscription for organizations and individuals in Brittany. Being able to provide Bro Nevez on a complimentary basis to those working in Brittany for their language and culture is an important way we show them our support ... and that is just what the ICDBL is supposed to do.

And when you renew your membership in the ICDBL, please add on a contribution for the DIWAN schools if you possibly can. These Breton language immersion schools play a key role in passing along a truly *living* language to new generations.

I thank you for all the support you have given to the ICDBL. I can assure you that our work is very much appreciated in Brittany and that our support makes a difference.



The "Cover Story": the design on the cover of this issue of Bro Nevez is reproduced from a much larger picture (24" x 34") presented to me by two students of Skol Diwan Landerne: Youenn Bouilly and Yves-Emmanuel Bara. Unfortunately, a lot of the artistry was lost in greatly reducing its size and eliminating the wonderful colors of the picture. This was one of many pictures drawn for me by the children of this Diwan school – see page 5 for my report!

## More on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages -- Cause for Hope?

On September 29, 1998, the Prime Minister of France, Lionel Jospin, announced that France would take steps to sign and ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. This follows the submission of a report in July by Bernard Poignant who was given the task by the Prime Minister to prepare a report on the state of regional languages in France. This was followed more recently by a study by law professor Guy Carcassone (Université de Paris X—Nanterre) of the legal implications of the European Charter on the French Constitution (which states that “the language of the Republic is French”). Although I found the report of this study difficult to follow, it appears that Professor Carcassone does not feel that a modification of the Constitution is necessary and that the Charter can be adopted without threatening the unity of France or the role of French as “the language of the Republic.” \*

All the positive talk on the part of the French government about the importance of regional languages is very nice, but Bretons remain very skeptical that any of this will translate into true advances for Breton. Without modification of the French Constitution, there will always be ways to block any application of protective measures included in the European Charter. My reading of both the Poignant and Carcassone reports lead me to believe that French government officials are not taking this very seriously and feel that regional languages in France are already adequately protected—even if they have admitted that not much has been done to help promote them by the government. During the past few decades, French officials have often proclaimed that the regional languages are a rich part of the heritage of France—but, when it comes to actually doing something concrete to give these languages some real support in the schools and media, there has been little action to back up all the pretty assurances given in speeches and reports.

It is important that France quickly signs and ratifies the European Charter, and that it modifies the “French only” clause of its Constitution so that the Charter’s provisions have some hope of being applied if necessary. But, Bretons must continue to work hard to get rid of basic roadblocks that slow real advance for the Breton language. It is clear that the demand for Breton language schooling far exceeds the ability of the school system to provide competent teachers. That is because the French education system has refused to put an effective teacher training procedure into place—ignoring practical recommendations made for many years now by Breton teachers. And when will the national education system of France recognize that Diwan is not just a private association for marginal fanatics, but a needed and desired public service of great importance to a diversity of people in Brittany who seek a good education for their children where they can learn and use Breton as a living language. As long as resources for the growth of schools and media (and adequate funding for cultural expression more generally—publications, theater, films, music and festivals, etc.) continues to be parceled out so meagerly, Bretons will need to continue to demonstrate in the streets and build their own institutions from scratch without any help from France. All the nice words about the richness of France’s linguistic and cultural diversity remain just words for now. One can hope that the application of the European Charter can help to change that, but no one is holding their breath.

\* Several web sites where copies of these texts and commentaries about them can be found include the BZH site (<http://www.bzh.com/>), the site for Ti ar Vro Kemper (<http://www.kerys.com/kerys/tiarvro/appel.htm>), the site for the newspaper Ouest France (<http://www.france-ouest.tm.fr/langues-regionales/>) and the site for the newspaper Le Télégramme (<http://www.bretagne-online.tm.fr>)



## **SPEAK OUT FOR LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN BRITTANY**

For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, thousands of Bretons will gather at 3 p.m. on December 5, 1998, on the Place de Résistance in Kemper (Quimper) to show their support for the protection of the Breton language and all the other unrecognized languages spoken in France and Europe. With the idea that the protection of human rights must include language and cultural rights, demonstrators are asking particularly for:

- The immediate signature and ratification by France of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
- Modification by January 1999 of Article 2 of the French Constitution which states that French is the language of the Republic [of France].
- Measures to insure that Breton language and culture is taught to all those who desire it in the schools by September 1999. This includes a statute recognizing Diwan as part of the public education system (sought from the day Diwan schools began twenty years ago), and a mechanism in the education system to recruit and train teachers specifically for bilingual schools (where the demand for teachers is not being met).

While it may not be possible for Bro Nevez readers to jump on a plane for Kemper, you can sign the following petition to show your support for the Breton language and culture.

### **A CALL FROM ARTISTS, WRITERS AND INTELLECTUALS OF BRITTANY [AND THE REST OF THE WORLD]**

On November 12<sup>th</sup> in Rennes a concert was organized by Amnesty International on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This served as the occasion not only to show support for Amnesty International, but also to launch a petition collecting signatures from Breton artists, writers and intellectuals (= all thinking people). The musicians and musical groups at this concert who got things rolling included Carre Manchof, Annie Ebrel and Dibenn, Gwenfol, Gwerz, Yann Fañch Kemener, Korm, Gilles Servat, Sonerien Du, Yann Tiersen, and Troidell. With such a line-up and a good cause to support, it is not surprising that the concert was sold out early with hundreds of people unable to get in that evening.

On behalf of the Collective of Artists instigating the petition drive, I received a copy of it and am passing it along to all Bro Nevez readers. You may not be an artist or musician, but surely many of you qualify as writers or intellectuals! The petition is designed for Breton signers, but I am certain that signatures from other parts of the world will be welcome.

So please read the text below, fill out the enclosed form, and mail it to any one of the organizations listed. The deadline is December 31<sup>st</sup>, so send this off as soon as you can (airmail to France is 60 cents).

[The following is my translation (from French) of the introductory text which I have provided in its original Breton as well.]

## **Galv Arzourien, Skrivagnerien ha kefredourien Breizh**

Frañs, ar renerien anezhi oc'h adlavaret laouen eo "mammvro Gwirioù Mab-den", he deus c'hoariet e gwirionez ur roll pouezus evit diorren talvoudegezhioù demokratel ha doujañ d'ar frankiz soñjal er bed a-bezh, abaoe kantved ar "Sklêrijennadur". Da veur a vare ez eus bet sellet outi evel ouzh ur vammenn a spi hag a awen gant merc'hed ha paotred diniver eus broioù ha kevandirioù liesseurt hag o oa o stourm evit an talvoudegezhioù-se. Ar vrud-se a laka anezhi atebeg, dreist ar re all, war an dachenn etrebroadel. *Rankout a ra Frañs diskouez bezañ un demokratelezh skouerieus d'an holl vroioù en Europa hag ar Bed, war an dachenn sevenadurel zoken.* N'eo ket trawalc'h dezhi distagañ prezegennoù. Bez' e tle bezañ hiviziken, dre oberoù fetis, e penn ar stourm evit ur bed reisoc'h ha kengretoc'h. Siwazh, soñjoù kaer he renerien a zo manet re bell diouzh ar gwirvoud war he zachennad dezhi he-unan. Evel-se, evit pezh a sell ouzh ar yezhoù hag ouzh ar sevenadurioù rannvroel, *Frañs n'he deus ket c'hoazh sinet ha peurwiriekaet Karta Europa ar Yezhoù Rannvroel ha/pe Bihanniver Kuzul Europa,* digor d'ar sinadur ha d'ar peurwiriekadur abaoe an 10 a viz Du 1994, ha bet sinet dija gant 18 bro ezel eus Kuzul Europa.

**Ni, arzourien, skrivagnerien ha kefredourien Breizh [ha d'ar bed holl],** a zo stad ennomp o vezañ klevet komzoù ar Ministr Kentañ oc'h embann e youl da lakaat sinañ ha peurwiriekaet ar Garta-se. Mall bras zo warnomp e vefe sinet ha peurwiriekaet ar Garta, ha kemmet mellad 2 ar Vonreizh gant Frañs, evit ma ne vo ket unan eus ar broioù diwezhañ ouzh en ober. Goulenn a reomp ivez ma vo peurwiriekaet, en o fezh, an Divizadoù Etrebroadel diseurt o tennañ da Wirioù Mab-den, evel m'eo bet graet abaoe pell gant ar broioù demokratel all.

Roazhon, d'an 12 a viz Du 1998

## **Call from Artists, Writers and intellectuals of Brittany [and the rest of the world]**

France, whose leaders have willingly repeated that it is "the land of Human Rights", has played an important role in the world in the development of democratic values and respect for freedom of conscience since the century of "Enlightenment". France has come forward in different epochs as a source of hope and inspiration for innumerable women and men from diverse countries fighting for those values on different continents. This reputation gives her a special responsibility on the international level. *In the eyes of the people of Europe and the world, France must appear to be an exemplary democracy on the cultural level as well.* France must thus place herself, not only in words but also through concrete action, at the head of the fight for a world with more justice and solidarity. Unfortunately, the declarations of principles by her leaders have remained for too long a time far from the realities on her own soil. Thus, in the realm of regional languages and cultures, *France has still not signed and ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* which was opened for signature and ratification by the Council of Europe on November 10, 1994, and which has already been signed by 18 member countries of the Council of Europe.

