

BRO NEVEZ

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE BRETON LANGUAGE
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## **From the Editor: The Breton Language in Crisis – Where do we go from here?**

Lois Kuter

A recent article on the Eurolang website ([www.eurolang.net](http://www.eurolang.net)) reported on a seminar held at the Summer University at the Festival de Cornouaille in Quimper this July. This was one of a series of discussions on the theme of "Brittany and Europe, Cultural Diversity and Citizenship." The title to the Eurolang article reporting on a seminar on Europe and the support of minority languages was: "We can't wait any longer, we are losing 20,000 speakers a year, the house is on fire." This was a quote of Patrick Malrieu, President of the Cultural Council of Brittany, who expressed the frustration of many others who have worked to get

support for the Breton language from the French government and European level institutions. The recent vote of "no" by France for the European Constitution has been cause for dismay by those who hoped that at least at the European level, the Breton language might be offered some legal protection (Bretons voted for the constitution by a slim majority). Whether the European Constitution had been approved by France or not, it is clear that France does not plan to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which has had some positive impact on the place of minority languages in those countries where it has

been adopted. Nor will France be changing the Article in its own Constitution that states that "French is the language of the Republic." And this Article will continue to be used by French politicians to block much needed public funding for programs to support regional languages in France. Time is of the essence.

This means that the Breton people must continue at the grass roots level with work that has been so encouraging in recent years – not just to continue a steady growth in bilingual and immersion schooling (at all levels), but also to expand adult classes and encouragement of the use Breton in the home and community, and to foster leisure time activities where Breton is encouraged. They must also work to increase Breton language radio and TV programming and publishing, and build incentives for the use of Breton in the workplace. They must insist on an increased presence of Breton in public signage on roads, in stores, and in offices. It will be the people of Brittany that carry their language into the future. Bretons must continue manning a bucket brigade to keep the house from burning down. And, as disheartening as it is, work also needs to continue to make the French government take down the road blocks that keep the fire trucks from arriving.

What can we do as members of the U.S. ICDBL? We cannot magically stop the loss of 20,000 Breton speakers a year. We certainly don't have the means to send Bretons the financial support that the French government should be investing in the future of the Breton language. But we can continue to encourage Bretons hard at work on all levels of activity to keep up their good work, to not give up, to not let the house burn down. And we can continue to express our outrage that a country like France, that presents itself to the world as a defender of human rights and cultural diversity, only seems willing to throw gasoline on the fire.

## Some Grass-Roots Efforts Recognized

For the fifth year the "Regional Prizes for the Future of Breton" have been awarded by the Ofis ar Brezhoneg (Office for Breton) for individuals, associations, and businesses in recognition of their work for the Breton language. Léna Louarn, Director of Ofis ar Brezhoneg, and Jean-Pierre Thomin, Vice-President of the Regional Council of Brittany and President of its Cultural Commission, presented the awards at the end of May. The winners were as follows:

### Businesses:

1. TV Rennes for its program on the Breton language in urban settings; 2. Marc Paugam, for his use of Breton in his bio-agriculture operations in Lanhouarneau; 3. Ouestélio, a numeric stamping business in Brest which incorporates Breton in its technology.

### Associations:

1. Ubapar, Union bretonne d'animation des pays ruraux, in Saint-Nolff, for its promotion of Breton in leisure activities; 2. Kentelioù an noz, in Nantes, which not only organizes classes in Breton but encourages learning by using Breton in various activities for Breton learners such as cooking, singing, and soccer; 3. Fea, in Arzano, for encouraging publications and creative activities in Breton for youth.

### Individuals:

1. Céline Soun, of Plouvien, for her work with youth in theater;

2. Arno Elegoed, of Quimper, the founder of the publishing house Bannoù-Heol in 1999, who published popular comic books Boule et Bill and Titeuf in Breton;

3. Ferroudja Aït Aoudia, of Lannion, who is teaching math and Arabic in Paris and preparing a business degree in the Breton language.

## NEW BOOKS OF NOTE

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

**Diarmuid Ó Néill (Editor). Rebuilding the Celtic Languages – Reversing Language Shift in the Celtic Countries.** Preface by Joshua Fishman. (Caredigion, Wales: Y Lolfa / [www.ylolfa.com](http://www.ylolfa.com)). 2005. 461 pages. ISBN 0 86243 723 7.

Sociolinguist Joshua Fishman starts his Preface, “The soft smile and the iron fist,” by noting that the “white death” of assimilation of minority cultures (delivered by those with the “soft smile”) in these more benign times is not much different in its end results than the “black death” of genocide (delivered by governments with an “iron fist”) in earlier days when minority languages were simply forbidden and crushed. And even when governments are “supportive,” the support is often more verbal than real. Fishman’s advice to supporters of threatened language is to “not place their ‘trust in princes,’ but to primarily undertake efforts they can implement themselves, by their own sweat, tears and resources.” This is advice he feels is needed for the six Celtic languages in view of the lack of true support from France or Britain.

In his research of a number of minority languages throughout the world, Fishman has proposed that reversing a downward slide can be accomplished by building languages in stages which lay foundations for growth. This model was first published in his 1991 work *Reversing Language Shift*, and it involves eight stages needed to reverse the loss of a language. At the base is the transmission of a language within the family and its use by a community. Work for a language at all other stages – schooling, media and wider public presence – will only be effective if you have that base.

Diarmuid Ó Néill, the head of the Canadian Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language, launched the project to put together this book on all six Celtic languages over five years ago. He has invested a great deal of his own “sweat, tears and resources” to see it come to fruition. He has wisely worked with a number of scholars who use the Fishman model to examine where each Celtic language stands today and what more needs to be done to build strength.

In his introduction Ó Néill briefly presents the state of each language and outlines major challenges they face. And he presents Fishman’s “Stages of Reversing

Language Shift” for those not familiar with it. A particularly useful table presents population, language speakers and percentage of Celtic language speakers for the populations of Scotland, Brittany, Wales, Ireland (the Republic and Northern Ireland), Cornwall, the Isle of Man, and Nova Scotia. I can’t think of any other place where I have seen these statistics (from 2001 and 2002) gathered together. This is the first of many useful tables, maps and charts found throughout the book.

The book is organized by language with those in the Brittonic/Brythonic branch of Celtic presented first: Welsh (in Wales and Argentina), Breton, and Cornish. The Goidelic/Gaelic languages make up the second half of the book: Irish (in the Republic and Northern Ireland), Scottish Gaelic (in Scotland and Nova Scotia) and Manx.

Colin Williams (University of Wales, Cardiff and The Welsh Language Board) gives a detailed presentation of Welsh, including a historical overview relating the state of the language to political changes, and analyzing Welsh today in terms of the eight stages of Fishman’s scale. Not only does this give a good overview of where Welsh stands today, but Williams also includes a number of practical and measurable steps to be taken to further strengthen Welsh. Welsh is spoken by 23% of the population of Wales – the strongest of all the Celtic languages.

Paul Birt presents the Welsh language in the Chubut Province of Argentina as it has been sustained by an emigrant community first arriving in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. He examines the history of this Welsh colony and the role of language in their maintenance of a Welsh identity. This is a detailed and fascinating history of how Welsh institutions (like the chapel system and schools) were maintained. Birt discusses factors in language loss and revival efforts, and compares them to other immigrant populations in Argentina.

The case of Breton is presented by Diarmuid Ó Néill and Marcel Texier who start with a presentation of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language. They give a solid background on the state of the Breton language and its challenges and do not hesitate to present Gallo as another language unique to Brittany which should be considered a treasure to be protected. They then launch into a stage-by-stage analysis of where Breton stands. As Williams did for Welsh they make proposals for actions to be taken to support Breton.

Cornish is presented by Kenneth MacKinnon (University of Edinburgh and Bòrd na Gàidhlig), with background on its decline and revival efforts. It is common to see Cornish described as “extinct.” It was lost as a community language by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the death of the last native speakers did not mean that the language disappeared. It was kept alive in public consciousness and a knowledge of it was passed along in bits and pieces and in scholarly studies of it before it ceased to be spoken widely. Today an optimistic estimate shows some 1,200 people able to converse fluently in Cornish and an additional 2,900 able to hold a simple conversation. Numbers are hard to determine but clearly Cornish is not “dead.” MacKinnon nicely outlines the challenges facing Cornish – including squabbles between those championing different dialects. But this article also gives cause for optimism in looking at the hard work of a number of organizations supporting the use of Cornish.

Diarmuid Ó Néill presents the cases of Irish in both the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, and Scottish Gaelic in Scotland and Nova Scotia. He presents a wealth of statistics on various levels of language fluency and gives a clear historical background and presentation of the current challenges and strengths at each of the eight Fishman stages. And he includes his proposals for new directions needed to strengthen Gaelic in those countries.

Brian Stowell presents the case for Manx Gaelic in the Isle of Man – another language mistakenly declared “dead” or “extinct.” Like Cornish, Manx lost its last native speaker (but only in 1974) but has seen a strong revival with some 1,700 people who can speak, read, and write in Manx. They have learned Manx as a second language, but the link to the previous generations of native speakers is a close one. Clearly Manx has challenges, but equally clear is the determination of many in the Isle of Man to reverse language shift.

In his conclusion Ó Néill urges those working for the Celtic languages to take serious steps to build Celtic-speaking communities where the languages are used daily and where transmission from one generation to the next becomes a normal step. This is indeed the challenge when language speakers are immersed in a world where the majority are speaking English or French.

This book is a mine of information with very useful background information on the history of each language so that you can understand why they are in need of militant action to strengthen them. The analysis using Fishman’s stages of Reversing Language Shift is a very

useful way to look objectively at both the successes and gaps to be filled in the fight for the future of each of the Celtic languages. The many statistics presented provide a current snapshot of the status of the languages, and this book will be out of date in many ways in another ten years. But, the book has the value of providing a benchmark to measure progress and to hopefully direct resources to areas of need in supporting the work being done to keep the Celtic languages alive and growing. Not all may agree with the recommendations the authors make, but this is an important book in its presentation of where the Celtic languages now stand and where they could go in the future.

Bravo to the Welsh publisher Y Lolfa ([www.ylolfa.com](http://www.ylolfa.com)) for bringing this book to the Celtic world. Those in Brittany who are more comfortable reading French can look forward to a translation to be published by the Breton publishing house Yoran Embanner (71 hent Mespiolet, 29170 Fouesnant).



**Mercator Education Regional Dossier. Breton – The Breton Language in Education in France. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.** Updated by Dr. Davyth Hicks from the 1998 edition compiled by Olier ar Mogn and Mercator Education. ([www.Mercator-education.org](http://www.Mercator-education.org)). 2003.

