

BRO NEVEZ

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



GENVER 2005		CHWEVRER		MEURZH		EBREL		MAE		MEZHEVEN	
1 S Kalana	1 M S Berc'hed	1 M S Dewi & S. Nonan	1 G S Enni	1 S G. Al Labouder	1 M S Ronan						
2 S S. ar Rann	2 M S Gouel ar Goulour	2 M S. Jozec	2 S S. Anperzh	2 L S. Brieg & S. Azal	2 M S Brevallenn						
3 L S. Kenez	3 Y S. Liza	3 Y S. Gwendole	3 S S. Ehen	3 M S. Evez	3 G S. Aevin						
4 M S. Rann	4 G S. Morvred	4 Y S. Ehen	4 S S. Benetia	4 Y S. Ezeour	4 S S. Nimg						
5 M S. Kevonion	5 S S. Melli	5 S S. Benetia	5 S S. Sane	5 Y S. Koad	5 S S. Perge						
6 Y S. Peran	6 S Sot. Al Lard	6 S S. Sane	6 L S. Ederan	6 S S. Nevezer	6 L S. Maeldan						
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Vakansoù skol : Kelt'hiad A

See pages 5-8, "Giving your child a Breton name"

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**

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of Bro Nevez. It is being mailed towards the end of the month of February because it has taken me a while to get this issue together. I know I have extended this invitation before, but I would love to hear from a few more contributors here in the U.S. I know that among the U.S. ICDBL Branch membership there are a number of people who can write knowledgeably on some aspect of Brittany and Breton culture. How about a quick review of a website about Brittany you found particularly useful or interesting? A book review (old or new)? A CD review (an old favorite or a new release)? A Breton recipe? A note on an event in Breton history? Reflections on a trip you have taken to Brittany - your favorite travel destinations? Travel tips for first-time visitors to Brittany? Don't be shy.

**Membership renewals** - Thank you to all those who have sent in your dues for the coming year. Some of you receiving this newsletter are due to renew your Membership/Subscription. If you find a membership/subscription form with your newsletter that means you still owe dues/subscription payment. If you have any questions about your membership status feel free to contact me.

## A New School Year for the Breton Language in Brittany – a correction!

The following statistics are from the newsletter of Unvaniezh ar Gelennerien Brezhoneg (Union of Breton Teachers (Kannadig 90, miz gwengolo/miz Here 1002). In printing this in the November 2004 issue of Bro Nevez, I mistakenly left off the line for Loire-Atlantique. So below is the revised chart for the 2004-05 school year.

| Department           | Diwan schools               | Public schools              | Catholic schools            | Total all schools |              | Increase in students from '03 |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
|                      |                             |                             |                             | 2004              | 2003         |                               |
| 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                            |
| Loire-Atlantique     | 191                         | 130                         | 48                          | 369               | 354          | +15                           |
| 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>          |
| % increase from 2003 | +2.8%                       | +8.76%                      | +15.14%                     | +8.95%            |              |                               |

## Brittany's Regional Council and the Breton Language

A Report by Lois Kuter

In December 2004 the Regional Council of Brittany unanimously adopted a text called "Une Politique Linguistique pour la Bretagne" which officially recognized Breton and Gallo – along with French – as the languages of Brittany, a Brittany including five Departments, despite the fact that the Department of Loire-Atlantique is not within the official "region" of Brittany. This policy statement makes it clear that the regional government is ready to support – morally and financially – a future for the Breton language.

In presenting the policy some basic ground rules were stated by the Regional Council (my translation):

1. Political policies to promote the Breton language are not directed against the French language. They are undertaken in the framework of bilingualism, opening to plurilingualism. They do not menace national unity.
2. Political policies in favor of the Breton language are based on encouragement and incentive and not on obligation. No one is required to learn the Breton language.

3. The Breton language belongs to the whole of the Breton population and not a handful of passionate supporters – no matter how meritorious their work.\* It is thus critical that public governmental powers integrate its survival into their political policies. [\* One has to wonder why this remark was made since militants for the Breton language certainly desire that Breton is used by the widest possible number of people.]

The following propositions were stated:

- The Regional Council of Brittany officially recognizes the existence of Breton and Gallo, alongside French, as languages of Brittany.
- Conscious of its responsibility, the Regional Council becomes engaged through this plan of linguistic policies, and in seeking the largest collaboration of partners and especially the five Breton Departments, in order to allow the perpetuity of the Breton language and culture.

The Regional Council also noted the following objectives of the plan:

- To assure the maintenance and transmission of everyday spoken Breton (“Breton populaire”) which means stabilizing the number of speakers.
- Allow each Breton person who wishes to learn, to hear, to speak, and to read Breton.
- Favor the presence of Breton in diverse areas of the social life of Brittany. This means promoting bilingualism.
- Assure the recognition of Gallo, encourage learning of it and favor its expression.

To achieve this, some more specific goals were outlined including obtaining the ratification of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and legislation to support it by France. The Regional Council also stated its goal to develop bilingual education with the objective of 20,000 students in bilingual programs by the year 2010 – a 12% increase each year until then. This would involve training 150 teachers each year as well as non-teaching personnel who would use Breton in their work. The Council recognizes that financial support will be needed for this expansion of staff as well as needs for pedagogical materials. The Council noted that it would work with Diwan towards integration into the public school system without compromise to the immersion pedagogy where Breton is used as the medium for teaching and all social activities of the school day. While work towards integration is in progress, the Council would financially assist Diwan. Education for Gallo learners will also be supported.

The Council also noted the need to work with the Ofis ar Brezhoneg and INSEE to study and monitor the use of Breton in everyday life and to encourage its transmission in family life. The plan also foresees the need for expanded presence for both Breton and Gallo in the media, including a Breton language radio that could be heard throughout all of Brittany. In hopes of an eventual public TV channel for Breton, the Council will work in the meantime with France 3 Ouest to expand programming and support professional training and the creation of new and dubbed programming in Breton. The Council also recognizes the need to support publishing, theater and other creative work in Breton.

Within the Regional Council a working group will put the plan in place and evaluate its progress. The Council will also encourage the use of Breton in its internal workings and in publications it produces, in bilingual signage and the encouragement of staff to learn Breton.



## PUBLISHING IN THE BRETON LANGUAGE

Based in part on findings from a survey done by the Ofis ar Brezhoneg, an article in *Armor Magazine* (419, December 2004) reported on the state of Breton language and bilingual publishing. The article noted that 44 groups were surveyed by the Ofis ar Brezhoneg for work done in 2002-03 – representing 21% of publishers in Brittany. Not surprisingly, Finistère has the highest number with 27 publishers of Breton or bilingual books. The study found that 65% of those publishing in Breton are set up as non-profits and 70% of the staff in this area are volunteers, although the number of salaried workers is on the increase – 55 in 2004, of which two-thirds were full time.

Each year some 80 to 90 Breton or bilingual books are published. Two publishers, Emgleo Breizh and TES (which specializes in school texts) publish more than 50% of these books. 30% of the publishers produced more than 10 books but a third of them produced just one. On average 1,300 copies of a book in Breton are printed; 2,400 for bilingual French/Breton books. But 15,000 copies can be printed for dictionaries. Nearly three-fourths of the books published are for adults with the novel being the most popular genre.

With a growing number of adults (who may already speak Breton) taking classes to perfect their skills, and a steady increase in the number of children learning Breton in the schools, certainly the market for publishing will grow.

## A NEW NEWSPAPER IN BRETON – YA !

Those who want to read Breton can certainly keep busy with a number of magazines and journals in Breton: the bi-monthly *Al Liamm* (600 to 700 pages a year) and the monthly *Bremañ* (over 250 pages a year) – to name just two. Now a new weekly newspaper called *Ya!* is being launched by the publisher Keit Vimp Beo (who already publishes three excellent magazines in Breton for children). In eight pages this weekly will cover a variety of topics from art and music, sports, literature, travel, nature, business, and current events, including interviews, comic strips, crossword puzzles, recipes and lots of photos. This is a great way to practice your Breton with articles of interest to all ages and levels of learners. Subscriptions are 5 Euros per month (plus an additional contribution for overseas mailing). For details about how to subscribe contact:

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## NEW BOOKS IN AND ABOUT THE BRETON LANGUAGE (AND GALLO)

**Fañch Peru. Gwaskado.** Embannadurioù Skol Vreizh. 84 pp. ISBN 2-911447-98-0.

Reviewed by Roparz Carre

This is a short book (84 pages, pocket size) but it does not lack interest. Students of the Breton language will find it easy to read, as the style and the story line are simple and do not strive for literary effects.

Using the guise of purported “adventures” of his young hero Herve, the author actually describes various aspects of life in a small town in northern Brittany about 60 years ago. You will discover how, not so long ago, people lived there without TV, telephone, or cars (electricity had just come to town) - but with the then usual assortment of colorful town “characters”, who by now have become an extinct species.

The author has a keen eye (the priest who, when delivering his Sunday sermon from the pulpit, closes his eyes when facing a group of young ladies) - and a good memory (the packets of cotton wads applied on the chest of someone with a persistent cough to keep them warm, marked by a red man blowing out fire - they were found in every household in Brittany at the time, but have vanished a long time ago).

Interestingly enough, the first memory that comes to the author’s mind (page 1) is that of the German occupiers leaving - followed closely (page 2) by the arrival of the American liberators. Those events have indeed marked a generation.

The book is written in “peurunvan” (unified Breton), with a lacing of local idioms. Fortunately for us Southerners, (Breton Southerners that is) the author has had the good idea of an addendum translating such terms into ... peurunvan.

☪ ☪

## SHORT NOTES

The following information was gleaned from book notes and reviews in the following sources: Al Liamm 346 (Here 2004) & 347 (Kerzu 2004), Armor 418 (Nov. 2004), 419 (Dec. 2004) & 420 (Jan. 2005); Ar Men 143 (Nov./Dec. 2004) & 144 (Jan./Feb. 2005); Bremañ 278 (Kerzu 2004) & 279 (Genver 2005).

Hervé Abalain. Pleins feux sur la langue bretonne. Coop Breizh. 384 pp.

A presentation of the Breton language – its origins and history, characteristics, usage, and fight for survival –

presented in an objective manner and loaded with illustrations. A good overview of a range of topics.

Marsel ar Barzh. An Erc’h Du. Embannadurioù Al Alarc’h. This is the journal of a priest about his time at the seminary in Saint Brieuc from 1932 to 1934 as well as five years spent as a prisoner in a German stalag during World War II where the bitter cold made even the snow seem black (an erc’h du). He died at the age of 35 in 1946 but left five notebooks from which Riwanon Kervella has drawn the writings published here.

Yan Balinec. Mab Juidikael pe ar roueed dilabour. Ed. Remuage. Entitled “Son of Judikael or the King of Unemployment,” this is a book with philosophical thought and humor on the subject of work and machines.

Gilles Baudry, Job an Irien. Il était une fois ... le tro ar relegoù. Minihi Levenez. 66 pp. A poetic reflection in French and Breton by a Benedictine monk on the Pardon of Landeleau (and all pardons) with photography by Christophe Filliette and Joël Hascoët.

Yann Bijer. Koñchennoa ar Gouelan Masklet. Emgleo Breiz. Entitled the Masked Seagull, this book comes with two CDs of stories recorded by the author and radio broadcaster Mari Kermareg. The texts are enhanced by illustrations by Malo Louarn.

