

# BRO NEVEZ

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



TOWERS OF ST. POL DE LEON.

Face p. 92.

A view of St. Pol de Leon from Henry Blackburn, Artistic Travel in Normandy, Brittany, The Pyrenees, Spain and Algeria, 1895.

See page 21 for a travel account of St. Pol de Leon from 1875.

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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The **U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)** was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981. **Bro Nevez** ("new country" in the Breton language) is the newsletter produced by the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly: 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 Editor.

The U.S. ICDBL provides Bro Nevez on a complimentary basis to a number of language and cultural organizations in Brittany to show our support for their work. Your Membership/Subscription allows us to do this. Membership (which includes subscription) for one year is \$20. Checks should be in U.S. dollars, made payable to "U.S. ICDBL" and mailed to Lois Kuter at the address above. Dues and contributions can also be sent electronically via the U.S. ICDBL web site – see below

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

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**FROM THE EDITOR - Lois Kuter / New e-mail address: [lkuter@fast.net](mailto:lkuter@fast.net)**

Membership renewals - U.S. ICDBL Members and Subscribers have the chance to renew for a two year period and to start a membership or subscription at any time of the year. This means that sometimes you do not know when it is time to renew! For some of you, I have enclosed a membership/subscription form. That means it is time for you to renew for your membership for the coming year. If you do not find a form enclosed with this newsletter, that means you are paid up ... and you will receive a renewal notice with a future issue of Bro Nevez. Even if your membership dues are not due at this time, please consider making a contribution for the Diwan schools. Even with the dollar at an all-time low against the euro, the money we send is important in helping schools improve their facilities and programs in small ways.

I thank you for all the support you have given the U.S. ICDBL. Please make our cause known as widely as you can. Bretons working for their language and culture continue to need the widest support possible, and building our membership is one way we can show that. Helping people learn more about Brittany and the Breton language is another way to show support. Tell people about our website. We have lots of good information there as well as great links to Breton web sites.

## A New School Year for the Breton Language in Brittany

The following statistics (and the chart and number on the following page) are from the newsletter of Unvaniezh ar Gelennerien Brezhoneg (Union of Breton Teachers (Kannadig 90, miz gwengolo/miz Here 1002). Numbers show that despite challenges in teacher training and financial support for bilingual programs, the demand for them in all schools of Brittany continues to grow.

| Department      | Diwan schools               | Public schools              | Catholic schools            | Total all schools 2004 | 2003         | Increase in students from '03 |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Finistère       | 1,662                       | 1,264                       | 1,111                       | 4,037                  | 3,658        | +379 students                 |
| Morbihan        | 401                         | 854                         | 1,667                       | 2,922                  | 2,679        | +243                          |
| Côtes d'Armor   | 465                         | 840                         | 334                         | 1,639                  | 1,502        | +137                          |
| Ille-et-Vilaine | 100                         | 461                         | 125                         | 686                    | 680          | +6                            |
| Paris           | 15                          |                             |                             | 15                     |              | +15                           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    | <b>2,834</b><br>at 33 sites | <b>3,549</b><br>at 58 sites | <b>3,285</b><br>at 49 sites | <b>9,668</b>           | <b>8,873</b> | <b>+795 students</b>          |

New Schools: Diwan opened a school in Paris. Public bilingual classes opened in Theix (Morbihan) and Sizun, Lanmeur, Loperhet and Guesnou (Finistère). Catholic classes opened in Clérguerrec (Morbihan) and Rospez, Trégueux and Maël-Carhaix (Finistère)

### Numbers by Levels

|                      | Diwan        | Public       | Catholic     | TOTAL        |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Preschool            | 935          | 1,799        | 1,517        | 4,251        |
| Primary school       | 1,122        | 1,375        | 1,515        | 4,012        |
| Middle school        | 616          | 296          | 244          | 1,156        |
| High school          | 161          | 79           | 9            | 249          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | <b>2,834</b> | <b>3,549</b> | <b>3,285</b> | <b>9,668</b> |
| % increase from 2003 | +2.8%        | +8.76%       | +15.14%      | +8.95%       |

### **ADULTS LEARNING BRETON IN 2004**

The following information is from Keleier Ofis ar Brezhoneg (Nov 58, hanv 2004). The Ofis ar Brezhoneg (Office of the Breton Language) surveyed 154 organizations who offered classes for adults in 152 communities: 28 in the Côtes d'Armor, 72 in Finistère, 10 in Ille-et-Vilaine, 13 in Loire-Atlantique and 31 in Morbihan. They found 29 organizations outside of Brittany: 3 in Paris, 12 in the Paris region and 14 elsewhere in France. The number of adults taking different types of classes were broken down as follows:

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Evening classes        | 3,261        |
| Weekend classes        | 754          |
| Week-long classes      | 850          |
| Longer term classes    | 95           |
| Correspondence lessons | 500          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>5,460</b> |

For *evening classes* the following is the breakdown of percentage of learners at a given level (4 + 5 being the more advanced levels)

|                  | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4+5 |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Finistère        | 38% | 25% | 19% | 18% |
| Côtes d'Armor    | 40  | 28  | 19  | 13  |
| Morbihan         | 38  | 28  | 18  | 16  |
| Ille-et-Vilaine  | 38  | 31  | 22  | 9   |
| Loire-Atlantique | 39  | 31  | 13  | 17  |

This shows that at least two thirds of adult learners taking evening classes are at beginner levels. We can hope that with time the number so those with higher levels of proficiency will increase, but more intensive and longer term classes are more likely to produce students who gain a higher proficiency.

Adults and children both need to see and hear Breton around them in daily life, so it is important that work continues to encourage the use of Breton on public signage and in the media. It is important that Bretons continued to sing, tell stories, and perform theater in the Breton language. And it is important they continue to also produce high quality literature and reading materials for learners at all levels. "Practice makes perfect," and the more interesting opportunities Bretons have to use Breton, the more likely it will be that adult learners continue their studies long enough to reach a level where Breton ceases to be an object of study and becomes a mode of communication and creativity.

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## A NOTE ON THE DIWAN SCHOOLS

While Diwan has just a small growth this school year (2.8%) this marks a bit of a rebound from 2003 when mere "survival" was a concern and numbers actually dropped from the previous year. This will be a year for the Diwan schools to rebuild and work for future growth. For more information about Diwan keep your eye on their web site: [www.diwanbreizh.org](http://www.diwanbreizh.org). This site also has very up-to-date information on all developments related to the Breton language.

### Skol Diwan Landerne

As longer-term members of the U.S. ICDBL know we have had a special relationship to the Diwan school located in Landerneau since 1992 when I was asked to be its "godmother." I brought you all along with this and some ICDBL members have had

the good fortune to be able to visit our school. We try to send a regular contribution so that the school can do some projects beyond its budget, and a check will be going out soon!

After 16 years in its stie on Rue de la Colline, the Landerneau school has moved to a new site and has a new address:

Skol Diwan Landerne  
Allée de Tremaria  
29800 Landerneau

During the summer parents did some painting to spruce up the former public primary school building which offers more space and light, and a school yard with lots of trees and the potential for the development of gardens. While the school population has dropped from the 60+ students it had in past years it welcomed six new families this year and has a total of 44 children enrolled (25 in the preschool and 19 at the primary school level).

## Diwan and U.S. Language Immersions Programs

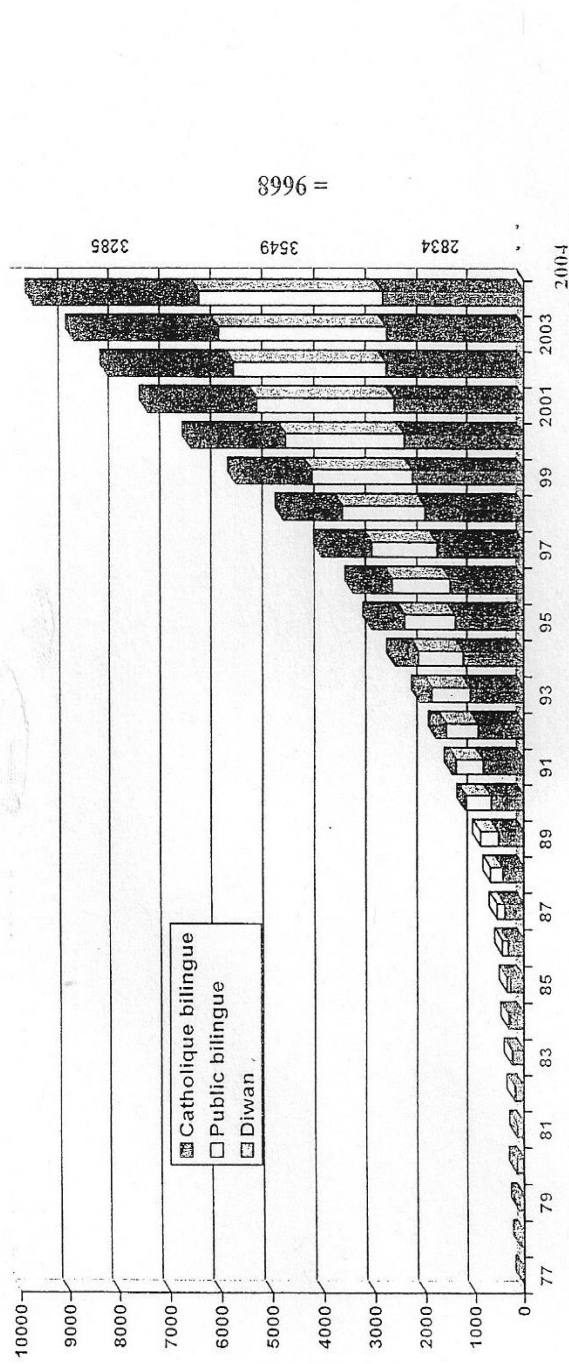
Last October 2003 I sent a letter and information about Diwan to some 15 French immersion schools in the U.S.. This brought just one telephone voice message thanking me for my efforts. But, the information I sent was clearly passed around and in time I was contacted to write an article on Diwan for the American Council on Immersion Education Newsletter (based at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition at the University of Minnesota: <http://carla.acad.umn.edu/ACIE.html>)

I had hoped that Diwan staff themselves might write such an article, but the Editor was persistent so my introductory article should be in press for an upcoming Immersion Education Newsletter. Clearly there is interest on the part of American teachers and researchers to learn more about immersion programs in the rest of the world. With over 25 years of experience Diwan has a wealth of experience to share.

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**MORE STATISTICS** - For those who like a more graphic presentation and a longer-term view of the development of Breton language classes in the schools of Brittany, the chart and numbers on the next page will be helpful. These are from the newsletter of Unvaniezh ar Gelennerien Brezhoneg (Union of Breton Teachers ([Kannadig](#) 90, miz gwengolo/miz Here 1002).