This is a detailed report on the state of the Breton language in the schools of Brittany from the Mercator Education website ([www.mercator-education.org](http://www.mercator-education.org)). Mercator has produced a series of dossiers on regional languages and their place in educational institutions and this one on Breton has been recently updated so that it includes statistics to reflect the state of things in 2002-03. The report breaks things down into pre-school, primary school, secondary school, vocational education, higher education (universities and teacher training), and adult education. For those not familiar with the French educational system, there are good explanations of structure to put things into a context, and loads of statistics. The study begins with a very good introduction to the history of Breton in the schools, and the French government challenges to its place there. The study includes a good list of reference works and an invaluable list of names and contact information for 31 education offices, publishers, and associations to support and teach the Breton language.

In the “Prospects” section the author concludes that Breton is facing major challenges in view of the fact that it is not being transmitted widely in homes – children

learn the language at school and return to French-speaking households and have little opportunity to use the language in their community. This is the major challenge to Breton also identified by Diarmuid Ó Néill and Marcel Texier in Rebuilding the Celtic Languages, and parents and grandparents will need to be engaged in supplementing the work of schools to insure that Breton has a future. Both Ó Néill and Texier and the Mercator study recognize the French state as a blockade in the efforts of Bretons to revitalize their language. The Mercator study places the blame squarely on France:

*That the decline in the usage of Breton is happening in a European nation-state, which purports to be in favour of basic human rights, which has the means to support Breton and help reverse language shift, but that is still actively hampering development of Breton in education, renders the French state culpable for the continuing decline of Breton. It cannot be emphasized enough that the next twenty years are going to be crucial for Breton and it will need all the support it can muster in order to create enough new speakers to even maintain the language community. Faced with a state whose opinion of Breton ranges between indifference to overt hostility it is difficult to see what progress the language can make within state structures of education. Hopes have rested with private initiatives such as the Diwan schools but in order to start their necessary expansion it is imperative that the state proactively supports this. In addition, the expansion of Breton as a second language needs to be exponentially increased and courses established to both train new teachers and retrain existing teachers to teach Breton and subjects through the medium of Breton. Only such action coupled with many more Breton parents and grandparents able to establish intergenerational language transmission with their children will provide a future for Breton.*

Clearly there is much work to be done to insure the future for the Breton language.

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### **Jean-Marie Déguignet. Memoirs of a Breton**

**Peasant**. Translated from the French by Linda Asher. Seven Stories Press (NY, London, Toronto, Melbourne), 2004. (Originally published in French as Mémoires d'un paysan bas-breton by Editions An Here, 1998)

This book is the translation of a remarkable collection of autobiographical memoirs written by a Breton peasant, Jean-Marie Déguignet, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Earlier research indicated that 26 notebooks of some 100 pages made up the memoirs which had been sold by

Déguignet to the well known collector of folklore Anatole Le Braz in 1897. Le Braz agreed to publish excerpts from “Memoirs d’un paysan bas-Breton,” and over 100 pages eventually appeared in La Revue de Paris in 1904. A search was made for the remaining unpublished materials which led to the discovery of 43 notebooks in the possession of a grand niece. These were in fact a second autobiography written between 1897 and 1904 when Déguignet assumed Le Braz had stolen his manuscripts out of spite – not paying him or publishing the work at that time.

The task of reading through the memoirs and publishing a selection from them was daunting since Déguignet’s self-taught French is threaded with his native Breton and even Latin, Italian and Spanish quotations – languages he also taught himself. The raw text of the memoir is not simply a straightforward autobiography, but includes many digressions. As Bernez Rouz, who tackled the project of tracking down the lost manuscripts and making them accessible to the public, notes:

*The author, who was writing in enormously trying circumstances at the turn of the last century – he lived in a hovel on a fern-frond mat – was mentally troubled, obsessed with his persecution; he was angry at the nobility, the parish priests, the politicians, all of them sources of his misfortunes. He especially resented Anatole Le Braz who “stole” his manuscripts. His writings are burdened by anticlerical tirades, by digressions into local or national politics, by diatribes against his enemies, all running off at the pen in indescribable disorder. These circumvolutions, which become unrelenting from the ninth notebook on make the reading an ordeal. (p. 15)*

So how did the publication of selections from this crazy man’s memoirs become a best-seller in France? Certainly by careful editing. In the English translation, it is clear that Déguignet’s life story is indeed a very remarkable one, and while the personality revealed in his writing does not make him endearing or lovable, his story is definitely interesting and compelling.

He was a man ahead of his time and definitely out of his time – a self-taught scholar trapped in a peasant world where he was born – too stubborn, and honest, to move up in social rank through the normal ways which would have required making peace with the local powers he despised – the clergy and politicians.

Jean-Marie Déguignet was born in July 1834 to tenant farmers who moved from place to place in the area

around Quimper. Throughout his childhood he begged for food to supplement the meager earnings and kitchen garden of the family. Déguignet credits his extraordinary intelligence and ability to learn and retain details to an accident in his childhood when he was struck in the head by a horse's hoof which smashed his skull. While this healed very slowly and was the source of pain and a very ugly appearance for many years, Déguignet expresses thanks for this "blessing":

*... if this accidental development of my faculties did not serve to make my fortune, or even an adequate material existence, it has provided me with a good many moments of intellectual and moral pleasure over the course of my troubled life. I take a real pleasure in setting down some honest and precise accounts of them. For since the accident, and doubtless because of it, all the events of my life remain etched into my memory like sounds in a phonograph recording. \* (pp.32-33)*

The comparison of having his life etched into his memory like sounds in a phonograph recording is intriguing. In the late 1800s French and Americans were experimenting with recording the human voice. In 1859 Frenchman Leon Scott invented the vibrograph to record voice and limited numbers were sold as phonautographs. These etched sound vibrations on a cylinder but did not reproduce sounds. Charles Cros, another Frenchman, was also a pioneer in recording and proposed the paleophone to reproduce sounds, but this was never built before he died in 1888. Thomas Edison patented the first successful model of a "speaking machine" in 1877. While it seems unlikely that Déguignet would have ever had the chance to listen to phonograph recordings (wax cylinders), it would not be surprising if he read scientific reports about these new inventions.

The details of Déguignet's account of his life are remarkable. Always eager to learn, he used religious texts to teach himself to read both Breton and Latin. Later he would use French-Breton vocabulary books and newspapers to learn French. As an adolescent he worked as a cowherd, then as a domestic servant for the mayor of Kerfunteun. Eager to see the world and leave Brittany, Déguignet became a soldier in 1853. In 1855 he embarks for the Crimean War to fight the Russians in Turkey. On furlough he travels to Jerusalem to become disenchanted with the commercialization of holy sites. After serving at Emperor Napoleon II's coronation and participating in Italy's liberation struggle, Déguignet is demobilized in 1861 and returns to his home district for a short time. Not able to find even the humblest employment he re-enlists in the army and goes to Algeria in 1865. From

there he eagerly embarks for Mexico in 1867 as part of an "expeditionary force" to support the installation of Ferdinand Joseph Maximilien as Emperor of Mexico by Napoleon III. In 1867 Maximilien is executed by Mexican republican forces and the French depart. In 1868 Déguignet is once more demobilized and returns again to Brittany after 14 years of army service.

He embarks on a new adventure – marriage and the challenge of bringing a farm from poverty to prosperity. For his bizarre and new-fangled farming ideas he wins the disdain of his new extended family, but he does improve the farm greatly despite resistance. During fifteen years on the farm Déguignet manages to make enemies of nearly everyone through his outspoken hatred of the Church and his Republican support. The landlord refuses to renew his lease and the family moves to Quimper. With money from the sale of farm equipment and his stock, his wife invests in a tavern while Déguignet is near death with illness. He recovers and takes on a job as an insurance salesman and then opens a tobacco shop. He loses the lease to this, his wife dies (after alcoholism reduces her to insanity) and eventually his children are taken from him by his mother-in-law (who always hated him). In 1905, at the age of 71, Déguignet dies in poverty and alone. He has left behind manuscripts rich in descriptive detail and full of sarcastic and derogatory remarks about the people and society in which he has lived. One bright spot before his death came in learning that the long-distrusted Le Braz had in fact published his memoirs.

There are some puzzling contradictions in Déguignet's views on some topics such as the Breton language. He seems to have disdain for his native language and for those defending it at this period – he calls them "non-Breton-speaking Bretonists." He feels these scholars (like the clergy) promote Breton only to hold Bretons back from education and entry into a modern world. Déguignet refers several times to the many dialects of Breton which make it difficult for Bretons to understand each other; and he does not favor the work of Celtic scholars whose writings include words he does not recognize. He seems to be aware that Breton is part of the Celtic family of languages, but declares several times in his memoirs that Breton is unrelated to any other language:

*... I emerged from my First Communion with full battlefield honors; I was held up as an example of learning and wisdom, humble and docile as befit my status of poor beggar; and because I could read Breton, the priest made me a gift of a little missal that gave me*

*great pleasure. Indeed, until then the only reading I had done was in my teacher's two-sous spelling book and in the catechism, which were in Breton only. But the little missal had the Breton text translated almost word for word from the Latin on the facing page. I realized instantly that I could learn Latin from it, since I learn all sorts of things so easily. It didn't take me long to learn all the Latin in the book – without rules, of course, but neither does Breton have any rules, either for talking or for writing. Every canton, and even every commune, speaks the language differently, and it is impossible to say who is speaking more correctly. The rare writers who write it do the same; each of them writes it and spells it in his own way. I have heard supposed experts, though, argue that Breton is a "mother tongue." It would certainly be a very odd mother, since it has produced no daughters or sons ... (pp58-59).*

While Déguignet seems to delight in studying other languages, he shows little interest in trying to understand the structure of his own. Given his intellectual curiosity one might have expected him to delight in studying Breton more deeply, but he had declared it a hopeless language and the fact that priests were defending it marked Breton for Déguignet as something that Bretons were burdened with rather than blessed to have.

Besides offering the reader a detailed (and biased) view of 19<sup>th</sup> century Brittany, and life in the French army, the memoirs reveal a very complex personality: a man who is good-hearted and generous, honest, highly opinionated, stubborn, self-righteous, highly intelligent, funny, inquisitive, and close-minded when he has made up his mind (as he did when it came to the Breton language). Whether you like him or not, you feel that you have gotten to know Jean-Marie Déguignet when you finish this book.

My sincere thanks to Mrs. William X Kienzle for sending me this fascinating book.



**Jacqueline Gibson and Gwyn Griffiths (Editors).**  
**The Time of the Ermine – A Bilingual Anthology of Breton Literature.** Francis Boutle Co. Paperback.  
 2005. ISBN 1 903427 28 2. £22.  
 ([www.francisboutle.co.uk](http://www.francisboutle.co.uk))

Here is a new book I have not seen but can recommend solely on its description on the publisher website: "This anthology aims to give an overall picture of Breton literature from the earliest traces in the *Lais* of Marie de France to the present day. The majority of the 150

stories, poems, legends and reminiscences are in Breton, with parallel translations into English. Also included are texts in English, and translations from Welsh, French and Latin."