Jean-Pierre Boulic. Royaume d’île / Rouantelez eun enezenn. Minihi Levenez. 82 pp. This is a bilingual collection of poetry inspired by the island of Ouessant by a poet who has published numerous collections before, and who was recognized in 1996 by the Association des Écrivains Bretons with their annual prize.

Claude Bourel. Dictionnaire de Gallo – Lexique Français-Gallo-Breton. Ed. Rue des Scribes. 220 pp. A book presenting 1,200 Gallo words with grammatical function, definition and examples of use and variations. In the second part of the book you have Gallo-French-Breton equivalencies, and the third part of the book focuses on etymology.

Gab Cherel & Alan E. Ar Berr. Geriadur ar verdeadurezh / Dictionnaire de la navigation. Ed. Preder. 510 pp. This is a Breton-French dictionary of old and new nautical terminology related to sailing and the sea. It is for those who make a living from the sea, those who sail for sport or pleasure, and a general public interested in Brittany’s maritime heritage.

Dastum Bro Dreger. Tro ma c’hanton – Karnedigoù ar Gonaned: Jakez, Erwan, Herve ha Gireg. Dastum Bro Dreger. 240 pp.

These notebooks include a hundred songs, dance tunes, cantiques, tales, sayings and adages from generations of the Konan family from the Perroz-Gireg area of Tregor.

Naïg Gars. Chao e Kêriz. Embanadurioù Delioù. Politically active as a member of the Union Democratique Breton Naïg le Gars has written political essays in Breton but this is her first novel. It is set in a fictitious town, Kêriz, on the southwest coast of Finistère where a journalist and his girlfriend uncover all sorts of shady dealings and the collusion of the mayor in the development of a vacation resort taken over by Donald Evil and his company MacBrother. You can bet there are some political statements being made in this novel.

Yann-Fañch Jacq. Bravoc'h e vo warc'hoazh. Keit Vimp Beo. 190 pp.

The 5<sup>th</sup> novel (and murder mystery) by this author. The hero of this tale is an 11 year old boy whose parents are mostly absent from his life. Left to his own devices he explores the back streets of the big city and meets some interesting and spooky characters.

Yves-Marie Gabriel Laouënan. Kastel Ker iann koatanskour / Le Château de Kerjean-Coatanscour. Edition CRBC. 368 pp.

The first Breton language novel written around 1830 and retrieved from the archives of Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué – the 19<sup>th</sup> century collector of oral literature best known for his song collection Barzhaz Breizh. This novel is a tale with autobiographical and philosophical elements thrown in, and it paints a portrait of the geography, history and society of the Leon region of northwestern Brittany. Yves Le Berre, of the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Brest, has translated the novel into French for this bilingual edition published by that university's Centre de Recherches Bretons et Celtiques.

Mikael Madeg. Poent 'zo bet e Bro-Leon 5. Emgleo Breiz. 252 pp.

This is the fifth volume of an ongoing publication of oral traditions from the Leon region of Brittany – some collected by the author and others from earlier collections.

Saint-Exupéry. Ar Priñs bihan. Translated by Pierrette Kermaol. Embannadurioù Preder. 96 pp.

This is the third edition of the 1999 Breton language translation of the famous book The Little Prince (Le Petit Prince) first published in 1943.

Jeffrey Shaw. Daerou dre ar goueleh [Tears on the Dessert]. Emgleo Breiz. 1764 pp.

Canadian Jeffrey Shaw has mastered Breton well enough to use it creatively as an author, and this is his third novel. It is set in South Africa during Apartheid.

**Asterix now speaks Gallo as well as Breton** (information from Armor 419 (Dec. 2004) and Bremañ 277 (Du 2004)

In the mid 1970s the first Astérix books were translated into Breton : The Combat of the Chiefs (Asteriks hag emgann ar pennoù) and Astérix Among the Bretons (Asteriks e Breizh). The publisher Editions Albert René decided that it was perfectly logical for Asterix to defend regional languages of France so a new edition published in 2003 in French (Astérix et la rentrée gauloise) has been translated into six of them: Alsatian, Occitan, Picard, Corsican, Gallo and Breton. The 40,000 copies in Picard sold out in two weeks. 30,000 copies in Breton, Asteriks hag an distro, translated by Divi Kervella, and 20,000 copies in Gallo, Astérix à l'école d'ertour, translated by André Lecoq, should also go quickly.



## GIVING YOUR CHILD A BRETON NAME

Lois Kuter

I was reminded by a recent article in Ar Men magazine (No. 144, January/February 2005) that it was not so long ago that people of Brittany could not officially give their children Breton language names. This attack on the Breton language gained international attention in the 1960s and 1970s thanks to the valiant fight of the Le Goarnig family to defy regulations. Indeed, still today people who know nothing much else about Brittany will ask me if it is still illegal to give one's child a Breton name.

The Loi du 11 Germinal an XI of 1803 which prevailed until the late 1960s did indeed stipulate that only names of saints on calendars and those names known in ancient history could be used on birth certificates. When the Le Goarnig family, living then in the Paris area, tried to register their first child, Garlonn, in 1946, this caused an uproar. It was simply impossible. In an effort to humiliate the family, they were sent to the offices that handled foreigners (not without an element of irony for Bretons who might consider themselves foreigners in Paris). This allowed the family to register their first six children: Garlonn in 1946, Patrig in 1947, Katell in 1948, Gwenn in 1952, Yann in 1953 and Morgann in 1954. With the birth of their sixth, Adraboran in 1956 things got stickier and the subsequent children were denied legal existence (and thus state child support). In all, twelve Le Goarnig children were named good Breton names in defiance of the law, with the addition of Maiwenn in 1957, Gwendal in 1958, Diwezha in 1960, Sklerijenn in 1961 and Brann in 1963.

In the post war period and militant years of the 60s it was felt that the Le Goarnig family was being used as an example to intimidate Bretons and discourage expressions of Breton identity. But this backfired as international press coverage of the family grew and more parents in other regions of France, as well as in Brittany insisted on culturally meaningful names. In 1966 the laws were

relaxed to recognize “regional customs” in naming. In the early 1980s laws were opened even more so that only names felt to be truly insulting were disallowed.

But the story is more complex. In demographic studies of the period of 1900 to 2002 evidence shows that many Breton names were registered well in advance of the Le Goarnig family’s efforts. Different mayors in Brittany accepted Breton names for birth certificates – after all, many were well known saint’s names. In other cases Breton parents provided strong documentation when registering a birth certificate – as in the case of Breton scholar Gwennole Le Menn whose father called upon the Bishop of Quimper in 1938 to give him a letter to vouch for the legitimacy of his son’s name as a true saint’s name. Legitimizing Breton names was aided by Per Lemoine in 1959 when he distributed a calendar listing of Breton saints names to all the mayor’s offices in Brittany when he had problems registering his son Riwal. In 1971 Gwennole Le Menn did his part to assist Bretons in the naming process with a very popular book Le Grand Choix des Prénoms Bretons (The big choice for Breton first names).

Whatever name ended up on a birth certificate, Breton parents have long used Breton names for their sons and daughters. As a French citizen you might be Jean on your birth certificate, but for daily use with friends and family you were always Yann. But, the Le Goarnig family’s fight for the legitimacy of Breton names should not be underestimated in its impact on provoking change. And it took courage for both parents and children to fight and persist in this battle when it would have been easy to put a French name on a birth certificate and use the Breton name for all other purposes, as generations of Bretons had been doing. Not only were the Le Goarnig parents harassed by bureaucrats and police (assumed to be dangerous Breton separatists) but they were jailed for short periods of time. Intimidation did not work, but the family is still fighting legal battles to reclaim lost benefits due to the refusal of French officials to register their children as named.

Today, Breton parents are free to name their children Breton names. A report of the research group INSEE on the use of Breton first names (briefly cited in the November 2004 issue of Armor Magazine) noted that in 1950 just 3% of children in Brittany were registered with such names while in 2002 this had risen to 14%, with Ewen, Killian and Maël as the most popular names for boys, and Enora, Lena and Nolwenn the most often chosen for girls.

In looking through old newspaper clippings I had saved on Breton names I found a New York Times article from 1975 about the Le Goarnig case. Although laws had been loosened by that time, they were not retroactive, so the family was still in a battle to get legal recognition for six children. I came across another article I had saved from 1990 – from The Sunday Times of some paper I had not S = Sant (Saint) / Sz = Santez (female Saint)

noted. This article was about a family from the outskirts of Paris who named their baby Chanel. They were fighting the Chanel perfume company in a war over trade names. I have no idea what the outcome of that battle was, but the article threw out the following line of defense for nine month old baby Chanel: “The affair has been further complicated by a revelation from a Breton priest that there was a famous French missionary named Pierre Chanel, born in 1801, who gathered souls in the Pacific. He was canonized after what is believed to have been a fatal immersion in a cooking pot.”

I could not find Pierre Chanel in Bernard Le Nail’s Explorateurs et Grand Voyageurs Bretons – which includes some 200 Breton explorers, including many missionaries who traveled all over the world. But here is a bit more about the name Chanel from a C. Morahan who wrote a letter to the editor following the newspaper article about the disputed use of the name Chanel: “St. Peter Chanel, to whom your article referred, is one of New Zealand’s two patron saints, or, more precisely, he is patron saint of Oceania. Born in 1801, he was a priest of the Marist order (Society of Mary), and was martyred on the island of Fortuna in the South Pacific. While saying mass, he was killed by a native who struck him a fatal blow on the head with an axe. When I was at school in New Zealand, one of the classmates had Chanel as a second Christian name and one of the houses at my school was called Chanel. New Zealand has a Chanel College and a shrine to St. Peter Chanel in the Bay of Islands; and there are statues of him in many Roman Catholic churches. I have also met a nun whose religious name was Chanel.”

Naming a child after a saint will not make them more saintly. Naming a child Chanel will not make her a spokeswoman for a perfume manufacturer. And a Breton name does not make you more “Breton” than your neighbor who was given a French name by his or her parents. After all, the many girls named “Brittany” here in the U.S. have not flocked to the ICDBL in defense of the country for which they bear the name. People often chose a name just because they like it – as in the case of Brittany/Britney/ Britany or any of the other versions of this name which originally caught America’s fancy from a TV soap opera star (so the story goes). But people also choose a name because it evokes a heritage and their ancestry. And certainly in Brittany the choice of a Breton name is something parents have done because they take a pride in their identity.

Each year a friend in Brittany sends me a little pocket calendar of Breton saints names. Being reminded of the story of the Le Goarneg family, and the efforts of other Breton parents to give their children Breton names and help others to do so, I see this little calendar in a whole new light. For those of you who might be curious, or looking for a name for a child, here are the names of Breton Saints for each day of the year from that calendar.