# Number of Students in Bilingual Schools of Brittany (Catholic schools, Public Schools and Diwan Schools)



## Evolution of enrolled students in bilingual programs since the creation of them in the schools

|          | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Diwan    | 16   | 65   | 104  | 143  | 137  | 170  | 223  | 278  | 276  | 321  | 387  | 428  | 520  | 668  |
| Public   |      |      |      |      |      | 18   | 25   | 37   | 71   | 119  | 162  | 255  | 373  | 510  |
| Catholic |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 45   |

|          | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2001 | 2003 | 2004 |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Diwan    | 832  | 937  | 1095 | 1235 | 1390 | 1498 | 1753 | 1996 | 2251 | 2414 | 2609 | 2768 | 2757 | 2874 |
| Public   | 545  | 643  | 764  | 893  | 1017 | 1153 | 1283 | 1609 | 1953 | 2289 | 2649 | 2944 | 3243 | 3549 |
| Catholic | 79   | 194  | 250  | 466  | 641  | 748  | 975  | 1141 | 1469 | 1851 | 2128 | 2459 | 2853 | 3285 |

## Five New Members of Brittany's Order of the Ermine

Each year the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro) inducts four (and sometimes five) individuals into this honorary order reinstituted in 1972 to recognize Bretons (and others) who have offered exceptional service to Brittany. The Order is inspired by the Order of the Ermine that was created in 1381 by Jean IV, one of the oldest honorary orders of Europe which was unique in including common people and women. Today's members of the Order of the Ermine are given a "medallion" designed by Pierre Toulhoat which is very much like that of the middle ages, decorated with "ermine" and including the motto "D'am buhe" - "For my life" – a reminder that those in the Order of the Ermine have the responsibility of life-long service to Brittany.

The following information (in Breton and with my translation from the French) about this year's inductees comes from Sterenn, the newsletter of Skol Uhel ar Vro (No. 21, 2004). This will briefly introduce you to five very interesting people of Brittany.

### Marie KERMAREC

Bet ganet en ur familh brezhonegerien e teu da vout skolaerez e-pad tri bloaz e Plougerne (Bro Leon). Gant laz-kanañ Kenvroiz Dom Mikael eus Plougerne ez a e darempred sevenadurezh ar vro. E gouel ar Biniou bras e Brest e 1971, diwar c'houlenn Charlez ha Chanig Ar Gall, e krog da genlabourat en abadennoù sul war Radio Arvorig. Ober a ra buan war dro abadennoù brezhonek Radio Arvorig, o kemer lec'h Chanig ar Gall da c'houde war-dro Breizh o Vevañ, ar magazin brezhonek kentañ bannet war ar skinwel. Produerez-dileuriad FR3 evit an abadennoù skinwel ez eo bet e-pad pell ar sevenourez vrezhoneger nemeti e tele ar rannvro. War ar memes tro e kenlabour gant strollad c'hoariva brezhonek Remi Derrien, Teatr Penn ar Bed, hag e sav ivez abadennoù barzhoniezh evit an hañvourien asambles gant Naig Rozmor, Christiane Malez hag an delennourez Kristen Nogues. Ingal a ra labour kinning e brezhoneg, eus Pleiben betek Roma, evit sonadegoù Breizh a Gan pe laz-kanañ Mouezh Paotred Breizh. E penn skipailh skridaozañ ar gelaouenn lennegel e brezhoneg Brud Nevez emañ Mari Kermarc'h eg abaoe 2002. Dimezet gant René Abjean, daou vugel ha pempezh bugel vihan a zo ganto.

Born into a Breton speaking family, she taught for three years in Plouguerneau (Leon). Her first immersion in Breton culture was made through participation in the choral group Kenvroiz Dom Mikael based in Plougerne (Plouguerneau). Beginning in 1971, at the Festival des Cornemuses of Brest, she was invited by Charlez and Chanig ar Gall to take part in Sunday broadcasts on Radio Armorique. She took over for them with Breton language programs on Radio-Armorique and then succeeded Chanig Ar Gall as the commentator on regional television for the first Breton language feature Breizh o Veva. Producer for FR3 for television broadcasts, Marie Kermarec was the first and for a long time the only Breton speaking woman producer for regional television. In parallel she did theater in Breton with Rémi Derrien's troupe Teatr Penn ar Bed. And she also worked with Naig Rozmor, Christiane Malez and harpist Kristen Nogues on summer festival performances of poetry. From Pleyben to Rome, she is known as the Breton language presenter for concerts of Breizh a Gan as well as the men's choir Mouezh Paotred Breizh. Since 2002 Marie Kermarec has headed the editing team for the Breton language magazine Brud Nevez. Married to René Abjean [also a member of the Order of the Ermine] she has two children and five grand children.

### Pierre-Yves MOIGN

E Brest e 1927 eo bet ganet Pêr-Yves Moign. Heuliañ a ra kentelioù skritur e Gwarezti riezal meur ar sonerezh e Pariz e-lec'h ma dap ar priz kentañ kendonouriezh e 1952. E oberenn gentañ bet c'hoariet ez-foran a voe ar sonerezh krouet evit mont asambles gant arvestadenn gentañ ar jestrouer Marcel Marceau e 1948. Ken abred ha 1952 eo e teu da vezañ dedennet gant ar sonerezhioù hengounel: krouiñ a ra meur a strollad sonerezh etre 1955 ha 1961 (ar g"Kabalerien" brudet en o zouez), o seveniñ meur a bladenn ganto. Tremenet war leurenn an Olympia, e krog d'ober troiadoù abadennoù sonerezh en Europa a-bezh, o kemer perzh e abadennoù radio ha skinwel fonnus. Adalek 1963, e studi aketus pedagogiezh ar sonerezh hag an hentennoù a restaol an intrudu d'an deskarded. O lakaat a ra e pleustr en e gentelioù hag ivez en e laz-kanañ. War Hentoù Breizh, bet krouet gantañ e 1969, a

Pierre-Yves Moign was born in Brest in 1927. He took composition classes at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris where he won first prize in counterpoint in 1952. His first work performed in public was background music for the first performances of the mime Marcel Marceau in 1948. His interest in traditional music dates from 1952 and in 1955 and 1961 he created musical ensembles (like the famous "Kabalerien") with whom he made several recordings, performed at the Olympia [in Paris], made several concert tours in Europe, and participated in radio and TV broadcasts. Beginning in 1963, he studied musical pedagogy -- especially active methods which he put into practice in his classes and with the choral group War Hentoù Breizh he created in 1969 which included children and young people. Along with this, he had a career as a composer, writing for all kinds of

sonerezh evit a bep seurt lazioù binvioù pe mouezhioù, oc'h aozañ ivez kalz pezhioù, en evit an delenn geltiek ken evit ar c'helenn. Eñ eo, neveshoc'h, en deus aozet orkestradur overennoù Didier Squiban: kensonadegoù 'Breizh' (2000) hag 'an Hirwazh' (2004) pergen. Eus 1978 betek 1999, eo bet rener Kreizenn Breizhek an Arzoù Pobl bet krouet e Brest diwar e intrudu. A-gevret gant e labour er skol sonerezh hengounel, ec'h aoz arvestoù ha sonadegoù, an emgavioù. Arzoù hengounel ha kevredigezh kempred, Kroazhent ar brioù kelt hag ivez kalz kenstrivadegoù sonerezh.

## Yannig BARON

Ganet en un tiegezh niverus en Enez Groe, e tizolo buan istor Breizh hag e krog da seniñ ar vombar da 14 bloaz. Aet, barzh ar morlu e kej eno gant kalz a Vretoned e Toulon hag e Marseille, e-lec'h m'en em stal goude bezañ zegemer bugale ha tud yaouank. Kenderc'hel a ra war ar memes tro gant e labour sonaozañ, o skrivañ meur a bezh kuitaet an arme e 1960. Ober a ra neuze war dro Gouel Bretoned ar C'hreisteiz, lec'h ma bed ur bern arzourien ag ar vro. Krouiñ a ra eno, d'ar memes mare, ur gevrenn eus ar MOB, hag e stourm ouzh ar brezel en Aljeria. E 1970, distroet da Vreizh, e ra, gant Yann Goasdoue, war dro kreizenn Menez Kamm, a zeu da vezañ neuze ul lec'h a-bouez e buhez sevenadurel Breizh. Staliat e Gwened kerkent ha 1978, e stourm evit krouiñ aze ur skol Diwan, mes ur c'hwitadenn eo. E 1988, pennek, goude bout gourdrouzet ober harz-debriñ, e teu a-benn da gaout ur c'hlas divyezhek e skol bublik Brec'h. En Enez-Groe, d'ar memes mare, a ra berzh bras an diskouezadeg ha an degouezhioù aozet gantañ diwar-benn e genderv-meur Yann-Ber Kalloc'h. Aet tre en UDB en hevelep bloavezh, ez a war ar renk e meur a zilennadeg. Merzout a ra neuze ne oa miret plas ebet d'ar brezhoneg en deskadurezh katolik: a-gevret gant stourmerien all (c'hoar Amma-Vari Arzur e Penn-ar-Bed en o zouez) e krou ar gevredigezh Dihun, deut bremañ da vout ur rouedad 49 skol o vodañ 3300 bugel e Breizh a bezh. Goude kas da benn 38 devezh harz-debriñ e 1990 e tizh lakaat krouiñ stajoù stummañ hir en deskadurezh public. A-stroll gant daouzek den all ez implij c'hoazh an doare mantret-se e 1995, da bouezañ war ar Stad C'hall d'he rediañ da sinañ Karta ar yezhoù bihan. D'an hevelep bloavezh e lak da vont en dro ur stummadur arbennik e Skol-Veur Katolik ar C'hornôg: aze 'mañ e vez stummet hiviziken darn vrasañ kelennerien divyezhek an naoziad. D'an hevelep mare e kemer perzh oberiant e krouidigezh ar gevredigezh difenn "Peulvanoù Dieub" e Karnag. Kregiñ a ra un trede harz-debriñ e 1998 evit gounit postoù nevez en deskadurezh divyezhek. Gant Arvot Magazine o anvet "Breizhad ar bloaz" e 2000.

vocal and instrumental ensembles with many pieces for Celtic harp and for music teaching. And he more recently did the orchestration for works by Didier Squiban, notably the "Bretagne" symphony (2000) and the "Iroise" symphony (2004). From 1978 to 1999 he directed the Centre Breton d'Art Populaire which he founded in Brest. Along with this school for traditional music, he organized events and concerts such as the "Rencontres Arts traditionnels et société contemporaine," and the "Carrefour de pays celtiques," as well as numerous music competitions.

Born into a large family on the Ile de Groix, he discovered the history of Brittany at a very young age and learned to play the bombard when he was 14. Joining the Navy which he left in 1960, he found many fellow Bretons in Toulon and then in Marseille where he organized the "Festival of the Bretons of Midi," bringing many artists from Brittany there. At the same time he created a section of the M.O. B [Mouvement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne] and fought against the war in Algeria. When he returned to Brittany in 1970 he directed the cultural Center Menez Kamm with Yann Goasdoue, making this a key center in Breton cultural life. Living in Vannes, he began in 1978 to fight for the creation of a Diwan school there. This failed, but with persistence and the threat of a hunger strike, a bilingual class was created in Brec'h at the public school. At the same period he organized an exhibit and events about his cousin Yann-Ber Kalloc'h which was very successful. At this time he also joined the Union Démocratique Bretonne and ran in several local elections. Noting and deploring the lack of Breton classes in the Catholic schools he helped found the organization Dihun (with others such as Sister Anna Vari Arzur in Finistère). Today he is president of Dihun; Catholic schools now have 49 bilingual classes with some 3,300 students throughout Brittany. After a new 38-day hunger strike in 1990 he helped to obtain the creation of longer term training classes for teachers in public education. In 1995 he used this method of last resort again with another dozen people to push for France's signature of the European Charter for Minority Languages. The same year he designed and implemented specific teacher training at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest which today prepares the majority of bilingual teachers for the Catholic schools. Baron was also the co-founder at this period of the "Menhir Libres" association in Carnac. In 1998 he took up a third hunger strike to obtain more teaching positions for bilingual education. In 2002 Armor Magazine named him "Breton of the Year."