## **MORE MINI-DICTIONARIES FROM YORAN EMBANNER**

I am holding in my hand three 475-page dictionaries – and they fit easily into one hand. These are part of a very useful and certainly pleasing series of tiny little dictionaries produced by the Yoran Embanner publishing house of Brittany. Although small in size, each contains some 8,000 words and translations and I have found in using the Breton-English/English-Breton dictionary that this is not just a novelty item or toy.

The publisher works with various language experts in putting together each dictionary and three I have before me are as follows:

Fulup Travers, Geriadurig Brezhoneg/Portugaleg – Minidicionário Protugyês/Bretão (Breton/Portuguese).

Rhisiart Hincks, Geriadurig Brezhoneg/Kembraeg – Geiriadur Bach Cymraeg/Llydaweg (Breton/Welsh)

Ken George, Kesva an Taves Kernewek/Cornish Language Board, Gerlyvrik Kernewek/Sowsnek – Mini-Dictionary English/Cornish.

Other dictionaries for the Breton language cover Breton/German, Breton/Spanish, Breton/French, Breton/Italian, Breton/Dutch, as well as Breton/English. But Yoran Embanner has also produced dictionaries for Alsatian/French, Alsatian/German, Corsican/French, Corsican/Italian, Savoyard/French, Occitan/French, Ladin/German, Ladin/Italian, and quite a few more planned for the coming year: Bulgarian/French, Croatian/French, Finnish/French, Hungarian/French, Ukrainian/French, etc.

Also in the planning is a Scottish Gaelic/English Mini-Dictionary and Yoran Embanner is searching for the author for this. Please send a recommendation to the address below if you have one.

I have a number of copies of the Breton/English – English/Breton mini-dictionaries available for sale (at cost for U.S. ICDBL Members for \$6.50 including mailing). Let me know if you would like one and send a check made out to "U.S. ICDBL" to me. – Lois



## NEW BOOKS IN THE BRETON LANGUAGE

**Herri ar Borgn. Pennduig ma c'hazhez** (My cat Pennduig). Skol Vreizh. 2004.

Reviewed by Natalie Novik

“Pennduig” (or black head, which is also the name of the titmouse in Breton), is the name of this philosophical female cat who conducts an intense dialogue with her owner all through the book. The idea is not new, but this cat has got a rather original stance on life and what’s happening in the world.

To give you an idea of her views (without unveiling the whole story), she rebels against the idea that cats should be spayed, saying it’s their right to have all the babies they want, and she muses for a moment about cats demonstrating for the right to wear condoms...

She is also very dismayed at the disappearance of the small rodents, due to the growing industrialization of Brittany and the fact that hedges along the fields have been cut, depriving many small animals and birds of their habitat.

You’d think this is a liberal, leftist cat, but actually she is quite catholic and conservative. I don’t know if this reflects the opinions of her master...

The difficulty with this book for many Breton language readers is the language: it is written in the Gwened dialect (from the Vannes region), which is quite different from the standard KLT (Kernewez-Leon-Tregor, the unified spelling for the Breton language, which unites the three north and western dialects). As a result, many of the words are either not spelled in KLT or cannot be found in a KLT dictionary. There is a small lexicon (Breton-Breton) at the end of the book, but it is very limited and does not offer much help.

However, it is to Skol Vreizh’s credit to publish in Gwenedeg, the Vannes dialect, since very few Breton publishers do so, as they believe it will limit the number of readers. Even without a dictionary, you can still understand most of it if you make the effort... and if you know Breton of course. There is no plan to get it translated either in French or in English.



## Short Notes on other new books in the Breton language

Notes for the following were gleaned from notes and reviews found in: Al Liamm 349 (Ebreil 2005) & 350 (Mezheven 2005), Ar Men 145 (mars-avril 2005), Armor 422 (mars 2005) & 426-427 (juillet-août 2005).

**Fañh Broudic. Moueziou a leh all**. Brud Nevez/Emgleo Breiz. 142 pp.

This book includes poems and stories by non-Bretons translated into Breton. The “voices from other places” of the title are Sioux, Inuit, Turkish, Danish, Palestinian & South American. (One supposes that at least some of these are translated from French and not the original language of the author).

**La Fontaine. Fablennoù Jean de la Fontaine**.

Translated by Yves Louis Marie Combeau and Daniel Doujet. Al Lanv. 560 pp.

Twelve volumes of fables by La Fontaine are found here with old engravings to illustrate them. These are drawn from earlier translations by Combeau (born in 1799), and Doujet has added notes to help better understand the fables and their history.

**Gwenvred Latimier Kervella. Huñvreoù**. Keit Vimp Beo. 54 pp.

This is a short novel by a young author in which the hero, Erle, tries to unravel mysteries of past and present split personalities.

**Mikael Madeg. Levr Lesanoïou Kerne** (Arvor su Bro-Vigouden). Emgleo Breiz. 197 pp.

As noted in the May 2005 issue of Bro Nevez, Mikael Madeg has spent much time in the study of nicknames, publishing in both French and Breton. Here he examines names of coastal Bigouden country where maritime culture influences naming.

**Tangi Malmanche. Marvaih an Ene Naonek**. Aber (115 Kergareg, 29870 Landeda).

Written in 1939 after some forty years of preparation, this work – thought lost – has been published with the authorization of Malmanche’s daughter. It is preceded by a study by Morgan ar Menn on the theme of death in this work.

**Prosper Merimée. Colomba**. Translated into Breton by Daniel Kernalegen. Al Lanv. 252 pp.

This is a novel set in Corsica about the life of young people and the impact of the mafia on their lives and families.

**Maria Prat. Ma beaj Jersey – ha peziou-c’hoari all.**

Emgleo Breiz. 152 pp.

A collection of plays written by Maria Prat – well-known for her role with the popular Breton-language theater troupe Strollad Beilhadegou Treger.

**Annaig Renault. Kanedig beaj.** Coop Breizh.

This is a bilingual Breton/French collection of poetry and reflections on five different trips taken between 1994 and 2002 in France, and to Germany, Italy, Wales and Belgium.

**Yvon Riou. Echos du bord de mer. Mémoire, culture et langue bretonne à Lampaul-Plouarzel.** Emgleo

Breiz. 300 pp.

This is a look at the region of Lampaul-Plouarzel based on recollections of older residents – an ethnography as well as linguistic study of this Breton-speaking area.



## **Breton Language Dictation Contest Ar Skrivadenn Vras**

In the may issue of Bro Nevez I noted that dictations in Breton (“dictées”) have grown in popularity and competitiveness in recent years. With finalists chosen from run-offs in Rennes, Nantes, Morlaix, Brest, Quimper and Lorient, the final was held in Lorient on May 21 as part of the Fest Yves celebrations sponsored by Emglev Bro an Oriant who launched the competition nine years ago. Fifty-five finalists competed with a tale collected by François-Marie Luzel called “Gwennveur ha C’hwevrer” (“January and February”). It’s worth citing the winners here and noting that competitors from Nantes showed that this city is truly proud to be Breton and Breton-literate.

Elementary school level (7 to 9 year olds)

1. Solenn Le Roux (Nantes)
2. Ewen Travert (Rennes)
3. Robin Le Jeune (Morlaix)

Upper Elementary School Level (9 to 11 year olds)

1. Maina Guillamet (Quimper)
2. Viviane Brunic (Brest)
3. Bleunwenn Allaire (Lorient)

Middle School Level

1. Metig Renaudon (Nantes)
2. Gwenn Menez (Brest)
3. Maël Giraudon (Lorient)

High School and Adult Learners

1. Mewenna Guillouzic-Gouret (Nantes)
2. Christophe Chatelier (Nantes)
3. Marie Pierre Merret (Brest)

(information form Bremañ 284 (mezheven 2005) and Gwenn ha Du 169 (juillet-août 2005))



## **A Loss for the Breton Language**

### **Ivona Martin**

(1907-2005)

Ivona Martin, a life-long defender of the Breton language died in February at the age of 97. She was born in the Saint-Marc district of Brest where Breton was spoken in the community. She fell in love with this language as a teen and perfected writing skills in working with Roparz Hemon and his new magazine Gwalarn. She worked for twenty years as the editor for another journal created by Hemon, Ar Bed Keltiek. Under the pen name Barba Ivinek she wrote a number of short stories and was a teacher for the Skol Ober correspondence school. A friend of Anjela Duval she was instrumental in encouraging this poet to publish her work.

In 1995, Ivona Martin was inducted into the Order of the Ermine in recognition of her lifetime of service to the Breton language and culture. But it was not only the Breton language that she defended. Ivona Martin was also active with humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International and l’Association des Chrétiens Contre la Torture.

Tributes are paid to this remarkable woman and two of her short stories are published in the April 2005 issue of Al Liamm (No. 349).

## BreizhEire: Linking Bretons in Ireland

An Introduction by Bertrand Hugo

BreizhEire was started not very long ago after I met Josselin Kerviche. Both of us had the dream of unifying and developing the now rather large Breton community in Ireland. Up until now little had been done. And previous attempts in the 1970s and 1980s did not last.

Josselin has been living in Ireland for six years and tried to start something, but could not find anyone until now who was motivated enough to work with him on this project. He has done a lot of ground work to contact Breton people all over Ireland.

I lived in Norway for six years before coming to Ireland. Since I had lived in Ireland for three years during my childhood I have always considered it to be my second country. I knew that there was much to do to unite a Breton community. I had once organized the Fest Yves celebration in Norway which went very well, but now I couldn't go much further than that.

When I came back to Ireland I made contact with Josselin who I had heard about through O.B.E. (Bretons du Monde). Working together is just fantastic since we compliment each other in our points of view and work. So far we have organized the Fest Yves celebration in Donegal – a challenge since it is pretty far from any major cities. But this was a good start in gathering people. The local Irish community loved it – especially my crepes and galettes. We will work on other events – especially musical ones – to gather the Breton community and to stimulate and support interest in Brittany and Inter-Celticism in Ireland. Hopefully in the future we will launch a Breton language class and we hope to have a website operating by the end of the summer.

We would be happy to hear from anyone who wants to know more about our work ... especially if you are in Ireland or know people in Ireland who might be interested in BreizhEire.

To contact us:

[Breizheire@gmail.com](mailto:Breizheire@gmail.com)

Bertrand Hugo

Raphoe Road 24

Crumlin

Baile Atha Cliath 123

EIRE / BRO IWERZHON

Tel: +353 (0)87 411 7104

## Breton lesson 5 / Kentel 5

By Natalie Novik

### Yezadur / Grammar

I promised to tell you about mutations, which are changes in the consonants either initial or final in a word, depending on various factors. The main factor, however, is human laziness.