S = Sant (Saint) / Sz = Santez (female Saint)

GENVER (January)

- 1 Kalanna (New Year's Day)
- 2 Sz. Koupaia
- 3 Sz. Jenofeva
- 4 S. Ruvon
- 5 S. Konwoion
- 6 S. Peran
- 7 S. Gourzelv
- 8 S. Gurvan
- 9 S Faelan
- 10 Sz. Dunvael
- 11 S. Hernin
- 12 S. Aofred
- 13 S. Enogad
- 14 s. Kendiern
- 15 Sz. Aouregan
- 16 S. Dic'hil
- 17 S. Arzhur
- 18 S. Gwendal
- 19 S. Brevalaer
- 20 Sz. Oanez
- 21 S. Benniged
- 22 S. Dozhwal
- 23 Sz. Pezen
- 24 S. Kado
- 25 S. Konhouarn
- 26 S. Tujen
- 27 S. Giduen
- 28 Sz. Alwena
- 29 S. Gweltaz
- 30 Sz. Vinvella
- 31 Sz. Morwenna

C'HWEVRER (February)

- 1 Sz. Berc'hed
- 2 Gouel ar Goulou ("Feast of Light")
- 3 Sz. Liza
- 4 S. Morvred
- 5 S. Melen
- 6 Sz. Agiol
- 7 S. Aodren
- 8 S. Jagu
- 9 S. Telo
- 10 S. Riwalann
- 11 S Ehouarn
- 12 S. Rieg
- 13 S. Riwan
- 14 S. Biavili
- 15 s. Laouenan
- 16 S. Eliaz
- 17 S. Gireg
- 18 S. Nioreg
- 19 S. Tiernvael
- 20 S. Lever
- 21 Sz. Gwenn
- 22 S. Evarzheg
- 23 S. Finnian
- 24 S. Kenan
- 25 S. Roparzh
- 26 S. Koulfined
- 27 S. Onen
- 28 S. Riwelen
- 29 Sz. Sisilia

MERUZH (March)

- 1 S. Dewi & S. Nonn
- 2 S. Jaouen
- 3 S. Gwenole
- 4 S. Elven
- 5 S. Kenerin
- 6 S. Sane
- 7 S. Eleiran
- 8 S. Seni
- 9 Sz. Glannon
- 10 Sz. Kanna
- 11 S. Beuzeg
- 12 S. Paol
- 13 S. Kemo
- 14 S. Hegareg
- 15 S. Bozian
- 16 S. Yungourian
- 17 S. Padrig
- 18 Sz. Derwell
- 19 S. Jozeb
- 20 S. Kirill
- 21 S. Enna
- 22 Sz. Dalerc'ha
- 23 Sz. Peronell
- 24 Sz. Krestell
- 25 S. Mordiern
- 26 S. Evemer
- 27 S. Louarn
- 28 S. Karneg
- 29 Sz. Gladez & Gwenlev
- 30 S. Kenider
- 31 S. Gwion

EBREL (April)

- 1 S. Enni
- 2 S. Aoperzh
- 3 S. Izuned
- 4 S. Tierneg
- 5 S. Visan
- 6 S. Brec'han
- 7 S. Kleden
- 8 S. Gouron
- 9 Sz. Merzherian
- 10 S. Adeodat
- 11 Sz. Keridwen
- 12 S. Brenac'h
- 13 S. Karadeg
- 14 Sz. Mevanwi
- 15 Sz. Yuveot
- 16 S. Padarn
- 17 S. Kedverin
- 18 S. Molv
- 19 S. Istin
- 20 S. Kadwalon
- 21 S. Finbar
- 22 S. Konvarc'h
- 23 S. Jord
- 24 S. Flann
- 25 S. Marc'h
- 26 S. Gouloz
- 27 S. Konwen
- 28 S. Loudiern
- 29 S. Segondel
- 30 Sz. Onenn

MAE (May)

- 1 Gouel al Labourer (Workers' Day)
- 2 S. Brieg & S. Azaf
- 3 S. Ewen
- 4 S. Eneour
- 5 S. Kolen
- 6 Sz. Yulizh
- 7 S. Neventer
- 8 Sz. Tunvez
- 9 S. Komgall
- 10 S. Maoran
- 11 S. Tudi
- 12 S. Servan
- 13 S. Mael
- 14 S. Pever
- 15 S. Priavel
- 16 S. Brendan
- 17 Sz. Tudon
- 18 S. Karanteg
- 19 S. Erwan
- 20 S. Tirizhian
- 21 Sz. Awen
- 22 S. Aotrom
- 23 S. Bili
- 24 SS. Donasian & Rog
- 25 Sz. Beda
- 26 S. Sieg
- 27 S. Aostin
- 28 S. Yoran
- 29 S. Riagad
- 30 Sz. Burian
- 31 S. Nerin

MEZHEVEN (June)

- 1 S. Ronan
- 2 Sz. Brewalann
- 3 S. Kevin
- 4 Sz. Ninnog
- 5 S. Pereg
- 6 Sz. Maeldan
- 7 S. Meriadeg
- 8 S. Herbot
- 9 S. Bron
- 10 S. Koulmkell
- 11 S. Majan
- 12 S. Kristan
- 13 S. Tuno
- 14 S. Devneg
- 15 Sz. Viviana
- 16 S. Nin
- 17 S. Herve
- 18 S. Meogon
- 19 Sz. Riwanon
- 20 S. Marc'han
- 21 S. Meven
- 22 Sz. Gwenvred
- 23 Sz. Eflez
- 24 S. Yann
- 25 S. Salaün
- 26 Sz. Sennin
- 27 S. Maelvon
- 28 S. Gwazeg
- 29 SS. Pêr & Paol
- 30 S. Kast

## GOUERE (July)

|    |              |
|----|--------------|
| 1  | S. Goulwen   |
| 2  | S. Luner     |
| 3  | S. Tomaz     |
| 4  | S. Balae     |
| 5  | S. Anton     |
| 6  | Sz. Nolwenn  |
| 7  | S. Tei       |
| 8  | S. Kilian    |
| 9  | S. Garvan    |
| 10 | S. Pasker    |
| 11 | S. Emeri     |
| 12 | S. Kare      |
| 13 | S. Turio     |
| 14 | Sz. Essylt   |
| 15 | S. Riwal     |
| 16 | S. Tenenan   |
| 17 | S. Goneri    |
| 18 | S. Tivizio   |
| 19 | S. Maden     |
| 20 | Sz. Angharad |
| 21 | Sz. Trifin   |
| 22 | Sz. Sev      |
| 23 | S. Melio     |
| 24 | Sz. Kristenn |
| 25 | S. Gwengalon |
| 26 | Sz. Anna     |
| 27 | S. Henog     |
| 28 | S. Samzun    |
| 29 | S. Gwilherm  |
| 30 | S. Nazer     |
| 31 | S. Garmon    |

## EOST (August)

|    |                              |
|----|------------------------------|
| 1  | Sz. Madenn                   |
| 2  | S. Tunio                     |
| 3  | S. Pergad                    |
| 4  | Sz. Aourgen                  |
| 5  | Sz. Sidwell                  |
| 6  | Sz. Dahud                    |
| 7  | Sz. Gwerborc'h               |
| 8  | S. Elid                      |
| 9  | S. Erle                      |
| 10 | Sz. Klerwi                   |
| 11 | S. Ergad                     |
| 12 | Sz. Sklerijenn               |
| 13 | S. Ever                      |
| 14 | S. Riowen                    |
| 15 | Gouel Varia (Feast of Marie) |
| 16 | S. Arzhel                    |
| 17 | SS. Gulc'hien & Gulian       |
| 18 | Sz. Lena                     |
| 19 | S. Gwennin                   |
| 20 | S. Filberzh                  |
| 21 | Sz. Yuna                     |
| 22 | S. Milian                    |
| 23 | Sz. Tedvil                   |
| 24 | S. Bertele                   |
| 25 | S. Brewen                    |
| 26 | S. Yugonvarc'h               |
| 27 | Sz. Mona                     |
| 28 | S. Elouan                    |
| 29 | S. Ederm                     |
| 30 | S. Fieg                      |
| 31 | Sz. Rozenn                   |

## GWENGOLO (September)

|    |                |
|----|----------------|
| 1  | S. Yuz         |
| 2  | Sz. Yaouank    |
| 3  | S. Kavan       |
| 4  | S. Berin       |
| 5  | S. Konneg      |
| 6  | S. Dogvael     |
| 7  | S. Gorun       |
| 8  | S. Karan       |
| 9  | Sz. Ozvan      |
| 10 | S. Konwal      |
| 11 | S. Glen        |
| 12 | Sz. Barba      |
| 13 | S. Dagan       |
| 14 | S. Modan       |
| 15 | Sz. Erell      |
| 16 | S. Dider       |
| 17 | S. Urfol       |
| 18 | S. Senour      |
| 19 | S. Winnog      |
| 20 | Sz. Gwenlaouen |
| 21 | S. Mazhev      |
| 22 | S. Emeran      |
| 23 | S. Solen       |
| 24 | S. Maogad      |
| 25 | S. Donnan      |
| 26 | Sz. Tekla      |
| 27 | Sz. Lupita     |
| 28 | S. Konan       |
| 29 | S. Mikael      |
| 30 | S. Louri       |

## HERE (October)

|    |               |
|----|---------------|
| 1  | Sz. Uriell    |
| 2  | S. Sulio      |
| 3  | S. Fragan     |
| 4  | S. Frañsez    |
| 5  | S. Faizh      |
| 6  | S. Ivi        |
| 7  | Sz. Piala     |
| 8  | Sz. Morgan    |
| 9  | Sz. Maelduina |
| 10 | S. Kler       |
| 11 | S. Gwinian    |
| 12 | S. Ke         |
| 13 | S. Gwenegan   |
| 14 | Sz. Enora     |
| 15 | Sz. Aourell   |
| 16 | S. Ael        |
| 17 | S. Segal      |
| 18 | S. Lukaz      |
| 19 | S. Ezvin      |
| 20 | Sz. Gwengunv  |
| 21 | Sz. Sterenn   |
| 22 | S. Morvan     |
| 23 | S. Drenwal    |
| 24 | S. Malor      |
| 25 | S. Gouenou    |
| 26 | S. Deklan     |
| 27 | Sz. Argentaël |
| 28 | Sz. Libouban  |
| 29 | Sz. Lanwenn   |
| 30 | S. Follan     |
| 31 | S. Gwalon     |

## DU (November)

|    |                                     |
|----|-------------------------------------|
| 1  | Gouel an Hollsent (All Saints' Day) |
| 2  | Gouel an Anaon (Feast of the Souls) |
| 3  | SS. Gwenaël & Levenez               |
| 4  | S. Juvad                            |
| 5  | S. Fili                             |
| 6  | S. Eflamm                           |
| 7  | S. Brelivet                         |
| 8  | S. Treveur                          |
| 9  | S. Kadvalaer                        |
| 10 | S. Govrian                          |
| 11 | Sz. Frañseza                        |
| 12 | S. Maeg                             |
| 13 | S. Brizh                            |
| 14 | S. Gwezhenege                       |
| 15 | S. Malo                             |
| 16 | Sz. Marc'harid                      |
| 17 | Sz. Elesbed                         |
| 18 | S. Maodez                           |
| 19 | S. Tangi                            |
| 20 | S. Emilion                          |
| 21 | S. Koulman                          |
| 22 | Sz. Aziliz                          |
| 23 | Sz. Bieuñvenn                       |
| 24 | Sz. Katell                          |
| 25 | S. Ilan                             |
| 26 | S. Goustan                          |
| 27 | Sz. Heodez                          |
| 28 | S. Menefred                         |
| 29 | S. Menefred                         |
| 30 | S. Andrev                           |