## Albert POULAIN

Bet ganet d'an 8 a viz Gwengolo 1932, e studi an tresañ ha an adeiladiñ e Gwarezti an Arzoù hag ar Micherioù euz 1953 betek 1958. En amzer-se eo, e Pariz, ma tizolo sevenadur e bobl, o taremprediñ Herve ar Menn hag ar strolladoù sevenadurel divroet evel Ker Vreizh. E-touez ar re a sav ar M.O.B. eo e 1957. Ur wech distroet da B/Presperieg e 1959, ez a e darempred gant ar c'helc'hioù ha Kevrenn Roazhon, hag e krog e vor, o tastum e giz-se tost da 600 kanaouenn e kornioù bro Presperieg ha Gazilieg. Goude un ehan e kresko betek 1500 niver ar c'hanaouennoù bet dastumet gantañ er bloavezioù 1980. Pezh a fell dezhañ eo rein buhez en dro d'an teñzor sevenadurel-se ha setu ma krog neuze da ganañ e-unan er gouelioù lec'hel. Tresour, dont a ra da vont Mestr-Oberour sevel tiez, o kas 1200 raktres da bennvat e-doug seiz bloavezh war 'n ugent: seveniñ a ra c'hoazh 18000 luc'hskeudenn war c'hlad ar savadurioù plouezel hag ur bern nevesadurioù. Kejañ a ra ouzh Jean-Louis Latour ha Albert Noblet e 1959, ha e krou ganto Bodad sevenadurel breizhek Broioù ar Wilen. Kenlabourat a ra da rein lañs en dro d'ar gouelioù lec'hel a zisoc'ho war grouidigezh ar Bolc'h Aour e 18975, diwar intrudu Jean-Bernard Vighetti. D'ar mare-se eo ivez ma krog da vezañ dedennet gant un arvez all eus sevenadurezh ar bobl: ar marvailhoù. Dastum a ra 'giz-se ouzhpenn 300 anezho, embannet gantañ evit o mirout diouzh an ankounac'h ha dreist-holl reiñ buhez en dro dezho e-droug beilhadegoù ha gouelioù ar vro, en ur gallaoueg saourus ha skeudennus ur bam. Deut eo bremañ da vezañ, evidomp holl, degemennour awenet hon sevenadur gallaouek.

## Yann GOASDOUE

E Perroz-Gireg eo bet ganet e 1939, ma teu da vezañ ezel eus ar bagad kerkent ha krouet hemañ e 1954. Aze eo ivez ma tesk seniñ ar vombard ha ma tizolo sevenadur ar vro. E 1970 a kemer un disentez a bouez bras evitañ: dilezel e labour beajour kenwerzh o werzhañ produioù boued breizhek e Provañs evit en em staliañ gant e diegezh e kreiz Breizh. Gellout a ra ren evel-se war un dro e stourm evit Breizh e framm oaled sevenadurel Menez Kamm hag ur vuhez vicherel pinvidik ha leun a virvilh. Emañ e penn orin krouidigezh embregerezh skignañ levrioù ha pladennoù sonerezh Coop Breizh, deut d'em staliañ e Spezet e kreiz Breizh. Bet e rener kenwerzhel hag ar skignañ adal 1977, e teu da vezañ e bennrener betek deiz e leve e 1999: gant stalioù levrioù Ar Baol, Pariz, Roazhon, an Oriant, he deus lec'hienn Spezet kemeret ur perzh skedus, bete vremañ, el labour brudañ sevenadur Breizh. Bet unan eus ar pevar den o deus krouet strollad hollvrudet Diaouled ar Menez e 1972, e kendalc'h atav da seniñ ganto, o kanañ ivez gant meur a laz-kanañ, en o zouez, pergen, ar bagad paotred brudet kaer Mouezh Paotred Breizh. Gant e skiant-prenet, e ro dorn kalonek ingal da aozadur Gouel al Levrioù hag ar Romantourien e Karaez hag e kendalc'h da stourm o kemer perzh oberiant er gazetenn emsavel sizhuniek "Breizh Hebdo."

Born September 8, 1932, he studied design and architecture at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers from 1953 to 1958. It was during this stay in Paris and in contact with Hervé Le Menn and others active in cultural groups such as Ker Vreizh that he became interested in Breton popular culture. In 1957 he was a co-founder of the M.O.B. (Mouvement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne). Having returned to Pipriac in 1959 he regularly visited Celtic Circles and the Kevrenn de Rennes [bagad] and began to tape record traditional singers, collecting nearly 600 song in the area of Pipriac and La Gacilly. In the 1980s the songs he collected would grow to 1,500. Determined to give life to this rich repertoire, he began to interpret songs himself at local festivals. A designer, he became a "Maître d'Oeuvre" in buildings and in this title undertook 1,200 projects over 27 years. He would take nearly 18,000 photographs of rural architectural heritage of Brittany and work with numerous restorations. In 1959 he met up with Jean-Louis Latour and Albert Noblet who would be co-founders with him of the Groupement Culturel Breton des Pays de Vilaine. With them he was active in relaunching local festivals, culminating in 1975 with the creation of the Bogue d'Or at the instigation of Jean-Bernard Vighetti. It was also at this period that he became interested in another aspect of culture: storytelling. He collected over 300 traditional stories that he eventually published so they could not be forgotten. But most importantly he worked to bring them to life at evening gatherings and at festivals – in a perfect and imaginative use of Gallo – to become for everyone the inspired spokesman for the Gallo culture.

Born in Perros-Guirec in 1939, he became a member of the local bagad as soon as it was created in 1954. It was there that he learned to be a sonneur and take an interest in the culture of his country. In 1970 he decided to quit a modest job as a salesman for Breton food products in Provence to move his family to central Brittany. In working with the cultural Center Menez Kamm this step would allow him to link action for Brittany with a rich and satisfying professional life. Making his home in Spezet, he was in on the creation of a business to distribute Breton books and recordings, with the arrival of Coop Breizh in central Brittany to follow. He was named its director of sales and distribution in 1977 and then served as general director until 1999. With shops in La Baule, Paris, Rennes and Lorient, the Spezet site served and continues to serve as a major support in the spread of Breton culture. In 1972 he was one of four founding musicians of Diaouled ar Menez and is still very active with this fest noz band as its bombard player. He also sang in several choirs, notably in Mouezh Paotred Breizh which would become a well known men's choir. He has used his accumulated experience to assist in the organization of the "Festival du Livre et Salon des Romanciers de Bretagne" and has used his determination as a Breton militant for the weekly newspaper "Bretagne Hebdo."

# Skol Uhel ar Vro / Cultural Institute of Brittany

The Cultural Institute of Brittany was founded in 1982 with support from the Regional Council of Brittany, the five Departments of Brittany and France itself as an outgrowth of the Breton Cultural Charter of 1977.

It has 17 subgroups focused on various topics (music, art, literature, archaeology, sport, etc.) in which Bretons participate to foster conferences, publications and exhibits. The Cultural Institute has three regular publications. Sterenn is a biannual magazine with general articles on various topics related to the work of the Institute. Lizher 'Minig is a quarterly newsletter with more detailed news about the work of the Institute, its 17 subsections, and cultural events in Brittany. Dalc'homp Soñj is an internet publication focused on Breton history put together by Ti an Istor (Maison de l'Histoire de Bretagne).

Ti an Istor ("house of history") was put into place by the Institute in 2001 and has been very active ever since in promoting research and teaching of Breton history, and in making it more accessible to the general public through its website ([www.histoire-bretagne.org](http://www.histoire-bretagne.org)) as well as events to mark historical sites in all five Breton departments.

## **Annual Colloquium – Breizh 'zo sonerezh / Brittany is music**

The annual ceremony to recognize new inductees to the Order of the Ermine (see article in this issue of Bro Nevez) is preceded by a day long conference on various aspects of Breton culture and society. This year the conference on September 25, 2004, in Chateaubriant focused on music. Speakers and roundtables explored topics such as: what is unique about Breton music, the transmission of traditional music, creativity in Breton music, teaching music, music contests, influences on Breton traditional styles, and the spread of Breton music in the market place. Speakers were well known scholars, composers, musicians, singers and directors of major cultural and music organizations of Brittany, including René Abjean, Yves Defrance,

Yvonig Gicquel, Peirre-Yves Moign, Jacques Michenaud, Alan Stivell, Laurent Bigot, Yann Goasdoue, Bob Haslé and Patrick Malrieu ... to name just some. Information stands were also set up by instrument makers (Camac harps, Jorj Bothua, Gilbert Hervieux), cultural organizations (Bodadeg ar Sonerion, Dasum, Kendalc'h, War'l Leur, etc.), and distributors (Coop Breizh, Keltia Musique).

## **Publishing**

Conferences organized by the Cultural Institute of Brittany and the work of its subsections often lead to the publication of a book, and 2004 has been a very active year for this. The following are some of this past year's publications.

De la Clyde à Saint-Nazaire: Les liens Bretagne-Écosse dans la construction navale. Skol Uhel ar Vro, 2004. ISBN 2-86822-095-9. 151 pages. As the title suggests this book focuses on historical links between shipyards of the Clyde River in Scotland and the Loire estuary of Brittany. The book incorporates papers from a colloquium held in October 2003 in Saint-Nazaire. The papers look not only at the history of shipbuilding in Scotland and Brittany, but also at more recent activity such as the construction of the Queen Mary 2 in Saint-Nazaire and future prospects for the shipbuilding industry.

Le monde en mouvement – Agriculture et agroalimentaire en Bretagne. Skol Uhel ar Vro, 2004.

This book is the fruit of a colloquium held in Loudéac in April 2004 on agriculture and its industrialization in Brittany. Authors look at the boom of agricultural expansion in Brittany in the 1960s and 70s, as well as crisis in the business in more recent years for animal producers and feed industries. Papers also address pollution issues linked to intensive agricultural development and challenges for Breton farmers in today's economic climate and world markets.

Marie Rouzeau & Pierre Madiot. Sel, sable et soleil au Pays de Guérande. Skol Uhel ar Vro and Lycée Galilée de Guérande. 2004

This book grows from a colloquium held in October 2003 in Guérande which focused on the economic and social history of that area. It presents the long history of salt production, the traditional economy related to the wetlands, and addresses the challenges of maintaining a unique cultural identity

in a changing economic environment and a region where tourism has a strong impact.

Jaques Briard, Loïc Langouët, Yvan Onnée. Les Mégalithes du Département d'Ille-et-Vilaine. Collection Patrimoine Archéologie de Bretagne. Skol Uhel ar Vro & Centre Régional d'Archéologie d'Alet, 2004.

This is an inventory of archeological work on megaliths (standing stones) in the department of Ille-Et-Vilaine. The information is presented in detail but written for a general public, showing a wealth of megaliths to be found in this eastern department of Brittany. The book serves as a great guide for those wanting to visit Neolithic archeological sites.

Loïc Langouët. Les Mégalithes de l'arrondissement de Dinan. Collection Patrimoine Archéologie de Bretagne. Skol Uhel ar Vro & Centre Régional d'Archéologie d'Alet, 2004.

Another inventory of megalithic sites presented for the general public – this time focused on the area around the town of Dinan. The book includes maps and drawings and, like the above publication, serves as a reference for scholars as well as a good guide for those who want to see standing stones of the Neolithic period.

Michael Mauger. L'Iconographie de la Bretagne dans l'enluminure médiévale. Skol Uhel ar Vro. 2004.

This publication by Ti an Istor is the culmination of work begun by the author Michael Mauger in 1986 to study illuminated manuscripts and iconography of the Middle Ages in Brittany. This new publication adds to a previous work, Bretagne chatoyante, Enluminures et histoire (Apogée, 2002) and provides researchers with valuable references for illustrations of this period of history.