Let me show you what I mean:

In Breton, to say the book, we won't say ar (the) levr (book). We will mutate the last consonant in ar into al, and say al levr. Try it yourself: say al levr, and see how it goes smoothly on your tongue. Now, try to say ar levr, and you will see it requires a much greater effort, and the r gets blurred if you don't pay too much attention.

That's what mutations are about: the easiest way to blend two consonants together. We do the same in English (say quickly "he read about it" and notice what you do with the "t" in about and "it"), but we don't write it down. All Celtic languages do however, and that's one of the things to learn. The good news: if you already know Welsh, Gaelic, Cornish etc., you already know which letters turn into what. Otherwise, once you have learned the Breton ones, they will work in the other Celtic languages you will want to learn...!

In other cases, the first letter of the following word will also change, particularly the letters K and S after "ar":

|           |                                                                   |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The cat   | ar <b>h</b> az (the initial k in <b>k</b> az has turned to h).    |
| The chair | ar <b>g</b> ador (the initial k in <b>k</b> ador has turned to g) |
| The dream | ar <b>z</b> oñj (the initial s in <b>s</b> oñj has turned to z).  |

### Vocabulary / Geriadurig

|          |                                  |
|----------|----------------------------------|
| Kador    | chair                            |
| Taol     | table                            |
| Gwele    | bed                              |
| Prenestr | window (from the French fenetre) |
| Moger    | wall                             |
| Toenn    | roof                             |

### Exercise / Poelladen

Replace the missing letters

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| Ar ...ador | Ar ... az   |
| Ar ...oñj  | A... ...evr |

## DEEP INSIDE A BRETON SKULL 7

### All the world wisdom

Jean Pierre Le Mat

I live with my family in a small village between Landerneau and Plougastel-Daoulas, called Dirinonn. It is in the far west of Brittany, not far from the harbour of Brest.

It is not a place fit for mass tourism. Of course, we have a few prehistoric long stones. We have a lovely church dating from the XVIth century, with an ossuary, a chapel, a calvary, and nice sculptures and stained glass inside. But our megaliths are poor ones, and our sacred enclosure is not as prestigious as those of Saint Thegonnec or Guimiliau, a few miles from here.

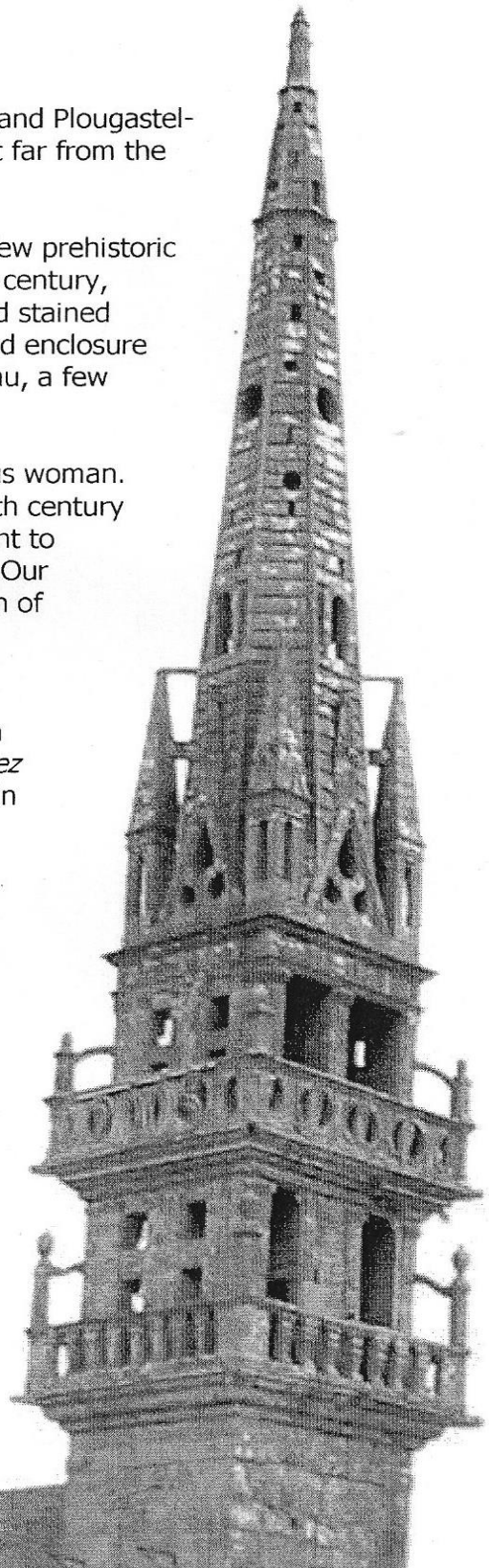
Dirinonn means "the oaks of Nonn". Nonn was a young pious woman. She is known to have come here from Ireland during the VIth century to hide after being raped. She gave birth to St Divi, who went to study in Wales where he founded the monastery of Menevia. Our Divi is known there as David, Dewy, or Devi Sant, the patron of the Welsh.

Divi was acknowledged as a future great saint by the monk Gildas very early, before his birth. This fact is recorded in an old piece of theatre written long ago, in Middle-Breton, *Buhez Santez Nonn*. It is a strange poem with internal rhymes, as in old Welsh poetry.

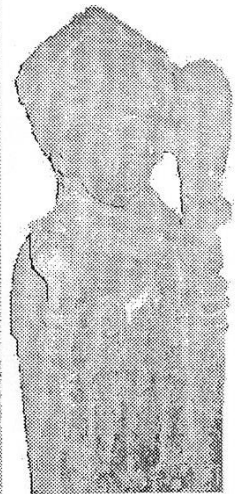
This story could also be found in the prophecies of Merlin (*"Moenia pallio urbis legionum induetur & praedicator hiberniae propter infantem in utero crescentem mutescet"*. "Menevia shall be dressed in the pall of the City of the Legions, and a preacher from Ireland shall be struck dumb by a child still growing in the womb").

Well, here in Dirinon, we speak Breton and French, but not Latin. I don't know if Roman garrisons stayed here twenty centuries ago. To do what ?

Every Sunday, when the Breton weather is not too rainy, I go jogging and I pass beside our two sacred fountains nested in the countryside.



The first one I hail is Sant Divi's fountain. Local people take care of the enclosure, putting flowers on the walls and near the statue of the saint. In his left hand, he holds the bishop's crook, symbolising his role of protection of the Christian flock. With his right hand up, he has not the gesture of blessing, but a closed fist. There is authority in the expression of this statue, in his stance and on his face.



The second one is Santez Nonn's fountain. This one is situated less than a mile from the first one. The old statue keeps an open book in her hands. She is not like her son. Half-bent on her book, she smiles gently.

According to the legend, Divi's blind godfather had recovered his sight the day of the baptism of the child, just there. Our ancestors said that the water of the fountain can cure eye troubles.

Nonn and Divi... The Woman and the Man... Here, the woman has precedence over the man. She is the mother, and her fountain is situated on a higher position.

Is the man dedicated to power and action, and the woman to knowledge and inspiration? Unlike other European traditions, mainly Latin ones, our ancient people transmitted to us that inspiration is feminine, and action proceeds of a male principle. And they told us golden stories, and they carved statues to secure this transmission. "In the beginning was the Verb...". In Dirinonn, the verb is in the hands of a woman.

During my Sunday jogging, I get the impression that all the world wisdom has been inscribed here in stone, mixed with the beauty of nature.

And strange images spring up deep inside my skull. They are images of the past, of the people who built these monuments lost now in the countryside. The children of the village, sitting together in the grass and on the branches of the trees, were looking at the builders. Farmers passing nearby after a long day of work were proud of the monuments rising in their parish. Women, young and old, were praying and discussing in front of the half carved stones.

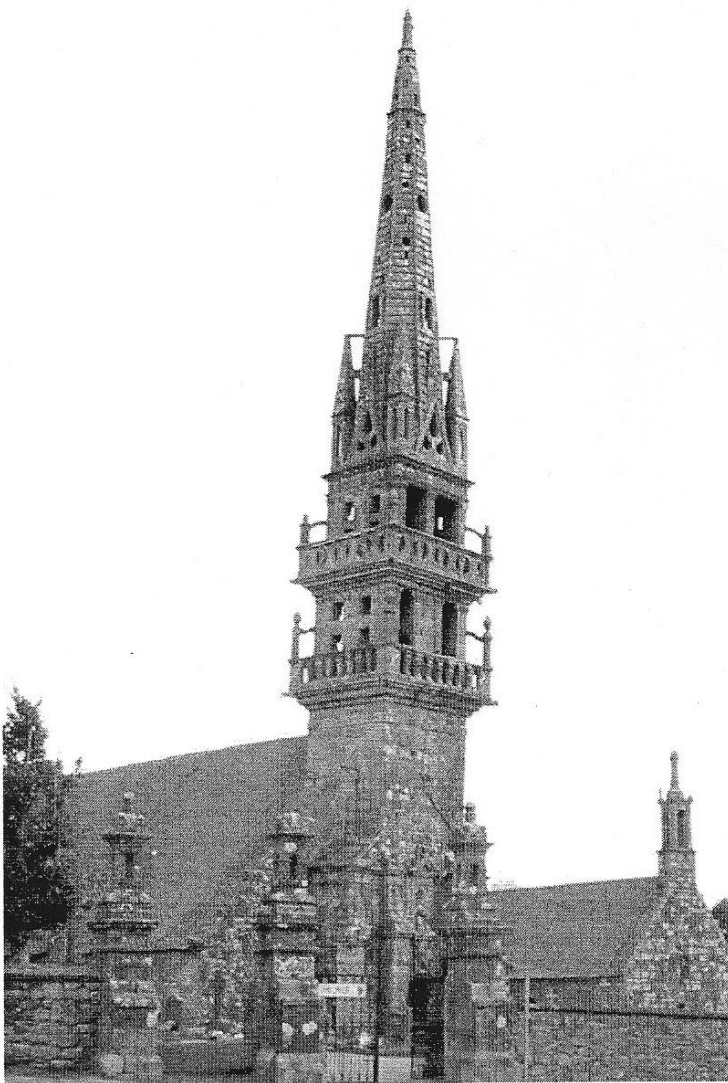


I also get images of the future. That could be fantasy, but old traditions tell us that time is not what we perceive. Past and future can be interlaced, like our Celtic design.