## KERZU (December)

|    |                     |
|----|---------------------|
| 1  | S. Tudal            |
| 2  | S. Tudeg            |
| 3  | S. Avran            |
| 4  | S. Melar            |
| 5  | S. Houarvian        |
| 6  | S. Iltud            |
| 7  | Sz. Azenor          |
| 8  | S. Budog            |
| 9  | Sz. Eryl            |
| 10 | S. Kouli            |
| 11 | S. Envel            |
| 12 | S. Kaourintin       |
| 13 | S. Judog            |
| 14 | S. Eginer           |
| 15 | Santig Du           |
| 16 | Sz. Lila            |
| 17 | S. Jezekael         |
| 18 | S. Briag            |
| 19 | S. Yuzel            |
| 20 | S. Alar             |
| 21 | S. Gwinier          |
| 22 | Sz. Eved            |
| 23 | S. Elvin            |
| 24 | Sz. Maela           |
| 25 | Nedeleg (Christmas) |
| 26 | S. Stefan           |
| 27 | S. Yann Avielour    |
| 28 | An Dianteged Wen    |
| 29 | S. Maeleg           |
| 30 | Sz. Tirid           |
| 31 | S. Jelvestr         |

## Breton lesson 4 / Kentel 4

by Natalie Novik

### Vocabulary / Geriadurig

Words that are similar to English:

|                 |         |                  |              |
|-----------------|---------|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Breur</b>    | brother | <b>Pav</b>       | paw          |
| <b>Fresk</b>    | fresh   | <b>Redek</b>     | to run       |
| <b>Frouezh</b>  | fruit   | <b>Rost</b>      | roast        |
| <b>Javed</b>    | jaw     | <b>Stal</b>      | stall, booth |
| <b>Kazh</b>     | cat     | <b>Steredenn</b> | star         |
| <b>Kastell</b>  | castle  | <b>Tavarn</b>    | tavern, bar  |
| <b>Ostiz</b>    | host    | <b>Yaouank</b>   | young        |
| <b>Ostaleri</b> | hotel   |                  |              |

There are many reasons for those similarities, one of them being that many of the words originate from mediaeval French, and were adopted both in England and Brittany around the same time (kastell, ostiz, tavarn). Another reason is that we are dealing here with two Indo-European languages, and that these languages share many words in common (breur, steredenn, yaouank). And finally, English inherited Celtic words like kazh (cat) from its oldest population, the Celts.

Memorize the list above, it should not be too hard. Next time we will see how some of these words mutate (change the initial letter) depending on their place in the sentence.

### Personal pronouns / Ajetivou perhenna

Before we start learning about verbs, we will look at the easy part of doing verbs, the personal pronouns. In Breton, like in French and many other languages, there are seven personal pronouns, because there is a "thou" which has disappeared in English.

Therefore the pronouns are:

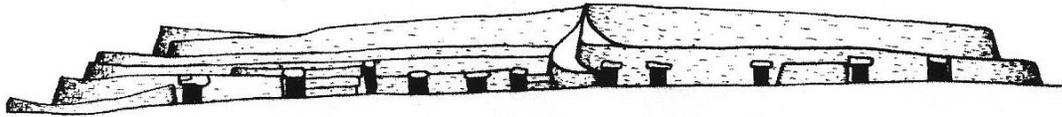
|           |                            |              |                                       |
|-----------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Me</b> | I                          | <b>Ni</b>    | us                                    |
| <b>Te</b> | thou                       | <b>C'hwi</b> | you (plural, but also for politeness) |
| <b>Eñ</b> | he                         | <b>Int</b>   | they                                  |
| <b>Hi</b> | she (confusing, isn't it?) |              |                                       |

Bretons have a natural tendency to address each other with "te", not "c'hwi", as often found in traditional rural societies, even when they meet you for the first time. However, in some areas, c'hwi is systematically used, not only with strangers but even within the family.

My favorite writer, Per Jakez Helias, tells of two villages on each side of a hill: one is a "te" village, where mothers warn their sons against these arrogant women in the other village who use only "c'hwi", while in the other village, mothers warn their daughters against these good-for-nothing guys from the other village who go around calling everybody "te"! Keep your ears pricked so you don't offend anybody, and learn all the above pronouns... so you recognize them when you are in those villages!

## Deep inside a Breton skull: 5 - The cairn of Barnenez

Jean-Pierre Le Mat



We Bretons have ancestors who were prehistoric people.

Unfortunately, nobody keeps a clear memory of these ancient times, even in Brittany, even in the most ancient families of the peninsula. What we have kept of these times is not memory, but scars. One of them, a scar of stones on a stony cliff, is a lonely monument on the northern coast of Brittany; and this building stirs strange emotions in our hearts.

The cairn is situated on a hill above the sea, dominating the Morlaix bay. From a distance, one could see a kind of low stepped pyramid. Nearby, the monument is huge and impressive : 72 meters long, 20 to 25 meters large, 6 meters high.

It is not a mere accumulation of stones. The prehistoric monument was constructed in several steps, with concentric paths on the top, sometimes cobbled with large slabs.

The cairn was built in two stages, with two different kinds of stones. The first part contains five chambers and was built with a local green stone called dolerite. The second part was built with a

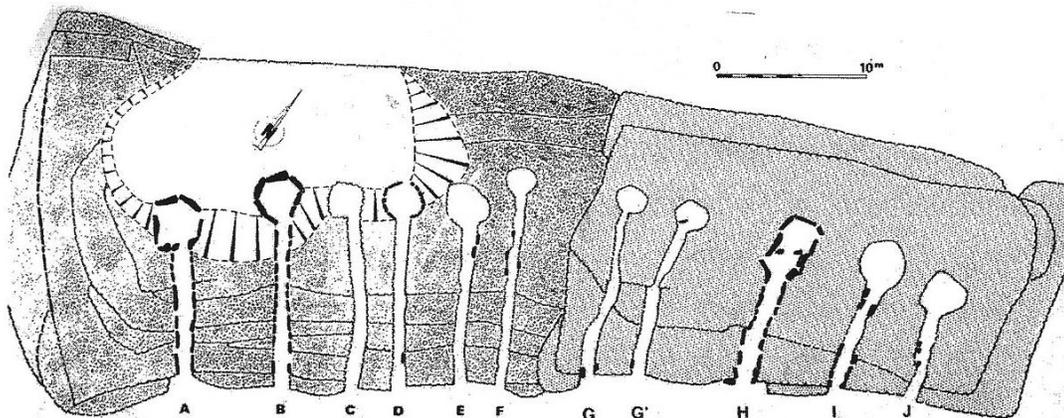
clear granite coming from an island nearby. The second cairn rests on the first one. This addition was done at the western end, on an increasing slope.

Tons of stones have been used through centuries to shelter eleven burial chambers. Wise men have calculated that there are here 7000 cubic meters of stone, which means 13 000 tons carried by our prehistoric fellows.

Some stones, inside the galleries or in the chambers are engraved with mysterious carvings. Flints, pottery remains and polished axes were discovered in the cairn.

The passages leading to the chambers are 7 to 12 meters long. Most of the chambers and passageways are covered by large granite slabs, although one or two of the chambers have conical ceilings. Flat stones have been put one on top of another, each one exceeding the one under it, making a vault of rough stones.

All the entrances are on the southeast side. Most of the passage have been sealed now for safety reasons.



The scholars tell us that this monument must have been a grave, for chieftains, kings, maybe entire families. They say that Barnenez must have been a place for the identification of a community, linked by a religion and the cult of ancestors. But only some remains of bones have been discovered. Here the soil is wet and acid, and the bones are dissolved in a few years. So it is not sure that all the chambers were graves, and it is impossible to know how many people were earthed there. There must not have been a lot; otherwise the quantity would have changed the acidity of the soil.

Anyway, in the primary cairn, only one funerary bowl was found in one of the five chambers. In the secondary cairn, pieces of broken pottery, charcoal, flints, and polished axes were found. That is a poor material for kings or chieftains.

According to the radiocarbon, the first part of the cairn was built 4500 years before Christ, maybe even before. It is one of the most ancient monuments of this size in the world, long before the Egyptian pyramids. The second part was built from 4100 BC on.

What do we know about these people, by the way? We know that they lived in wood houses, grouped in villages, and that they used to breed animals; they were not very familiar with agriculture and still lived from hunting. It was the beginning of the Neolithic period. There must have been a spiritual life at this time. The carvings in the slabs could have a ritual signification, or maybe symbolic or religious. The architecture of the cairn means that these people had technical skills, a work and social organization, but also a sense of proportion and beauty of the forms.

The building of the monument lasted for centuries. If it was exclusively to bury successive leaders, eleven chambers are not enough. There must be another logic behind this lasting job. Imagine this continual labor on a single monument for centuries! Builders, architects and engineers working, eating, laughing and shouting, generation after generation, in a cemetery for selected persons... Try to imagine the kind of social order, personal or collective hopes, exchanges with the outside. There must have been the making of a language there, a specific culture. There must have been strange stony dreams passing from the mothers to the children, strange

recommendations from the dying parents on how to succeed in life or to pursue happiness...

If the cairn of Barnenez is only a grave, that means that generations of people spent all their life preparing the eternal stay of others. True or false, I can feel a kind of prehistoric irony, the smile of the builders towards their masters. The real eternity is not in the power of the chiefs, not even in their bones. After the burial of a chieftain, I can hear the noise of the work back in Barnenez. Life was continuing; and the masterpiece was still growing, preparing the burial of another chieftain not yet born - a life of no importance, in front of the many-sided life of the ever-growing monument. In the stones and in the carvings, it is not the name of famous men which remains, but the movement of the hands of the anonymous builders, guided by anonymous engineers.

This cairn of Barnenez, half-forgotten, was rediscovered in 1955 when quarrying for stone cut down into it. I remember, when I was young, going with my parents to visit the site, then unprotected. Children were running everywhere on the top of the monument and in the galleries. The adults were listening to some local and unregulated guide, staying there to get some money and speaking about the old legends of the surroundings.

They said that there was in the monument niches with bones and even coins, and maybe gold. Now the explanations are more academic, more precise. This story of treasure is presumably linked with the legends about a medieval castle nearby, called Barnenez-Perron, where there could have been found skulls and gold.

Now the children are not allowed to go everywhere. And the guides are speaking to the adults about megaliths, radiocarbon, and dates. In the past, in front of the monument, we were asked to dream; nowadays we are asked to learn. Times are changing. I have had the chance to dream in my youth, and to learn later.

I will go back to Barnenez, some night of full moon, and forget the superficial knowledge that the prehistorians have put in my brain.

Youth and past, sunk in legend ; a Breton dream.

## New Music from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

### Didier Squiban. Symphonie Iroise. L'OZ

Production. L'OZ 44. 2004 50'56

When you think of Breton music, "piano" is not the instrument that first comes to mind, nor do you think of symphonic music. Those who are familiar with the diversity of musical expression in Brittany immediately associate "piano" with "Didier Squiban" and know well that Brittany can boast of a long line of composers of a "classical" style whose instrument has been a symphony orchestra or chamber ensemble.