**We, artists, writers and intellectuals of Brittany [and the entire world],** rejoiced at the will of France recently expressed by the Prime Minister to sign and ratify Charter. We ardently hope that this signature and ratification as well as a modification of Article 2 of the Constitution will be accomplished without further delay so that France is not one of the last countries to sign. We express also our hope that France will ratify, in their integrity, the various International Conventions relative to Human Rights, as was done long ago by most other democratic countries.

Roazhon, November 12, 1998

## **Galv Arzourien, Skrivagnerien ha kefredourien/Call from Artists, Writers and Intellectuals**

Express your support by signing the form(s) below and sending them *by December 31<sup>st</sup>* to any one of the following addresses:

Ajañs Sevenadurel Vreizhek Morvan Lebesque (Agence Culturelle Bretonne Morvan Lebesque  
24 kae ar Foz, 44000 Naoned (24 quai de la Fosse, 44000 Nantes)

C.R.I.B. / Kreizenn-rannvro titouroù war dañvez Breizh (Centre Régional d'Informations Bretonnes)  
30 plasenn al Lisoù, 35000 Roazhon (30 place des Lices, 35000 Rennes)

Sked  
18 straed Duguay Trouin, 29200 Brest (18 rue Duguay Trouin, 29200 Brest)

Ti ar Vro Kemper  
2-4 straed Jakez Karter, 29000 Kemper (2-4 rue Jacques Cartier, 29000 Quimper)

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ANV hag ANV-BIHAN (gant pennlizherennoù) .....

Micher ..... Kêr .....

**A gemer perzh e Galv Arzourien, Skrivagnerien ha kefredourien Breizh (ha d'ar bed holl)**  
evit ma vo sinet ha peurwiriekaet Karta Europa ar Yezhoù Rannvroel ha/pe Bihanniver gant  
Frañs.

Deiziad ..... Sinadur:

*A-raok an 31 a viz Kerzu 1998*

FAMILY NAME and FIRST NAME (in capital letters) .....

Profession ..... City, State, Country .....

**I join the Call from Artists, Writers and intellectuals of Brittany (and the world)** for the  
signature and ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by  
France.

Date ..... Signature:

*Before December 31, 1998*

## A NOVEMBER TRIP TO BRITTANY

A report by Lois Kuter

Two weeks is a very short time to be in Brittany. There are always too many people to see, and each time I travel to Brittany I give up all hope of doing everything I want to do. Indeed, the time is so short that I do not even tell many friends I am coming—knowing that it will be hopeless to try to visit everyone. I apologize to all those I did not call or visit. I am certain you know that I wanted to spend much more time in Brittany. I will be back again, and I hope that I will see you then (or at least as many of you as possible).

It seemed that everywhere I went I was asked if I noticed changes since my last visit (in 1995). Three years is not a terribly long time between visits, and I was not able to come up with any profound ideas or fascinating observations. BUT, in reflecting on the things I saw and the conversations I had with people during my two weeks in Brittany, I can certainly confirm that there are some good changes taking place—especially in the growth of a positive Breton identity and action to give expression to this in use of the Breton language and in music. There is nothing magical about this—it is the result of hard work at a grass roots level begun many years ago by Bretons who fought for their language and culture during a time when this was not at all popular. There is nothing easy about the positive changes taking place. It still takes strong determination, hard work, and sacrifice to insure that the Breton culture has the space and food it needs to grow.

So what's new in Brittany?

Not only are more and more children asking that the Breton language and culture be included in their school studies, but more and more adults are also going back to “school” to reclaim their cultural heritage (see my report below on Diwan and Roudour).

Breton teenagers find it quite normal to dance at festou-noz, and sing old and new ballads or play Breton musical instruments. The transmission of music from one generation to the next continues, and new music of all styles is being created (see my report on “the music scene”).

Some people who felt totally unconcerned by or hostile to efforts to promote the Breton language and culture are now finding (or their children are finding) that they can be proud of being Breton. (One can hope that most of this is indeed a sincere change of heart).

## A VISIT TO SKOL DIWAN LANDERNE

I had two occasions during this trip to visit the Diwan School in Landerneau. For newer readers of Bro Nevez, it's important to note that in 1992 I was asked to become this school's “godmother” (*maeronez*, in Breton). On this trip I paid my third visit to the school and was very warmly welcomed by teachers, parents, and all the very excited children. I had the chance to visit the classes and get an idea of the work the children were doing. To get ready for my visit, children in the three upper classes (5 to 10 year olds) prepared questions for me specifically on the topic of American Indians. This offered me the chance to dispel a few Hollywood stereotypes and to also help the children understand that Indians live all over the United States—in the east and west, and in big cities as well as more rural areas. It was also important to explain that there are many different tribes of Indians with many different languages. Like Bretons, Indians wear their unique costumes only for special occasions, and have created some new traditions to celebrate their culture with song and dance—powwows are not



terribly different in spirit from Breton festivals and festoù-noz. The children already understood that Indians, like Bretons, have had to fight for the survival of their culture. They had many good questions. No, unfortunately I can't sing any Indian songs (because I don't know Indian languages). Yes, I do know some Indians, but no, I am not an Indian myself ... just to set the record straight.

The role of a *maeronez* is to offer support to the children and school—and the fact that I come all the way from America to offer a bit of friendship and to show an interest in the school is important to the children. They also appreciated the little gifts I brought each of them—pencils, rulers, dinosaur stencils, stickers and animal erasers from the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia where I work. But the children had even nicer gifts for me—wonderful pictures and artwork they had created for my visit and a little piece of Breton jewelry which I can wear to keep them close in my thoughts and be reminded of my duty to keep studying the Breton language.

But, when I accepted the invitation to become the *maeronez* for Skol Diwan Landerne, I also brought you, members of the U.S. ICDBL along. Part of the contributions you make each year that are earmarked for Diwan go to Diwan as a whole, but also to the school in Landerneau where it allows the school to take up a new project that could not be done otherwise on a very tight budget. Our support on a more symbolic level has also been very important. As a group, the U.S. ICDBL has never held a meeting of members. Given our dispersal across huge distances with members found from Alaska, Hawaii and California, to Maine, Florida and Texas, it has been very difficult to come up with “projects” where we could all work together. BUT, I must report that one of the first things I saw during my visit to Skol Diwan Landerne was the banner we created for the school's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary during the Fall of 1997. I can assure you that our banner, with all the different letters you created to spell out “Da Skol Diwan Landerne, Gwellañ hetoù evit 10 vloaz—Happy Birthday”, was very much appreciated by the children and was taken to Diwan's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary festival in May to be proudly displayed. Thank you to all who contributed a letter for the banner.

My visit to “our” Diwan school was not only exciting for the children, but it also afforded an occasion to call out the press. It's not every day that a Diwan school has a visit from an American “godmother.” I was bombarded with questions by reporters from the television station FR3 for a brief appearance on the evening news, and was interviewed by Radio Bretagne Ouest and Radio Rivages. Although I did not speak directly to the reporters from Ouest France or Le Télégramme (the two major local newspapers of the area) they took photos and gathered information from the other interviews and a press release prepared by the Diwan school. A little positive press is always good for Diwan, so I was happy to be able to be of use. Unfortunately my Breton is still too poor for much of an interview for Breton language television or radio broadcasts—something I'll have to work on for my next visit!

### **A few details about Diwan and Skol Diwan Landerne**

As reported in past issues of Bro Nevez, Diwan continues to expand each year. From 1,753 students in the 1997-98 school year, Diwan saw a 14% growth for the 1998-99 school year with a total of 1,996 students (66 high school, 337 middle school, and 1,593 preschool and primary school children in all five departments of Brittany). Skol Diwan Landerne had a 15% growth for this school year with a total of 75 children from 42 families in the area of Landerneau:

- 18 in the youngest pre-school level (ar re vihan hag ar re grenn – 2 to 4 year olds), taught by Annie Corlosquet
- 23 in the older pre-school and first year primary school class (ar re vras & C.P. – 5 to 6 year olds), taught by Patricia Quere-Tassel, who is also the school's principal

16 in the next primary level (C.E.1 & C.E. 2 – 7 to 8 year olds), taught by Luce Poho

18 in the oldest level (C.M. 1 and C.M. 2 – 9 to 10 year olds), taught by Jean-Yves Lautredou

The school also has two teaching assistants, Natacha Bonneau and Gwenaëlle Jezequel who work with the children as well.

From primary school, Diwan children move on to one of the middle schools—the closest for Skol Diwan Landerne being that in Ar Releg Kerhuon (just outside of Brest). Other Diwan middle school students choose to attend schools in Plijidi (Aodoù an Arvor/Côtes d'Armor) or Kemper (Penn ar Bed/Finistère). And plans are advancing for a new middle school in Gwened (Vannes) to serve children from Diwan schools in the Morbihan, Il-ha-Gwilen (Ile-et-Vilaine) and Liger-Atlantel (Loire Atlantique) departments. If all goes as planned, a new high school will open the fall of 1999 in Karaez (Carhaix). This will greatly relieve crowding for this growing level which has been shuffled from building to building with inadequate space and facilities (it's never easy for the pioneers!).