I have been told by my mother that, on the last day of the world, the Bretons lost at sea will come back. They will be seen by the thousands on the sands of our beaches and on the rocks of the harbours. Warriors of ancient times, fishermen swept by the storms of Iceland, forgotten sailors, they will all get out from the mysterious waves of the end of Ages, to feel under their feet, for the last time, the ground of their dear country.

In Dirinonn, the farmers will walk around a last time, to look at their fields and their animals. They will cross their ancestors coming back to smell the hazel trees and see again the slopes and streams they had known, to keep them in memory for eternity.

The children who died in their youth will gather in the middle of the road, under the wet gaze of the mothers. The builders of the church and the fountains will let their hands gently touch the stones. Some of those who come out from the cemetery by the hundreds, around the church, will point to the elegant bell tower they raised during their life.



The very-ancients, those from the megalithic times and the more ancient people, will stay at some distance, in the unreal light of the last day.

The people of Dirinonn of all the times will gather near the fountains and the church. At the instant of the last judgment, some of them will have in their hand the hand of a child, or of a beloved man or woman. Some of them will keep a handful of the earth they cultivated all their life, or an apple from the apple-tree they planted.

My friends said to me that this could not be true. The day of Armageddon will surely be more frightful, and also more solemn. Dirinonn is of no value in the enormity of that event, and nobody will have at that instant terrestrial nostalgias. There will only be panic and hope, and after that absolute despair or absolute happiness.

Others said to me that after death there will be nothing. No judgment, no resurrection, no memory, no God. And Dirinonn will probably disappear as well, and Brittany, and everything in the cosmic evolution.

I don't know. I don't know...

I live in my Breton village under the protection of Nonn and her son Divi; and I am only a Sunday jogger.

# BRETON MUSIC IN REVIEW

Natalie Novik

## **Telenn, Harpe Celtique - L'Anthologie. Volume 1.** Coop Breizh CD951. 2004.

This is a double CD, released by Coop Breizh earlier this year. It features "la crème de la crème" of Breton harpists, and some non-Breton who have adopted Brittany... The anthology is in the form of a booklet, with color photos, biographies and discographies (in French only) for each harpist, and at the end of the volume, a bibliography. The only thing I don't like about it is the way the disks are in a tight pocket on each side, very hard to pull out without leaving fingerprints all over. Hopefully, they will figure out something better for the next volume.

You might not know all the names, although some are by now quite famous, like Mariannig Larc'hanteg, her students Dominig Bouchaud and Kristen Nogues, Soazig Noblet, Jakez François, Myrdhin... Ah, you will say, I don't see Alan Stivell... Next volume, probably. This is meant to be a very comprehensive compilation, and we are only getting the first installment.

It is a remarkable anthology, most of the pieces are from the Breton repertoire, played not only with talent, but with inspiration and gusto. Some pieces hark back to the Medieval and Renaissance repertoire, and some are compositions by the harpists themselves. In that category, my favorites are by Marie Jan, two pieces entitled "Sound of Malacca" and "Lune Rousse" (red moon), where exotic instruments of all kinds including percussions and drums weave a background on which the harp either sparkles like fireworks (Sound of Malacca) or blends in, in a lulling repetition of the same sounds till you feel totally relaxed (Lune Rousse).

Pierre-Yves Moign is listed in the biographies, since he has composed a great deal for the Celtic harp and many of his pieces are featured in this volume. One of the harpists is Elena Polonska, who, although she is not Breton, displays such a keen interest for Celtic harps that she has, among others, a harp made by Georges Cochevelou, Alan Stivell's father. I am hoping that the next volume will feature the grandmother of the Breton harp, Denise Megevand who recently passed away, and who has to her credit her work with Cochevelou to revive the harp in Brittany (she was Stivell's teacher).

Camac Harps is one of the sponsors of the anthology, which makes sense since the harps played in this volume are for the most part manufactured by them, a remarkable testimony to the variety of harps they are making and the support they have provided since the 1970's to the harp revival in Brittany. The preface by Isabelle Moretti and the foreword by Pierre-Yves Moign both stress that the Celtic harp, the older sister of the classical harp, has finally found its place today as an instrument with its own identity, an identity that carries enormous symbolism for all the Celtic countries.

## **Bretagne.** Wagram Music 3090202. 2004

This was released in 2004 by Wagram Music, another one of the numerous compilations of Breton music you find today on the market. This one is not bad at all. If you don't know anything about Breton music, it's a good introduction to today's musicians, and if you already know something of Breton music, then it features some excellent pieces. It starts with a wonderful waltz by Bagad Men ha Tan and Henri Texier, "Le Cimetière des Bateaux" (the boat cemetery), first as a slow, melancholy tune, which is then picked up by the bagad and transformed into a triumphant call of the pipes. Some great names are on this CD: Yann Fañch Kemener and Didier Squiban in a sad traditional song "Evnig bihan" (the small bird) with Squiban's romantic piano, singer Annie Ebrel accompanied by Gilles Le Bigot and Davy Spillane in "Ar Galon Digor" (the open heart), Patrick Molard, Sonerien Du, Patrick Molard playing Galician airs with Alain Genty... There is a total of 15 pieces, very representative of the latest developments in Breton music, well chosen and well recorded. The CD cover is the more economic glossy cardboard with a photo of the Pointe du Raz, and there are no explanations or comments inside, just the list of musicians and pieces.

## **HEARD OF, BUT NOT HEARD**

The short notes for these new CDs are based on reviews and notes found in the following Breton magazines: Ar Soner 377 (janv./fevr./mars 2005), Ar Men 146 (mai/juin 2005), Armor 423 (avril 2005), 425 (juin 2005) & 426/427 (juil./août 2005). – Lois Kuter

## **Jean-Eli Le Goff, Jacky Le Hetet, Daniel Philippe, Gwendal Berthou, André Thomas. An Toull kar.** Coop Breizh CD 947.

This CD features bombarde/biniou pairs interpreting airs and dances of the plinn and fisel regions. Thbombarde and biniou players on this CD

guarantee a great listen for those who love "sonneurs de couple."

**Bodadeg ar Sonerion. Bagadoù – Brest**

**2005.** Bodadeg ar Sonerion ([www.arsoner.org](http://www.arsoner.org)) This 3-CD set includes competition performances of the top-ranked category of Brittany's unique style of bagpipe band. This is the 56<sup>th</sup> championship and features the plinn and fisel territories and dance styles. A can't-miss for anyone who loves the bagad. The contest performances are also available on DVD.

**Celtic Fiddle Festival. Play On.**

Greenlinnet GLCD 1230.

Celtic Fiddle Festival is a trio of world-class fiddlers: Kevin Burke from Ireland, Christian Lemaitre from Brittany (Kornog, Pennou Skoulm ...), and André Brunet from the French Canadian tradition (La Bottine Souriante). Brunet has the unenviable task of filling the shoes of the departed Scottish fiddler Johnny Cunningham – and this he does very well and in his own style. This CD includes performances from a tour in the U.S. in 2004 (a stop in Portland, Oregon, in particular). This group tours frequently in the U.S. If they get anywhere near you, don't fail to go see them.

**Dastum Bro Dreger. Yann Poëns. Eostig**

**Tremel.** Dastum Bro-Dreger EST 04. Encyclopédie sonore du Trégor-Goëlo, Vol.. 4

"Nightingale of Tremel" was the name given to traditional singer Yann Poëns (1920-2002) who was also a very fine storyteller. This CD devoted to him includes stories as well as ballads, gavottes and marches. A master of Breton tradition from the Tregor region is justly celebrated in this well documented CD by the Tregor branch of Dastum.

**L'Epille. Aux sources du patrimoine oral 2:**

**C'est à Bovel il y a.** L'Epille EPL 002B.

Bovel, southwest of Rennes in the Ile et Vilaine department, has been the site for a dozen years for a festival of traditional song organized by the group called Epille. This CD includes in part recordings from an earlier 1998 cassette but adds new performances of songs and stories by traditional masters of this region. The CD includes great notes with song texts. This is a fine tribute to the great voices of Gallo Brittany.

**Clarisse Lavanant. Vers l'imaginaire.**

Avel-Ouest/Créon Music CM 2019.

Clarisse Lavanant uses compositions by Dan ar Bras (his texts? and music?) for contemporary songs which are both nostalgic and modern in theme and rendition.

**Philippe Marlu. Les Valses machines.**

Frenchsong CON 03.

Winner of the 2005 grand prize for a CD designated by "Produit en Bretagne," this CD features singer-songwriter Marlu (formerly the lead singer with the group Casse-Pipe). His texts are well crafted and full of substance.

**Tony McManus and Alain Genty. Singing Sounds.**

Greenrux CD Trax 274.

Many Irish and Scottish musicians include a token Breton tune or two in their repertoire. Few have done more to interpret Breton music than Tony McManus and here he teams with Breton guitar master, Alain Genty – as he has done before.

**Mouezh Paotred Breizh. Ce pays vers la mer.**

MPB 0305.

In May 2005 the Breton men's choir Mouezh Paotred Breizh organized an international festival of men's choirs held in Pleyben. This CD includes choirs from Wales, the Basque country, Estonia and Italy. The title piece, "This country towards the sea" is a composition by René Abjean using texts by Anthony Lhéritier, Per Jakez Helias, Charles Le Gall and Marie Kermarec.

**Ozan Trio. Konsert.**

Keltia Musique ETC 001.

This is a trio including Armel Hejer (song), Bernard Bizien (guitar) and Malo Carvou (flutes), interpreting traditional Breton melodies and dance tunes with a hint of jazz and swing.

**Pascal Rode and l'Ensemble Lirzhin. La Légende de la Ville d'Ys.**

Keltia Musique RSCD 265.

A mix of traditional airs with compositions with a classical tone, or the beat of a Breton dance or a tango – all on the legend of the sunken city of Ys and its key players – the femme fatale Dahud, her father King Gradlon, and Saint Gwenole.

**Didier Squiban. Tournée des chapelles.**

L'Oz Production L'OZ 45.

This features twelve piano performances recorded at various concerts given by Didier Squiban during the summer of 2004. A master of improvisation, Squiban's style is reminiscent of Keith Jarrett, but with roots in traditional Breton melodies and tunes.

**Tri Yann. Les racines du futur.**

Pathé OFRS 45097.

This CD (also with a DVD) presents a 2003 concert at the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient. This group from Nantes (also known as Tri Yann an Naoned) pulls themes and songs from the past (Medieval ages) but is very much in synch with themes of the present and a rock style of the future. One of the



longest running bands of Brittany, they have a unique style that keeps their fans loyal and helps them win new ones as well.

**Elisa Vellia. Voleur de secrets.**

PromouVoir Prod./Le Chant du Monde CDM 064.  
The former partner of Christine Mérienne in the harp and vocal duo Sedrenn, Elisa Vellia is now on her own. This CD harkens to her Greek roots and Celtic harp is accompanied by instruments and musicians from Brittany and elsewhere (including oud, clarinets, accordion and various strings).