With this CD Didier Squiban follows up on his 2000 composition "Symphonie Bretagne" with a symphonic work performed by the Orchestre de Bretagne under the direction of Alain Altinoglu. Like Squiban's first symphony, the performance here includes much more than an orchestra. You'll hear a lot of piano performed by Squiban who has classical training but years of performance as a jazz musician - inspired by Breton melodies and rhythms. You'll also hear Bernard Le Dréau on saxophone, Alain Trévarain on accordion, Jean Chevalier with percussion, Erwan Keravec on Scottish style bagpipes, and singer Manu Lann Huel - for a jazzier sound and clear evocation of traditional Breton themes. Never fear, this is not "the Yanni sound" - soft pop music with exotic touches covered with a veneer of violins.

Like Squiban's earlier works this composition is inspired by maritime Brittany. The "Sea of Iroise" is not to be found in many tourist guides or maps (and I found it noted on only three of several dozen maps I searched), but all Bretons will know that this body of water is the sea just off the far western tip of Brittany. As was the case for many of Squiban's earlier CDs, he collaborates with photographer Michel Thersiquel for jacket notes with ten exquisite photos of the Breton coast and sea. That nicely enhance the artistic package.

In this composition you will hear a few melodic lines from Squiban's earlier works - the solo piano trilogy of Molène (1997), Porz Gwenn (1999) and Rozbras (2001) and performances with singers Yann Fañch Kemener and Manu Lann Huel. But this is definitely not a rearrangement or stringing together of bits and pieces from Squiban's past to come up with a larger work you call a symphony because it involves an orchestra. Squiban draws from all his past strengths as a composer and pianist with a flair for improvisation to produce something that truly is a symphonic work.

I heard the strong voice of Pierre-Yves Moign who worked closely with Squiban on the orchestration of this piece (as well as the "Symphonie Bretagne"). Moign has been a pioneer in combining classical with traditional Breton instruments and styles since the 1950s. While recognized this past year with an induction into Brittany's Order of the Ermine (See Bro Nevez 92) he has not received the public recognition I think he deserves for his genius as a composer and arranger. The match of Squiban and Moign is a great one, and this symphony is a highly sophisticated blend of instruments, melodies and rhythms which takes full advantage of a great symphony orchestra. The orchestra is not used just for a pretty back up here, but forms a partnership with soloists, like Squiban.

At its debut performance at the 2004 Festival de Cornouaille in Quimper, the symphony received a standing ovation and strong reviews in the Breton press. And one can certainly see why in listening to this CD. There is a nice flow to the piece with slower melodies intertwined with dances such as the an dro, ridée, plinn and gavotte. The introduction of non-orchestral instruments such as the accordion and saxophone is done in a way that makes these seem a natural part of the full ensemble rather than a token introduction of "folk" or "jazz" instruments. The performance by singer Manu Lann Huel at the end of the second movement comes as a bit of a surprise since voice is not heard anywhere else in the symphony. This is not an operatic voice one might find typically for a solo with a classical symphony

orchestra, but the very distinctive voice of one of Brittany's best "singer-songwriters" whose composition "Ile-elle" is integrated well into the maritime theme of the symphony.

The jazzy swing and very exuberant final performance of "Plinn et gavottes" which introduces bagpipes for the first time brings the soloists back on stage for a very high energy and somewhat raucous finish. This is a bit in contrast to the more polished feel of the rest of the symphony but letting loose for a joyful grand finale of dance is not at all inappropriate for this celebration of Brittany and the Iroise sea and coast.



**Patrice Arnould, Violaine Mayor and Joël Herrou. Musique Celtique Ancienne.**

Hent Telenn Breizh. 2004. 46'09.

"Ancient Celtic Music" is the title of this CD and what that may conjure up in your imagination is anyone's guess. The repertoire here is both familiar and rare. Who has not heard the compositions of the famous Irish harp player Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738)? Here you have "Mr. Connor," "The Queen's Dream," and the very widely performed "Sidh beag sidh mor." Less known and from an earlier period are melodies from 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts - the Skene, Straloch and Rowallan collections from Scotland, and the Jane Pickeringe from England. These are collections of tunes by amateur musicians of the upper crust for lutes with an influence from both the folk tradition and music of the courts then in fashion.

And there are also a few more contemporary works in the mix - some of which may have some pretty ancient roots. A waulking song from the Scottish Highlands is sung, you have a traditional Scottish reel and a medieval melody from Wales ("Morfa'r frenhines"). Two selections evoke Brittany - a composition by Patrice Arnould called "Marche de la Vallée du Relec" and a traditional melody from

eastern Brittany, "Les lauriers blancs" which is the second of sixteen selections in which the trio sings.

That is the "subject matter" of the CD. What is of importance is the performance, and featured here is the unique sound of bronze strings of medieval harps and the Pandora - a lute of the Renaissance period. The light and resonating sound of the strings is supplemented by flutes and recorders modeled on early instruments. The press release (in English) that accompanied this CD presents very well this remarkable trio which was formed in 2003.

*Violaine Mayor, a harpist concertist, has devoted herself for many years to the rediscovery of the ancient Gaelic harp with bronze strings, its historical repertoire and playing techniques (on the left shoulder using the fingernails). Her husband Joël Herrou, a musician and harp maker inhabited with his research for the sound, makes her harps, based on the 15<sup>th</sup> century original "Queen Mary Harp," according to the medieval techniques (one piece willow soundbox...). A Breton bagpipe and bombarde player originally, he plays wood whistles and a medieval recorder. The lutenist Patrice Arnould is one of the rare pandora solo players (he has dedicated his previous solo recording, "Pandora" to the instrument). He works, combines and achieves the harmonies, and also composes, with the same happiness as he does with his watercolors.*

While the mix of instruments gives a calm and soothing feel to the overall tone of this CD, this trio is definitely capable of tackling some quick paced dances. All three are masters of their instruments and it is clear that a great deal of research has gone into the production of this CD to capture the flavor of the period in which the pieces were composed, but also to exploit to the fullest the expressive capabilities of each instrument.

I liked the very resonant and rich harmonic overtones of these instruments - where you hear a drone akin to bagpipes at times. The melodies are lovely and varied and the dances full of energy. Don't be put off by the somewhat boring title of the CD --

"Ancient Celtic Music". The centuries-old compositions and instruments here are thoroughly modern in appeal.

For harp players out there (or any musicians looking for an excuse to travel to Brittany), take note of ongoing harp workshops offered by Violaine Mayor on the technique of playing ancient bronze-stringed harp as well as other workshops on Celtic and Breton music and dance offered by Hent Telenn Breizh ("the way of the Breton harp"). I can provide 2005 information, or you can contact musicians directly:

Violaine Mayor and Joël Herrou  
Association Hent Telenn Breizh  
Kerguz  
29410 Plouneour-Menez  
Brittany, France  
Tel: 33 (0)2 98 78 93 25

Patrice Arnould  
[www.avezard.com/patrice.arnould.htm](http://www.avezard.com/patrice.arnould.htm)



## HEARD OF BUT NOT HEARD

Notes for the following recordings are drawn from information and reviews in the following Breton magazines: Ar Men 143 (Nov./Dec. 2004), 144 (Jan./Feb. 2005); Armor 418 (Nov. 2004), 419 (Dec. 2004) & 420 (Jan. 2005); Musique Bretonne 187 (Nov./Dec. 2004).

### A-Bouez Penn. A veg de veg - Paysage sonore en pays vannetais.

This is a musical journey to the Vannetais area (Gwened) in a three-CD set, with 54 selections and a 70-page booklet as your guide. The CD features live recordings of traditional song and dance as found at festive gatherings around a meal or at a fest-noz. You'll hear solo unaccompanied voices, but also accordion, sax and bombarde for dances, marches, ballads and cantiques. The Vannetais area is known for its especially beautiful melodies and this CD set is a great sampling of both slower airs and lively dances.

### Bagad Cap Caval. Hepken. BCC 003.

This is one of the top bagads of Brittany who finished second in the 2004 championship of bagadoù and also competed well in the World Championship of pipe bands in Glasgow, Scotland. This CD features a concert performance created by the bagad called "Hepken" which includes a number of guest artists for a complex mix of the bagpipes, bombardes, percussion of the bagad with voice and a variety of instruments.

### Roland Becker. Monsieur Kerbec et ses belouzes. Oyoun Musik OM 002.

([www.rolandbecker.com](http://www.rolandbecker.com))

A thoroughly modern look at jazz and Breton tradition of the 1930s by bombarde and saxophone master Roland Becker. Dozens of musicians join him with sax, trumpets, tuba, clarinets, banjo, accordion, piano, percussion ... Titles include "Un Armoricain à Paris," "Gavotenn Circus," and "Belle-Ile 1937"

### Yann Bertrand. Kan ha Telenn. Drop Studio/Outre Bleu OBL 404-091.

Somewhat in the style of Alan Stivell, Yann Bertrand combines voice and harp in an interpretation of Breton songs and his own compositions (in the Breton language). Accompaniment also includes fiddle, guitar and bass.

### Dominig Bouchaud & Enzo Vacca. Vèis - Harpe entre Piémont et Bretagne. Arte Nomade. AN 00904.

Two harp players from Brittany and the Piedmont of Italy explore each other's cultures. Performances also include the harp and voice of Anne Auffret, hurdy-gurdy of Alberto Cesa and voice of Donata Pinti.

Ifig Castel. Amzer vat. Centre Culturel de Lannion. The Kreizenn Sevenadurel Lannuon (Cultural Center of Lannion) has produced a dozen cassettes and CDs in an excellent series of recordings focused on performers and traditions of Bro Dreger - north central Brittany. A new series has now been launched called "Tud Bro Dreger" - people of the Tregor country - which will present individuals who have been prominent in the music of this area. This one features Ifig Castel, a singer, bombarde player, composer and teacher of traditional Breton music. He plays paired bombarde/biniou with his own teacher Alain Salaün, a

former student Patrice Guégou, and his usual partner Patrick Galopin. Well known as a kan ha diskan singer, he performs also with his long-time partner Anaig Le Gorju. As is the case with all of the recordings produced by the Lannion Cultural Center this one is rich in documentation, including a presentation of the performers, song texts, and background information on the selections on the CD.

**Chantous d'Loudia. D'hier à aujourd'hui.** Self-proudced CD CDL 01. 56'

A 15-minute Ronde de Loudia dance leads off this CD by a group of eight male traditional singers. They also sing for the hanter dro and other traditional dances found in the Loudéac region. While this group has been performing traditional song at festoù noz and other events since 1966 this is their first CD.

**Le Chasse-Marée. Douarnenez port de fête. Chants marins des sept mers.** Anthologie des chansons de mer - Vol. 17. Chasse-Marée 047.

For some 20 years the maritime heritage organization called Le Chasse-Marée has organized tall ship festivals - and music has been at the heart of these very popular gatherings. This CD includes a mix of performances from the Douarnenez festivals of 2000 to 2002, with musicians from Denmark, The Netherlands, England, Poland, and islands of the Indian Ocean, as well as Brittany.

**Gérard Delahaye. Vive l'Amour!** Dylie Productions DY 240.

Delahaye has produced six recordings for children, and with this one he again targets a young audience with lighter texts and humor, but also messages that get kids to reflect a bit - in this case on the big topic of love. The style and musical talent of this singer/guitarist and the high quality of the instrumentalists he engages in his CDs makes them attractive to adults as well as kids.

**Guichen. Frères.** Avel Ouest/Coop Breizh JCFG 02.

Jean-Charles Guichen (guitar) and Fred Guichen (accordion) are brothers who first hit the music scene as part of the ground-breaking fest noz band Ar Re Yaouank. They are joined here by Etienne Callac on bass guitar and Antonin Volson with percussion for an

innovative quartet with unique arrangements of traditional Breton dances as well as slower compositions.