I was able to get a more personal sense of Diwan's direction as a whole through a visit to Diwan's president Andrew Lincoln (and my thanks to Marie Madeg, head of the Skol Diwan Landerne's parent association, for this opportunity). While it is clear that Diwan will continue to expand to meet a growing demand in Brittany, there are some serious challenges. Locating affordable classroom space (with the support of municipal officials) can be quite a problem. While Diwan has created its own teacher training school in 1997 (called Kelenn), it takes time to train teachers who have both a solid command of Breton and the ability to teach children. There is still much research to be done about bilingualism and pedagogy, with little time for experimentation.

In meeting both children and parents from Skol Diwan Landerne as well as from other Diwan primary, middle and high schools, there seems no doubt in my mind that these schools offer children the chance to build a future for the Breton language—a future which will need the creation of some new words for math and sciences, but which can draw from the richness of a heritage which is still very much alive in Brittany. The Diwan children I met were happy and inquisitive. The Diwan youth I met were like all other teens I have known—a mix of rebellion, high energy, self-doubt, and creativity—but they were people who were proud of who they were, ready to explore the world and create a future—a future where the Breton language would be their language. Breton is not a language they are learning as a relic of the past, but part of their life.

## **AND WHAT ABOUT THE ADULTS? – GOING BACK TO SCHOOL**

One of the most remarkable changes I have noticed for the Breton language in recent years is the number of adults who are reclaiming their language and heritage. These are often people in their 30s, 40s and 50s who grew up in a Breton speaking household, but whose parents made every effort possible to speak French to them to help them get ahead in the world and to spare them the indignity they suffered in schools where Breton was considered a worthless language. Today those children who grew up speaking French but understanding the Breton which was spoken all around them are looking for the voice that was squelched by well-meaning parents. The number of adults enrolling in evening or week-long immersive Breton language classes has boomed in Brittany. Perfectly able to understand spoken Breton, many of these students are people who never learned to read Breton since it was forbidden, or at best simply not offered in school. They have lots of words in their head, but need confidence and a bit of training to put the words into voice or to read them on a page. I got to know a few of them during this trip to Brittany.

Some of those who are fluent listeners of Breton go to school because they feel that Breton is their language and they want to learn to read and speak it. Sometimes there is an extra incentive—a command of the Breton language makes you more employable in Brittany. This economic argument for learning Breton is an astounding development—a complete turnaround from the idea that Breton is a language of the past, fit only for speaking to cows and pigs. But, today fluency in spoken and written Breton is a plus in finding employment, and taking Breton classes is viewed as a valid part of job training for the unemployed or those taking continuing education to upgrade job skills. Who would have thought this possible twenty or thirty years ago in Brittany?

### **“VACATIONING” WITH *ROUDOUR***

Are you looking for a relaxing vacation stay in scenic central western Brittany? Then, what better vacation spot than Uhelgoad (Huelgoat)—described in the 1990 Insight Guide to Brittany as “a great walking and fishing centre ... also well provided with woods and streams and great wind-eroded rocks ... a popular place with those visitors to Brittany who don’t particularly care for the seaside.” Uhelgoad is indeed a lovely little town and the surrounding countryside is well worth exploring by foot, but if you really want to do some sightseeing, don’t enroll in a week of Breton classes with *Roudour* in November—unless you like to watch the sun rise on your way to class and set on your way home. “Vacationing” and “taking a week of vacation time” to spend enroll in a *Roudour* “staj” are two very different things. Although I would have liked a bit more daylight to enjoy the countryside, I had no delusions about “vacationing” ... and November is November—miz Du.

*Roudour* is a cooperative enterprise owned and operated by Breton language teachers who work very hard year-round to offer intensive training to adults. Most classes run from 9 am to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. There are quick coffee breaks during the morning and afternoon and for lunch, but the pace is fast and the classes are demanding. Four different levels are offered (although not all are available every week of the year): total beginners, “false” beginners (for those with some previous training), “confirmed” speakers (those with some ability to communicate), and advanced learners with a good command of spoken and written Breton. Based on strong teaching experience, the *Roudour* teachers do their best to make sure students are in the best level possible for them—challenging but not overwhelming. Students often sign up for a series of classes over several weeks or months, and this offers the best chance to really build skills.

If you have plans to go to Brittany and are seriously interested in beginning or continuing a study of Breton, I can highly recommend *Roudour* (and have reprinted the latest flyer listing class dates). But, there are many other organizations offering classes for adults and I would be happy to help any Bro Nevez readers with more information. You will not master Breton in a one-week class, no matter how hard you or your teachers work, but this can give you just enough of a jump-start to continue studies here in the U.S. on your own. And you, like me, will probably find the dedication and determination of your teachers and fellow students to be inspiring.

### **THE MUSIC SCENE IN BRITTANY**

Normally during a trip to Brittany, I have a limited opportunity to attend concerts, festivals, or festou noz. This is because I have been travelling in the fall when things calm down (slightly), and the options for musical events is (slightly) more limited than in summer months. But, with this trip I can report that

I fully indulged in dancing at two festoù noz (thanks to my local guides who also like to dance)—one in Milizac (Bro Leon) and the other in Tremargat (Bro Plinn). As was the case in 1995, I noticed a very good mix of young teens and “older” participants (like me) who shared the dance floor with no problem. And there was a mix of “style” to the dancing—exuberant and spacious steps from younger dancers to more reserved footwork on the part of others (or when things got really crowded and there was no room to run away with a dance). I found that dancers of western Brittany sometimes underestimated the energy of dances of the Gallo country (the Rond the Saint-Vincent, for example, was often a pale imitation of how I recall it being done by the people of Saint-Vincent-sur-Oust). But, when it came to gavotte, plinn, fisel, or other dances more familiar or “native” to the area, there was a definite burst of energy and joy in the room. At both festoù-noz, the room was packed with dancers, but people also took time to talk with friends and have a drink (or two).

I can’t recall and never knew the full list of performers for the fest noz in Milizac, but among those featured were singers Yann Fañch Kemener in pair with Iffig Troadec and the group Carre Manchot. Several other groups performed very well, but I missed the presence of sonerien—the paired biniou and bombarde at both fest noz. The second fest noz I attended in Tremargat was a bit less “conventional”—it featured women singers and musicians. Some were better known to me than others (Nanda Troadec and Les Mangeouses d’oreilles), but it is always reassuring to me to find that there are dozens of good singers and musicians I have never heard of before. While women have always had a strong presence as singers in Brittany, they have not seemed eager to take up musical instruments. This fest noz showed that younger women are forming bands and can play with the big guys (from bombarde and saxophone to harp, flute, fiddle and bagpipes). One of the most astounding performances of the evening was that of the “Soeurs Morvan.” Many of you readers have heard of the “Frères Morvan” but I bet you were unaware of their feminine counterparts—complete with coiffe and costume from the Tregor region. I salute the courage of these fine singers who, like other men taking the stage during this fest noz, donned skirts and wigs. And to make the appearance of the Soeurs Morvan even more memorable, several ladies dressed in trousers, sabots, and blue checkered shirts characteristic of a certain phase in the Morvan brothers’ public career to escort them to the stage and sing with them. No one can say that Bretons lack a sense of humor. In the case of the Morvan brothers, it is also important to note their generosity in numerous appearances over the years to support Diwan schools. They are ferocious in their support and attachment to the Breton language, and they have inspired many young singers.

I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to dance (and learn a few new dances) at the two festoù noz I was able to get to during this trip. The wide range of styles of music and the high quality of performances speaks well for the health of Breton music. And the number of young musicians – men and women – on stage providing music for the dance was very good to see. I also had the opportunity to see and hear another area of performance which has been booming in Brittany—the cercle celtiques and bagadoù—with an afternoon presentation of local groups in Gwengamp. In these groups young and “older” Bretons work together in more choreographed/orchestrated arrangements of dance and music. While there is ferocious competition among the dancers of the “Celtic Circles” and between the numerous bagadoù or bagpipe bands of Brittany, most people dance and perform in these groups for fun. Indeed the very same musicians and dancers will be found (sans costume) at festoù noz on the dance floor or on stage with a saxophone or other instrument in hand. The bagad and the cercle celtique offer yet another style of performance—in a more formally organized group—for Bretons to joyfully express their attachment to and pride in a unique heritage. While not yet ready to capture the championship of Brittany, I found the performances of the Gwengamp area cercles and bagadoù beautiful and moving.