## **The U.S. ICDBL Shines at the Potomac Celtic Festival**

June 11 & 12, 2005

For the 12<sup>th</sup> year the U.S. ICDBL set up information tables and displays at the Potomac Celtic Festival, in Leesburg, Virginia. From a single card table at the first festival we have grown to two tents, multiple tables, colorful poster displays, lots of information about Brittany and the Breton language to give away, coloring activities for children, and our friendly presence to answer questions. (see next page for a view of our tents.)

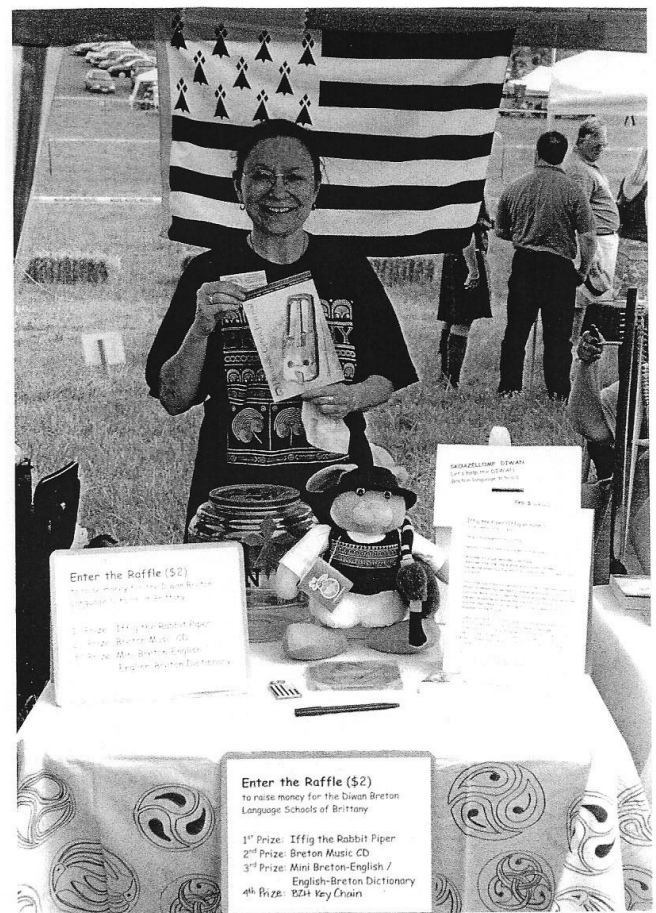
We fly four flags high above our two information tents so that anyone interested in the Breton culture can see us from a distance. These are two "gwenn ha du," the modern flag of Brittany, one "kroaz du," a much older Breton flag which has a white field with a black cross (the inverse of the Cornish flag), and the inter-Celtic flag designed by Polig Monjarret which encompasses the flags of the six Celtic-speaking nations with a triskell in the center. This is the only inter-Celtic flag at the festival and is always admired for its beauty.

This year we had a special guest at the tent: Iffig ar Soner, a biniou-playing rabbit wearing a costume of his home Bigouden region. Created by Eric Léost ([www.an-eost.com](http://www.an-eost.com)), this stuffed animal has served as a good-will ambassador as it travels with Bretons and to non-Bretons outside of Brittany. We used this beautiful little bunny as the centerpiece for a raffle to raise money for the Diwan schools. Iffig lured festival visitors to our tent and opened many conversations about the important work in Brittany to keep the Breton language and culture strong.

For the second time (the first was in 2000 when the festival featured Brittany) we won the award for "Best Tent" for Celtic societies. This is not a small thing since judges rate you on the quality of the material you present (educational value of handouts and displays as well as overall attractiveness and colorfulness of the tent). You are also rated by the quality of the people at your tent – the depth of their knowledge, and ability to answer questions, as well as friendliness and eagerness to share information.

The U.S. ICDBL tent could not work if it were not for a large crew of members who help put it up and take it down, and who take turns manning the tent to meet with visitors. Thanks to Susan Baker, Philippe Berthier, Roger Gossement, and Ben and Dottie Pecson who were at the core of this crew.

(more on next page)



Iffig ar Soner with Susan Baker who holds the festival program book.

It was also great to see David and Rebecca Pugh (who were deep in preparations to move to Brittany) and Matt Cosgrove, visiting from distant Florida.

The U.S. ICDBL tent serves to introduce Brittany to hundreds of festival-goers who stop by to talk to us, but our members are also very active away from the tent.

Philippe Berthier carries the Breton flag in the opening ceremonies for the festival, and as he roams the festival, he gets the crowd dancing whenever any band plays a Breton dance. Jan Zollars teaches Breton

dances in a workshop and uses this opportunity to talk about Breton culture and the importance of music and dance in Brittany. While the band Moch Pryderi features Welsh music, they also include a bit of Breton repertoire, and all the members of this group – Bill Reese, Bob Roser, David Rich and Mary Triola - are members of the U.S. ICDBL. Other ICDBL members are active each year at the festival teaching people about other Celtic languages. Cheryl Mitchell hosts a Welsh tent each year at the festival and does a workshop on the Welsh language.

Liam Ó Caiside does workshops on Manx ("Manx in 30 minutes – or your money back") and sings in the group Mac-talla which features a Scottish Gaelic repertoire.

The dates for the 2006 Potomac Celtic Festival are June 10 and 11. We would love to see you at the U.S. ICDBL tent. Keep an eye on the Potomac Festival website: [www.pcfest.org](http://www.pcfest.org)

Lois Kuter



## MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF BRITTANY: Biniou & Bombarde

Lois Kuter

*Note: Over twenty years ago I first produced a "Guide to the Music of Brittany" for the U.S. ICDBL and every few years this gets an update. The last update was in 2002 and that version is on the U.S. ICDBL website [www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm](http://www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm). It's now time to look over the Guide again and do more updating. As I do this I will publish sections in Bro Nevez. The Guide is meant to offer just a brief introduction to Breton music. Musicians in Brittany themselves are doing a great deal of research and are best able to present their own traditions, so those who really want an in-depth understanding of any aspect of Breton music are urged to go to the source ... and I have tried to include some essential references so you can do that.*

The **biniou koz** ("old bagpipe" in Breton) or **biniou bihan** ("little bagpipe") is traditionally played in pair with the **bombarde** (see below). The two players are referred to as **sonerion** (in Breton) or **sonneurs de couple** (in French). The **biniou** (as it is referred to these days) is a mouth-blown bagpipe with one drone. It is high-pitched (an octave above the Scottish Highland bagpipes), with a range of ten notes. Its tuning has varied from one area of Brittany to the next (it can be found in the keys of G#, A, B, or C), and Bretons continue to research the history and diverse use of this instrument. The **bombarde** has a range of two octaves with its lower range pitched an octave below the **biniou**. The **biniou** provides a continuous sound due to the steady supply of air from the bag to both the drone and chanter. The chanter is only 5-1/2 inches long with 7 finger holes; the single drone is approximately 14 inches long.

While the **biniou** and **bombarde** pair is found today throughout Brittany and performed by some 400 pairs, it has been traditionally found in the southwestern and south central part of Brittany where its practice remains strong. The style of paired playing found today has been well documented as far back as the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although

there are references and visual depictions indicating that these two instruments might have been played in pair at least as far back as the 16th century in Brittany. In earlier times a drum was also commonly found to form a trio, although today this is rarely found. In past centuries **sonneurs** were often professional musicians (at least part-time) who were hired for weddings, fairs and other public events. Except for very rare exceptions, **biniou** and **bombarde** pairs have been men.

The **bombarde** is a member of the oboe or shawm family. Describing it as an oboe, however, can be misleading since it has a very powerful sound, more closely resembling a trumpet. The **bombarde** is played as oboes are played with the double reed placed between one's lips; the second octave (unison with the range of the **biniou**) is achieved with lip pressure. In contrast to the continuous sound of the bagpipe, the **bombarde** is capable of staccato which makes it particularly effective in pair with the **biniou**. This is an instrument that has been in constant evolution with many different keys developed as well as milder versions (**lombarde**, **piston**) developed for use in ensembles.

Today, both the **biniou** and **bombarde** are played in combination with an unlimited number of instruments (saxophone, fiddle, flutes, electric guitar, percussion from all over the world ... ) or with voice in fest-noz bands, rock groups and ensembles of all styles - in arrangements of traditional Breton dance tunes and airs or new compositions.

Below is a brief listing of readings and recordings. See the U.S. ICDBL website for more details.

### Some Essential Reading:

See the « Panorama » section of the Dastum website : [www.dastum.net](http://www.dastum.net) for a history of the bombarde and biniou including musical examples. Dastum also produces and excellent bi-monthly magazine, Musique Bretonne.

While primarily focused on the bagad and use of Scottish style bagpipes in Brittany the **website for Bodadeg ar Sonerion** : [www.ar-soner.org](http://www.ar-soner.org) is also a good source of information. The BAS also publishes a bi-monthly magazine called Ar Soner.

### **Musique Bretonne—Histoire des sonneurs de tradition.**

Douarnenez: Le Chasse-Marée/Ar Men. 1996. 512 pages. *A beautifully illustrated and documented history of bagpipe, bombardes, the veuze and other instruments in Brittany.*

**La Musique bretonne**, by Roland Becker & Laure Le Gurun. Spezet: Coop Breizh, 1994. 120 pages. *Good single source of background information on Breton music--especially good for piping and instrumental traditions.*

**"Le couple biniou-bombarde"** by Laurent Bigot. *Ar Men* 59 (May 1994):26-39 & 61 (August 1994):10-29. *(Excellent articles with beautiful photographs and illustrations about the history of the biniou and bombarde in Brittany.)*

**Musiques traditionnelles de Bretagne: I—Sonnoux et Sonerien**, by Yves Defrance. *Skol Vreizh* no. 35. 1996.

### **Looking for music notations?**

**Toniou Breizh-Izel--Folk Music of West Brittany**, by Polig Monjarret. Bodadeg ar Sonerion, 1984. 675 pages. *2,200 dances and melodies collected from biniou and bombarde players between 1941 and 1954 in Lower Brittany; introductory section describes structure of music and collection activity.* & **Toniou Breizh-Izel 2**, by Polig Monjarret. Bodadeg ar Sonerion & Dastum. 2003. 700 pp. *Another 2,000 tunes.*

## **Just a Few Recordings**

**Roland Becker.**

Musiques Traditionnelles en Bretagne Morbihannaise. Arfolk CD 423. 1993. *(Features the bombarde, with biniou koz and biniou braz, drum and organ.; good notes included)*

**Jean Baron & Christian Anneix.**

Hentad. Keltia Musique KMCD 140. 2003 *(Retrospective of long career of this pair including lots of great photos)*

**Jean Baron & Georges Epinette**

War Roudoù aen Arboulet. Dastum - Tradition Vivante de Bretagne 18. DAS 146. 2004. *(Well documented by Yves Labbé, a CD in homage to a collector of Vannetais Brittany, Jean-Louis Larboulette (1878-1951))*

**Yves Berthou & Patrick Molard.**

War Roudoù Leon Braz. Dastum - Tradition vivante de Bretagne 17. DAS 144. 2002. *(homage to the famous piper Leon Braz, with extensive notes)*

**Pierre Crepillon, Laurent Bigot, Patrick Molard.**

Ar sac'h ler. Escalibur BUR 826. 1988; reissued by Coop Breizh CD 453. 1998 *(Some of the best you can hear of bombarde/biniou koz and bombarde biniou braz combined.)*

**Jean-Elie Le Goff, Jacky Le Hetet, Daniel Philippe, Gwendal Berthou, André Thomas.**

An Toull Karr. Coop Breizh CD 947. 2005. *(dances and melodies featuring the Plinn area)*

**Frédéric Lory**

Instruments du Diable, Musique des Anges - Tableaux sonores de Bretagne. Dastum DAS 132. 1999. *(Sound scapes evoking the role of bagpipes and bombardes in Breton society from the Middle Ages to today).*

**Gildas Moal & René Chaplain.**

Fin 'Zun. Coop Breizh CD 938 - DB10. 2003.