**Harpe Celtique / Telenn - L'Anthologie, Vol. 1.**

Coop Breizh CD 951.

This is a 2-CD set featuring the Celtic harp in Brittany. In the style of earlier double CDs featuring the bagad and maritime music, this handsomely bound booklet includes rich documentation on the history of the harp in Brittany and the 21 harp players in this selection (which surprisingly does not include Alan Stivell). Performances include arrangements of traditional tunes as well as innovative new compositions.

**Kej. Namou.** Méridien Productions. MER 01.

The trio called Kej (flute, guitar, bass fiddle) plays with musicians from Mali for a successful cross-cultural collaboration. Not the first group to work with African musicians, but this is a partnership that continues to be interesting.

**Yann Fañch Kemener & Aldo Ripoché. An Dorn.** Buda Musique 3016971.

One of Brittany's great traditional singers, Yann Fañch Kemener, pairs with classical and baroque cellist and viola de gamba player Aldo Ripoché for a unique performance of Breton language traditional song.

**Gérard Lomenec'h. Menestrels à la Cour de Bretagne.** Coop Breizh CD958.

This CD features music from the age of troubadours of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries as interpreted by Bretons in the courts of Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

**Menestra. Multicartes.** DogOfProd DOP 01.

This is a well established group with an unusual mix of instruments, including guitar by Fabien Robbe, percussion by Itud Le Doré, and hurdy-gurdy by Gurban Kerboeuf, with the addition of fiddle by Ronan Pinc. They feature melodies and dances of Gallo Brittany.

**Mouez Port Rhu. La mer en Bretagne.** MPR 04.

This is a group from Douarnenez who perform compositions with themes and musical styles of Brittany's maritime tradition. There is nothing fancy in

this production, but it will appeal to those who love maritime music and sea chanteys.

**Red Cardell. Bal à l'Ouest.** Kas Ha Bar RK008.

This is a live recording that captures the energy of this Breton rock band which combines song texts by Jean-Pierre Riou with the accompaniment of electric guitar, accordion and percussion. This is a band with roots in Brittany and there's a bit of rhythm borrowed from traditional dances such as the an dro or gavotte.

**Louis-Jacques Suignard. Lodenn an Ael.** Kreizenn ar Son LIS 01.

Suignard, a traditional singer from the Tregor region, leaves the fest noz to record a CD of "pop" music in the Breton language. The texts and music composed and sung by Suignard are supported by guitar, keyboard, accordion, flute and uilleann pipes. This isn't the first singer to take the Breton language outside of the realm of traditional song, but a good example of how a good artist can express him or herself in this language in any style of music.

**Tri Yann & L'Orchestre des Pays de Loire. La Tradition Symphonique 2.** Marcelle-Epic 519 1242 / Sony Music France.

A combination of folk-rock group Tri Yann with a symphonic orchestra, choral ensemble, the bagad of Nantes and others for a combination of classical and Breton styles and compositions. Included is a rendition of the Breton national anthem "Bro Goz ma Zadou" as you'll never hear it elsewhere. This CD received a very strong review in Armor Magazine. It's not by accident that Tri Yann has been on the Breton music scene for 30 years.



## **A Breton Bagad in Chicago**

(as noted in Ar Soner 375, July/Aug./Sept. 2004).

Twenty-one pipers, bombard players and drummers from the Bagad Ronsed Mor (Lokoal Mendon) and the Kevrenn Alre were guests of honor at the Chicago Celtic Fest on September 18 & 19, 2004. They gave two 40-minute concerts on the Saturday and Sunday of the festival as well as improvised performances at the Chief O'Neill pub. Normally dominated by Irish and Scottish

music, the very successful presence of the Breton bagad members as well as a Galician group, Llan de Babel, bodes well for a more inter-Celtic flavor for the Chicago festival which draws some 250,000 visitors.



## **BRETON EXPLORERS AND TRAVELERS A Few Biographical Notes**

One of my favorite books is a little 127-page paperback by Bernard Le Nail called Explorateurs et Grand Voyageurs Bretons (Editions Jean-Paul Gisserot, 1998). Some 200 explorers from Brittany are given biographical notes in this book, and one cannot help but to be impressed by how widely Bretons traveled in the past four centuries as scientists, doctors, military men, missionaries, and curious tourists. The following are just a few who stepped foot in North America. (My translations – Lois Kuter)

### **Jacques Noël** (Saint-Malo, 16<sup>th</sup> Century)

Nephew of Jacques Cartier (who had no children of his own) he inherited from him a maritime map and perhaps other documents, and considered himself the inheritor of rights gained by his uncle through his discoveries. We know that he came to Canada himself at least once in 1585 in the path of his uncle, finding ruins of forts he had constructed, traveling up the Saint Lawrence River to the rapids of Hochelaga, and climbing Mont-Royal. His two sons, Jean and Michel Noël, also came to Canada in 1587 to join the fur trade and took part in a war against other traders.

### **Pierre du Gué de Boisbriand** (Montréal 1675 – 1736)

Pierre du Gué de Boisbriand was the son of a Breton, Michel de Boisbriand (born near Nantes, 1638-1688) who arrived in Montreal in September 1665, marrying Elizabeth Le Ber in 1667 who gave him nine children. Michel de Boisbriand was one of the first lords of the region of Montreal and a place near Montreal bears his name. In the role of flag bearer, his son Pierre accompanied the Chevalier d'Iberville in 1699 in his exploration of the Mississippi. It was he who founded the fort of Chartres on the left bank of the Mississippi. Very popular among the Illinois Indians whose language he spoke fluently, Pierre du Gué de Boisbriand was an interim governor of Louisiana from 1724 to 1726. He died a bachelor in 1736.

## **Dom Urbain Guillet**

(Nantes, 1764 – Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 1817)

Born in Nantes, February 13, 1764, Urban Jacques Marie Guillet was the son of a Nantes merchant. After his studies he entered the Trappe de Mortagne in 1785 and joined this profession in 1789. With the Revolution he had to leave France with other monks of his monastery in 1791 to take refuge in La Valsainte, Switzerland. Ordained a priest in April 1794, he was sent to Hungary in October of that same year. In 1795 he became the head of the monastery of Sembranchier in Valais, but in 1798, with the invasion of French, he had to seek safety in Austria and then Poland. In 1799 he became the head of the monastery of Derman in Podolie (today in the Ukraine). In 1803 he was able to return to La Valsainte, but with the Cistercian Order taking the decision to send the Trappists to America, he set sail from the port of Amsterdam on *The Sally* on May 24, 1803, as the leader of a group of monks, landing in Baltimore [MD] on September 25.

He tried to found a community at Pigeon Hill; then moved to Louisville in 1805. With the hope of finding a place where he could establish a Cistercian monastery, he explored Kentucky and tried to create a monastery in Casey Creek. In 1808 he arrived in Louisiana; then on November 2, 1809, he created a community at Florissant, next to St. Louis in Missouri. In 1810 he founded the Trappist community of Notre Dame de Bon Secours in Looking Glass, Illinois. Then, in view of limited success and the hard climate, he returned to Maryland in 1812. Recalled to France after having traveled thousands of adventure-filled miles across North America, he landed in Le Havre in November 1814 with 16 of the faithful. In December 1816 he acquired the old monastery of Bellefontaine in Bégrolles-en-Mauges and in 1817 he set up a community that he directed for just a short time before a horse riding accident caused his death on April 2, 1817.

It would be a wait of several decades before the first lasting Cistercian monastery would be established in the U.S.: the Abby of Notre-Dame de Getsemany in Kentucky, 50 miles south of Louisville and 13 miles from Bardstown, founded in 1848 by Trappists from Brittany of the Abby Notre Dame de Melleray in La Meilleraye-de-Bretagne, north of Nantes. At the end of 1850 the Abby N-D de Getsemany had some 60 monks, half of them from Brittany.

## **Auguste Gilbert de Voisins**

(Saint-Malo, Paramé, 1877 – Nice, 1939)

Born in Paramé September 7, 1877, Auguste Gilbert de Voisins completed secondary school studies at the high school of Marseilles and then university studies at the law faculty of Aix-en-Provence. At the death of his father in

1897, he went to live in Paris and launched a career as a writer, publishing his first novel in 1900 which was soon followed by several others. Having inherited a huge fortune, he could freely pursue his passion for travel, first to a large part of Africa and then accompanying Victor Segalen\* to central China in 1909-1910. He traveled again with Segalen as well as Geuthner and Jean Lartigues on an archeological mission to China in 1914.

An excellent horseman, he participated for a time in Buffalo Bill's circus, the "Wild West Show," which toured the U.S. and Europe from 1883 to 1916, presenting a reconstruction of spectacular scenes of the western conquest: buffalo hunts, attacks on wagon trains, and battles between cowboys and Indians, etc. August Gilbert de Voisins died in Nice, France, December 8, 1939.

\* Victor Segalen (1878-1919) was a Breton doctor who spent many years in China and published a number of books about his stay there. His writings were also about Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands where he traveled as a naval doctor, arriving just months after the death of Paul Gauguin there in 1903.

**Maurice Julien Émeriau** (Carhaix, 1762 – Toulon, 1845) (from Bernard Le Nail, *L'Almanach de la Bretagne*, Editions Jacques Marseille – Larousse/VUEF, 2003)

Born in Carhaix on October 20, 1762, Maurice Julien Émeriau wasn't yet 13 years old when he volunteered to join a merchant ship setting sail from Saint Malo for Cayenne. From 1778 to 1783 he took part in the American Revolution as part of the royal navy, participating in twelve campaigns and getting wounded three times. He then sailed for a time with commerce ships and took up service again on naval war ships in 1786. With the Revolution in France he refused to emigrate, as so many naval officers of noble families did, and was sent to Santo Domingo to try to reestablish order there and help in the evacuation of European colonists. With a menace of famine in France he was given the task of supervising the purchase of wheat from the United States, and he managed to bring a convoy of 400 ships to France with no losses, transporting among other things 50,000 barrels of flour. During the battle of Aboukir he fought courageously and was badly wounded and made prisoner by Admiral Nelson who allowed him to keep his sword. From 1804 to 1811, he was the Maritime Prefect in Toulon. Promoted to Vice-Admiral in 1811, he withstood a total blockage of the port of Toulon by a powerful English fleet at the end of 1813. He exerted himself night and day to defend the town until the English gave up their siege and left. When he had to regrettably leave active service, the Admiral Émeriau had spent more than 22 months at sea. Hailed by France in 1831 he died in Toulon on February 2, 1845 at the age of 83 years.