And speaking of moving, this was a trip where I was destined to move from one public pay telephone to the next in an unexpected adventure with the Chorale du Bout du Monde. It's a good thing I had lots of "mileage" available on my telephone card! On one of my first nights in Brittany I was whisked away to the home of Christian Desbordes, composer and Director of the Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde, to be brought into a radio project that seemed to have gotten a bit out of hand. The choir's compact disc of Christmas music is being rereleased in the U.S. by Green Linnet Records who had managed to arrange for a short radio piece on National Public Radio ("Morning Edition") to air around Christmas. The radio was seeking someone for the interview who could speak intelligently about the Chorale du Bout du Monde and about Brittany and Breton music more generally. This individual also had to have a perfect command of English. That seemed to be the sticking point in negotiating things with the radio. Bretons could easily be found with very good English and the expertise necessary to provide a very interesting interview, but very good English didn't seem to be enough for the NPR people. So Lois Kuter bumbles in just at the right moment in the midst of this search for the right radio "voice." After days of calls back and forth to Green Linnet and from Green Linnet back and forth to NPR, a "test interview" is arranged for me (which took place the first day back here in the States). It seems that my English is up to snuff, and NPR staff seemed to feel I could find enough to say about the Christmas CD and Breton music, language and culture more generally. After doing 140 radio programs about Breton music over a ten-year period here in Philadelphia, I don't think I'll have a problem finding something to say. So, if all goes well, you will be able to tune in to a local NPR affiliated radio station for a short (and I hope brilliant) interview sometime between now and Christmas, or perhaps even on Christmas morning. While there is no guarantee that anything will ever be aired, this is a wonderful opportunity to introduce the good work of this choir (which sings in the Breton language) to a huge radio audience here in the U.S.

In the meantime, let me shamelessly insist that you consider purchasing this newly available CD by the Chorale du Bout du Monde. (See the review later in this issue of Bro Nevez and the enclosed flyer for details and ordering information). It is lovely. Bravo to Green Linnet for working to promote this fine CD with such diligence. One can hope that this will open the way for more Breton music of many styles to be distributed more widely in the U.S.

A few more subtle changes in the Breton music scene can also be noted in the growth of Breton dance classes—for both children and adults. And I was delighted to see that both books and recordings of Breton music seem to be well stocked in book and music stores in Brittany which in the past carried only a few more tourist-oriented products. However, for the widest selection (and for a wider selection of books in the Breton language) the more specialized stores which have always featured the creative talents of Breton writers and musicians are worth seeking out and supporting for their work to make such material available even in years when customers were not so abundant. These also serve as centers for information with staff who can answer a wide range of questions and help one find the most obscure recordings or publications. (I'll be happy to send a list of some of these for anyone interested.)

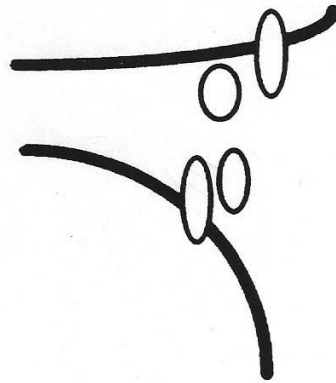
To close this little report of adventures in Brittany, I would like to thank all those I met who offered their hospitality, friendship, and knowledge. It is always a great pleasure to visit old friends again—and to see "my" children at Skol Diwan Landerne, but it is also wonderful to meet new people each time I travel to Brittany. I always learn a lot each time I visit, and see just how much there is still to learn. Old and new friends make it a bit sad to return home so soon.

Bloavezh

1998-1999

Année

Le breton  
en stages intensifs  
pour une maîtrise  
rapide  
de la langue.



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HUELGOAT niveau 1. 2	du lundi 14 / 12 au vendredi 18 / 12
GENVER 1999 JANVIER	
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HUELGOAT niveau 0. 1. 2	du lundi 15 / 02 au vendredi 19 / 02
HUELGOAT niveau 1. 2.	du lundi 22 / 02 au vendredi 26 / 02
MEURZH 1999 MARS	
HUELGOAT niveau 1. 2. 3	du lundi 01 / 03 au vendredi 05 / 03
QUIMPER niveau 1. 2	du lundi 08 / 03 au vendredi 12 / 03
HUELGOAT niveau 0. 1. 2	du lundi 15 / 03 au vendredi 19 / 03
HUELGOAT niveau 1. 2.	du lundi 22 / 03 au vendredi 26 / 03
HUELGOAT niveau 1. 2. 3	du lundi 29 / 03 au vendredi 02 / 04
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HUELGOAT niveau 1. 2.	du lundi 26 / 04 au vendredi 30 / 04
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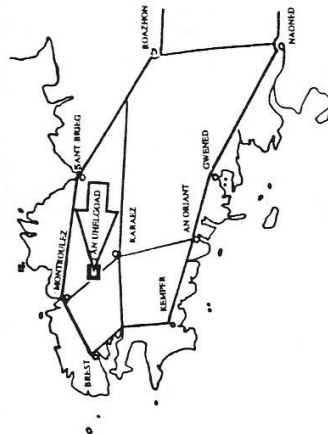
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## Travels in Brittany

Cindy Compton 10/28/98

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to visit the departments of Cotes d'Armor and Finistere in Brittany from mid-August to mid-September. I arrived in Guingamp on the TGV (fast train), a 3-hour ride direct from the Paris Montparnasse station. Guingamp is the easternmost mid-sized town (population about 15,000) in the Breton speaking part of Brittany. It lies at the hub of a network of roads radiating in from the various areas of Cotes d'Armor. Twenty-six days later, I took the TGV back to Paris and flew home. I could easily have stayed longer but I was there long enough to get a flavor of the local culture.

One of the things that I noticed from the start was the solidarity of the Breton people as distinct from the French. Breton flags were common while French flags were rare. Political posters to the effect of Breizh Nation were not unusual. There is a school (called Diwan) in which children are taught exclusively in the Breton language and this school does not receive significant support from the French government. The Festou-Noz (night festivals of dance & music) are often fundraisers for this school. Another thing I noticed was a pleasantly lower material standard of living than has come to be the norm in the U.S. which is notorious for its ostentatious excess. The people I met spent very little if any time watching TV. They had older houses, smaller cars, fewer clothes, fresher (local) fruit, bread and cheese than I am used to in America. Once I saw a man riding a bicycle that pulled a trailer holding his surfboard. The only "toys" they seemed to have were very small cell phones. I saw many small family farms- artichokes, cabbage and broccoli were popular in the small fields lined with hedgerows. French wine was incredibly inexpensive, but the local brew is hard apple cider called Cidre of which there were several varieties like Brut (dry) and Bouche (corked). It made a wonderful accompaniment to gallettes (buckwheat dinner crepes), a meal I always finished with a crepe flambee if possible (wow!). One delightful restaurant in Belle-Ile-en-Terre is called Ti ar Chrampoze (literally House of Pancakes). Cous-cous topped with a meat and vegetable stew is another regional favorite. Although my French is fairly limited, I got by without a problem and the people were very friendly.

My agenda was essentially to 1) learn about the music and dance of the area, 2) walk on the coastal trail networks that are common throughout the area and 3) visit megalithic sites along the way as I had done in Ireland last year.

### Music and Dance

The first week of my visit I stayed in Guingamp for the Breton Dance Festival de St. Loup. There were lots of dance exhibitions and competitions, bagpipe bands (bagads) and concerts of music from the five Celtic nations - Brittany, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the northwest corner of Spain (Galicia).. I attended the concerts of Dervish, Capercaille and Gilles Servat as well as several of the dance exhibitions where participants wore traditional costumes. The concerts were complete with brightly colored lights and stage smoke and the intense energy of the performers was exciting. In Guingamp, I met a couple of local musicians (a friend of a brother of a friend and his friend- a strange circumstance which led me to play Irish music at a local creperie and gave me company for a few of the Festou-Noz.)

I attended several of the Festou-Noz around the area including the 40th anniversary of singing by the freres Morvan, 3 brothers who sing in the kan ha diskann style so common throughout Brittany. I loved these festivals and quickly picked up dance steps of the



*gavotte and the plinn with a little circle circassian, fisel, kost ar kwotz and waltz. The festivals typically had a 30 Franc (~\$5) entry fee and were held in cut fields in the middle of nowhere set up with a very fine temporary wood floor, stage, bright lights, a bar, buffet dinner and covered tents. Hundreds of people- young and old, would show up and dance from roughly 9pm to 2am. You can be safe in saying of any of these events that "a good time was had by all!" It was amazing to me that everyone knew all the steps. Usually there would be 3 bands, but for the 2-day celebration of the freres Morvan at St. Nicodeme there were over 100 groups in two tents. They alternated between binou & bombarde players, kan ha diskan, and groups with several instruments that often had more modern styles. The kan ha diskan singing has a quick tempo and is all in the Breton language. Each singer sings individually and there is an area of overlap in the middle so that the songs can (and do) go on for a very long time. The songs are very old and tell of love, war and daily life, so I was told by a singer I met.*

*I arranged a couple of fiddle lessons from a Breton player. From him I learned the basic dance rhythms of Brittany and where they originated geographically speaking. In Breton music, all the notes are on the main beats of the measure unlike Irish music which has a lot of back beat notes or syncopation. The timing of the tunes is precise - like in the fisel where the 4th, 6th and 7th beats are emphasized, and the fingering can be complex. Once learned, these tunes are very easy to remember (if you can remember how they start). None of the tunes have names, only categories like suite plinn or suite gavotte which makes the set list at a concert a little tricky (you know the one that goes da, da, da dada da).*