## **NEW PUBLICATIONS IN AND ABOUT THE BRETON LANGUAGE**

Notes for the following were gleaned from information in Bremañ (273-74, gouere-eost 2004), Ar Men 142 (Sept-Oct. 2004), Armor (417, Oct. 2004) and Al Liamm 345 (eost 2004).

**Ronan Huon.** Al Liamm-Tir na nÓg. Niv. 345, Eost 2004. 160 pages. (www.alliamm.com)

The summer 2004 issue of the journal Al Liamm is dedicated to Ronan Huon (1922-2003) who

founded this journal and publishing house of the same name in the 1940s. (See Bro Nevez 88, November 2003, for a portrait). In the 160 pages of this special edition friends and family (sons Tudual and Gwenaél) contribute remembrances, photos, and works of Ronan Huon himself, including some diary entries, to present and honor the life of this writer who did so much to promote the Breton language and literature. More than just a biography, the presentations in this volume are personal testimonials to the impact Huon had as a friend, father, writer, publisher, and creator of the KEAV – Kamp Etrekeltiek ar Vrezhonegerien – a summer camp for Breton speakers. Contributions include poetry by Elen er Melinier and Dan ar Wern, and essays by Herve ar Bihan, Yann-Ber Piriou, Per ar Bihan, Filip Oillo, Goulc'han Kervella, Rita Williams and Yann Talbot. The work concludes with a list and index to Ronan Huon's work published in Tir na nÓg (1945-1947) and Al Liamm – Tir na nÓg (1948-2002).

**Youn Brennig. Loened Toud.** Edition Emgleo Breiz. 2004. 174 pp.

This is a collection of 28 short stories and essays with the theme of animals.

**Emgleo Breiz. Un nom Breton pour ma maison.**

Collection Geriadurig. Emgleo Breiz. 2004

This is a booklet listing words you might use to give your home a Breton name. The lists are broken into themes such as the sea, animals, trees, etc.

**Daniel Giraudon (editor). An dud hag al**

**loened.** Centre de recherche bretonnes et celtiques. Université de Bretagne-Occidentale, Brest. 2004. 146 pp.

This work includes papers from a colloquium held in October 2002 on the theme of "People and animals in material, spiritual, and literary life of Bretons."

**Kantikoù brezhoneg.** Editions Minihi-Levenez. 2004. 185 pages.

This is a bilingual collection of Breton cantiques – old and new hymns – in Breton and French and sometimes Latin. Some are often sung at Breton pardons for Sainte Anne and Saint Yves, but lesser known texts are also included.

**Yann-Vadezour Lagadeg. Dalh soñj ez out den!** Emgleo Breiz. 2004, 128 pages.

Twelve short stories of human experiences in Brittany, the Amazon, Algeria and India, in times of peace and war.

# Breton lesson 3 / Kentel 3

By Natalie Novik

## Vocabulary / Geriadurig

An = the  
An aval = the apple

Eun = a  
Eun ti = a house

## Mutations / Kemmaduriou

One of the difficulties of Breton are the mutations, i.e. the change of letter in a word due to its proximity to other words or its place in the sentence. It is usually the first letter in a word, but sometimes it can be the last letter, influenced by the first letter of the word that follows.

|             |                                         |                      |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|
| An becomes  | <b>an</b> before vowels, and n, d, t, h | an dant (the tooth)  |
|             | <b>al</b> before l                      | al linenn (the line) |
|             | <b>ar</b> in all other cases            | ar rod (the wheel)   |
| Eun becomes | <b>eun</b> before vowels and n, d, t, h | eun noz (a night)    |
|             | <b>eul</b> before l                     | eul lizer (a letter) |
|             | <b>eur</b> in all other cases           | eur skol (a school)  |

Mutations are nothing to be afraid of: they reflect a simple fact of life, that humans are lazy and if were to try to say eun skol, you would find it takes more effort than saying eur skol. We do it all the time in English, but we don't write it down. Breton and the other Celtic languages spell out these slight differences.

## Sounds / Distagadur

The letter J is pronounced not like in English, but like in French. In the name Jos (Joseph), pronounce the initial J like ZH (or if you can figure it out, like the English J, but without the initial "d" in it). It takes some practice, but you should master it pretty soon.

Nasal sounds are pronounced more or less like in French (maybe a little bit more accented):  
Euñ (like "un" in French), iñ (like "in" in French), uñ (also like "un" in French)

añv (like "an" in French, the v is not pronounced), euñv (like "un" in French, do not pronounce the v), uñv (like "un", v is not pronounced), oñv (like "on" in French, do not pronounce the v).

French, as you know, originates from the Gaulish language, which then incorporated Latin, Frankish and many other languages. Being originally a Celtic language like Breton, French features sounds and grammar forms that are also found in Breton.

## Brittany and Wales

In January 2004 the Prime Minister of Wales, Rhodri Morgan, traveled to Brittany at the invitation of the President of Brittany's Regional Council, Josselin de Rohan, to sign an agreement to work together for economic and cultural development. This included the potential for collaboration between the Welsh Language Board and Brittany's Ofis ar Brezhoneg.

On October 13, 2004, the new President of Brittany's Regional Council, Jean-Yves Le Drian, traveled to Wales to reaffirm Breton commitment to work more closely with Wales for economic and cultural development. This was to occasion to sign once again an accord, written this time in Breton as well as Welsh, English and French.

In his speech to the National Assembly of Wales, Le Drian reaffirmed the desire of Bretons to learn from the Welsh – not only in the area of economics development but also in development for the Breton language. He said: "... our respective territories are strong and proud for preserving and knowing how to preserve their languages. We confront the same challenges. How to preserve this linguistic patrimony? How to develop it? How to share it with an ever increasing number of speakers? You have already posed these questions. We thus come to you because Brittany is entering a new era for its language. I take on the promise to Bretons to allow each and every one who desires so to learn, hear and speak Breton, and to open up all areas of social life in Brittany to the Breton language. These are not just words thrown to the wind, or simple electoral campaign promises. It's a strong conviction that motivates me and is shared by a large number of my fellow citizens."



## Welsh in the U.S.

### The Welsh Guild of Philadelphia and the Thanksgiving Gymanfa Ganu

Every day on my way to work I walk past the Arch Steet Presbyterian Church in Center City Philadelphia (18<sup>th</sup> and Arch Streets) and I am reminded of the presence of the Welsh in this city by the Welsh flag that hangs on the annex to the church which was dedicated in 1855. And every year the Welsh Guild (Yr Urdd Gymraeg) sends me news of the annual Thanksgiving Gymanfa Ganu. So with this issue of Bro Nevez I want to include a very brief introduction to the Welsh of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania.

The Welsh Society of Philadelphia is believed to be the oldest benevolent institution in America with roots going back to 1729 when they gathered annually to celebrate St. David's Day on March 1. It is not surprising that Philadelphia would have such an old organization since many of the first Quaker settlers coming to William Penn's city in the late 1600s were Welsh. But there were also Welsh Baptists, Anglicans and Presbyterians in early Philadelphia, and like Welsh Quakers, they spoke Welsh.

"For some years before 1720, Welsh was the most common foreign tongue spoken on the streets of Philadelphia and book sellers featured books in the Welsh language. At least two of the earliest books printed in Philadelphia were in the old Cymric tongue: Eliis Pugh's *Annerch i'r Cymru* (1721) and Able Morgan's *Cyd-Gordiad Egwyddorawl o'r Scrythurau* (1730)." (Edward George Hartman, "Welsh Society of Philadelphia," p. 131 in Invisible Philadelphia, Community Through Voluntary Organizations. Edited by Jean Barth Toll and Mildred S. Gilliam, 1995, Atwater Kent Museum).

The Welsh Society of Philadelphia was organized to keep the culture alive – at least on St. David’s Day – and to aid Welsh immigrants who continued to arrive. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century many Welsh immigrants passed through Philadelphia on the way to the coal fields of the Shuylkill and Carbon Counties in “upstate” Pennsylvania. A large number also came from south Wales and arrived in the 1890s to work in tin-plate factories in Philadelphia and this spawned the establishment of the First Welsh Presbyterian Church (1892) which served as a center for Welsh cultural activities such as an annual eisteddfod held from 1903 to 1969.

This church merged in 1946 with the Girard Avenue Presbyterian congregation (which dated back to 1846) which in turn merged with the Arch Street Presbyterian Church in center-city Philadelphia in 1970. The Welsh Guild came into being after this merger and states as its mission: “to further and perpetuate Welsh cultural, missionary, musical and religious activities at this center city church through programs which will foster Christian fellowship at the church and aid in the growth of the Christian church by making all (Welsh and non-Welsh) aware of and able to share in and enjoy the religious values and heritage inherent in Welsh culture. The Welsh Guild maintains a library of Welsh books [and some Breton ones as well] at this location ...”

The Arch Street Presbyterian Church has a special chapel dedicated to St. David (Capel Dewi Sant) where the Welsh Guild holds activities. St. David’s Day remains an occasion to celebrate Welshness, but the Welsh Guild is particularly active in organizing an annual “Thanksgiving Gymanfa Ganu” (this year, Sunday, November 21 at 3:30) which they co-sponsor with the Welsh Society of Philadelphia. This Welsh hymn festival is open to the public and is followed by a Te’ Bach or Welsh tea.

Conducting the singing will be the Rev. Gregory F. Dimick from the coal mining region of upstate Pennsylvania. The Pregethwr/Minister will be the

Rev. G. Clayton Ames III, Minister of the Arch Street Presbyterian Church and Chaplain for the Welsh Society of Philadelphia. Jack R. Williams, past President and musical director of the Welsh Society will be the organist and Carol A. Ellis, the Vice President of the Susquehanna Valley Welsh Society will be a soloist.

These are not famous people, nor is the Thanksgiving Gymanfa Ganu an event that gets wide publicity in the Philadelphia area. This is an event supported by individual donations and is a gathering of Welsh families of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania (and sometimes beyond) who have carried on a tradition as best they can for some three centuries in the U.S. If you love the Welsh language and you love to sing, this is an annual event for which to be thankful.

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## **2005 Celtic Calendar from the Celtic League American Branch**

Once again the Celtic League is offering its Celtic calendar which begins on November 1, 2004 following the ancient Celtic year. Each month features artwork depicting scenes from Celtic mythology and folk tales. Each day features events in the history of Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Brittany, Cornwall and the Isle of Man – over 1,000 anniversaries of people and events. And you will find proverbs and names of the months and days in the Celtic languages throughout the calendar.

The calendar is available directly from the Celtic League for \$10 per copy postpaid (a bargain): Celtic League Calendar, Box 20153 Dag Hammarskjold Center, New York, NY 10017. For more information consult the Celtic League American Branch web site: [www.celticleague.org](http://www.celticleague.org).

Fear in Paris means horror in Brittany.

## DEEP INSIDE A BRETON SKULL - 4: The camp of Conlie

Jean-Pierre Le Mat

In 1788, the weather was really bad here, and the crops were very poor. The political Revolution burst in 1789 in Paris, linked with the fear of starvation. Plots of speculators, and the natural egoism of farmers, were the usual topics of Parisian concern. There was no famine, but the prices went up. The potential starvation makers had to be denounced and quickly neutralized.