**Serge Riou and Hervé Irvoas.**

Gant ar vombar hag ar biniou. Coop Breizh CD 902. 2000. (52'36)

## **Bombarde & Organ**

The pairing of the bombarde with big church organs dates back only to the 1970s but has become a tradition of its own. Often the repertoire includes a number of Breton cantiques or hymns, but this pairing is also used for dances and new compositions, and more recently the biniou has been added to make a trio, and you also find bombarde paired with piano. The following are some more recent recordings.

**Jean-Michel ALhais & Jean-Pierre Rolland.**

Fantaisies. Esclaibur 868. 1997

**Josick Allot, Job Defernez & Michel Dubois.**

Trio biniou-orgue-bombarde: Bonjour Boulom. 2000.

**Anne Auffret, Daniel Le Féon, Loic Le Griguer**

Pardonioù Vol. 1 - Les plus beau cantiques de pardons. Coop Breizh CD 919. 2001 & Pardonioù Vol. 2. Coop Breizh CD 920. 2002. *(Cantiques you would find at festivals celebrating the many saints of Brittany with singer Anne Auffret in trio with bombarde and organ)*

**Jean Baron, Christian Anneix & Jean-Michel Mansano.**

Kerjadenn—bombarde, biniou, orgue. Keltia Musique KMCD 108. 2000.

**Hervé Le Lu & Philippe Turbin**

Dawad. Créon Musique. 2003. *(bombarde and*



## *A Walking Tour of Brittany in 1853*

From: George Barrell, Jr., The Pedestrian in France and Switzerland. (New York: G.P. Putnam & Co.), 1853

NOTE: Thirty-four pages of this 1853 travel account are devoted to Brittany and the author – a young American – very briefly describes a route that passes through Mont St. Michel, Dinan, Dol, St. Malo, Jugon, St. Brieuc, Guingamp, Morlaix, Huelgoat, Carhaix, Quimper, Rosporden, Quimperlé, Pont Scorff, Hennebont, Auray, Vannes and Nantes. Some of these towns are dismissed in one sentence – “Auray is in nowise remarkable.” The author often says more about the inns where he stays. Descriptions of the people he sees or meets are often summed up with the adjectives “ugly” or “filthy”. Nevertheless, some of the descriptions give interesting insight into mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Brittany. The following passages are drawn from chapters on Guingamp, Morlaix and Huelgoat. (The Chapter on Quimper to Pont Scorff was presented in Bro Nevez 77, February 2001).

### Chapter XII – Guingamp

While leaning the following morning from the grotesquely carved window of my humble inn, admiring the sunshine and a little streak of blue sky, numbers of poorly dressed peasant women passed by in the street on their way to the fair, which was held in another quarter of the town. Among them was a woman who placed me in mind of the occupier of my room at Caen – the person called Madame Le Fort. She wore the ugly little cap, with her hair combed back of her ears; but her upper lip and chin were blackened by a thick, bristly beard, full a quarter of an inch in length, which, perhaps, would not be shortened till the following Sunday; proving that Madame Le Fort, after all, was no such great curiosity.

As for the foire, whither the women were going, it was visited just before leaving upon my day's journey, but appeared uninteresting, after the grand ones already seen. There were no shows of any kind, and the men and women, in their dirty, somber garments, created a tremendous noise in transacting sales; but though it was evident the voices of the latter were not so powerful as those of the former, yet they made greater use of their tongues, speaking full twice as quick in the same given time. There was

also a pretty fair sprinkling of gend'armes, whose duty it was to see that order was maintained.

At Guingamp there is a fontaine de plomb, which is pretty both in design and workmanship. It appears to be made of bronze, though from its name it should be formed of lead. The houses of Guingamp, and the churches, have curiously-colored roofs. You will find them the same in nearly all Brittany. They are of slate, ornamented and rendered water-proof by a moulding of white cement running along the peak, down the gable ends, and around the bases of the chimneys. When you have the entire view of a town, as you can have of Morlaix, the sight is novel and striking.

Leaving Guingamp, the country changes from barrenness and dreariness, to the wild and beautiful. There are many hills, though but few trees; and the scenery must much resemble that of Scotland. Roads struck off from the main route, similar to those in La Vendée. They were cut into the ground; and it appeared strange to see a man's head rising now and then above the fields, and not his body, with level land between you and him, and level country between him and the hills. Those kind of passages are now seldom seen in La Vendée, for Napoleon and Louis Philippe did much in the way of destroying them, by covering the province with a net-work of high roads.

Before me was a dismal village; for every building in the place was as somber as though painted black. While gazing upon the collection of antique houses, some one near me was crying for charity – a sound rarely heard in France, where laws against beggary are strictly enforced, but in this part of Brittany they are less rigidly carried out than in any other department. I turned to see whence the sound proceeded, and must confess to have been a little surprised at the result. A sandy bank sloped towards the road, and in it a hole about seven feet in length by three in breadth, opening towards me, had been excavated. A bed was placed therein, in which was a woman wrapped in blankets, with her head raised sufficiently high upon pillows, to see all who passed. And there was this horrible picture of human misery permitted to lie, when the weather permitted, shocking the ears and disgusting the eyes of the traveler!

While refreshing myself at the inn with a chopine – an English pint – of cider, in the next room two or three women were assembled, but not a word they uttered was understood. I was aware there were patois or dialects in France, and thought this must be

one, but then remembered I was in Brittany, where the peasantry possess a gibberish called Breton. It is a most uncouth tongue, certainly; the German “ya, ya” – “yes, yes,” was often heard. I left the room to discover who it was that used the harsh language thus fluently, and found some old and ugly women, who had merely come to have a chat, and warm themselves with some burning sticks in the fire-place. My hostess, who had spoken to me in very good French, was in the midst, conversing with really surprising volubility.

The village was small, and soon inspected. I strayed into the primitive old church; pushing open the door on its creaking hinges – a door that had swung, perhaps, for three or four hundred years – and noticed that the interior of the edifice was as simple and quaint as the outside. No one was within; and the works of the clock descending in one corner, filled the place with its clicking.

Thence I passed into the market-place, and heard the sound of a violin. There were a dozen couples of young men and girls, skipping here and skipping there, and twisting themselves about in the greatest glee.

“What’s going on?” asked I of a man.

“It’s a wedding-dance.”

“Which is the bridegroom?”

“He with the violin,”

“And his bride?”

“She with the bunch of flowers in her bosom.”

It was a merry dance; and no one worked harder or amused himself so much as the lucky bridegroom; for the bride was quite pretty. Dressed in new clothes, and with flowers in his hat, he danced to and fro with his partner – a smiling maiden – all the time fiddling as quick as possible, never losing a note or missing the time. ...

I returned to the inn, and the hostess prepared supper: as usual, she commenced with soup.

There are two kinds of soup obtained in France – *soupe maigre* and *soupe au lait*. *Soupe maigre* means thin or *lean* soup.

*Soupe au lait* means milk-soup.

She made some of the lean kind, in the following manner:

Some bread is cut into thin small pieces, and placed in a bowl, after which, procuring a large saucepan, she lays it over the fire to warm. Sometimes they have a pot simmering on the fire, with a “sensation” of meat trying to discolor the water – then the soup is soon produced. Well, when the pan is hot, she peels an onion and cuts it into small pieces, which, with a very small lump of butter, is thrown therein. Then the butter hisses in torment at the warm reception it meets, but is quickly cooled by water, poured in till the pan is nearly full. When the water begins to boil it is poured into the bowl containing the bread; then the hostess laying beside it a spoon, salt, and pepper, says, “On a servi, Monsieur.”

As for the milk-soup, all the difference is – and there is a difference – that in place of water, milk is the article employed to relieve the butter from its agony.

Soup is the national dish of France. As regards *frogs*, for which the French are so ridiculed, they are but rarely eaten, save as a delicacy, for I never saw, but once, those amphibious animals used as food. It was on the banks of the Loire. An old man was dressing the hind legs of a dozen or two of those once lively creatures, while his wife was throwing their forequarters in the road. *Revenons a notre soupe*. I have often stopped for the night in an *auberge*, where was seen an enormous iron kettle on the fire containing water and some meat – a traveler has the right to ask questions when desirous of acquiring knowledge – and on a side-table a regiment of little brown bowls half filled with shavings of bread. When the evening hour arrives, the hostess will fill these bowls with soup; and the male and female field-laborers, coming in soon after, amuse themselves for the next half hour – and that was their supper.

At my little inn was obtained a good meal and a good bed, and the next morning I paid the sum of twenty-three sous, which is the common price in the north of France. Let me give a description of Norman and Breton inns.

La Normandie is a very picturesque province, and the inns well sustain its character. They are not so handsome as those in Great Britain. They are rough and dirty, especially those of the humbler description; but enter which you will, even in the most lowly, and they will always cover your bed with clean sheets and pillow-cases. The room you first enter, the great one where all the cooking, eating, drinking, and smoking is done, is very large, and generally has a

lofty smoke-blackened ceiling. Tables, with long benches on both sides, are placed in order in one part of the room, and the other is occupied by the cupboard, kitchen utensils, and an enormous fire-place – the mantel-piece being six feet in height, with a depth sufficient to accommodate four or five old smokers – and on one side of the mantel-shelf is the machinery employed for turning the spit. Such is a Norman inn. The only difference of those in Brittany is, that where one person smokes in Normandy, a dozen follow the same occupation in Brittany, therefore the fire-places are generally larger; the floor is the mother earth.