*The only major city I visited was Quimper (population about 85,000) a beautiful city with a river running through the center of town. There I made it my business to visit several music stores and pick up a few CDs. Keltia Musique, Ar Bed Keltiek and Harmonia Mundi were a few of the shops visited. At one, I was able to get an English version of the book "Legends of Brittany". CDs purchased included Fest Noz Live, Annie Ebrel, Skolvan (Swing and Tears), Christian LeMaitre (Ballade a l'hotesse), Bro Dreger IX, Ar Re Yaouank (Breizh Positive). All were excellent. In Quimper, I can recommend the Musee Breton which has several good exhibits including some Iron Age steles, traditional costumes, furniture, pottery and special exhibits such as the one I saw, a black & white photograph exhibit on Brittany in the early 1900s.*

### *Coastal Trails*

*There are many beautiful coastal trails in Brittany and the places I went included the Cote de Granit Rose from Plougrescant north of Treguier to Tregastel, Point de Primel near Plougasnou north of Morlaix and headlands of the Presque Ile de Crozon south of Brest. On the Cote de Granit Rose I was very impressed with the large pink granite rocks of all shapes which reminded me of those in the national parks of southern Utah and northern Arizona here in the U.S. There are lots of great beaches for swimming too. There are nearly always a few sailboats off the coast, but I was pleasantly surprised by the lack of motorboats possibly owing to the treacherous rocks and large tidal swings that can make for dangerous passage if one is not familiar with the terrain of the ocean floor. That week I attended a drawing workshop and spent hours filling a notebook with the local sights. Like walking for miles and miles, this seemed to be a good way to get to know the landscape. Point de Primel offers a pristine trail among spectacular scenery. On a hilltop along the way, is an empty, old stone house called the Maison de Dourniers which at one time was a pirate lookout. There were lots of wind surfers and kayaks at the nearby beaches. An old resort hotel was shuttered and marked for sale in the tiny town of Primel-Tregastel and I immediately started fantasizing about being rich and moving to Brittany to renovate this hotel! Alas it is probably not in the cards for this lifetime. I*

loved the way early one morning seaweed had washed up from the previous night's high tide, onto the narrow road where there was a break in the stone wall. Near Camaret-sur-Mer on the Presque Ile de Crozon the rocky cliffs are rugged not unlike those of the Oregon coast where I live. The winds are high here and the plants are correspondingly close to the ground like in Arctic tundra. A world-war II museum and several outdoor trenches and bunkers mark the place where a battle took place, there in the remote reaches of western Brittany. At a nearby beach, people harvested hundreds of small purple and yellow clams using a unique metal basket on rollers.

### Neolithic Sites

I visited close to twenty neolithic sights including alignments, menhirs (standing stones), allee couvertes and a couple of burial cairns. It was a pilgrimage of sorts. I've always been intrigued by these stone monuments which were built by an unknown culture between 4000 and 7000 BC. Because many of the sites are not well-marked if at all, I was helped immensely by a guide book in English that I picked up last year at a used book store which details the location of over 350 ancient sites in Brittany. The book is Megalithic Brittany by Aubrey Burl, publisher Thames and Hudson, 30 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B3QP with ISBN # 0-500-27460-6, but I am not sure if it is still in print or not. Although the sites are found all over Brittany, most of the ones I visited were in Finistere. Some of the highlights include the Cairn de Barnenez at Plouezoc'h north of Morlaix. This restored site is similar in scope to Newgrange in Ireland but the stones are not covered with soil. It is less than a quarter of the size of Newgrange but has more passages, eleven in all. Unfortunately the passages have been barred and entry is not permitted. The Cairn de Barnenez is at the top of a small promontory with a view in all directions. Although the sea surrounds the small peninsula, this was not always the case. Sea level is thought to be about 20 meters higher now than when these monuments were built. The cairn used to overlook fertile valleys with the ocean on one side instead of three. Ile Carn near Ploudalmezeau is a similar passage-grave yet smaller with three dolmens enclosed within the stone mound. This site can only be visited at low tide or by boat. Although it was damaged when used as fortification during the second world war, some restoration has been done and it is possible to enter the chambers where the exquisite corbelled roof may be seen.

Another class of monument is called an allee couverte, similar to the Irish dolmens except they are usually two rows of stones with several capstones rather than the triple stone base with a single capstone so common around the Irish countryside. One of the loveliest sites is Guilliguy overlooking Portsall, a small fishing village. Also notable is Mougau-Bihan (which means Little House) near Commana, on the west slopes of Montagne d'Arree. It is situated in a field next to a farm house and orchard and has an impressive heavy architecture consisting of 18 granite slabs and 5 capstones. While I did not make it to Carnac, I did get to see alignments near Camaret-sur-Mer. They are long lines of standing stones typically smaller and less smoothed than the menhirs. It is not known if the directions of the lines had significance since they do not line up or only loosely so, with known astronomical events. Still it leaves a question in one's mind to walk around fields so marked with these lines of stones. Last but not least are the menhirs, the largest of which is Kerloas ('place of sadness') near Plouarzel in Finistere. It is nearly 10 meters high and now stands near cornfields and has been defiled with graffiti. St. Duzec near Penvern in Cote d'Armor is also a magnificent menhir at over 8 meters in height. Christian symbols were carved and a cross added in about the 1600s. Christ is on the cross holding two grails instead of the usual one, and some believe this symbolizes the twin existence of Druidism (or Paganism) and Christianity at the time. Well there are many more stories to tell, but time and space does not permit it. All I can add is that I hope I will get to visit this wonderful place again sometime soon!

## Congratulations to Four New Members of Brittany's Order of the Ermine

Each September, the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol-Uhel ar Vro) recognizes four Breton individuals for their exceptional work for Brittany by inviting them to join the Order of the Ermine. First 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 (mostly the service of defending Brittany from attack by France). Reestablished in the 1970's by the Cultural Institute of Brittany, the Order of the Ermine today still recognizes exceptional service in support of Brittany and the Breton culture. The "collier" (medallion) given to each new member of the order is modeled after that of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and includes the inscription "d'am buhe" (Breton for "for my life"). Indeed, this honor recognizes Bretons (and a handful of non-Bretons) who have worked for Brittany during a lifetime—or in the case of younger inductees, will take on that responsibility for their life.

This September four people were inducted into the Order of the Ermine in recognition of their diverse and considerable contributions to Brittany.

**Naig Rozmor** (born in Saint-Pol-de-Léon in 1923) is a writer who uses her maternal language, Breton. She first published stories in the magazines *Bleun Brug* and *Brud Nevez* and her poems about love were published in a collection called *Karantez ha karantez* which won the poetry prize of the Association of Breton Writers in 1980. She has translated the poems of Tagore and worked with Jerzy Wielunski to translate poems in many minority languages of the world. For 20 years she has been a member of the Breton language theater troupe Strollad ar Bro Bagan who produced her piece *Ar Mestr*. She has also written humorous theater pieces and has participated in numerous Breton language radio and television programs.

**Goulc'han Kervella** (born in Plouguerneau in 1951) completed a doctorate degree in medicine with a thesis on the subject of medicine as depicted in Breton language literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. With a passion for theater, he has been at the heart of the Breton language theater troupe Stollad ar Vro Bagan since its founding in 1974, and in 1982 he made the choice to become a professional actor. He has written and produced numerous theater pieces for Strollad ar Vro Bagan in both Breton and French and this group has been particularly active in involving school children in theater. In 1991 the troupe received the Regional Prize for Creation for its production *Ar Basion Vras*. Goulc'han Kervella has also written a number of books and shorter works in Breton. If that weren't enough, he has been the Deputy Mayor of Plouguerneau since 1983 and is president of the Museum of Seaweed Collectors.

**Henri Maho** (born in 1921) learned French as many Bretons do by being punished for each word he spoke of Breton when he entered school as a child. He learned to write Breton on his own and contributed articles for *Arvor*, a magazine published by Loeiz Andouard. During the 1950s he began a number of activities in support of Breton—teaching Breton in Bignan and Locminé, founding the magazine *Doere*, and publishing a number of articles in newspapers of the Vannes region for youth especially. As a member and then head of Breiz Santel, he has worked for many years to research and document the architectural heritage of Brittany and to help preserve and restore chapels, crosses and old fountains.

**Pierre Loquet** (born in 1930) was active in the Resistance movement when he was just 14 years old. In 1945 he enrolled in agricultural studies in Angers and was active in that city's Celtic Circle, and during that period he was also active in mobilizing supporters for Le Peuple Breton, an organization with a publication of the same name launched by Joseph Martray. In 1949 he returned to Guerande and founded the Celtic Circle "Bro Gwen Ran" with J. Le Bihen and Georges Auclair. A member of the MOB starting in 1957, he edited the magazine *L'Avenir de la Bretagne* during a period of time. Pierre Loquet worked to defend the salt marshes of the Guerande area and has fought for the return of



Loire-Atlantique to the “officially” recognized region of Brittany. In 1977 he moved to the Leon region where he worked with the bank Crédit Mutuel de Bretagne—serving to help open the way for the acceptance of checks written in the Breton language. Now back in Guerande he continues to work for the welfare of this region of Brittany. Since 1981 he has been president of Skoazell Vreizh, an organization which supports Breton political prisoners and their families.