The provincial rights were then abolished. The people of the country, noblemen, farmers, were mixed up in a loud haze of suspicion. Conscription, to export republican principles in neighbouring countries, was established together with anti religious vandalism. In the countryside, young men, our ancestors, took to the hills. When the Republican Terror was established by Robespierre, they joined the counter revolutionary movement known as "chouannerie" and fought a guerrilla war, enjoying a strong popular support.

In towns like Nantes, the Terror struck without mercy. Citizen Carrier, sent by Paris to pacify the country, killed thousand of suspects. "In this damned country, everyone could only be guilty" said he. Since the guillotine was a killing process too slow, he drowned men and women by tens in the river Loire.

South of Brittany, in the Vendée country, the "infernal columns" of the French republic organized the systematic massacre of men, women, young and aged, cattle, sheep, every living being.

We survived nevertheless.

Less than a century after, during the year 1870, there was fear in Paris. The French empire of Napoleon III foolishly declared war on Prussia. But the emperor was defeated in Sedan and the French army collapsed without glory. Paris is now besieged by the Prussian army of chancellor Bismarck, whose aim is, through the conflict with France, to unify Germany and create the Second Reich.

In Paris the Republic was proclaimed in September and Gambetta, a lawyer, was in charge of the continuation of the war. He never was a soldier and was completely incompetent in military matters, but that did not matter. He escaped from Paris and established himself in Tours, and then in Bordeaux. He asked for a total war against the Prussian armies.

Gambetta was an enthusiastic character. He called for conscription of all valid men, married or not. He did not trust the army officers and dreamed of the glorious revolutionary soldiers of 1792.

Horror was back in Brittany.

In October 1870, 80 000 Bretons were enlisted by a Breton republican MP, Emile de Keratry, a former soldier of the French army who was named general for the circumstance. This gathering was called "Armée de Bretagne" and sent to the military camp of Conlie, near Le Mans, between Rennes and Paris. Actually, 30 000 to 40 000 men stayed really in the camp. The others were scattered in other military corps or went back home.

Gambetta did not trust anybody. He suspected the Breton conscripts of being an army of chouans. What could he do to prevent this armed force to turn against the new French republic?

November arrived, miz Du, the dark month in Breton language, and the German armies were getting near the town of Le Mans. On the 23, Gambetta sent two orders : One to Keratry, to march against the enemy. Another one to the Breton arsenals of Nantes, Rennes, Lorient and Brest not to provide weapons to the Armée de Bretagne.

An English journalist, E.A. Vizetelly described the situation in his book "My days of adventure" : "Such things as guns, gun-carriages, firearms, cartridges, bayonets, and so forth formed the subject of innumerable telegrams and letters exchanged between Keratry and the National Defence Delegation at Tours. The former was constantly receiving promises from Gambetta, which were seldom kept, supplies at first intended for him being at the last moment sent in other directions, according to the more pressing requirements of the hour. Moreover, a good many of the weapons which Keratry actually received were defective. In the early days of the camp, many of the men were given staves (broom-sticks in some instances) for use at drill."

A few days later, Keratry resigned and was replaced by a French naval officer, De Marivault.

Then came December, miz Kerzu, the darkest month. The financial support to the camp of Conlie to pay for the food of the Breton conscripts was cut off by Gambetta.

The weather was particularly bad this winter -- snowy and icy. And the camp of Conlie became really muddy. Really. It was very difficult to find a place to lie and sleep. Gambetta did not want to have hay or straw brought to the camp of Conlie. There was mud up to the knee. Men died with cold. Men died with hunger. Men died with small pox and diphtheria. And mud became green sometimes, mixed with corpses of men and horses.

In January, troops of Bretons were brought to the battle of La Tuilerie. They were used, according to the military words, as a "curtain". Anyway, what could they do ? They were never trained, and they had no weapons. Mud, hunger, cold, disease ; were they human still ? The Germans killed hundreds of them. The French said, in their newspapers, that the Bretons were really bad soldiers.

More than 10 000 Bretons died in the camp of Conlie, in twelve weeks. Some of them came back. Some of them were poets, or spoke to our poets. We, their descendants, we have kept their shaky rhymes deep in our skulls:

(Extract of "La pastorale de Conlie" 1873; Poem of Tristan Corbière )  
*Who enlisted us during the dark month -November-  
And parked like herds*

*To leave in mud during the darkest month -  
December-  
Our sheepskins and our skins ?*

*Who leaves us there : empty, without hope  
Without the leaven of despair  
Looking each other, like looking for France  
Comical, making fear to see ?...*

*Please : something to put in our mouths  
- Heroes and half beasts -  
Or something there : a heart.. or cartridges ?  
Only pity was left for us !*

*So : slaughterhouse ! Scabious beaten livestock  
We were provided to Prussians ;  
Seeing us falling under the blows of butts  
The Frenchmen barked : - Good dogs !*

*You were not drunk, o pit of Conlie  
With our young poor blood  
Seeing your fat wheat, are forgotten  
Our bones which stagnated, rotten*

*Our flesh clung to our ragged jackets  
Manure gathered by itself !...  
Don't eat this bread, mothers and girls,  
The blend of death is in the grain.*



## The Broceliande Forest

Natalie Novik

Just west of Rennes, lies a forest known by many names: Brecilien in the middle ages, Brec'helean in Breton, Broceliande in French but also Paimpont in French or Penn Pont in Breton. The meaning of these names is the subject of many controversies, and it can only be surmised that Penn Pont would actually signify Ponthus' head, Ponthus being a 9<sup>th</sup> century Galician prince whose adventures in Brittany have been fixed in a 14<sup>th</sup> century tale. So let's call it Broceliande for the purpose of this article, since it appears that Paimpont is actually one of the main villages in the forest, and Broceliande the preferred name for the forest and the country around it.

This forest is what remains today of the vast primeval forest that once covered all of Europe. Few other remnants are left, like the Black Forest in Germany, and we know of this immense forest because it is the

background of stories like Little Red Riding Hood and Sleeping Beauty. The Broceliande forest is actually a vast area of deciduous woods, lakes, ponds, rivers and open, rocky terrain with pine trees called landes in French (lan in Breton). The total superficies is 8,000 hectares or 18,760 acres of private land, some state-owned land, hunting preserves and military land. The French army occupies the southern side of the forest with the famous Coetquidan elite military base, the source of endless quarrels with the locals. There are a few tiny villages inside the forest, but most of them are at the periphery, where farmers can keep cattle and till fields.

So what's so interesting about this place? The fact is that this forest is an incredible mix of history, legend and fantasy, so intertwined it becomes hard to tell what is real and what is not. For one thing, it is closely

linked to the Round Table cycle, for another it is the realm of fairies and wizards, and then even in historical and documented times, strange things have happened here. The Round Table cycle was composed of various legends from all Celtic countries and Brittany plays an important part, both in the legends themselves, but also in their compilation in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We need only remember that five of the Round Table knights were from Brittany (Ban, Bohor, Hector, Guivret and of course, Lancelot du Lac). And Tristan, from the Cornish legend bearing his name, was also from Brittany.

You only need to take a few steps along the trail that winds around the lake in Paimpont to start asking yourself questions. The village is hidden from the lake, all you see is the medieval castle by the shore, casting a handsome reflection into the still waters. Tall trees and thickets surround the lake, and as you venture further into this green realm, your eyes start playing tricks on you, what with the sun sparkling on the water, the branches swaying in the wind, the dappled forest floor, the ducks leaving an arch of foam as they lift from the lake. As the sun goes down and the shadows deepen, you wonder if you really saw something...

In the light of the morning, your first impulse is to go check things further. Why not a visit to the castle of Comper and its lake, which, according to tradition, is Vivian the Enchantress' castle and where she brought up Lancelot? At first glance, nothing much: a couple of fishermen on the shores of the lake, and some tourists visiting an exhibit on the Round Table in the castle. Then you remember that the locals don't go swimming in the lake. It is deep in places, oddly shaped and disappears into the woods opposite the castle. On its shores, a very old and distorted beech tree stands guard. Everything is very quiet, not a splash in the lake... It becomes easier to think of how a fairy would like to live in this lake, and stretch up a hand holding a sword when the need arises. The courtyard of the castle must have inspired Tolkien when he described Gondor in "The Lord of the Rings", there is even a white tree in the middle. No sign of Lancelot, but then the castle is surrounded by a deep moat and the ramparts show signs they have survived many battles. The silence and the peace in the woods around the castle bring back to mind the idea that this is a place protected by a very powerful spirit, Vivian being the equivalent of the water goddess of the Celts. Her palace is at the bottom of the lake, this is where she brought up Lancelot, after taking him away from King Ban, his father, and that is how he got his name, Lancelot du Lac.

From Comper, you can follow the road west and south and then come across Vivian's arch-enemy, Morgan the Faye: legend has it that she kept her lovers

prisoners in a vale without return, called to this day the Val sans Retour, a strange formation of red rock with a cleft in the middle and a small pond at the bottom. Finding the exact location has become a challenge: a society of druids has taken the forest under its protection and to prevent tourists from damaging it and desecrating it, they regularly remove all the signs the local tourism bureau erects. To get there, you need to climb up a hill and then follow the path through an endless moorland, and turn left. But the turn is no longer marked.... It is easy to get lost here: everything looks like everything, the enchantments of Morgan are not gone. It is said Lancelot freed her prisoners, but he left no safeguards for later visitors. So it is only when you get back on the main road that suddenly you see the rocks in the far, bright red against the golden gorse thickets, and you know you missed it!

But the most hallowed places in the forest are linked to Merlin's name. There again, the druids are at work, and it can be tricky to find the spots. But a good pair of hiking shoes and determination, as well as a sense of what you are looking for, should help. Unfortunately, the maps published locally are not very precise, and sometimes it is better to follow the crowds. However, being in a crowd is not exactly conducive to finding wizards and fairies. Once again, it is better to wait for the early evening, when the forest is back to its own self, quiet, dark and slightly haunted. One very special place is the Barenton fountain (or spring rather), which is abundantly described in the Round Table. This is the place where Merlin met Vivian and fell in love with her. And there is definitely a feeling this would be a nice setting for a beautiful fairy, sitting under the oak tree, looking at her lovely reflection in the cool waters, to be spied by an old and smart wizard who loses his wits over her. He becomes her teacher, she learns all of his craft, and in the end, she binds him for eternity in... some believe in the oak tree above the spring, some say a rock. And not just any rock: "Merlin's tomb", a standing stone at the other end of the forest, which has been the goal of pilgrimages for centuries. The local druids have now surrounded the stone with a little wooden fence, and then they place offerings of flower wreaths and paper wishes on the stone and the little tree over it. Finding the stone is not too difficult, it is not very far from the road and a well-trodden path leads directly to it.

The Barenton fountain is off a forest lane about two miles from the village of Folle-Pensee: a short wooden pole bears a chalk-mark pointing right to the path that leads to the spring. It is indeed easy to miss it. Folle-Pensee or "mad thought" has an interesting tradition: this would have been the place where the druids cured people with mental disorders, in particular using mistletoe, a plant commonly found in the forest, which

has been recently proven to have some scientific merit. The waters of the spring have been considered to have healing properties for centuries, although modern science has demonstrated their contents to be carbon and some sulfur, nothing else.