Now will be given an illustration of one of the uses to which the kitchen is placed. While seated before the fire smoking my pipe, La Bourgeoise, as the landlady is called, spoke, and I arose and moved my chair on one side, permitting a man to lead his horse through the room into the little yard behind, where was a blacksmith's shop; the only way of getting there, was through that apartment!

### Chapter XIII – Morlaix and Huelgoat

This morning I beheld one of the most perfect of all the crucifixes yet seen in Brittany. There were many in the province, but most of them had been broken by the ferocious mob of the Revolution. It is not uncommon to see a figure without a head, or behold the remains of a cross piled upon the pedestal; but this one had not received the slightest injury, was antique in appearance, and quite a gem of its kind. The figure and cross were of one piece, but very roughly executed; the fingers and toes being left to the imagination of the spectator; there was nothing resembling them, save faint tracery on the feet and hands

Two men were lying by the wayside; one of them having shouted, left his friend, the road repairer, and ran after me, wishing to know if I would not ride with him to Morlaix; for he could take me with rapidity, and at a low price. This, certainly, was an inducement; and thinking the fare reasonable, I entered a low-built house near by, while off went he to harness his quadruped; and soon returned with the horse attached to a cart very much resembling that of the marchand of Rouen, only it was blessed with a covering. Beneath this round roof you crept by a small hole in front, and when in, you could not sit on the seat unless with a crooked back. We had not proceeded very far before a sailor was noticed coming towards us, having a stick across his shoulder supporting a bundle.

“Dites donc, Monsieur,” said the driver to me; “it’s a very little distance now to Morlaix.”

“Is it? I am glad to hear it.”

“Yes; and I should like to turn back. Now, what shall I give you for the distance here to Morlaix?”

“What do you mean?”

“There is a sailor who wants to go my way, and he will pay me well for taking him home. No, I will give you back part of your fare, and I will take him. Halloo, my monsieur matelot! Been paid off?”

“Yes.”

“Going home?”

“Yes.”

:Will you allow me to turn back Monsieur?”

The country seemed very free from trees around Morlaix; and soon was seen the flourishing little town, seated in a valley, with a hill rising behind it. The roofs were very black; in many places splashed with the mortar or white paint. When once in town, you found yourself in a very antique and curious place, especially when visiting the old quarters; but there was not a single ancient or provincial costume worn by the inhabitants. The streets are extremely steep, and very narrow; some would be impassable were they not transformed into stairs, odd in appearance and fatiguing to the walker. Morlaix is built immediately upon the side of the hill, or the rock, before noticed, which accounts for the perpendicularity of its streets; and the houses are continually ascending one above another, and lean towards each other across the narrow lanes. There was some grotesque carving upon the door-posts; but the town is much overrated as regards singularity – has not the hundredth part of the wonderfulness of Dol.

Starting from Morlaix, the character of the country was changed. The road was thickly bordered by trees, mostly of the pine genus. When upon the summit of a hill, away ahead were many other hill-tops, grotesquely outlined against the clear sky; but the country was still naked. I was not certain of the road that led to Huelgoat – where was a silver mine it was my intention to visit – as it struck off from the main one, but at what place was not precisely known.

I was then passing a collection of about the oldest farm-houses to be seen in the country. By the roadside was a youth of about my age, who was the first person yet seen dressed in the Breton costume. He wore a round-crowned, wide-brimmed, black felt hat, with a velvet ribbon falling from one side; and beneath this was his interesting face. It appeared to have been a stranger to water, from the time it first saw light—at any rate, it was exceedingly dirty. Long hair fell upon his shoulders; and the ends twisted this way, and curled that, and lost themselves in the hair of his coat—a goat-skin, with the “fur” outside. His breeches were held in their place by a leather belt with a big buckle; and coarse knee breeches, gaiters and huge sabots, with his feet wrapped in straw and thrust into them, together with a spade, upon which he leaned, completes the portrait.

Being desirous of learning the way to the mine, I addressed him in my best French, speaking slow, that he might better understand; but it was of no use, for he answered in Breton. I gave up in despair, and wished him good morning; he wished me the same in Breton—at least that is the supposition; and I have not seen him since.

I marched on, though not knowing whether on the right road or not. The day was fast coming to a close. By-and-by two roads appeared upon a hill ahead, running into the one I was traveling. Which of the two was to be taken? One of them might lead to Huelgoat, and the other in a contrary direction—but which led to the mine? There was a man upon the hills cutting gon; and I proceeded towards him through the detestable shrub. When there, it was found, according to anticipation, that he could not speak French. At last an expedient was used.

“Huelgoat?” Huelgoat? Asked I several times.

“Huelgoat,” replied he; and then pointed in the direction of the two roads.

I thrust forward the two fingers of my left hand, spreading them in fork fashion. Then we faced the roads, and I pointed to them and to my fingers; and, for a wonder, he comprehended.

“Huelgoat?” touching the right finger and bending the other.

“Ya! Ya!” laughed the man; “Huelgoat,” and he tipped my still extended finger.

The road—the *right* one—was very pretty, very narrow, and at times very stony; and there were

many blue hills ahead. Then the sun descended, and there was a concert of toads, charming me all the way to Huelgoat. Before you enter the village, is seen the small lake on the right, and the walled gardens of the town, with ivy or other greens capping them, descending to the water’s edge, and in it reflected. Then on the left. Just below the road, is a very old water-mill, near which are heaped vast round stones, with the stream foaming among them.

Early next morning I left for the mine, the path to which is carried through the woods. On the opposite hill were many huge stones, of the kind heaped around the old mill; and it appeared as if they had been swept down from the hills by the continual pressure of some mighty torrent; for they are smoothly rounded as they would have been were they subjected to such treatment.

It was a fine walk that morning, with the sun peeping above the hills! By the side of the path is a canal conveying the water to the mine to move the machinery, and work the pump which keeps it dry; it was at times filled with moss, which streamed in green grandeur—seemingly passing on with the current.

When the mine was reached, the director showed me the mode of working the metal, commencing with the separating of the good ore from the bad, and how they obtained the silver from the lead by pounding and burning. Washing the silver from the sand was a very interesting process. There was a large shed, in which were many long flat boards; at the head of each water continually dripped; and the boards being nearly upon a level, it steals off. Girls are always at work. The earth, containing the silver, is placed at the upper part of the board, and the water of course carries it further down than the metal powder. Then it is all pushed back again by the aid of a curious wooden shovel, something like a “mace” used in playing billiards, though many times larger. After the sand below has been removed, the operation is repeated, until nothing remains but pure silver.

Having expressed a wish to descend into the mine, and see the men at work, the director said he would return with me to his house, and obtain a dress and guide. Soon I was transformed in appearance. A sailor’s tarpaulin hat, blouse, pantaloons of the coarse gray material used by miners, and an apron to wear behind, in case I wished to rest, completed my attire. A boy said all was ready, and I followed him to the mine; but no bucket and rope that would transfer one below was seen, as the traveler is given to understand by Murray’s Hand Book.



We came to a round hole, above which protruded the top of a ladder. Then my guide gave me a little iron lamp with a hook attached, which, when lighted, was hung across my hand between the thumb and forefinger. When he had disappeared, I followed, squeezing myself through the narrow passage. So we continued, descending ladders, and lowering ourselves through holes, till we had reached the third floor or gallery; there are eleven of them in all, but they are too hot to visit, and it is only giving yourself trouble for nothing, as no more could be seen in the eleventh than in the third. We saw what we came for, and then commenced the ascent.

The grand object of interest in the mine is the pump which keeps it dry. It is a masterpiece of mechanical skill, and works with hardly any noise. When, however, you stand upon the machine in almost total darkness, you hear the pistons slowly driving downwards and groaning – down – down – far below; echoing still downwards.

There is another mine, and also a melting house at Poulaonan; but having already seen one, time was saved by not stopping, but walking on to Carhaix.

On the route we met a train of Bretons on horseback driving a drove of horses having bells around their necks, so that they could easily be found should they chance to stray. The men were tall and very lean; some sat side-ways, and some astraddle; others being in the lady's posture. They curved their backs, and you could hardly see the color of their faces, as they were so dirty. Their hair was long, straggling, and thin; and they were all smoking or trying to smoke – for it takes a Breton a very long time to light his pipe. Tobacco is very expensive in France, and is not very strong. Now, the Bretons do not care how powerful are its narcotic effects, neither how low the price; therefore they buy the kind we call "plug," always keeping it about them. When they wish to smoke, they cut off small pieces, which they press into the bowl of a little clay pipe, and then sit for half an hour trying to light it; and the instant they cease sucking, the fire takes its departure.

I passed through Carhaix, where there was nothing to see, and continued on my walk towards Quimper. It was not reached that afternoon; for, as it commenced to rain, refuge was sought in a chaumière, in a small village where was a very picturesque church, that would have appeared well on canvas.

I had entered an auberge, for such it appeared to be, but the bourgeoisie told me they had no accommodations, and never took in travelers; but that if I would accompany "that young man there," my wish would be gratified; and he took me to the chaumière. In the room was a good-featured old woman, reeling thread which was no doubt spun by herself. The apartment was large and old-fashioned – so were the woman and the reel. The thread was very coarse, and the articles made of it are also coarse, but strong; one of those "duck" shirts will outlast a dozen of ours made of cotton.

Pretty soon her husband dropped in – an old Breton with long hair. When he had seated himself he pulled out a lump of tobacco, cut little pieces from it, and filled the bowl of his ebon-hued pipe. I took up a glowing coal from the fire with a pair of iron nippers – a neat little article, possessed by every peasant – and presented it to him. He stared hard at me, as if he did not know from what quarter of the heavens I had dropped – thought perhaps that I had come down in the rain which was then pouring; but taking the pincers, placed himself upon a stool, and commenced sucking and puffing vigorously, but no smoke came; he was there full three minutes, all the time "drawing," before he succeeded in setting the tobacco on fire.

The old woman had by this time finished winding her twine; for such it really appeared – so placing the reel away, she drew forth a pipe, and charged it with "fine cut." Loud laughter was then heard without; the door was driven open, striking against the furniture, and in tumbled, rather than walked, two or three men, tall, lean, dirty, and wild in their movements. They procured chairs, and soon were smoking at the "bits of clay," – and I was in the most select society of La Basse Bretagne!

They left; the husband also departed; and my supper was prepared. In the evening I sat upon a stool, sending up tobacco smoke before the fire. On one side was the old woman continually asking questions; and on the other was a large ugly cat curled upon a chair. Silence took up her reign; and then like Doctor Syntax, I "smoked out my pipe, and went to bed."

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