These four remarkable Bretons join forty-four others inducted into the Order of the Ermine since 1972: Anna-Vari Arzur, Vefa de Bellaing\*, Jacques Briard, Herri Caouissin, Per Denez, Vetig an Dret-Kervella, Jean Fréour, Charlez ar Gall, Pierre-Roland Giot, Yvonig Gicquel, Glenmor\*, Pierre-Jakez Helias\*, Jean-Jacques Hénaff, Ronan Huon, Yvonne Jean-Haffen\*, Dodik Jégou, Lois Kuter, Pierre Laurent, André Lavanant, Raymond Lebossé, Joseph Lec'hvien, Robert Legrand, Pierre Lemoine, Pierre Le Treut, Jean L'Helgouac'h, Louis Lichou, Georges Lombard, Ivona Martin, Joseph Martray, Jean Mévellec\*, Polig Monjarret, Rita Morgan Williams, Bernard de Parades, Gabriele Pescatore, Michel Philipponneau, Yann Poilvet, Jordi Pujol, René Pleven\*, Henri Queffélec\*, Maryvonne Quéméré-Jaouen, Loeiz Ropars, Alan Stivell-Cochevelou, Albert Trévidic, Jean Tricoire\*.

\* now deceased.

\* \* \*

## **Herve Kerrain (1955-1998) – A Loss for Brittany and the Breton Language**

It is nice to be able to include reports each year in Bro Nevez on the addition of new members to the Order of the Ermine, since this offers the chance to recognize just a few of the many people in Brittany who devote their lives to defending their language and culture and bettering their country. Unfortunately it is also necessary sometimes to report the loss of such individuals who—whether honored or not with medals or awards of some kind—have inspired others with a lifetime of work for their country.

In September Brittany lost such a person: Herve Kerrain. This was a particularly sad loss because of his young age (just 43), but also because of Herve's remarkable determination to fight for Brittany and the Breton language.

Like a handful of other young Bretons during the 1970s he refused to serve in the French army—not as a conscientious objector opposed to war, but as a Breton. For this conviction he spent fifteen months in prison. His action for the Breton language included leadership of the group called Stourm ar Brezhoneg whose tarring of French-only road signs was instrumental in forcing the French government and local municipalities to put Breton into more public view. This was another area where jail was certainly a possible reward for acting on one's convictions. But during the 1980s Herve also worked as a teacher and director of pedagogical programs for Diwan and in the 1990s he shifted to working as a teacher for adults who wanted to master the Breton language—first with the organization Stumdi and then as a co-founder and teacher for Roudour until his death. In addition he contributed articles in Breton regularly to the monthly magazine *Bremañ*. Herve Kerrain was not only a fine teacher and writer, but a man of rare courage and conviction, prepared to face jail for his country. His death is a great loss for his family, friends, and the many young and older students he has helped, but it is a terrible loss also for Brittany and the Breton language.



## SKOLAJ DIWAN AR MOR-BIHAN – You can help build a Library

As noted in the last issue of Bro Nevez, work is underway for the opening of a fourth Diwan middle school to serve children in the 6<sup>th</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> levels (in France they count down instead of up as children get older). This would include children roughly between the ages of 11 and 15. This fourth Diwan school—Skolaj Diwan ar Mor-Bihan—will be located in the city of Vannes (Gwened) and will draw students from the Morbihan department as well as Ille-et-Vilaine and Loire-Atlantique. The three other middle schools in Relecq Kerhuon (outside Brest), Kemper, and Plijidi, serve Finistère and Côtes d'Armor.

Opening a new school requires a huge investment of work to insure a site that will permit growth as class sizes increase and to insure finances for not only an initial year of operation, but continued growth. The middle school level also requires an investment of materials and work is underway to establish a "library" for the new middle school. The Kreizenn Deuliaouiñ ha Kelaouiñ (Centre de Documentation et d'Information) will include not only books, but also magazines, recordings, videos and any other material that can be used to supplement the studies of students in this age group. Materials in Breton are of primary interest (including dictionaries and books for language study as well as materials on all subjects in Breton). But students in Diwan middle schools are also studying French and English, and are beginning study of Spanish or German. That means that perhaps the U.S. ICDBL can be of some help in contributing some books or other materials. It goes without saying the Bro Nevez will be sent regularly to the Document Center.

If you would like to contribute books or other materials here is a short list of some of the things being recommended.

- dictionaries in French, Breton and English (monolingual or from one language to the other)
- dictionaries of terms and names
- grammars and other school texts (for learning Breton, French, English)
- encyclopedias, atlases and other basic texts on all subjects (science, geography, literature, art, the environment, etc.)
- fiction works for fun (mysteries, comic books, novels, poetry collections, etc.)
- videos, books on tape, and music recordings.

Keep in mind that the age group is middle school students (11 through 15) who are learning English. Materials for small children are inappropriate, but the students gain enough of a command of English to handle materials designed for their age group. I suggest that before sending materials, you contact the Center's director to make sure your gift will be welcome and appropriate. If you do not have any books to contribute, consider sending a contribution of money which can be used to buy new materials to build a base of material for the Documentation Center.

Here is the person to contact should you be able to assist with this project in any way:

Maripol GOURET  
La Bruyère  
44360 Vigneux de Bretagne

## NEW MUSIC FROM BRITTANY

Hastañ. Hastañ. An Naer Produktion 201. 1998. 60'10.

Reviewed by Matt Cosgrove

Hastañ is currently one of the hottest bands on the Breton fest-noz scene. the group has been thrilling dancers for several years now, but this is the first CD of its music to be released. Recorded live at festou-noz held in the Trégor region, it captures the excitement generated whenever Hastañ gets on stage.

The personalities behind Hastañ are Jean-Luc Thomas, flute; Yann-Guirec Le Bars, guitar; Pierre Stéphan, violin; Cédric Le Roy, bombarde; and Stéphane Foll, biniou. Talented musicians and arrangers, they're also inspired composers. Half of the tunes on the CD—which includes gavotte des montagnes, an dro, laridé, fisel, polka, hanter dro, cercle circassien, and suite de Loudéac—were written by members of the group, with additional contributions by musicians such as Youenn Le Bihan and Olivier Urvoy.

These guys are passionate performers, and their exuberant playing, encouraged by the enthusiastic cheers of the dancers, crackles with energy. The group blends a rhythmically traditional base with inventive arrangements to produce an exciting, eminently danceable sound. All of the instruments are equally strong, and the way they constantly shift roles—such as biniou/bombarde, flute/violin, or bombarde/violin duos alternately carrying the melody—creates a rich swirl of musical textures. Yann Guirec's masterful guitar playing drives the tunes along, and Jean Luc's unconventional flute technique (listen to his Jethro Tull-like accompaniment to the suite de Loudéac) adds some extra punch.

Originality, creativity, and humor are the keywords here, and that applies to the packaging as well as the music. The cardboard CD pocket, with its distinctive cover photo and interior pages in white, black, and red, is both attractive and unconventional. Inside you'll find complete notes on the tunes (in French and Breton), great photos of the musicians and dancers, irreverent comments by the band's members, and even the group's web address ([www.musictrad.com/hastan](http://www.musictrad.com/hastan)). A website isn't the only touch of cyber-tech: the group has also included a CD-ROM track complete with more photos, games and assorted trivia.

Hastañ means "hurry up" in Breton, and fans of traditional Breton dance music will want to do just that: hurry out to get a copy of this enjoyable CD. Just don't try listening to it in a confined space. Sitting still to this music is *not* an option.

P.S." the final rond of the last suite of dances is not the end of the fun. More surprises in store!

Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde. Noëls Celtiques/Celtic Christmas Music from Brittany. Green Linnet Records. GLCD 3124. 1998.

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

For those who get truly bored with the same old Christmas carols and jingles that become inescapable about this time of the year, here is a wonderfully refreshing alternative. And we can thank Green Linnet Records for taking the initiative to distribute this new CD here in the U.S. (Actually this CD was released about a year ago by the Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde as Nedeleg, ECBM 1197 CD).

There are twelve selections on this CD which offer the choir and its composer/director Christian Desbordes to present not only more traditional Breton cantiques, but also some new compositions as well. Indeed, Brittany does not have an ancient choral tradition. This is yet one more *new* style of music-making in Brittany which Bretons use. Like the bagadoù, the choir allows for the use of harmony and layers of music which is not found in the unison of traditional song or the give and take of the biniou-bombarde pair. Unlike traditional Breton song, voices in choirs work with an organ and musical instruments in complex arrangements of melodies. Bretons have been greatly inspired by Wales in the creation of choirs in the past half-century and on this CD you find two Welsh Christmas hymns (with Breton words added) as well as a Cornish carol. Four other carols are part of the Breton tradition, and while their collection and printing in “hymnals” may be relatively recent, their modal sound hints of much more ancient roots.

Old music or not, Breton choral groups have done a great deal of rearranging of both music and texts, and some of the best composers/arrangers in this genre were at work for the selections included: René Abjean (director of the choir from its origins in 1977 to 1989), Roger Abjean, and Pierre-Yves Moign as well as Christian Desbordes (who has directed the choir since 1989). I especially liked the arrangement of a traditional “nouel” done by Pierre-Yves Moign which had a very modern touch, characteristic of the avant garde nature of much of his compositional work which has spanned decades. And the instrumental piece by Christian Desbordes, “Christmas at sea” is lovely. But one can expect no less from Desbordes based on his brilliant work in composing the music for “Ar Basion Vras” in 1991 (see Bro Nevez 44, November 1992 for a review).