The other tradition attached to the Barenton spring is told in the Round Table: the spring is surrounded by a small wall of stones, topped by a large flat stone ("Merlin's stepping stone"), and if you were to sprinkle water on the stones, a dramatic storm would start with thunder, hail and lightning, and a black knight would ride out of the forest to kill you. Lancelot, as could be expected, spilled water on the rocks, fought the black knight, killed him, and later ended up undergoing many more adventures in the nearby castle of the black knight. Castle? What castle? There is no castle anywhere nearby. But if you wander south of the fountain, you find yourself in a clearing with little mounds of earth and an very ancient beechtree in the middle. This is what's left of Ponthus' castle (remember, the Galician knight?), which was later inhabited by an actual historical figure, King Salaun of Brittany, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

There are several castles and mansions in the forest, some private and closed to the public, and some that can be visited, like the Comper castle and the Paimpont castle. There are more places linked to the Round Table, like the Bridge of the Secret, near the village of Beignon, said to be the place where Queen Guinever and Lancelot told each other of their love. There are churches to be seen, like the church in Paimpont with its original 12<sup>th</sup> century decorations. The abundance of lakes and ponds in the area is staggering and probably accounts for the feeling of calm and quiet in the forest and at the same time for the foggy mornings and evenings. The fog in turn might explain why people think they have seen something, but there is no way of telling if it's always on account of the fog.

Very little archaeological work has been done in the forest, it seems that both historians and researchers prefer to leave the forest intact with its legends and traditions. Some traditions have been amplified by time, some might be disappearing: there is a Fountain of Youth (Fontaine de Jouvence) close to Merlin's tomb, but it has dried up now, and, completely girded in thorns and bramble, it has become inaccessible.

What is alive though, and very much so is the wildlife: wild deer, boars, rabbits, foxes, and a wide variety of birds are certainly responsible for all the whispers, rustles, clicks and noises you hear and the shadows you think you see. They have also contributed to make Broceliande a prime hunting destination: several

private hunting lodges are located in the forest with private land around them and warning signs to stop the occasional visitor from entering these parcels. In the fall, the danger of being hit by a hunter's bullet is very real. The game is served at all the local restaurants, often roasted on a pit in a huge fireplace. Game management is an important feature in Broceliande, the hunters have no interest in decimating the species found in the forest, and efforts were made 30-40 years to save the boars when they grew in numbers, started furrowing the nearby fields, and incurred the farmers' wrath.

Perhaps the magic of the forest is best experienced when you are simply traveling along the shady roads, where the trees curve like an arch of many colors over your head, hiding the sky and sun and creating their own world. Don't rush, take your time under this leafy canopy, maybe something unusual is waiting for you at the turn of the road... Many people prefer to walk along these small trails, there is so much to see and experience. Once, I was coming back to my camp in the evening, following the very same path I had taken in the morning, when I found the largest white mushroom I have ever seen in my life, about 18 inches in diameter. This mushroom was not there in the morning, I would have seen it, I am an experienced mushroom hunter! I sincerely believe the mushroom was left there for me by the dwellers of the world I was visiting... What an omelette it contributed to!

Another eerie experience was walking the road that crosses the middle of the forest at sunset to have dinner at the famous Auberge de Paimpont, the best restaurant in the area. I had assumed it would be a 20 minute walk, but I was wrong. It took over an hour, and half way there, it became totally dark. No lights, no stars, no moon to guide me. But somewhere in the far, I could see a little bright light, and I followed the road to the light, just like in the tales of my childhood. And sure enough, the light was that of the inn, where I got a fantastic dinner of boar meat a la Bretonne and a pocket light to go back to camp after dinner...

If you are ever in Rennes, the magic of the Broceliande forest is well worth the experience. It is a 20 minutes ride out of Rennes, no matter which road you chose. But keep in mind that the popularity of these legends and traditions has a price: finding a room in the nearby villages in the summer has become a challenge. A short one-day visit will not be enough to see all the sites, so you will have to be selective. Otherwise, two to three days will be well spent both for pilgrimages to all the castles, lakes, ponds, and sacred places, but also to simply enjoy this magnificent forest.

## New Music from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

### **Patrick Molard and Alain Genty. To the Bobs.** Keltia Musique KMCD 156. 2004. 49'08 minutes

This new CD by Patrick Molard and guitarist Alain Genty is dedicated to two famous Scottish pipers with whom Molard studied Scottish Highland bagpipes -- Bob Brown and Bob Nicol -- and to the bagpipe maker Bob Hardie.

The CD starts with an impressive set of reels composed by Patrick Molard: "Piper's Dream" is in honor of a great chanter reed, and "Fred Morrison" is in honor of the piper of that name with whom Molard traveled in Galicia (Spain). A jig composed by Molard in 1994 and named for Rory Campbell also shows off Molard's impressive mastery of Scottish pipes and Alain Genty's ability to play with the listener's perception of rhythm in his interesting use of electric guitar and keyboard.

While the Scottish pipes and repertoire are featured on this CD, the musical tradition of Brittany is by no means ignored. Three selections feature tunes from Polig Monjarret's extensive collection work in Brittany which was published in two volumes as Toniou Breiz Izel. "Leon Braz," a march with the ambling style typical of Breton tradition, was collected by Polig Monjarret from a legendary piper of Brittany, Guillaume Léon. Also drawn from Monjarret's collections is a beautiful slow melody, "Al leanezig Izabel." The slow rambling airs of Brittany are usually sung (called "gwerz") and performed by paired bombarde and biniou players, and it is very rare to hear them on Scottish style bagpipes. But, as a master of the paired playing of biniou with bombarde as well as Scottish pipes Molard is able to do some rarer things. Molard gets out the biniou for a marriage march composed by Polig Monjarret to pay homage to this piper who passed away in 2004 after a life time of work to promote Breton music and culture.

While Scottish Highland bagpipes are featured on this CD, the biniou comes out again for a composition by Alain Genty, "Ajari." This melody evokes the walk

fulfilled by Buddhist monks in Japan who complete thirty kilometers each night (between 1 and 7 am) to reach 38,400 kilometers in seven years. Another composition by Genty, "Les Talmouses," shows off well the duet of guitar and bagpipes. While guitar, keyboard and percussion most often serve as a rhythmic counterpoint to the pipes, Genty takes on the melody in a beautiful slow air from the Hebrides. The low voice of the bass guitar truly sings in solo and is then very nicely paired with the higher pitched and raspier sound of the pipes in this performance.

While Breton tunes and original compositions add a nice variety in melody and rhythm to the CD, the Bobs are truly honored in the Scottish repertoire included. Molard impeccably performs the classic march-strathspey-reel combination played by pipers in competitions - this set being one he competed with in the 1970s: "The Clan MacColl," "The Piper's Bonnet," and "The Lad wi' the delicate ears." Molard studied piobaireachd with the Bobs so it is not surprising that three are included on this CD. Piobaireachd (sometimes spelled pibroch for short) is a "classical" style of piping where a melody is elaborated with variations and increasingly complex grace notes. This CD includes a performance of "Port Urlar," an unnamed piobaireachd tune from the Campbell Canntaireachd collection. Patrick Molard provides an impeccable performance of this style of pipe music but the arrangement here is very untypical in its use of Genty's guitar and keyboard to throw things off kilter. Piping "purists" may find the bass guitar intrusive, but I liked the odd beat thrown in by Genty that forced me to hear this music in a different way. The piobareachd "Echoing roots from Brittany," composed by Eric Freyssinet, has a Breton flavor to the melody while the structure of variations is very much along the Scottish model. Molard's own piobarieachd composition, "A Tune for the Bobs" is performed solo, and nicely closes this CD in honor of Robert U. Brown and Robert B. Nicol ("Bobs from Balmoral").

The combination of bagpipes with electric instruments and the mixing of traditional melodies with less traditional rhythms is certainly not a new departure for Patrick Molard since he has performed in a number of Breton groups (often with Alain Genty) and paired with Dan ar Braz in 1994 in a suite for pipes and guitar called "Theme for the Green Lands" and

worked with him even earlier with the 1977 lp record "Douar Nevez." Those who love Scottish bagpipes will find great performances on this CD which do justice to the memory of Molard's teachers. Those who believe that tradition is not static will appreciate the inventive combination of bagpipes with Alain Genty's guitars, keyboard and percussion.

Patrick Molard. To the Bobs - Recueil de Musique pour cornemuse ecossaise. Editions Keltia Musique. 2004. 75 pages.

"To the Bobs" is not just a new CD but also a collection of tune transcriptions. In twenty-five years of piping - biniou, Scottish Highland pipes, Irish uilleann pipes and a variety of other bagpipes of Europe - Patrick Molard has had the chance to hear and learn some good tunes. As noted in a review in Ar Soner (No. 375, July, August, September 2004), this collection of some 50 tunes includes lots of Scottish bagpipe tunes (marches, strathspeys, reels, jigs and airs) and piobaireachd. But, the collection also includes tunes from Brittany, Ireland, Galicia and even Bulgaria - all arranged with a Breton flair. These are all tunes Patrick Molard has performed and some of his own compositions are also included. Each tune has a story that is briefly noted in the collection.



### **Alain Pennec Quartet. Bacchanales.**

Keltia Musique KMCD 155. 2004. 51'05 minutes.

From the CD title one might expect to hear lots of drinking songs or frenzied dance music, but this CD is a sophisticated mix of slower melodies and dances from Brittany as well as Ireland, Scotland and Quebec. Alain Pennec often takes the melodic lead on button accordion, but shares it frequently with Aurore Bréger on Celtic harp. Rhythms and sometimes melodies are supported by Youenn Landreau on Chapman stick (a type of guitar) and by Stéphane Barbier with percussion. The sound quality is excellent so that each instrument is distinct and important.

The opening composition by Youenn Landreau, "Ar seizh eiz" (an easy 7/8ths), has a Latin feel in the use of percussion and harp. This is followed by a traditional air called "Par un dimanche au soir" where

accordion takes the lead, sliding into a bluesy composition by Landreau, "Les regrets du lundi." From the easy-going rhythms of these melodies the quartet takes off with a high energy "Gavotte de l'Aven," where Pennec shows off his virtuosity on button accordion. Despite the somewhat heavy weight of percussion this gavotte retains its very quick pace and is highly danceable. You can catch your breath with the next selection, an arrangement of a traditional song, "Chanson de la mariée" collected by Gilbert Hervieu in the Redon area of eastern Brittany. This is a beautiful melody performed on accordion with an eerie undertone on didgeridoo, but also lighter notes from the harp and a swing to a quicker pace to reflect the mixed feelings of excitement and sadness a bride might have in leaving her family for a new life.

In another composition by Landreau, "Strathbour," there is a hint of the Scottish dance strathspey and perhaps a bit of the French bourée? - a decidedly jazzy swing with roots in several traditions. Pulling from traditional music of Quebec all four musicians dust off the vocal chords for some nice harmony in "Le Galant noyé." Back across the ocean the quartet then speeds through a set of polkas - two from Ireland, "Ta dta ghabhairin bhui agam" and "Magic slipper," and two composed by Alain Pennec, "Nino's Polka" and "Angèle's Polka." There's a nice trade off of harp and accordion to lead the melody, and an interesting little interlude of drum solo in the midst of the polka suite.

Harp is featured in Aurore Bréger's composition "O'Valafennin" (balafenn is Breton for butterfly). This starts out very softly to move to a tango-like rhythm. One can almost hear a guitar solo in the fingerwork, but the harp has the decided advantage of a wealth of strings and wide range of notes.

"A kiss early in the morning" is an easy-going Irish melody with guest singer and guitarist Philippe Ménard who recites as much as sings this selection. This is followed by two more recently composed reels, "Patrick's Reel" by David Duran and "Where's ma mace" by Gordon Duncan. These show off Pennec's virtuosity on accordion and I liked the use of the Chapman stick and percussion for rhythmic support. These are very high in energy but not the speedy headlong race that ruins some performances of reels.