## A Trip to the Iroise Sea – Travel Literature and the Islands of Ouessant and Molène in 1869, 1905, the 1920s, 1930 & 2002

*Inspired by Didier Squiban's composition "Symphonie Iroise" I looked through my collection of Breton travel literature to find some accounts of the islands of Ouessant and Molène. Travel writers can take great liberty in their descriptions, and they sometimes freely borrowed from earlier writers, allowing them to describe a place they may not have ever visited. You will find some disparity in the descriptions here – some due to changes over time, some no doubt inaccuracies. Since these earlier publications there have been numerous travel articles on these islands which continue to be tourist destinations. – Lois Kuter*

**Mrs. Bury Palliser** gives a very brief view of Ouessant in her **1869** book, **Brittany and Its Byways** (John Murray, Albermarle Street, London) in the context of longer discussion of Le Conquet and the Abbey of St. Mathieu:

Opposite [Le Conquet] is a beautiful beach, called the Blancs Sablons, accessible at low water by walking across the harbour. Here is the point of communication with the island of Ouessant, about seventeen miles distant, by means of a steamer, weather permitting, as the Chenal du Four, which separates the group of islands from the continent, is covered with rocks and is very dangerous in rough weather. Its men are all seamen or fishermen, the women perform the agricultural labour. They bring in their produce to Brest at the monthly fairs, and are not so cut off from the world as Gresset describes them ... Next day was the monthly fair at Brest, which brought in many of the country people in their picturesque costumes. Most conspicuous among them were the peasants of Ouessant, last type of the Celtic women, in their singularly Italian-looking head-dress, their hair streaming over their shoulders ...



**In 1905 Francis Miltoun** writes the following about Molène and Ouessant in his 1906 book, **Rambles in Brittany** (L.C. Page & Co., Boston):

Three times a week one can make the journey by steamboat to Ouessant, which English sailor-folk – those who go down to the sea in great liners – know as Ushant. The Île Molène and the Île Ouessant are the principal members of the group, and are even more stern and rock bound than the mainland.

“Very little comfort on the boat,” you will be told at the port-office, where you make inquiry as to the hour of departure. Any but good sailors and true vagabond travelers had best leave the journey out of their itinerary, although it has unique interest.

There are numerous isles and islets to pass on the way, and the Chaussée des Pierres Noires is a roughly strewn ledge which breathes danger in the very spray continually flying over it. Molène is a kilometer long and rather more than a half as wide. If ever the population of a sea-girt isle had to take in one another's washing in order to make a living, this is the place, for nearly six hundred men, women, and children make their habitation upon the isle.

Needless to say there are some things of the twentieth-century civilization of which they know not, such as automobiles, tram-cars, or loco-motives. There is not even a donkey engine on the island, and there are no bicycles or perambulators, hence there is something for which to be thankful. Considerable quantities of vegetables are exported, the population living apparently on fish, and the “farms” are divided into plots so small as to be almost infinitesimal.

The island is sadly remembered for the part it played in the wreck of the great South African liner, the Drummond Castle, in recent years [June 16-17, 1896]. The inhabitants of the isle, poor in this world's goods though they were, did much to succour the survivors, an act which is writ large in the history of life-saving.

The isle of Ouessant itself has nearly three thousand population, and boasts a market and a hotel, besides numerous hamlets or suburbs. The isle is eight kilometers long, and perhaps three and a half wide, and is known to the government authorities both as a canton and as a commune.

Pliny knew of this rock-bound isle, the foremost outpost of France, and called it Uxantos, though it was known to the ancient Bretons as Enez Heussa. Practically, the island is a table-land with an abundance of pure water, and the soil very productive so far as new potatoes and an early crop of barley go. The cultivation is mostly in the hands of the women, the men being nearly all engaged in the fisheries, or as sailors. Ouessant is a little land of windmills, though in no way does it resemble Holland. For the most part, they are sturdy stone buildings, and work but lazily, many of them being dismantled, as if there were not enough for them to do. Some years ago a fort was erected here, and a garrison of colonial troops billeted upon the island. It is a sad job at best to be a soldier in a colonial outpost such as this, and whether the observation is just or not, it is made, nevertheless, that the appearance of the garrison of Ouessant is as though it were made up, literally, of the scum of the earth.

As for history, the Île d'Ouessant is by no means entirely lacking. It was evangelized in the sixth century by St. Pol Aurelian, who built a chapel here at a spot known as Portz Pol.

In 1388, the English ravaged the island, and the former seignory was made a marquisate in 1597, in favor of René de Rieux, the governor of Brest, whose descendants sold their birthright to the king in 1764,

The glorious battle of Ouessant – at least, the French call it “*la glorieuse bataille*,” and so it really was – took place in 1778 in the neighboring waters between a French fleet under the Comte d’Orvilliers and the English Admiral Keppel.

As may be supposed, these far-jutting, rocky islands have been the scene of many ship-wrecks. There is a proverb known to mariners which classes these Breton isles as follows:

“Who sights Belle Île sights his refuge,  
Who sights Île Groix sights joy,  
Who sights Ouessant sights blood.”

When a sailorman of Ouessant is lost at sea, his parents or friends bring to his former dwelling a little cross of wood, which serves the purpose of a corpse, and the clergy officiate over it, and his friends weep over it as if it were his true body.

Finally a procession forms, and, with much solemnity, this little cross of wood, after having been placed in a casket, is deposited at the foot of a statue of St. Pol, a sad and glorious symbol of grief and also of hope.

The women of Ouessant, whether in mourning or not – and they mostly are in mourning – wear a costume of black cloth, cut their hair short and wear a square sort of cap. For the most part, the inhabitants – all those, in fact, who are natives, and there are but few mainlanders here – speak only Breton.

The Lighthouse of Créac’h, a white and black painted tower, with a magnificent light flashing its rays twenty-four miles out at sea, is a monument to the parental French government, which neglects nothing in the way of guarding its coasts by modern search-lights, quite the best of their kind in all the known world. \* There is another light here known as the Stiff Lighthouse, which carries eighteen miles.

Near the lighthouse is the tiny chapel of Our Lady of Farewells, a place of pilgrimage on the day of the local pardon (1<sup>st</sup> September) ...

\* *Editor’s Note: While the light houses built by France may be a marvel, Bretons today will wonder at the idea of the “French government which neglects nothing in the way of guarding its coasts” in view of the many “black tides” which have plagued the Breton coasts with the wreck of super-tankers carrying oil.*



My copy of **A New Handbook to Brittany and Adjacent Parts of Normandy** (Ward, Lock and Co., Ltd., London) has no date noted, but seems to be from the **mid-1920s**. Its itinerary for the area of Le Conquet includes a sort note on Ouessant:

From Le Conquet and also from Brest (from which the voyage occupies 4 ½ hours) one can embark for the Île d’Ouessant, Isle of Ushant, or in the Breton language, Enez-Heussa, the Isle of Terror, on account of the dangerous reefs and numerous shipwrecks. Landing is made at Porspaul pier. The island is about 5 miles long and 2 miles broad. The population numbers about 3,000. Much of the cultivation of the soil is done by the women. Of the lighthouses, the most powerful is Le Créac’h. It is about 230 feet in height and under favourable

conditions the light can be seen at a distance of 45 miles. There is also a foghorn.



By far the most detailed and entertaining of the travel accounts I found for Ouessant and Molène is that by **Amy Oakley** in her **1930** book **Enchanted Brittany** (The Century Company, NY)

On Friday the thirteenth, at 7:30 a.m., we found ourselves about to embark on the *Enez-Eussaff* for the island of Ouessant. No power on earth could deter us now. After long debate Ouessant had won the day, despite the oft-repeated adage, "He who sees Ouessant sees his blood." Its very name, Ouessant, had had a strange fascination for us ever since we first heard it when eastward bound from London on the P. and O. liner *Egypt*. "Yonder's Ushant," the quartermaster had pointed out; "the sailors' dread."

The *Enez-Eussaff* (Breton for Isle of Ouessant or "farthest island") is not a boat for summer tourists. The very sight of her is enough to turn their stomachs. She was alarmingly low in the water. Cinders belched from her one battered stack, which might have been black by intention or might have been blackened by soot. Prepared though we were for general untidiness, we had not by any means expected to fare twelve miles from shore in so insignificant a craft. The fact that owing to the lowness of the tide the passengers on the dock looked down upon her smoke-stack, exaggerated, perhaps, her many shortcomings.

Sailors in patched salmon jeans formed the crew. Uniform was unknown even to the captain, an unimpressive drab figure, whose one distinguishing mark was a vizored cap. Gesticulating with a thumb swathed in crude bandages, he directed the embarkation. The first to go aboard were four lean cows quivering beneath the whips of drovers. A half-dozen daughters of Ouessant had gathered at the dock. Their striking costumes were in themselves enough to repay an early morning visit. All wore white caps and dark hair falling loose over shawl-draped shoulders. Several of the older women were swarthy as gypsies, with deep-set blue eyes and the unmistakable features of the Celt. They were joined by a group of boyish sailors in training at Brest, we conjectured from the ribbons on their tam-o-shanters, *2e Dépot des Equipages*.

There was a general hand-shaking and conversation in uncouth Breton. "Ça change un peu," a woman remarked to a bystander, pointing out the uniform of a dark-eyed lad who would have been a beauty had he not disclosed the absence of front teeth. We counted on having the entire groups as fellow-passengers, but when the time came, only two of the women went aboard – to retire to the cabin and not to reappear. The occasional sailings of the *Enez-Eussaff* are apparently an opportunity for seeing friends, giving and receiving news of the island.

Cattle occupied the stern. The upper deck at the bow we had entirely to ourselves. The captain shared the bridge with a beautiful Ouessantine who had been a late arrival and the center of interest on the dock; a girl of sixteen or thereabouts; a bride, to judge by her appearance and wedding-ring. Her sturdy hands and ankles betrayed the peasant, but her charming face and winsome smile instantly won hearts. She wore a lace cap over vivid-blue ribbon which also trimmed the front of her carefully pinned bodice. A huge bow, tied coquettishly to the left of her chin, held her coif and gave her the demure aspect of a school-girl. She carried a fragrant nosegay which on coming aboard she handed to the captain, who to our amazement buried his wizened features in its rosy depths, uttering exclamations of delight.

Slowly our boat slipped its moorings and we set forth into the unknown. The Rade de Brest, our inland sea, was all animation. Ferry-boats plied their way; red-sailed fishing-smacks and white-sailed pleasure yachts skimmed over the blue waters. A tiny catboat, bobbing like a gigantic wooden shoe, had painted on its bow the name *Mon Sabot*. An elephant balloon strained at restricting cables. Submarines crossed our path, graceful as porpoises. As we passed into the open sea we could discern the cliffs of Camaret and a clear-cut row of cottages perched on the headland of the Pointe des Pois. Four cruisers steamed proudly by, single file. We were rounding the Pointe de Saint-Mathieu now, with its forsaken abbey and monumental light.

The *Enez-Eussaff* never docks except at Brest. Six crowded rowboats put forth from le Conquet, our only call on the mainland. In one stood two raven-black-bearded friars with shovel hats and a curé with gold-rimmed spectacles. The three crossed themselves on embarking. The friars, perhaps exhausted by a long journey, fell into heavy slumber near us on the deck. The priest entered into animated conversation with a bony Ouessantine who had just

come aboard and whose flowing white locks and piercing eyes made her look less like an ordinary mortal than like our conception of the witch of Endor. At intervals she raised a lean arm and her face became tense with emotion. Was she denouncing some rival enemy, in her brutal Breton tongue?

One rowboat contained half-grown pigs. There was a moment of comic diversion among the passengers – some of whom had found the deck, while most were crowded in the cabin – when a porker escaped from his brethren and trotted, grunting, into the engine room. According to the seaman who made the rescue, pulling the shrieking animal to safety, “He went to the kitchen to have himself cooked.”