But it is not just the music that is “new” and interesting. Texts for the Christmas cantiques can also be quite new, and a good example of this is the selection “Nedeleg” (“Christmas” in Breton) with words and music by Youenn Gwernig, arranged for choir by Christian Desbordes. This is one of the few “protest Christmas songs” I can recall hearing—quite characteristic of Youenn Gwernig whose poetry and song often presents

the harsh realities of life (especially of the life he saw as an emigrant in the U.S.). In this “carol” the rich and fat factory boss denies his workers a raise at Christmas time, telling them that it is good for their soul to follow Christ’s path of suffering. But, most of the texts on this CD speak simply of the birth of Jesus, and the joy of this event.

What is perhaps most attractive about this CD is the freshness of the sound of the choir. This is a group of some one hundred singers from forty or more different towns and villages of northwest Brittany (Choral du “Bout du Monde” = Choir from the “end (or head) of the earth” = Choir from “Penn ar Bed” which in Breton is the name for Finistère). These are good singers, but they are not professional singers (no operatic style here). These are people who simply like to sing—housewives, teachers, retired sailors or fishermen, shop keepers, businessmen and women. They span all ages, but have one thing in common—they want to sing in the BRETON language. Indeed, there are hundreds of choirs in Brittany where one can sing, but just a dozen or so which focus on a Breton language repertoire. People who sing in the Chorale du Bout du Monde do so because they love the Breton language. And, I was told a revealing story by Sylvie Pennors, the “contact person” for the choir, about a woman who came to one of their concerts. This woman had sung in a number of other choirs in Brittany, but when she heard the Breton language performance of Choral du Bout du Monde, she said “this is me; this is what I want to do.” There is a definite energy to the voices in the Choral du Bout du Monde. Their heart is in the singing.

The jacket notes to the CD are attractively packaged by Green Linnet, and you will find the texts to each song in Breton with a French and English translation.

To order this CD? See the pamphlet included with this issue of Bro Nevez which includes the address, telephone number and web site for Green Linnet Records. In France, the CD is distributed by Keltia Musique and can be found in Breton record stores.

\* \* \*

Riccardo Del Fra & Annie Ebrel. Youlouz loar/Velluto di luna. Gwerz Pladenn GWP 016. 1998. 39’20.

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

It is sometimes very hard to give the review necessary to new recordings from Brittany. I’m having some trouble finding the right words to describe this partnership of jazz bass player Riccardo Del Fra and singer Annie Ebrel. First of all, I like their sound very much in all its complexity and beauty. Who could not like the voice of Annie Ebrel.



Included on this CD are a number of traditional songs and gwerzioù, including classic ballads like “Skolvan” and “Dom Yann Derrian” where everyday life and the supernatural world blur. Annie Ebrel is also a master of kan ha diskan singing for Breton dancing and the “Dañs tro Lors” and “Pach Pi” show off her skills there. But, it is the pairing of such a voice with the genius of Riccardo Del Fra that makes this CD so interesting and enjoyable. He is the arranger for most of the eleven selections which are pulled from Breton song tradition. Born in Rome, Ricardo Del Fra has played with a number of jazz groups (perhaps the best known being his work with trumpet player Chet Baker). The free rhythm of Breton song seems to offer him the perfect opportunity to use the bass fiddle to play around with the melodic and rhythmic lines of Annie Ebrel’s singing—sometimes in support of a song and sometimes leading the music with the song following the lead of the bass. The ability of a jazz musician to improvise is certainly not an obstacle in the dances on the CD where he works in pair with Annie Ebrel in the response style characteristic of Breton dance.

What perhaps makes this CD so powerful for me is that each performer is required to stretch beyond their area of strength to use voice or instruments in a slightly new way. This is perhaps most evident for Annie Ebrel in her singing for Riccardo Del Fra’s composition “Voulouz loar/Velluto di luna” which, for me, is one of the highlights of the recording. Using a Breton language text by Pierre-Jakez Hélias, this song’s melody, mood, and swing is considerably different from the Breton gwerz which Annie Ebrel has mastered, and she must use her voice in a very different way—just as carrying the rhythm of a “pach pi” requires Riccardo Del Fra to use his bass in a different way. But, both of these musicians are perfectly capable of “pushing the envelope” a little, and there is a wonderful tension and energy created by this duo of masters.

The music on this CD is appealing yet also challenging for those who might think they’ve “heard it all” when it comes to Breton music. I love hearing yet one more way to interpret the Breton song tradition. The high quality of the music on this CD is complemented very nicely by the graphic design of the CD package. I must congratulate Jean Louis Le Vallégant and Olwenn Manac’h of Coop Breizh/Gwerz Pladenn for one of the most attractive and interesting packaging jobs I’ve seen yet for a CD. The deep blue/purple color of the cardboard CD case with its textured surface makes you want to reach out and pick up the CD. In contrast to the plastic cases of most CDs, this one actually feels good to the touch. The case unfolds to present Annie Ebrel and Riccardo Del Fra in photos and at the center are the notes with each Breton song text side by side with a French translation. The print style is unusual and interesting, yet easy to read. This is a CD which brings pleasure both to the eyes and ears.

## NEW BOOKS FROM BRITTANY

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

**Jakez Gaucher. La Bretagne de A à Z (l'essentiel pour comprendre ce qui nourrit l'âme, la culture et l'unité de ce pays). C\Spezet: Coop Breizh, 1998. ISBN 2-84346-03502. 177 pages.**

Here is a book that is deceptively small in size. As the subtitle promises, "the essentials to understand what nourishes the soul, the culture and the unity of this country [Brittany]" this mini-encyclopedia includes a great deal of information on a wide range of subjects. As someone who receives telephone calls and letters from individuals nearly anywhere in the world (including Brittany!) on almost all topics related Brittany, I love such books where topics are listed alphabetically. And, most importantly this book gives "the essential" information needed to answer questions. While Jakez Gaucher has a strength in history and the Celtic countires, he includes a great deal of information on music and the arts, the Breton language, and gastronomic and natural wonders of Brittany. Here is just a sample of what you find under "A": Abbaye/abati, Aber, Accordéon/akordeoñs, Age d'Or de la Bretagne/Oadvezh Aour Breizh [15<sup>th</sup> century], Agriculture/labour-douar, Ankou, Anne de Bretagne/Anna Breizh, Argoad, Armor/Arvor, Armorique/Arvorig, Art celtique/Arz keltiek, and Arthur (le roi)/ar roue Arzhur. Some of the topics require just a short paragraph, but in other cases several pages of information is provided with cross references to other related topics.

The A through Z entries (140 different topics) take up 115 pages of the book. The appendices allow a bit more detail on the history of Brittany in particular, with a list of kings and dukes, a 25-page chronology of events, a glossary for Breton language terms, a bibliography by topic, and a list of addresses for various organizations and shops specializing in Breton and Celtic books, recordings and products.

This is a book one can use with the confidence that the author has his facts straight (and there are lots of facts, names and dates. While it will be quite useful to those who want to quickly look up information on a particular topic, the book is quite enjoyable to read in a random fashion—picking a letter or individual entry to explore just for fun. This is a book which will appeal to curious tourists, but it is written for Bretons themselves, and I very much liked Jakez Gaucher's militant introduction urging Bretons to take command of their history and culture. This is a book that will need updating with time with all its references to contemporary Breton culture of the 1990s, and this is a book that merits a translation in English as one of the most concise yet meaty introductions to the "essentials" of Brittany I have seen.

\* \* \*

**Philippe Rault. Les drapeaux bretons—de 1188 à nos jours Spezet: Coop Breizh. 1998. ISBN 2-84346-034-4. 87 pages.**

One of the most frequent questions I have received over the years working with the U.S. ICDBL has been about the Breton flag—what is its history and what do the stripes and little cross-like symbols mean. There seem to be a lot of people out there who study flags and collect them. Thankfully, now there is a book to explain the Breton flag—not just the "gwenn ha du" that is flown in front of many public buildings in Brittany today, but also all the flags that have in history stood for Brittany in some way. Of particular interest to me was the discussion of the origins of the "ermine"—the symbol that is so often presented to stand for Brittany itself.

You have seen it, but probably wondered what it had to do with the animal of that name, since it doesn't at all look like a weasel-like creature.

In fact the symbol for the ermine comes from the way the skin of the ermine was prepared for shields and banners with the black tip of the tail pinned to the pelt of the animal. In looking at the symbol called an "ermine" you are in fact looking at the pinned tail of the beast. I will not go further into the history of the Breton flag(s), but urge anyone interested to purchase this book which traces the history of flags representing Brittany and all the political manifestations of this country from the Middle Ages to the present. Although a price of 161 francs (\$32) may seem steep for such a small book (just 70 pages without the introductory sections), the book is loaded with color illustrations of flags and banners and other photographs of flags in use in Brittany. This is a nicely produced hard-back book and you get what you pay for.