The quartet returns to Brittany with a decided change in rhythm for two tunes for the dance hanter dro. There is nothing robotic about the composition by Patrice Querré, "Hanterdroïde," which is paired with the traditional melody "Je vous le demande." The arrangement is very jazzy but quite danceable.

The CD closes with a composition by Hervé Dréan called "Dielloù." This roves from a lovely meandering melody with a nice contrast of accordion with higher bell-like tones of the harp to a more rhythmic style, reminiscent to me of the swing you find in the traditional marches of Brittany.

This CD provides a good mix of instruments and styles, retaining the character of traditional roots (Breton, Irish, or other), while creatively playing with them. I would have preferred a bit less percussion, or perhaps a bit more variety in percussion instruments, but that is a matter of personal taste. There is a nice threading of slower airs with speedier rhythms so that the music flows from one selection to the next - constantly shifting rhythms and melodies in an interesting and sometimes dramatic way.

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## HEARD OF BUT NOT HEARD

The following notes are based on reviews and information found in the following magazines from Brittany: Ar Soner 374 (May-June 2004); Musique Bretonne 186 (Sept./Oct. 2004); Armor 413 (June 2004), 416 (Sept. 2004) & 417 (Oct. 2004); Ar Men 142 (Sept.-Oct 2004); Bremañ 276 (Sept. 2004).

**Bagad Roñsed-Mor Lokoal Mendon. Bloavezh Mat.** Coop Breizh CD 957-DB13. 2 CD set.

This double CD by one of Brittany's top bagads includes 38 cuts. Included is the composition "Joa Deoch" where they play with the trumpet ensemble EnTéPé, the composition "Baleadenn e Bro Gwened" by Andre Le Meut and Patrick Fabert, and the performance "War an hent" that won them first place in the 2003 contest for bagads in Brest.

**BD Swing Orchestra. En Concert que c'est!**  
An Naer Production.

This is an ensemble of 15 musicians including voice and Breton and non-Breton instruments in arrangements of Breton dances, melodies and compositions.

**Dahlia. Dahlia.** Yapucca YAP 01.

The first CD by a duo of singer/guitarist Guillaume Fresneau and cellist Armel Thermain, featuring folk-rock compositions.

**Louise Ebrel and Ifig Flatrès. Tre Tavrín ha Sant Vóran.** Coop Breizh CD 955.

With a repertoire borrowed largely from the famous Goadec sisters, Louis Ebrel (the daughter of Eugénie Goadec) pairs with another fine traditional singer, Ifig Flatrès for kan ha diskan singing for dance and melodies from the Haute Cornouaille and Pays Bigouden regions of western Brittany.

**34e Festival Interceltique de Lorient.**

Keltia Musique KMCD 153

This CD features 18 performances from the 2004 Interceltic Festival of Lorient. Included are the Bagad Kemper, Tud, Frères Morvan, Gilles Servat, Galician piper Susana Seivane and Irish voices and Welsh choirs. You also get a DVD of the parade of Celtic nations from the 2002 festival.

**Kalon ur Vamm Vol. 2.** AN 01.

Sofi Le Hunsec, Véronique Bourgot and Bleunwenn Mevel provide the vocals - in Breton - for ten lullabies arranged by Yves Ribis. They are joined by the string quartet Arz Nevez, harpist Soazig Kermabon and sax by Pascal Meven. This follows the first CD of lullabies called Kalon ur vamm performed by Sofi Le Hunsec and Yves Ribis in 1998.

**KeltiAfrica. KeltiAfrica.** Bateau Bleu BBL 040315.

A group founded by Didier Guyot where Bretons and Africans meet but do not get lost in a "world music" fusion. Performers include Cédric Le Bozec (bagpipes), Dominique Dallon (hurdy-gurdy), the Bagad Kemperle and Gilles Servat, and Pap Wamba with a drum ensemble from the Congo, and Doudou N'Diaye Rose.

**Paul Le Flem. Quintette - Sonate violon et piano.**  
Timpani 1C 1077.

Le Flem (1881-1984), a Breton composer in the classical style, was active until 1976. The two works on

this CD date from his earlier period: The Sonata in G Minor for Violin and Piano was written in 1905 and the Quintet in F Minor for Piano and Strings dates from 1908-09. In these compositions he uses Breton dance tunes as well as some Russian themes as a basis for composition.

**Musiques du pays de Dol-de-Bretagne.**

Kerig KSD 183.

An anthology of traditional dances and songs from the region of Dol (northeastern Brittany) in large part sung and performed on accordion and flute by Filip Montade.

**Les Pirates. Sur le grand banc.** Phare Ouest PO 03

Six girls and a boy, from nine to fourteen years old, from the region of Cancale perform maritime songs. This is not "children's music" but a performance based on the kids research and contact with Aimé Lefeuve, an 80 year old sailor who lived with the song traditions the kids vigorously bring to life on this CD.

**Run. Musique d'ici et d'ailleurs.** Self-produced HPLC 102.

Always inventive harpist Myrdhin teams with bass player Philippe Lefèvre and percussionist Gabriel Jégo. The trio draws from various musical traditions for a sound where "salsa is found alongside [Irish] jigs and ronds from Loudéac, and where jazz mixes with cantaireachd of the Scottish Hebrides."

**Sonerien Du. Puzzle 2.** EOG Production EOG 009.

One of Brittany's longest-running "fest noz bands" is still going strong with a recording that evokes their unique style of the 1970s as well as new arrangements of dances and songs.

**Telyn y Celt / Trad Harps.** Sain SCD 2397.

The Welsh label Sain ([www.sain.wales.com](http://www.sain.wales.com)) has produced an anthology of harp music featuring performers of recent years in a variety of styles. From Brittany you hear Gwenaël Kreléo, Gwennola Ropars and Dominig Bouchaud. From Ireland: Laise Kelly, Cormac de Barra and Grainne Yeats. From Scotland: Alison Kinnaird, Corrina Hewat and Wendy Stewart. From Wales: Robin Huw Bowen and Delyth Jenkins.

## A NEW INTERNET RESOURCE

### Dastum's Panorama of Breton music and oral patrimony

**[www.dastum.net](http://www.dastum.net)**

Dastum, Breton for "to collect" or "to gather," was founded in 1972 as an association of volunteers who wanted to collect and promote Brittany's oral heritage - and especially traditional music. Hundreds of musicians and music lovers are linked through a network of Dastum sites located throughout Brittany and through collaborative work with Breton cultural organizations as well as French and European associations devoted to the promotion of traditional culture. Dastum not only houses an extensive collection of recordings, texts and photography, but promotes performance through a variety of events. And Dastum has also produced an excellent series of books and recordings during its over thirty years of operation.

Bretons have never shied away from using new technology to protect their heritage and promote its continued evolution. Dastum has an excellent website to share its riches and make information about music in Brittany more widely available. It has recently inaugurated a particularly rich educational component of the web site called "Panorama de la musique bretonne et du patrimoine oral." This is a virtual encyclopedia of Breton oral tradition and music.

You will find the history of Breton musical instruments and musical practices from the middle ages to the present. You can learn about the different dances of Brittany and about various styles of song and instrumental music. You can learn about subtle stylistic aspects of Breton singing and piping and you can see maps of Brittany's "pays" and instrumental traditions (for instance, the regions where you find fiddling or the hurdy-gurdy). There is much to read, and there are wonderful images throughout, but of even more interest, there is much to hear since each bit of information is accompanied by a musical illustration. This is still a work in progress, but you can spend hours exploring this excellent "panorama" of Breton music and culture.

## Travels in Brittany in 1875

“Wanderings in Brittany,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine No. CCCII, Vol. LI, July 1875

The unidentified author of this article begins his “wanderings” in Sant Malo and travels through much of Brittany. We join him as he leaves Morlaix for St. Pol-de-Léon. As is the case for all travel writing, what is stated as fact is often opinion. Some travelers were better observers than others, but they were rarely historians or scholars who could back up information with rigorous research. They were more likely to seek inspiration in literature and in the writings of other travelers published in the popular magazines of their day.

While at Morlaix I took occasion to visit St. Pol-de-Leon, a small town twenty miles from the railroad, in a northerly direction on the coast-line. The ride was pleasing, without presenting any striking features. The spire of the Kreisker was visible for many miles before we reached it. We were now traveling “all down the lonely coast of Lyonnese,” so associated with the names of King Arthur, Lancelot, Guinevere, Tristram, and Isolt, and others whose names are emblazoned on the magic pages of legend and song. Brittany, the Armorica of old, is now divided into five departments – Finisterre, Morbihan, Ille-et-Vilaine, Lower Loire, and Côtes-du-Nord. Up to the French Revolution it retained the old territorial names and boundaries established by race or political events from the earliest times. First was Cornouailles or Cornwall, which included the district of Leon or Lyonnese at the north, and is now represented by Finisterre, the most western department. Tréguier is now substantially represented by Côtes-du-Nord [Côtes d’Armor]; Vannes in some respects the most picturesque district of Brittany, is very nearly indicated by the Morbihan. The other two departments, although included in the modern limits of Brittany, are somewhat in excess of what it covered in the times of Cesar, who first introduced this old fastness of the Celtic race into history. When he entered the country he found the Venetii at Vannes a powerful nation, able to send two hundred and fifty large galleys to battle with the fleet of the Romans. Many kings, dynasties, and dukes, after the Roman conquest and subsequent overthrow of the Roman yoke, ruled part or the whole of Armorica; many cities existed, now gone to decay, or swallowed by the sea in alterations of the coast-line which the eastern shores of the Atlantic have seen from age to age, which have given rise to mysterious legends, undoubtedly founded on certain awful physical convulsions but dimly outlined in history, like the legend of the city of Dis. The names of Brittany and Cornwall seem to have been of origin succeeding the Roman and early Saxon invasions of England, and are evidently the result of large emigrations of Celts from Wales and Cornwall at two distinct periods, who, flying the foreign oppressor, sought an asylum in the cradle of the Celtic race. Whether King Arthur ever reigned or

fought in Armorica, or whether the traditions about him were brought from Wales and gradually became incorporated as part of the legends of Brittany, it is certain that for many ages his name and fame have been credited and sung in this wild, lonely land as part of its early history

After much whipping on the part of the driver, who was stimulated by copious draughts of *eau-de-vie* and cider of the *coupe gorge* brand, and much patient endurance on the part of the horses, we at last made out to reach St. Pol-de-Len without meeting any fire-belching dragons, or losel knights dragging virgin princesses into durance vile, and with a falchion—in our day it would be called an umbrella—wet only with showers, I leaped impatiently from the carriage and hastened to survey the Church of Notre Dame de Kreisker, whose miraculous spire is the most beautiful in France.

St. Pol-de-Leon is the Assisi of Brittany, almost entirely an ecclesiastical town. Here formerly was the see of a bishop, with seminaries where large numbers of students, called cloareks, studied for holy orders. The place still owes its importance entirely to the convents and churches which yet remain. The Kreisker church is the chapel of the college, a small building, pretty, but not specially noteworthy; but the daring genius who built it, and whose name has, alas, perished, seems to have then obtained permission of the fathers to carry out an inspiration which may have been the aspiration of his life. On the four piers supporting the roof at the juncture of the nave and transept, presenting a base only thirty-three feet square, and supported at the corners alone, he reared a tower three hundred and ninety-two feet high—a tower of most exquisite proportions, and while very elaborate, yet preserving truly artistic breadth and purity of outline. From the ceiling, which extends across the piers and forms the floor of the spire, one looks up to the finial at the extreme top, through a hollow shell of stone tracery-work nearly three hundred feet high, and entirely clear of brace or buttress, pier, beam, or bracket—nothing to break the astonishing sight but the doves flying in the dizzy cavity,

or the sun flashing here and there through the open carvings, while the wind breathes from age to age a grand aeolian chant through that organ of granite, that seems to the beholder as if it would topple over with a light breeze, but which has withstood the storms of five hundred years.