Every way we looked were red-winged sloops of Douarnenez, le Conquet, and the islands: lobster boats, thick-set and stocky, in naught resembling the svelte sardine boats of Concarneau. The coast, with its semaphores and lighthouses stately as obelisks, its myriad burning mounds, was definitely receding now as we steamed westward. Reefs and islands – many deserted, others showing signs of life by the curling smoke of their fires whose acrid odor drifted to us, so near were we to their ragged shores – broke somewhat the vigorous swell of the Atlantic.

The island of Molène, like the Ile de Sein, is almost level with the sea, fringed with rocks to which the algae cling. Molène is still remembered as the scene of the wreck of the British liner *Drummond Castle*, bound from South Africa for “home.” The passengers in evening dress were celebrating the last night of their voyage, already anticipating the greetings awaiting them at Plymouth. The vessel struck the reef of Pierres Vertes and immediately foundered. Of all the company – there were forty passengers – but three were saved alive. Twenty-nine bodies were recovered by intrepid coast-guards of Molène. With the characteristic veneration shown by the Breton to the dead the corpses of the women were dressed by the natives in their own most cherished garments, the mass was said and burial made ... the graves may be seen in the cemetery. In recognition of the devotion of the islanders the British people presented a clock for the church tower and a modern cistern, though ‘tis said some inhabitants still prefer the salt taste of their polluted well-water.

Turning from the shelter of the harbor of Molène, we faced the open sea. On and on into the unknown, Ouessant-bound, we plunged. The morning was gray

and chill, the wind pierced through our warmest garments. One by one our fellow-passengers, livid-faced, retreated to the cabin, till only the two drowsy friars remained. On the bridge the captain paced unceasingly, glancing from time to time at his beautiful companion, who, with closed eyes, drooped heavy-headed as a wilting flower. The wind, barely perceptible at Brest, had risen to an amazing velocity. It buffeted our faces, and tugged our garments as if it would drag them from our bodies. Above the chorus of the battling sea it howled like a banshee. On a rising tide, we had been told, death comes to the Breton. In a storm at sea the peasants hear the despairing voices of the drowned who are floating seaward, far from the blessed shore where they would rest at peace.

The boom of cannon fired at Brest barely reached us now. Lightning seared the heavens. Above the roar of the wind and waters thunder crashed. The sky grew leaden. A blackness as of descending night settled upon us. Spray dashed in our faces. Rain swept the deck and blotted out the many islets; yet, as with uncanny precision the *Enez-Eussaff* plowed its way, we caught glints of riotous surf lashing bared reefs. When at last the storm abated the sky brightened, an auspicious omen for the last stretch of our journey – the crossing of the Gulf Stream. Caught in the long swell of the Grand Courant, our frail craft tossed like a cockleshell, but fear, by now, had left our hearts. Our insignificant captain loomed with a larger importance in our eyes. Considering his exhibition of seamanship, we, as passengers could give ourselves up to the enjoyment of the moment. What fools we had been to doubt the seaworthiness of a Breton boat. As for the captain, these men were born to the sea ... life is safe in their keeping.

As we disengaged ourselves from the drenched wrappings our eyes sought the island. Because of the difficulty of the approach Ouessant remains remote for the mainland. We felt as if on a liner skirting a foreign shore. Gulf-weed scurried by, swirling in eddies. We passed a rock with an isolated light, the Phare du Jument. The coast of Ouessant is undoubtedly forbidding. For the whole seven miles of its length, unlike Molène and the Ile de Sein, the island consists of a mighty plateau, presenting on all sides formidable cliffs. A less resisting formation would long since have succumbed to the thundering assault of the Atlantic. The entrance to the one harbor at Lampaul (otherwise known as “the bourg”) is guarded by an enormous rock seemingly crouched

like a mythical monster. On its flank waves dash and fly incessantly, while gulls circle around its head, uttering discordant cries.

On arrival at Lampaul, we had the feeling of the completion of a long voyage. Greetings were ecstatic, as at Brest farewells had been as if for inseparable partings. We anchored at a distance from the dock. Pigs and cows were without ceremony thrown into the water, swimming, each after its fashion, to the shore. For the passengers, however, rowboats were provided. One of the first to go ashore was the captain's protégée, who, exquisite flower that she was, finding herself no longer tossed by the storm, had completely revived. On the dock she became at once the center of an animated group of lads and lasses, and we asked the seaman who rowed us to point out her husband. "You mean Marik?" he questioned, surprised at our ignorance. "She is the captain's bride."

Half the population of the village was lined up on the embankment to watch the debarkation. A Breton frieze from the hand of a master was formed by the women in white or austere everyday bonnets, their gray shawls and voluminous skirts outlined against the somber background of a leaden sky. To one who has worshipped at the shrine of Cottet's triptych in the Luxembourg, Ouessant is a canvas come to life.

Women predominate on the island, where the cultivation of the soil is entirely in their hands. If wheat and rye are to be planted, cultivated, winnowed, theirs is the task. In opposition to the usual Breton custom the men are rarely fishermen, for even the sturdy lobster boats cannot be assured of a safe haven at this island swept by the wind and waves of the Atlantic. Ouessantins are mostly sailors, in the mercantile marine or in the navy. Until within recent years a proposal of marriage was woman's prerogative. A custom still obtains that during the engagement the girl dwells with the family of her fiancé. In case of a dissimilarity of tastes, no stigma attaches to a broken troth. One of the most curious observances is the burial of a waxen cross, or *broella*, in lieu of the body of a person lost at sea. The churchyard of Lampaul lies in a sheltered oasis where flourish some of the few trees on the wind-swept island. Christianity was brought to Ouessant as early as the sixth century by Saint Pol de Léon, who founded a chapel here on his way from England.

Ouessant still remembers having been ravaged by the English in 1388 and the fact that in these waters in

1778 the French fleet won a glorious victory over the hereditary enemy is not forgotten. For years the property of the Governor of Brest, Ouessant was sold in 1764 to the French Crown. The island occupies a strategic position as an outpost of French territory and guardian of one of the most important maritime routes of the world.

Two lighthouses of the first order illuminate this entrance to the British Channel, their names almost as formidable as their stark selves – Creac'h and Stiff. It was to the former that we made our way afoot. The peasants we passed gave us hearty "good mornings," but retreated as hastily as frightened animals if they caught sight of our Kodak. Cottages along the way were surprisingly neat (as to exteriors!), with shutters of bright blue or green. Bent tamarisks waved in the wind, while fuchsias and vivid marigolds enlivened dooryards.

Passing the chapel of Notre-Dame des Bon Voyages, we came upon clustered windmills whirling eerily and shepherd lasses blowing after vagrant sheep. One girl, whose habitual shyness was evidently overcome by the unprecedented experience of actually conversing with Americans, told us that the mills themselves, flimsy wooden affairs, were sometimes blown into the Atlantic, leaving naught but the ruined stone foundations. The sheep, it appeared, were saved from a like fate by low stone walls, built crisscross, behind which they could crouch to windward. Had we heard how the winds came to Ouessant? Stretched out beside our Ouessantine on the close-cropped sward, we were all eagerness to hear. Before us spread the vast Atlantic, hurling wave after wave against the island's rocky bulwarks. The horizon was streaked with the smoke of ocean liners; wide berth they gave to "seaman's dread"!

"It was like this," the daughter of the guardian light – for so she called herself – shouted above the roar of the wind and breakers. "In those days there was no wind in the region and men had no sails to their boats. The ocean was a vast pond and sailors were bent to their oars like slaves. Now, a captain journeyed to a far country to seek the home of the winds, and found it. After consultation with the wise ones of that land he learned how to secure the winds, and that he did with the aid of magic. With much difficulty he tied them into eight vast sacks and cast them into the hold of his vessel. Now, the captain's plan was, once out to sea, to drown the unruly winds but to keep those which could be of use to man. Men

say that women are curious, but the men, too, are curious, are they not, madame? There was on that boat a sailor lad, no more than a boy, who thought he should like to see for himself what it was that the captain prized so much. He crept into the hold when no one was looking and picked up one of the sacks.

“Light as air,’ said he to himself. ‘Now, what can it be” No harm in looking,’ he thought and punched a hole with his pocket-knife.

“Poof! Whew!’ blew the wind, for he had released the so’wester. The vessel was blown sky-high and the winds were scattered north, east, south, and west ... That happened near Ouessant, the old folks say ... we have no reason to doubt it, madame.”

The fear of missing the *Enez-Eussaff* and having to remain for an indefinite period on the island made us hasten our return to Lampaul. Leisurely as though time did not exist was the departure of that trusted vessel. Had it been our private yacht the deck could not have been more completely our own. Although rays from the setting sun pierced the clouds, we were not over-confident as to what weather lay ahead. As Ouessant faded, however, with it disappeared the boisterous seas, the unruly winds that had buffeted our approach.

Threading its way among the reefs, the *Enez-Eussaff* came at twilight to Molène, isle of mystery, wreathed in vaporous smoke, burial-ground of ancient druids. Le Conquet was a flaming beacon, Ouessant a far-distant gleam as we glided in darkness toward the lights of Brest.



It is worth concluding with a few notes from the **2002 edition of Lonely Plant Brittany** (Lonely Planet Publications, Melbourne, Oakland, London, Paris).

Île d’Ouessant

Postcode 29242 / pop 950

Île d’Ouessant (Enez Eusa, meaning ‘Island of Terror’, in Breton; Ushant in English), a wild but hauntingly beautiful island 20 km from the mainland, epitomizes the ruggedness of the Breton coast. About 7km long and 4km wide, it serves as a beacon for more than 50,000 ships entering the English Channel each year.

Traditionally, the sea played a pivotal role in the everyday life of the islanders, providing them with both a livelihood and resources. The interiors of the houses, partitioned by little more than wooden panels, resembled the inside of a boat and had furniture made from driftwood. Outside, the houses were painted in symbolic colours: blue and white for the Virgin Mary, green and white for hope.

Although the island is no longer as isolated as it once was, some local traditions and customs persist. Old women still make delicate lace crosses in memory of husbands who never returned from the sea, little black sheep are free to roam where they please and the delicious local dish *ragoût de mouton* (lamb baked for five hours under a layer of roots and herbs) retains its popularity ...

Île Molène

Postcode 29259 / pop 270

Île Molène (Mol Enez, meaning ‘Bald Island’ in Breton) – barely 1 km across – is the only inhabited island among the dozens of tide-washed rocks, reefs and sandbanks that lie scattered between Le Conquet and Île Ouessant. The entire Molène archipelago was designated a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1988 and is a haven for a variety of marine life, including seals, cetaceans and thousands upon thousands of sea birds.

The islanders, known as Molénois, have long been famous as expert seafarers, though nowadays those that remain on the island are mainly engaged in fishing for lobster and crab and in gathering seaweed from the vast expanse of sea bed that uncovers at low tide. ...

... The only real sight is the Musée du Drummond Castle ... The museum tells the tragic tale of the *Drummond Castle*, a British passenger liner which foundered on the rocks of the Pierres Vertes, west of Molène, in 1896. Only three people survived; 251 lives were lost. Britain’s Queen Victoria, in a gesture of thanks to the Molénois who had risked their own lives rescuing the survivors, gifted a bell tower to the island’s church. ...



Give the page which follows to a friend who might be interested in supporting the Breton language and culture by joining the U.S. ICDBL.

# 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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