\* \* \*

**Jean-Jacques Barreau & Guy Jaouen. Les Jeux populaires—eclipse et renaissance. Carhaix: Confédération FALSAB. 1998. ISBN 2-9504402-2-3. 245 pages.**

This book collects papers from a conference held in April 1990 in Carhaix on the subject of traditional sports and games of Europe. While some of the papers are a bit "sociological" in tone, this was not just a gathering of scholars, but of people who love the unique sports and games of their lands. Representatives at the conference included Cumbrians, Aoutaus, Basques, Bretons, Cornish, Danish, Flemish, Frisians, Welsh, Irish, and Icelanders—who were not just studying the history of traditions of their countries, but seeking common ground to help promote the practice of such sports.

Papers were presented in many languages, but the majority of those published in this book are in both French and English. The contents give a good idea of what is covered:

- Guy Jaouen (Brittany), "The necessity of preserving and promoting traditional sports"
- Jean Jacques Barreau (Brittany), "Traditional festivals, games, activities and sporting events"
- Fanch Peru (Brittany), "The popular tradition of outdoor games in Brittany"
- William Baxter (England), "Wrestling—The Ancient Modern Sport"
- Erik De Broede (Flanders) "Les jeux traditionnels en Flandre: Projets de recherche et de promotion"
- Dr. Peve Lavega (Catalonia), "Les jeux et sports traditionnels en Espagña"
- Klass Jansma (Freisland), "Success and failure of institutionalization—Frisian sportive games, a dynamic approach"
- Roger Homes (Cornwall), "The survival and revival of traditional sports and games in Cornwall"
- Piero Daudry (Val d'Aoste), "Defense et renouveau des jeux de tradition"
- Jørn Møller (Denmark), "Sports et anciens jeux de village au Danemark"
- Guy Jaouen (Brittany), "The development of a traditional sport at an international level—Gouvern in the countries of Western Europe"
- Henning Eichberg (Denmark), "A revolution of body culture"—traditional games on the way from modernization to "postmodernity"

This book may not have a terrifically wide appeal, but it is an important documentation of the work that is being done to promote unique sports that are just as much a part of the heritage of Europe as music and language.

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## L'Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde

L'Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde, founded in 1977, unites the choirs of "Kanerien al Levenez" from Le Folgoët and "Gwalarn Uhel" from Ploudalmézeau and also gathers more than one hundred choir members from about forty towns and villages in North Finistère.

The main purpose of the group is to promote the Breton language and culture by singing a repertoire consisting of music and traditional songs but also rich in new compositions. Under the direction of **René Abjean**, the choir created, among other works, the cantata *Ar marc'h dall* (1979), la *Missa Keltia* (1982), the oratorio *War varc'h d'ar mor* (1987) and the cantata *Kan evid ar peoc'h* (1989). The texts for these productions are by **Job An Irien** and the music by **René Abjean**.

Since 1989, the choir has been under the direction of **Christian Desbordes**. Composer, arranger and musician, he composed the music for the theatrical spectacular *La Passion Celtique* (*Ar Basion vras*) in 1991. The choir took an active part in the thirty productions of this show, mainly during Breton festivals but also at Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.

In 1993, at the Abbey of Landévennec, the choir staged the Celtic oratorio *War henchou ar bed*, text by Job An Irien, set to music by Christian Desbordes. These two authors came together once again, two years later, to create the *Messe à Saint Guénolé*. This Mass was sung for the first time in Landévennec on May 1, 1995.

Along with writing original compositions, Christian Desbordes arranges many traditional songs for the choir, notably pieces taken from the *Barzaz Breiz*. Ten of these songs appear on the CD produced by the choir in 1994.

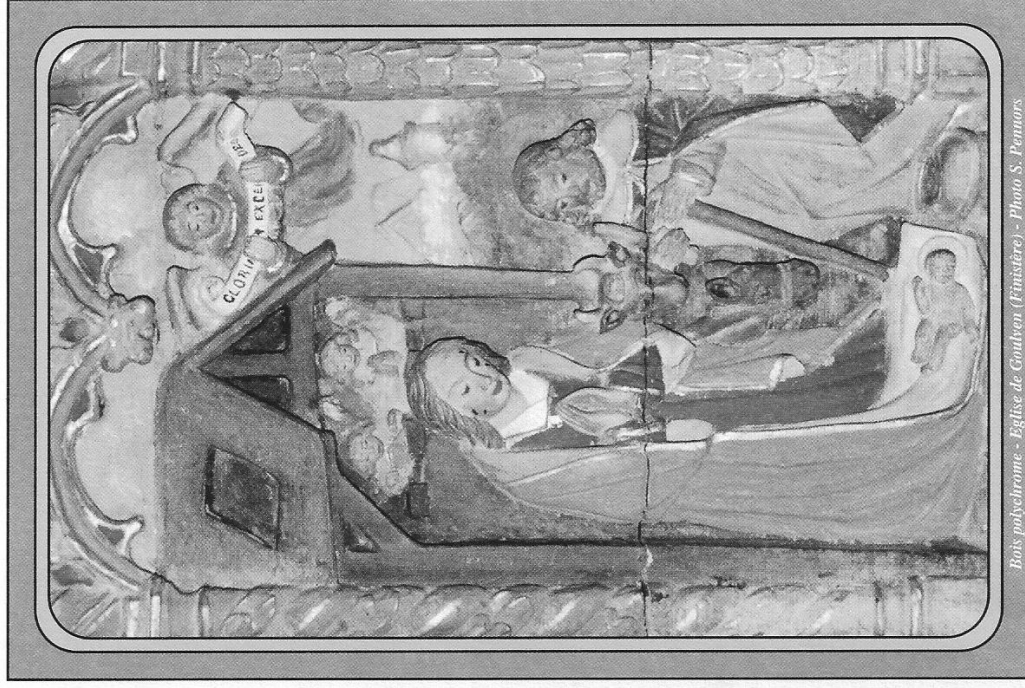
The CD "**NEDELEG**, *Noëls Celtiques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*" is another opportunity for the Choir to demonstrate his intention to promote and enrich the musical and cultural heritage of Brittany.

*Kana en or yez a zo vidom eul loc'h hag eur blijadur.  
Gand ma kavoc'h er bladenn-mañ plijadur ha joa.  
Setu pezh a hetom deoc'h!*

# NEDELEG

*Noëls Celtiques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*

**Compact Disk**



*Bois polychrome - Église de Goulven (Finistère) - Photo S. Pennors*

**Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde**  
Direction : Christian Desbordes

## The Compact-Disk

### "NEDELEG - Noël's Celtiques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui"

gathers twelve titles:

#### ✓ Ten orchestrated songs

resorting to traditional Celtic style or to fresh creation:

##### **Misteriou joiaus / Joyful Mysteries**

Traditional - Harmonization by René ABJEAN

##### **Pa voe ganet / When He was born**

Traditional - Harmonization by Roger ABJEAN

##### **Nedeleg / Christmas**

Words and music by Youenn GWERNIG - Arrangement by Christian DESBORDES

##### **War ar menez ar bastored / Sheperds on the Hill**

L. VIDAL et H. Du RUSQUEC - Arrangement by René ABJEAN

##### **Nouel / Christmas**

Traditional - Arrangement by Pierre-Yves MOIGN

##### **An Elez a gane / The Angel sang**

Word by Job AN IRIEN - Music by Christian DESBORDES

##### **Diskennit euz an neñvou / Descend from the Heaven**

Traditional - Harmonization by Roger ABJEAN

##### **Petra 'zo a nevez? / What's New?**

Traditional (Welsh) - Music by Edward ARTHUR - Breton text by Jo LE GAD

##### **O na kaerra burzud! / Oh, what a Wonderful Miracle!**

Traditional (Cornish) - Breton lyrics by Job SEITE

##### **Kreiz an noz / In the middle of the Nigth**

Adapted from a Welsh hymn - Breton lyrics by Job SEITE

#### ✓ Two music-pieces (instrumental)

##### **Pe trouz war an douar? / What noise on earth?**

Traditional - Arrangement by Jean-Marc KERNIN

##### **Nedeleg war ar mor / Christmas at sea**

Especially composed by Christian Desbordes

" ... La plupart des chants du CD ont été enregistrés en l'église abbatiale de Landévennec qui dispose d'une acoustique exceptionnelle et d'un orgue aux sonorités remarquables tenu par Jean-Marc Kernin. Toutes les parties solistes sont interprétées par de jeunes choristes dont les voix sont particulièrement émouvantes. De plus, la richesse des orchestrations réalisées par Christian Desbordes apportent modernité et diversité à l'ensemble du disque. Tous les atouts sont donc réunis pour que ce CD témoigne de la recherche de qualité qui fait la réputation de l'Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde ... "

LE TELEGRAMME 11/11/2197

... Most of the melodies of this Compact Disk have been recorded in Landevennec Abbey which offers exceptional acoustics and a remarkably resonant set of organ-stops, held by Jean-Marc Kernin. Every solo part is sung by a young and charming voice from the choir. Besides, the copiousness of Christian Desbordes' orchestrations brings moderne diversity and forms a fairly harmonious whole. All the assets are therefore grouped to demonstrate the constant quest of quality that honours the "Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde" ... "

LE TELEGRAMME 11/11/2197

\* The CD "NEDELEG, Noël's Celtiques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui" is a production of the Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde.

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