One can ascend to the gallery by a very narrow passage inside of the wall itself, often opening without protection on the interior of the spire, and so small that no man of over average size would have any chance of either getting up or down. The view from there is of course very extensive, and in some respects very interesting. Near at hand was the little fishing port of Roscoff, from which Queen Mary sailed, and where Prince Charles Edward landed when flying from England. Beyond lay the island of Batz, with its splendid light-house. Farther still the grand coast-line of Brittany could be clearly discerned, the land of Tréguier, Lannion, and the famous Seven Islands of Perros-Guirec, where Breton legends tell us King Arthur held the court of the Table Round. In one of those mysterious, often mist-enshrouded, islands called Agalon, or Avalan, the true Breton yet believes is the land of Avilion, where the good king still dwells entranced. Just below, and immediately adjoining the college of which Kreisker is the chapel, we overlooked from our lofty position a convent whose inmates can well say, "All hope resign who enter here," for, having once taken the vows and entered within its barred gates and windows, the unhappy prisoner can never more pass out until they bear her forth in her coffin to that silent land where neither vow nor cloister is of any avail. We could see the nuns walking in the grounds of the convent, which were surrounded by a lofty wall, like gardens where the wives of the Sultan take the air on the Bosphorus.

The Cathedral of St. Pol is another beautiful edifice, claiming careful study. The exterior, flamboyant Gothic, is excellently preserved, and the façade is flanked by two fine spires of open-work; the interior, recently restored, is really beautiful, although it would be greatly improved if mellowed by stained glass in all the windows. Being a festal day, the church and streets were crowded with peasants in holiday attire and holiday sabots. It was noticeable that the men were generally very handsome, while the women were of inferior mould—a fact I have observed to be the case among the peasantry of most countries where the women work in the fields, Italy and England excepted, while as soon as one enters the cities he finds the balance again inclining the other way. The costumes of St. Pol differ slightly from those of other parts of Leon; in fact, almost every district and town of Brittany presents some local peculiarities in the dress of both sexes, although it must be added that the distinctive

and often rich and picturesque costumes of Brittany are gradually giving way to the more convenient if less showy fashions for which Paris gives the law to the rest of Europe. Those who would see these old costumes before they have been entirely relegated to the past must visit Brittany soon. In the eastern part of the country they are now mostly confined to varieties of head-dress, with occasionally a richly embroidered belt or vest on festal occasions; but in Finisterre, around Brest and Douarnenez, and among the sailors and fishermen, the old costumes are still much worn, and are often quite rich in form, color, and embroidery. The wearing of the hair long over the shoulders by the men, or undressed sheep-skin cloaks, except in Finisterre and the inland regions around Carhaix, is confined chiefly to old men who do not care to alter life-long habits.

The language of the people is still the older Celtic or Breton, allied to that of Wales, and reputed to have been the language spoken in Paradise—a fact of which I am unable to speak with certainty; a Welshman can make himself understood in many parts of Brittany. And yet it is not a little singular that, as with costumes, so with language: each town and district has a dialect of its own, while the dialect of Tréguier so far differs from that of Cornouailles or Vannes as to be to a degree unintelligible to those of the west and south of Brittany. The fact must also be admitted that in the eastern parts and in the larger sea-ports the Breton is much modified, and sometimes almost confounded with the French. In Finisterre Celtic is still the general language, while some are still found there and in the interior who do not even understand the French as I can state from personal observations.

Leaving St. Pol-de-Leon, Morlaix, and that very interesting region abounding in beautiful churches, calvaries of extraordinary elaboration, like that of Guimiliau, which a young Breton lady described to me as "tout à fait délicieux," and many spots of historic and legendary interest, I came to Landivisiau, and saw beyond, perched on a lofty precipitous crag by the peaceful waters of the Elorn, the remains of the castle of Roche Maurice, one of the finest bits in Brittany. Landerneau I found to be an antique town of some seven thousand inhabitants, with narrow streets and curious houses, but prettily situated on each side of the Elorn, which there winds through meadows very inviting to the sauntering wayfarer or fisherman. Brest I left on the right, having visited it once before, and also because, excepting its splendid port and modern fortifications, it presents few points of interest. It was a "château fort" in feudal times, and was honored by an assault at the hands of De Montfort, but little of this now remains. Quimper I found to be a very charming city

on the Odet. It is clean, and the streets display a certain modern coquettish air that is not out of harmony with the remains of ivy-covered walls and towers and clumsy but picturesque luggers moored to the quays. The Cathedral of St. Corentin is one of the largest, best-preserved, and most beautiful buildings in Brittany. The towers are especially worthy of study, and the building is so situated on the Place that it can be advantageously seen. The choir curiously curves toward the northeast. St. Corentin was, or is at present, a Breton saint. Of his previous history little is known, but he seems to have had that sympathy with the animal creation which looks as if he was originally of Druidic extraction. Proceeding to Quimperlé, I found here another curious and very pretty little town, struggling up a hill-side, and often mentioned in the glowing pages of Froissart. A famous pardon, or saint's festival, is held here in summer, appropriately celebrated in the forest of St. Maurice, because it is called the "Pardon des Oiseaux." It is essentially a bird festival, for all kinds of birds, not only fowls, but orioles, woodpeckers, larks, and various woodland songsters, are brought on this occasion in cages, and are bought and presented by lovers to their sweethearts. We should call this a bird fair, but they manage these things better in Brittany. St. Maurice, who seems to have been a bird-fancier, possibly a naturalist and taxidermist, has been named the patron of this festival. Such a saint is indeed one worth having!

Political economists pretend that the division of labor is comparatively a modern device, suggested by the higher civilization and increasing needs of society in these latter days. It is time that these gentlemen should be informed that they labor under a mistake. One has but to look over the saints' calendar of Brittany to find that ages ago the system of the division of labor was introduced into heaven, and to each saint was assigned a specialty to which he was to devote his undivided attention for the remainder of eternity. To one is awarded the cure of lunatics, to another the charge of rheumatics, another yet must listen to the prayers of those afflicted with earache or chilbains; one takes care of lambs, and another protects dairy-maids; another makes a specialty of healing cows, or horses, or pigs; and veterinary surgeons may stand aside, for in Brittany their fees are small compared with those paid at the shrine of St. Mathurin, the patron of sick cows. If only St. Eloi had been consulted and well feed when the epizootic was in New York, how much might have been saved! As things are managed in Brittany, the doctors have but a poor time of it, while the saints grow rich, or the priests who tend their shrines. The Church of St. Anne at Auray is called the milch cow of the Bishop of Vannes, such is the wealth it brings into his coffers. For every possible need of succor a saint exists to grant the aid

requested; as, for example, a legend on one of the stained windows just put up in the shire of St. Anne runs as follows: "Santa Anna, port assure aux navigateurs." While the saints thus have their allotted departments, the Virgin Mary exercises general superintendence over this corps of ministering spirits, and affords a source of final supplication and aid in extreme cases: hence no one need apply for assistance to Christ or God, who are thus quite set aside in the conduct of human affairs.

The dances at the "Pardon des Oiseaux" are of a character indicating their Druidic origin. Dancing, such as the *ronde* or the *gavotte*, forms an important element in all the festivals of Brittany, accompanied by song, often the favorite Breton rhyme beginning

"Ann hini goz,  
Ehé ma douce,  
Ann hini goz, eh! sur."  
"Ai courgerue pas,  
N'um sangeant:  
Ann hini ionankt,  
E ar goantur,  
Ann hini goz! sur," etc.

The first day is sacred to religious observances; the second day of the pardon, on which national traits and customs inherited from pagan times have full play, is devoted to making amends for the piety of the previous day; wrestling matches between the champions of villages and districts, and games established by long traditions, arouse the interest and passions of the assembled multitude to a pitch which prepares them for the dances, in which every one, of high or low degree, of character good, bad, or indifferent, joins without reserve. The musicians, already well moistened, are placed in the centre of the arena, armed with the binion, or bagpipe, and bombardo, and with a barrel of cider within arm-length. The music proceeds with an energy truly astonishing, and the dance goes round with ever increasing vivacity. The variety of costumes and the enthusiastic performances of these pious bacchanals render the scene very entertaining, and toward the close, peculiar to a degree. "L'un peut dire que le champ de la fête n'est lui-même qu'un immense cabaret," says a writer whose church predilections and strong advocacy of the fêtes de pardon would lead him to avoid exaggeration. Notwithstanding the religious character of the festival, it often terminates in an orgy where scenes are enacted that will hardly bear allusion. "Mais il n'en prouve pas moins la foi vive dont le Bas Breton est animé," says another writer.

# JOIN US in supporting the Breton language and culture

*Your Membership in the U.S.  
ICDBL will send a clear signal to  
the people of Brittany and to the  
world that the future of the  
Breton language is a cause with  
international support.*

The Breton language is a Celtic language closely related to Welsh, Cornish, Manx, and Irish and Scottish Gaelic. It is the everyday language of an estimated 250,000 people in Brittany, the far western peninsula of France. But Breton is threatened with extinction. The Breton language is no longer forbidden in schools or totally hidden from public view, but France continues to withhold the resources necessary for its development as a healthy living language, despite demands from an ever widening Breton population for its support and growth in the schools, media, and public life.

## ***What the does the U.S. ICDBL do?***

A major role of the U.S. Branch of the ICDBL is to simply introduce the existence of Brittany and the Breton language to the American public.

With Members of the U.S. ICDBL dispersed in 35 of the 51 States of the U.S.--from Maine

to Florida, from Hawaii to California and even Alaska, and lots of states in between—we do not hold meetings or have the ability to carry out many projects as a group.

Our central activity is the publication of a quarterly newsletter called Bro Nevez (which means "new country" in the Breton language). The 25 pages of this publication include current information about what is going on in Brittany related to the Breton language, and short articles on a range of topics, from music and dance, to sports, travel, the economy, or history.

The U.S. ICDBL has its own internet site which contains a wealth of information and links to Breton web sites.

[www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm](http://www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm)

The Secretary assists people from the U.S. and all over the world who write, e-mail or telephone with requests for information about the Breton language and culture. ICDBL Members throughout the U.S. have been spokesmen for the cause of the Breton language by distributing information at Celtic cultural events and music festivals or concerts, and by simply discussing their concerns with friends and acquaintances.

## ***More direct support for the Breton language ...***

The U.S. ICDBL has supported Diwan—Breton language immersion schools--for over ten years with a small annual contribution from our Members. We have maintained a

personal link with the children of one particular Diwan school—Skol Diwan Landerne—since 1992 when Lois Kuter, the U.S. ICDBL Secretary, was invited to become the school's "godmother."

As is the case for all branches of the ICDBL, our support of the Breton language is mostly symbolic—the fact that outsiders care at all offers encouragement to people in Brittany who are working to sustain the Breton language and find new and creative ways to use it. When we have felt it would have an impact, we have circulated petitions in support of the Breton language, and have written letters to French government officials to express our concern about the lack of support given to the Breton language and culture.

## **PLEASE JOIN US IN PROMOTING THE FUTURE OF THE BRETON LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

Annual Membership can start at any time of the year, and is just \$20 (U.S. \$) including a subscription to our newsletter Bro Nevez. Send a check made out to the "U.S. ICDBL" to:

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